

POETRY
Paper-V
Option-I
Section A & B

M.A. English (Previous)

Directorate of Distance Education
Maharshi Dayanand University
ROHTAK – 124 001

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Maharshi Dayanand University
ROHTAK - 124 001

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Contents

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|-----|
| Unit 1 | Spenser | 5 |
| | Faerie Queene | |
| Unit 2 | Alexander Pope | 43 |
| | The Rape of the Lock | |
| Unit 3 | Samuel Taylor Coleridge | 80 |
| | The Rime of the Ancient Mariner | |
| | Kubla Khan | |
| Unit 4 | Matthew Arnold | 115 |
| | The Forsaken Merman | |
| | Dover Beach | |
| | Scholar Gypsy | |
| | Memorial Verses to Wordsworth | |

M.A. (Previous)
POETRY

PAPER-V (Option-I)**Max. Marks : 100****Time : 3 Hours**

***Note:** Students will be required to attempt five questions in all. Question 1 will be compulsory. This question shall be framed to test students' comprehension of the texts prescribed for **Close Study**. There will be one question on each of the Units in all the four Sections. The students will be required to attempt four questions (in about 200 words each) one from each section.*

*The other four questions will be based on the texts for **Close Study** with internal choice i.e. one question with internal choice on each of the four units. The students will be required to attempt **One** question from each of the **Four** unit.*

Section A

Unit 1 Spenser
Faerie Queene

Unit 2 Pope
The Rape of the Lock

Section B

Unit 3 Coleridge
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
Kubla Khan

Unit 4 Arnold
The Forsaken Merman
Dover Beach
Scholar Gypsy
Memorial Verses to Wordsworth

Course: M. A. (Previous) English
Paper V (option I) Poetry
Section A; Unit I: Spenser's *The Faerie Queene Book I*

SPENSER'S LIFE AND WORK

Although considerable information about Spenser's life is available from official records and from the writings of his contemporaries, the more valuable information can be obtained from his poetry itself. For instance, from a sonnet Spenser wrote in 1593, the year of his courtship, we can know when he was born. The year (1593), says Spenser, seems longer "then all those forty that my life outwent." We can easily infer from the sonnet that Spenser was born in or about 1542. We can also know from *Prothalamion*, where he speaks of

... mery London, my most kindly nurse,
That to me gave this life's first native sourse;
Though from another place I take my name,
An house of ancient fame,

that he was born and brought up in London, but that his parents were not Londoners. The reference to the "house of ancient fame" is to the Spencer's of Althorpe, Northampton. Spenser received his school education at the Merchant Taylors, where Mulcaster was its first head master, who was a keen scholar with a generous conception of the aims of education. "It is not a mind," he wrote, "not a body, that we have to educate, but a man; and we can not divide him." This conception derives from the Humanist ideal of education; from, broadly, the culture of the Renaissance. The ideal of the perfect courtier, which Spenser later emulates and portrays, must have found its source in this early education. Mulcaster grounded his students in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. He also trained them daily in music both vocal and instrumental.

It was also at school that Spenser picked up French, and made his first attempts as a poet. Spenser translated certain sonnets of Petrarch and Du Bellay. Of his years at Pembroke college, Cambridge (1569-76) there is not much on record. But certain vital informations are available. The entry books of the college do make a reference to him as the recipient of allowances, "aegrotanti." It is considered possible that Spenser's chronic ill-health tended to develop in him the tendency to reflect and dream. He is considered among the most learned of the English poets. Even if some of his contemporaries have been better scholars, none has been as well read as Spenser. Of his contemporaries, Ben Jonson and, perhaps, Chapman alone could rival his knowledge of the classics. As Drummond has informed, Ben Jonson "did neither understand French nor Italiannes," whereas Spenser knew both quite well. Spenser was a known Greek scholar in his time. He was an enthusiastic student of both Plato and Aristotle. He was more profoundly influenced by the mystical element in Plato's thought, as revealed in the latter's *Symposium* and *Republic*. The Roman poetry also

attracted Spenser both by its wealth of material which he could use for his own purpose, and by virtue of its style. It is also significant to note that while most Elizabethans turned chiefly to Ovid, Spenser was highly influenced by the art of Virgil.

At Cambridge Spenser formed a deep and lasting friendship with Gabriel Harvey, who was among the most notable figures at the university. There can be no doubt that Harvey was both a loyal and a valued friend of Spenser's, that he took keen interest in Spenser's career, and introduced him to those who were in the best position to further it. If he gave Spenser bad advice on literary matters, obviously Spenser seldom followed it. Years later, he delighted to refer to Harvey as his "entire friend". In 1576 Spenser earned the degree of M. A. and left Cambridge for the society of his Lancashire kinsfolk. Of his occupation at this place, we only know that he fell in love with a lady whose identity he veils under the name of Rosalind in the *Shepherd's Calendar*. She was both a conventional love figure of Elizabethan poetry as well as a sincere object of love. This love experience remained an integral part of Spenser's imagination for a long time in his life. Rosalind is again alluded to with chivalrous devotion in Spenser's poem *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. However, whatever the depth of emotion for Rosalind, it did not save Spenser from the dangers and the delights of falling under other spells. The cautious Harvey had soon reason to warn his friend of the seductions of another "Rosalindula," perhaps some lady of the court.

Spenser returned to London in 1578, where Harvey introduced him to Sidney and Leicester. Spenser looked up to Leicester as the acknowledged political leader of the Puritan faction, the most favourite of Elizabeth, who had not yet lost the hope that a marriage with the Queen might turn his fortunes. He got bound more closely to Sidney than to Leicester and their relation was not that of patron and protégé. Although yet a young man, Sidney was regarded the most brilliant figure at the court of Elizabeth. Sidney, recognized for his abilities all over Europe, was considered by his own countrymen as the ideal courtier. An earnest Protestant, Sidney saw in Roman Catholicism the greatest threat to his country's liberty. He remained persistent in persuading Elizabeth for a strong action against Spain. Spenser accepted Sidney's political ideals without any reservation. In other matters, too, he felt closer to Sidney than to any one else around him. The Puritanism of both Sidney and Spenser was deeply tinged with Platonic mysticism. Both made an attempt to adopt to modern life the ideals of mediaeval chivalry. They saw in the romance of medieval times an inspiring symbol for the battles they were to fight in their times. The soul of Sidney that was stirred by a rude ballad of Chary Chase and later found an intimate expression in *Arcadia* found kinship with the poet of the *Faerie Queene*. In their judgements upon art, however, the two friends were not in complete agreement. Sidney was more committed to fashion and precedent. He did not endorse Spenser's bolder linguistic experiments because he "dare not

allow, since neither Theocritus in Greek, Virgil in Latin, nor Sanazar in Italian, did affect it.” Sidney, in fact, went a step further to lead the scholars’ movement for establishing classical metres in English verse. And yet, Sidney did not fail to encourage Spenser in his ambitious project of the *Faerie Queene*, whereas Harvey only condemned it. Spenser’s dedication of his poem *The Ruins of Time* to Sidney’s sister, the countess of Pembroke, claims no equal friendship with “that most brave knight your noble brother deceased.” Sidney had also inspired Spenser in his youth and given him a model for the brave courtier in *Mother Hubberds Tale*. This noble friend continued in Spenser’s memory to vitalize some of his most beautiful conceptions in the *Faerie Queene*. Spenser’s elegy on the death of Sidney, *Astrophel*, although in pastoral form, underlines the poet’s deep sentiment for Sidney.

In Spenser as a poet, there is nothing of the realist. His genius expresses his emotion far more in verbal cadence, in melody of phrasing, than in the logical expressions of words. Even in his *Astrophel*, it is only through elaborate use of his characteristic effects of alliteration and repetition that he is able to give to his lay of lingering and tender pathos an effective expression of personal regard. It is not because *Astrophel* is an elegy that he uses the pastoral idiom. Pastoral idiom, for Spenser, was the most useful metaphor which could give an effective expression to his most intimate personal experience. It is not for nothing that the poet of the *Faerie Queene* was known as “Colin Clout” among his friends. Finally, when Spenser’s own Faerie land itself becomes pastoral, with Colin Clout straying into it, its hero, Sir Calidore, represents an ideal portrait of Sidney. Spenser’s first bid for poetic fame, in 1579, was also marked by his dedication of the book, the *Shepheardes Calender*, to “the president of noblesse and of chevalrie, “Sir Philip Sidney”.

THE SHEPHEARDES CALENDER:

Spenser’s the *Shepheardes Calender*, with its clear relations with the past, came to be recognized as a pioneering piece of a new movement. It appeared with explanatory and apologetic notes by an editor mentioned merely as E. K. Various scholarly views on the identity of the editor notwithstanding, the current critical opinion accepts the editor as Edward Kirk, a fellow student of Spenser at Cambridge and an enthusiastic disciple of Harvey. The poem has been accepted as a veiled autobiography of the poet, as a work of historic interest, and as a work of high intrinsic value. Spenser’s choice of the pastoral form was a happy one, for Virgilian eclogue was already popular. Its traditions in classical and Renaissance literature allowed Spenser a precedence for the allegorical use he made of it. The Shepherd’s cloak, in Spenser’s time, was an accepted disguise of the lover, the poet, the courtier, the pastor, and even the critic of contemporary life. Thus, the poem could be made the repository of the poet’s personal emotions, his religious and political beliefs, his hopes and fears for art. Spenser represents, in the dramatic personae, under a disguise

sometimes dark, sometimes transparent, himself as well as his friends. Spenser appears disguised as Colin Clout, Gabriel Harvey as Hobbinol, and Rosalind, the object of his unhappy love. Several more personalities are represented under different names.

The poem's editor, E. K., has divided the Eclogues into Plaintive (1,6,11,12); Recreative, "such as certain matter of love, or commendation of special personages" (3,4,8); Moral, "which for the most part be mixed with some satirical bitterness" (2,5,7,9,10). The various motives of the work are so interwoven that no division can, in fact, be entirely satisfactory. There is an Eclogue written for every month of the calendar. For instance, love is the main theme of January and December alone. The April Eclogue is in praise of "the fayre queene of sheperds all." The February Eclogue brilliantly narrates the fable of the oak and the brier, contrasts old age with arrogant youth. Spenser's purpose in May, July and September, is clear enough:

To teach the ruder shepherd how to feed his sheepe,
And from the falsers' fraud his folded flocke to keepe,

The most deeply interesting of all the Eclogues is, in fact, the October one. It takes the form of a dialogue between two shepherds, Cuddie and Piers. The subject of dialogue is the state of poetry in Spenser's time, the dialogue actually being between the two internal voices within the poet himself. Even more important than the contents of the *Shepherd's Calendar* is, however, the style in which it is composed. The poet's own attitude to his predecessors is equally important. The poet shows full knowledge of the pastorals of Greece, Italy, and France. He also adapts and translates from Mantuan and Marot. But he acknowledges his debt to Chaucer alone. At a time when his contemporaries were running after foreign models, it was Spenser's ambition to be English. His reversion to Chaucer is the boldest sign of his independence.

In the June Eclogue Spenser represents Harvey as calling Colin to the study of the classics, to which Colin modestly replies:

Of Muses Hobbinol, I conne no skill,
For they bene daughters of the hyghest Jove,
I never lyst presume to Parnasse hyll,
But pyping low in shade of lowly grove
I play to plese myself, al be it ill.

Colin's reply in the above lines barely conceals his deliberate conviction that his native poetry can benefit little from the rhetoric of classical and Italian imitation. Here, the poet asserts that his master is Tityrus alone, by which he means Chaucer. The reason why he is drawn to Chaucer most is that he considers Chaucer one of those who "have right well employed themselves to the beautifying and bettering of the English tongue."

The *Shepherd's Calendar* is no less experimental in its use of metre. Having no precedent in pastoral tradition for such metrical variety, Spenser was inspired solely by his own enthusiasm to explore the capabilities of his native

language. Although he does owe something to his immediate predecessors both in England and France, he reaches back for his models to an earlier age. He makes attempt at forms suggested by the ballad, at the irregular four-stressed lines, at the regular line of five feet, all being traditional in English poetry. But in this, too, he finds the fullest and most natural expression in the metre of Chaucer. In the exquisite and varied melody of Spenser's poem lies, for sure, its greatest charm. But it also makes a further appeal to the admirer of Spenser's poetry. That appeal comes from the strange pastoral country that the poet creates in the poem. With its ideal atmosphere that imparts to intimate personal allusion the remoteness of romance; with its unique mixing of artifice and naturalness; of nature and convention, of deep moral earnestness and tender delicacy of feeling, Spenser's poem, despite all its borrowings, creates a world of its own. It lies along the high-road that leads him to Faery land.

The status of the *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) is the same as that of the *The Lyrical Ballads* (1798); both are literary events of the same kind. Like Wordsworth, Spenser appeared like heaven's benediction with the demand for homelier things and truer poetic language. He also aimed at fresher cadences, ballad simplicity, and a new social philosophy. Like Wordsworth, he did not stand alone, though for several years readers called him "the new poet," or Colin Clout, or "Immerito." The poem, consisting of twelve eclogues, is addressed to Philip Sidney in the most charming of all Spenser's dedications:

Go, little book: thyself present,
As child whose parent is unkent,
To him that is the president
Of noblesse and of chivalry.

The *Shepherd's Calendar* marks the turning point in the Elizabethan poetry. It also forms the first landmark in Spenser's career as a poet. He was only twenty-seven years old. The breadth and immediacy of the poem's intellectual basis and the variety of effects and rhythms obtained are what most call attention to the work.

THE IRELAND EXPERIENCE:

Only six months had passed after the publication of the *Shepherd's Calendar* when Spenser was appointed as secretary to the new governor of Ireland, Lord Grey of Wilton. Although the post in itself was highly honourable, the life of an administrator in Ireland was rather arduous. It checked for ten years the output of Spenser's poetry. He had started the composition of the *Faerie Queene* before he left England in August 1580, and it was not till late in 1589 that he was able to return and find a printer for the first three books, which appeared in 1590. This was the earliest publication to bear Spenser's name. He boldly dedicated the books, as later the entire poem, to Queen Elizabeth, who rewarded him by the grant of a pension of fifty pounds a year. In 1591, Spenser was able to issue two volumes of his minor poems. One of these volumes,

Daphnaida, is a long ceremonious elegy on the recent death of a lady of rank. The poem is notable for its beautiful metrical structure and delicate balancing of parts. It remains reminiscent of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, and has been considered Spenser's most consummate tribute to medieval art and to his great predecessor. The second volume entitled *Complaints, containing Sundry Small Poems of the World's Vanity*, consists of poems of mixed character, consisting of four parts, each carrying a signed dedication by Spenser to a lady of the court, namely, the Countess of Pembroke, and the three titled sisters of the Althorpe Spenser family with whom the poet claimed relationship. The four parts of the volume carry separate titles as *The Vision of Belley*, *Visions of Petrarch*, *Visions of The World's Vanity*, and *Ruins of Rome*. All the poems in the volume are in sonnet form, showing the growth of Spenser's style from its early beginnings to full maturity.

The greatest poem, and the longest, in *Complaints* is *Mother Hubbard's Tale*. The significance of this poem is that it is Spenser's only ambitious effort in heroic couplets. There is no doubt about the poet's satiric intention. The tale actually consists of four tales of the malefactions of a fox and an ape, who in the first three live disguised in the world of men, but in the last inhabit a beast world. The satire moves on four levels, in which the poet successively attacks agricultural, clerical, social, and finally imperial mores. The poem, especially the picture of "the brave courtier" (Philip Sidney) in the third part, portrays conditions of the Elizabethan court, in the strongest couplet verse written by any poet before Dryden:

So pitiful a thing is suitor's state...
 Full little knowest thou that hast not tried,
 What hell it is in suing long to bide:
 To lose good days that might be better spent,
 To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
 To speed today, to be put back to-morrow;
 To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;
 To have thy prince's grace, yet want her peers';
 To have thy asking, yet wait many years;
 To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares,
 To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs:
 To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
 To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.

In the last tale, the fox becomes an apparent symbol of Burghley's imperiousness, avarice, and nepotism. It is not surprising that for this and other impudences, the *Complaints* volume was "called in" or suppressed, and that Spenser did not adventure further along this congenial but most dangerous path.

Spenser's next poem, *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, is, therefore, in a different tone altogether. It is also considered, in its attractiveness, only next to the *Epithalamion*. Although not printed until 1595, the poem is prefaced by a

letter to Raleigh, dated from Spenser's Irish home, Kilcolman Castle, December 27, 1589 – 90, which made possible the publication of the first three books of the *Faerie Queene*. In *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, Spenser lays off his singing robes and reverts to the humble character of Colin Clout. He is shown safe in Ireland again among his shepherd mates, to whom he describes the great things and persons he has seen. The poem is written in pentameter quatrain of rustic type and language in keeping with the poem's character. Primarily, his purpose is to pay complements to Raleigh, the "Shepherd of the Ocean," whose meeting with Spenser in Munster, companionship on the voyage, and patronage at court are delightfully narrated. The pastoral note is admirably sustained. The poem is equally important as poetic autobiography, though far less sublime than Milton's *Lycidas*. The poem gives the impression that Spenser was now happily reconciled to his life in Ireland, and had sincerely abjured the enticements of courtly ambition. The poem ends in philosophic mood, with a Platonic praise of true love and a reassertion of Colin's loyalty to the loved and lost Rosalind.

ASTROPHEL AND AMORETTI:

Spenser's *Astrophel*, his elegy on the death of Philip Sydney, was printed in the same volume as *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*. The poem is the first of a group of poems by various poets on Sidney's death. Although published a little later, it was in all probability composed earlier than Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. Spenser's elegy is written in the same stanza as Shakespeare's. It figuratively represents Sidney's wound as caused, like Adonis's, by a tusked beast. An year later Spenser found himself enamoured of an English girl, named Elizabeth Boyle, who had come to Ireland with her brother and settled near Kilcolman. The account of the wooing and marriage in Spenser's *Amoretti* sequence of sonnets and *Epithalamion*, published together in 1595, is expressed in the same autobiographical frankness as in *Colin Clout's Come Home Againe*. But in these later volumes we come across much greater depth of feeling. The courtship was, of course, not easy. The girl was proud and much his junior, with her family having greater ambitions for her. The fourth sonnet of the *Amoretti* sequence is dated, by internal evidence, January 1, 1593. In the nineteenth, "the merry cuckoo, messenger of spring" has commenced to sing. In the twenty-second Lent has begun. The sixtieth sonnet notes that the poet has been in love for one year. The sixty-second sonnet speaks of New Year, 1594. The sixty-eighth speaks of Easter. The seventieth sonnet speaks of May Day. Their marriage took place on St. Barnaby's Day, June 11, which by the Old Style calendar was the longest day of the year.

In the *Amoretti* sonnets, except the eighth, which is of usual "Shakespearean" kind, Spenser employs his special form of linked quatrains, *a b a b bc bc cd cd ee*, which he had already used in the *Vision of the World's Vanity* and the *Dedication to Virgil's Gnat*. In terms of the content of these sonnets, they divide into three unequal parts. While sonnets 1-62 deal with

unrequited love, sonnets 63-84 deal with the lovers' happiness, sonnets 85-88 deal with the four little lyrics on Cupid. It is naturally the second group which matters most. One of the notable features of these sonnets is Spenser's dabbling with the metaphysical conceit, commonly defined as a phase of the reaction against him. Although a less outstanding instance is sonnet no. 67, it merits mention because not many poets have written so like a gentleman:

Like as a huntsman after weary chase,
 Seeing the game from him escape away,
 Sits down to rest him in some shady place,
 With panting hounds beguiled of their prey.
 So, after long pursuit and vain assay,
 When I all weary had the chase forsook,
 The gentle deer return'd the selfsame way,
 Thinking to quench her thirst at the next brook.
 There she, beholding me with milder look,
 Sought not to fly, but fearless still did bide,
 Till I in hand her yet half-trembling took,
 And with her own good will her firmly tied,
 Strange thing, me seem'd, to see a beast so wild
 So goodly won, with her own will beguil'd.

EPITHALAMION ANA PROTHALAMION:

Spenser's marriage, when finally arranged, was performed rather in a hurry. The *Epithalamion* is his gift to his bride and to himself. As he puts it, "I unto myself alone will sing." But the song has actually been his most universal passport to posterity. The *Faerie Queene* may not always, or in all respects, be admired, but the superiority of *Epithalamion* to everything else in its class has seldom been disputed. For one thing, it differs from the other marriage hymns in its larger range of melody. It is said that Spenser has used in this poem the total resources of his musical power. For another, it differs in its broader humanity; for in its twenty-three strophes some twenty hours of an Irish day are registered with a vividness that never seems to fade. And the poem differs most of all in striking the nearly unattainable line between too hot and too cold.

Spenser's *Prothalamion* is one of the casual results of his visit to London in 1596 to see Books IV-VI of the *Faerie Queene* through the press. *Epithalamion* had been printed the year before. On this visit to London, Spenser was made to concede to a request by the Earl of Worcester, who had to provide a state wedding for his two daughters, the Ladies Elizabeth and Katherine Somerset. Taking advantage of Spenser's presence in London at the time, the Earl commissioned him to write a marriage poem similar to the one he had done for the occasion of his own marriage. Although less than half the length of the other poem, *Prothalamion* is not much inferior in quality. In fact, the Earl got an extraordinary value for his money. The poem, some critics believe, is even more

proportioned than the other one. However, the emotion of the earlier work could not be reproduced, nor did perhaps the poet make any attempt to do so. The brides and the bridegrooms remain lay-figures, but the poet's emotion on being in London once again, walking beside the Thames, comes out in fascinating verses. The spousal interest is delicately dismissed in the opening lines, in which Spenser expresses his old grievance against courts:

Calm was the day...
 When I, whom sullen care,
 Through discontent of my long fruitless stay
 In prince's court, and expectation vain
 Of idle hopes, which still do fly away
 Like empty shadows, did afflict my brain,
 Walk'd forth to ease my pain
 Along the shores of silver-streaming Thames.

At the end of the poem, Spenser brings over his associations with "merry London, my most kindly nurse," expressing in lines that everyone remembers best. The marriage occasion actually gets pushed into the background as a decorative backcloth.

THE FOUR HYMNS

Preferred by an interesting letters to the Countesses of Cumberland and Warwick, date September 1, 1596, Spenser's *The Four Hymns* were published the same year. They are perhaps the latest publications of his life-time. It is perhaps the only time that Spenser so directly attempts a formal statement on the idealistic philosophy of Pagan-Christian blend and neo-Platonic brand. The philosophy, no doubt, is suffused over the whole of *The Faerie Queene*. Of course, *The Four Hymns* are more poetic than systematic. As the poet's letter explains, the first two poems, on the pagan theory of love and beauty, had been composed "in the greener times of my youth" when one of the sister countesses had urged Spenser to suppress them, he had been unable to do so by reason of the number of manuscript copies in circulation. Therefore, he resolved "at least to amend and by way of retraction to reform them, making instead of those two hymns of earthly or natural love and beauty two others of heavenly and celestial." These Hymns are written in delicate and accomplished rime royal, making it lend itself to abstruse exposition. The first two start from the notion that love is born of beauty as Cupid was of Venus. They develop the conception of love as the prime creative force (as is done in Plato's *Symposium*). They further demonstrate how man's moral progress takes place through the love of beauty at its successive levels. In the *Hymn of Heavenly Love*, Christ replaces Cupid as creative love. The poem becomes a rationalization of the Fall and Redemption, a sort of *Paradise Lost* in miniature.

Spenser retracted nothing in the later Hymns, which essentially remain as Greek as the earlier ones. They are also not much hampered by the new medium

into which the doctrine has been translated. “For all that is good is beautiful and fair” is the core of Spenser’s thought. The grand summary at the end of *Heavenly Beauty* is as frank neo-Platonism, or pure Platonism, as anything in the earlier two. The conception of love and beauty as a gradual infusion is one of the points that make Spenser stand apart from that other Hellenist, Marlowe, who stressed intuitive genius. In the second Hymn he categorically denies the Dead Shepherd’s yet unpublished cliché’:

For all that like the beauty which they see
Straight do not love; for love is not so light
As straight to burn at first beholder’s sight.

One of the controversial pieces of Spenser’s appeared in prose, namely, *A view of the present State of Ireland*. Although written in 1596, when Spenser was in England, it got into print much later in 1633. This treatise runs into 60,000 words, and is a well-planned dialogue on Irish laws, customs, and military government. Spenser’s own opinions are expressed through a character named Irenius, who has recently arrived from Ireland. Another character, Eudoxus, interprets the opinion of Irenius. The prose style is beautiful, simple in diction and syntax, but with a periodic roll that marks it for the poet’s prose, as in Irenius’s condemnation of the social influence of the Irish bards. Large part of the essay shows sympathetic understanding of the antiquities, art, and customs of the island. But the poet’s view in the treatise has been described as “brutal” by most critics. An example of the *View’s* brutality is cited in the poet’s blatant defence of the British policy of imposing reforms “by the sword.” Unlike a “poet”, Spenser suggests group removal of disloyal population to another part of the country and systematic starvation to check outlaws. He advocates mercy for the mean and submissive, but none for the great rebels like Tyrone. No wonder that barely four months after Spenser’s book was ineffectively registered in London, Tyrone struck again. All Munster rose in unexpected tumult. Spenser’s Kilcolman residence was destroyed, with also probably an important portion of *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser, now Sheriff of Cork, was sent to London in December 1598 with official dispatches about the revolt. Spenser died at Westminster, January 13, 1599, owing to the tensions he had been under. He was about 47 years of age, and at the peak of his career both as poet and civil servant.

THE FAERIE QUEENE

Mature critical opinion insists that Spenser’s own life provides the key to much that is there in *The Faerie Queene*, which was his crowning achievement. Written for the most part during his long stay in Ireland, in the wild and solitary part of the island, the poem is reminiscent of the world from which the poet, so to say, remained exiled for the better part of his life. It expresses his yearning for a fuller life, for an abundance of all the good things that his spirit and senses felt deprived of in the “hostile” country. The poem is also fully charged with his

experience of those years in Ireland. The beauties of the countryside, the desolation of forest and hillside, the difficulties and dangers he was made to face living amidst rebellious people, the heroes and villains he actually encountered, the friends he made, and the women he loved, all find their places in the intricate structure of *The Faerie Queene*. The poem's idealism, heightened by the poet's desire to escape from sordid reality, is thus combined with a realism that bespeaks his sure sense of the imaginative value of all experience that is intensely lived.

Thus, in a sense, all the earlier poetry of Spenser has been a preparation and exercise for his unfinished epic, *The Faerie Queene*. It has been viewed as a great inclusive attempt by the poet to bring together in one rich pattern all the various strands of civilization with which he was acquainted. Spenser drew upon the medieval allegorical tradition in both its secular and religious form, on medieval romance, classical epic, Aristotelian ethics, Plato and Italian neo-Platonism, Renaissance Humanism, geography and folklore, Elizabethan patriotism and political thought, and almost every current of European thought and expression and convention which were the rich heritage of the Elizabethan age. He constructed his comprehensive poetic vision of *la condition humaine* as it was, in a context of ideal suggestion, what it should be. Spenser's immediate model for *The Faerie Queene* was Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. As Spenser told his friend Gabriel Harvey, he hoped to "overgo" the Italian epic. It provided Spenser the mould into which he could put his serious and complex vision. He might have used the older traditions and moulds, the vision that informs his poem was decidedly his.

Spenser prefixed to the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene* a letter addressed to Sir Walter Raleigh "expounding his whole intention in the course of his work". He declared in this letter that "the general end ... of all the book is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline". He further pointed out that he had learned from Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, and Tasso, "by example of which excellent Poets I labour to portray in Arthur, before he was king, the image of a brave Knight, perhaps in the twelve private moral virtues, as Aristotle hath devised, which is the purpose of these first twelve books, which if I find to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encouraged to frame the other part of politic virtues in his person, after that he came to be king". The letter goes on as under:

In that Faerie Queen I mean glory in my general intention, but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our souveraine the Queen, and her kingdom in Faery land. And yet in some places else I do otherwise shadow her, for considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royal Queen or Empress, the other of a most virtuous and beautiful Lady, this latter part in some places I do express in Belphoebe, ... So in the person of Prince Arthur I set forth magnificence [the Aristotelian *megalopsychia*, *magnanimitas*, greatness of soul] in

particular, which virtue for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and containeth in it them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deeds of Arthur applicable to that virtue which I write of in that book. But of the XII other virtues I make XII other Knights the patrons, for the more variety of the history. Of which these books [i.e. the first three books, published in 1590] contain three, the first of the Knight of the Redcross, in whom I express Holiness; the second of Sir Guyon, in whom I set forth Temperance; the third of Britomartis, a lady Knight, in whom I picture Chastity.

Spenser further goes on to explain that he starts *in medias res* in proper epic fashion. But since only the three books are here presented, he had better explain what has happened before the events narrated there. “The beginning of my history,” he says, “if it were to be told by an Historiographer, should be the twelfth book, which is the last, where I devise that the Faery Queen kept her annual feast xii days, upon which xii several days the occasions of the xii several adventures happened, which being undertaken by xii several knights are in these xii books severally handled and discussed.” Spenser does not stop here. He goes on to give a brief account of how the adventure of the Redcross Knight, of Sir Guyon, and of Britomart first started. And “many other adventures are intermeddled, but rather as accidents than intendments.”

Like Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*, Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* also remained incomplete. Chaucer had planned 120 tales, but could complete only twenty. Similarly, Spenser planned a total of 24 books, but completed only 6. While the first three books were published in 1590, the next three books were published in 1596. In 1609, almost ten years after Spenser’s death, a folio edition of the poem was published containing the first six books and a fragment of book VII entitled “Two Cantos of Mutability.” Thus, Spenser’s epic poem is far from complete, being only a fragment of the whole. Decidedly, in a work of such a complex design incompleteness is bound to present difficulties of comprehension and interpretation. Nevertheless, the work as it exists today is noble and impressive. It is long enough to enable us to assess its merit and excellence. It still remains one of the greatest poems in the English language; but its greatness is of a rather special kind.

BOOK I

The Book I of *The Faerie Queene* relates to the story of the Redcross Knight, who represents Holiness. He sets forth as the champion of Una, who represents truth, to slay the old Dragon that is devastating her father’s country. The very opening stanza of the poem (as well as of Book I) strikes the note of observed adventure:

A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plain,
Y-clad in mighty arms and silver shield,
Wherein old dints of deep wounds did remain,

The cruel marks of many a bloody field;
 Yet arms till that time never did he wield.
 As much disdain to the curb to yield.
 Full jolly knight he seemed, and fair did sit,
 As one for knightly jousts and fierce encounters fit.

The Redcross knight becomes involved in a series of adventures which suggest (at a variety of levels) how man's pursuit of holiness can be hindered by error, hypocrisy, false devotion, etc. At the same time, the Redcross knight is also Everyman, facing the ordinary temptations of this world. As such, he needs the help of Grace, represented by Prince Arthur. He also needs the help of Truth in order to attain the good life and achieve holiness. Thus, the Redcross knight both represents a quality (holiness) and represents man in search of that quality. Spenser also introduces in his narrative another level of meaning. He is also talking about the religious conditions in England, putting the Protestant against the Catholic view of the good life, thereby inducing many contemporary references.

In the multilayered complex of meanings that Spenser has woven into the narrative of *The Faerie Queene*, the adventures as well as the various levels they represent carry in them both the story and significance, adventure and allegory. The reader is carried through a structure subjected to reflections and refractions of various colours. While the major characters and adventures arouse both the story interest as well as the significance interest, the incidental minor characters may or may not have human qualities, which enrich the narrative psychologically and ethically. The allegorical significance of characters and incidents varies at different times and at different places. In the company of Una, the knight fights a successful battle against the monster Error. The Redcross Knight slays the monster Error, who is described as "most loathsome, filthy, foul and full of vile disdain." The monster is prolific of her poisonous young, and, in the midst of the fight, vomits forth books and papers together with lumps of local flesh and "loathly frogs and toads." Spenser's description here is vigorous, skillful, and thoroughly "Spenserian" in the popular sense. The allegory, too, is highly simple, to the point of childishness. The description goes on showing how the knight is harassed by the monster's "cursed spawn":

The same so sore annoyed has the Knight,
 That wellnigh choked with the deadly stink
 His forces fail, he can no longer fight.
 Whose courage when the fiend perceived to shrink
 She poured forth out of her hellish sink
 Her fruitful cursed spawn of serpents small,
 Deformed monsters, foul and black as ink,
 Which swarming all about his legs and crawl,
 And him encumbered sore, but could not hurt at all.

This, for sure, is quite vigorous and effective. Both layers of meaning, literal as well as allegorical, are quite clear. But when we move to the next stanza, the tone changes altogether:

As gentle Shepherd in sweet eventide
 When ruddy Phoebus gins to welk in west,
 High on an hill, his flock to viewen wide,
 Marks which do bite their hasty supper best,
 A cloud of cumbrous gnats do him molest,
 All striving to infix their feeble stings,
 That from their noyance he nowhere can rest,
 But with his clownish hands their tender wings
 He brusbeth oft, and oft doth mar their murmurings.

The background of postoral life introduced here reminds one of Milton's similar comparisons in *Paradise Lost*. The sudden though brief metamorphosis of the Redcross knight here from a hero battling with a cursed spawn of serpents into a shepherd brushing off the innocent but annoying bring in a more human world. It establishes, as it were, a middle term between the world of heroic action on the one hand and the world of ethical ideals on the other. The transformation does not in any way spoil the force of the original incidents, because the change is introduced only as a simile. At the same time, it humanizes the heroic world, reminding us of the everyday world in which our ethical problems are to be faced and resolved.

Spenser moves in Book I, as he does in the others, through a much wider range of tones. There is, for instance, the note of pure and simple romantic adventure:

At length they chanced to meet upon their way
 An aged Sire, in long black weeds clad.

Next, there is the pastoral:

A little lowly Hermitage it was,
 Down in a dale, hard by a forest's side.

And then, there is the popular satirical:

He told of Saints and Popes, and evermore
 He strewed an *Ave Mary* after and before.

Thus, he keeps shifting the tone further from the mythological, to the homely proverbial, to the moralizing and religions, and then to the lofty heroic. The astounding variety of verse, the richness of imagery and music, the wealth of adventure and significance, all combine to make the slow but steady colourful but complex movement of the narrative.

After slaying the monster Error, the Redcross knight has to soon encounter next the arch deceiver Archimago. This misleader of the knight is actually impersonating Guile and Fraud. He succeeds in deceiving the hero, making him distrust the integrity of his lady (Una) and take in her place Duessa. Since the hero is now enamoured of false Religion, he succeeds in defeating the

pagan knights named Sans Foy and Sans Joy. But since he is committed now to false Religion, he falls an easy prey to Orgoglio, the Giant of Pride. Now, Una brings to his aid the divine strength of Arthur. However, even though rescued from the sin of Pride, he is weakened by suffering and remorse, narrowly escaping the toils of Despayre. It is only after dwelling in the House of Holiness thereby learning the full meaning of the Christian faith that the Redcross knight gains strength to overcome the Dragon. Thus, he finally becomes worthy of winning the hand of Una, who represents Truth. Thus goes the surface or literal story of Book I. But each character and incident here, as well as elsewhere, is loaded with multiple meanings through allegorical suggestions. We need to know these allegorical meanings and significances of incidents and characters in Book I to fully appreciate the poem's richness and complexity.

THEME OF BOOK I

C.S. Lewis, in his *Allegory of Love*, insists that "the subject of the first book is sanctification – the restoring of the soul to her lost paradisaic nature by holiness. This is presented in two interlocked allegories. Una's parents, who represent *homo*, or even, if you like, Adam and Eve, after long exclusion from their native land (which of course is Eden) by the Devil, are restored to it by Holiness whom Truth brings to their aid." That, says Lewis, is the first allegory. In the second, we are told, "we trace the genesis of Holiness; that is, the human soul, guided by truth, contends with various powers of darkness and finally attains sanctification and beats down Satan under her feet." Spenser chooses Truth as the heroine of both actions. The reason for this, in all probability, is owing to the age of Spenser being a time of religious doubt and controversy. At such a time, avoidance of error is as pressing a problem as, and in a sense prior to, the conquest of sin. It is for this very reason that the forces of illusion and deception, such as Archimago and Duessa, play such a part in the story of the Redcross knight. And it is for this very reason that St. George and Una get separated so easily. Moral instability and intellectual error, however, are inextricably mixed with each other. The knight's desertion of his lady symbolizes the soul's desertion of truth, and has an element of willful rebellion as well as of illusion.

Will was his guide and griefe led him astray.

The various temptations which the knight has to encounter can, for the most part, be easily recognized. The only difficulty he faces is to make distinction between Pride and Orgoglio. In the historical or political allegory, undoubtedly, Orgoglio is the dungeons of the Inquisition. But what is not obvious is his moral signification. However, if we do not forget that he is a blood relation to Disdain, and view, with imagination than intellect, the character of both giants, it is not difficult to get the inkling. Although Pride and Orgoglio are both pride, the one is pride within us, the other pride attacks us from outside. The outside attack of pride can be in the form of persecution,

oppression, or ridicule. In other words, while the one (the internal) seduces us, the other (the external) browbeats us. There has been noticed some inconsistency in the utter hopelessness with which St. George, who is unarmed and newly roused from the fountain of sloth, staggers forward to meet Orgoglio; for it cannot be easily reconciled with this view. It is quite possible that the giant is a survival from some earlier version of the poem.

This can be called the allegorical core of the first book. Una's adventure carry much less load of allegory. Only in a very general sense, the lion, the satyrs, and Satyrane represent the world of unspoiled nature, which cannot hold Una: she blesses it and passes on her way. But to go beyond this and read more in it would be a mistake. We need not expect that Truth separated from soul could, or should, be allegorized as fully as the soul separated from Truth. Certain characters in the poem are only types; they are not personifications. Satyrane is very first of these characters. He is truly a child of nature. Although he is a knight, we are told that "in vaine glorious frays he little did delight." Decidedly, it is a deliberate rejection of that essential element of chivalry, which had survived, as the *duello*, into the courtly code of Spenser's time. Spenser, very clearly, emphasizes this anti-courtly character in Satyrane. When this character is introduced again some twenty-four contos later, we are reminded that he

In vain sheows, that wont young knights bewitch
And courtly services, tooke no delight.

One of the problems posed by the incompleteness of the poem is that we cannot say with certainty that Prince Arthur is the hero of the whole poem. We can only talk of the respective heroes of the six books that are complete. There we are very certain about the status of different characters. But the same certainty cannot be available about the hero of the entire poem. We do know from the preface that he personifies Magnificence and is seeking Gloriana, or Glory. But if it is considered how little one should know of Britomart from the mere statement that she is Chastity, it will be seen that this tells us little about Arthur. As C. S. Lewis observes, "And if we consider how little we should know of Spenser's "chastity" if we had never been to the Garden of Adonis, and how little of his "justice" if we had never been to the temple of Isis, or of his "courtesy" if we had never seen its connexion with the Graces on Mount Acidale, then we must conclude that we do not know what "Glory" would have come to mean in the completed poem. I have very little doubt... that Glory would have been spiritualized and Platonized into something very like the Form of the Good, or even the glory of God." It seems reasonable to argue that Spenser's whole method is such that we come to have a rather dim perception of his characters until we are met by them or their archetypes at the great allegorical centre of each book. For example, Amoret would reveal nothing of her real nature unless the Garden of Adonis and the Temple of Venus are

known. Suppose they are lost, then the character would not carry the presently accepted connotations.

THE HERO OF BOOK I:

Very much like Virgil's *Aeneid*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, echoing the former, begins on a note where we see the pastoral poet turning to become the epic poet:

Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,
 As time her taught in lowly Shepherds weeds,
 Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,
 For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,
 And sing of knights and Ladies gentle deeds;
 Whose prayers having slept in silence long,
 Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds
 To blazon broad emongst her learned throng:

Fierce warres and faithful loves shall moralize my song.

Thus, the poet of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, like Virgil before him, sees himself as reaching poetic maturity only when he faces the realities of his own world and ceases to linger in an imagined paradise of rural simplicity. In fact, it is not merely the poet who is shown leaving the pastoral mode, it is the hero as well. There is a clear juxtaposition of the pastoral marks of the early Spenser and the native rusticity of the youthful St. George. The anonymous "new poete" of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, "Immerito" becomes the narrator of a poem whose hero had himself first appeared at Gloriana's court in the guise of "a tall clownishe younge man" and had "rested him on the floore, unfitted through his rusticity for a better place." We are told all this in Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh prefixed to *The Faerie Queene*. As we see in Book I of the poem, it is only after Una has seen him dressed in the armour of a Christian Knight, which she has brought with her to Fairyland, that he seems "the goodliest man in all that company" and wins her approval as the champion of her cause.

The hero of Book I is known only in terms of his armour until the tenth canto, when at the House of Holiness he learns that he is English and bears his name of George attributed to his childhood upbringing "in ploughmans state". Spenser's treatment of Redcross is rather periphrastic. It is an extreme instance of the poet's habit of repeatedly giving his characters names symbolic of their roles but announcing those names only after showing them in action, so that the names themselves become capsule summaries or mottoes. Spenser's rather extended emphasis on the anonymity of Redcross is directly related to the plot of Book I. As an unproved knight, Redcross is therefore only potentially St. George. Book I traces the steps by which the hero gains his identity. The poem's opening incidents present the ambiguous position of the Redcross. His armour, at first, is a mere protection, or even a disguise. But there is a promise

that it may become an image of his inner nature. The natural settings of the poem, too, stress the same ambiguity.

The first challenge to the hero, Redcross, comes as a consequence of a sudden shower which drives the knight and lady into the Wood of Error. In fleeing the shower, they have abandoned one kind of nature for another. Redcross and Una do not hesitate to take shelter. They find themselves in a wood with which they seem very familiar. They deliberately shroud themselves from the light, and praise the trees in a catalogue which reflects man's confident moral dissection of his universe. We are shown here that humans seem to share with the animals and birds a false sense of security which ignores the changing moods of nature, of which seasons are a reflection. It is only when they come upon the hollow cave of Error that they realize their position of being lost. Una belatedly recognizes this position. Until then, they seem content to identify the trees and append the appropriate moral or emblematic tags to each:

The sayling Pine, the cedar proud and tall,
The vine-prop Elme.

When Una urges caution at the mouth of Error's den, an accumulation of proverbs is nicely suggestive of perplexity:

Be well aware, quoth then that Ladie milde,
Least suddaine mischiefe ye too rash prouoke:
The danger hid, the place unknowne and wilde,
Breeds dreadfull doubts: Oft fire is without smoke
And perill without show: therefore your stroke
Sir knight with-hold, till further trial made.
Ah Ladie (said he) shame were to revoke
The forward footing for an hidden shade:
Vertue gives her selfe light, through darkenesse for to wade.

The rapid exchange of comments reaches its climax when the Dwarf is moved to interject his own comment:

... Fly fly (quoth then

The fearful Dwarf:) this is no place for living men

The Error is to be overcome. But that can be done only when faith reinforces the knight's human powers. As Una urges,

Add faith unto your force and be not faint
Strangle her, else she sure will strangle thee.

The hero's next encounter on the journey to Holiness is with Archimago. Redcross and Una are "drowned in deadly sleepe" when Archimago begins his enchantment. They go to their sleep suspecting nothing, lulled as they are by easy platitudes and the appearance of a cloistered virtue. The temptations offered by Archimago bring into clear focus the present spiritual health of the hero, Redcross. In the hero's active conscience and his dependence on reason and the evidence of his senses there is implicit the combination of his strength and weakness. It is very much appropriate that Archimago's assault should be

directed toward sexuality. The very sobriety and solemnity of the hero's pursuit of his quest becomes at once his strength as well as weakness. Here is a challenge to his naïve idealism in an area where his faith in a reality contrary to appearance is most difficult. He has overcome Error by following Una's advice, thereby adding faith to force. But when Archimago presents him, in his third and final phase of his temptation, with the apparent evidence of Una embracing a "young squire," such a faith becomes impossible. Thus, the final stage comes in his fall when he yields to Duessa and presents to Orgoglio the compromising spectacle which is prepared for his sight by Archimago. As is common in *The Faerie Queene* here lust is presented as primarily a dereliction of chivalric duties. It amounts to a "loosness," which is opposed to the "sternness" of the pursuit.

Although the hero, at this stage, is running away from the imagined lust of his chaste lady, he himself becomes a victim of lust by falling for Duessa. Thus, the parallel stories of Una and Redcross complement each other. Put together, these stories define the "divided personality" produced by the separation of the two. This shows the movement of Book I towards a meaningful return symbolized by the climactic killing of the Dragon, by the formal blazoning of the Knight's armour, and by the betrothal scene - the solemnization of the union of Knight and Una. The pattern of Book I seems to stress the repetition of scenes in which he overcomes a clear and present threat only to fall prey to a hidden danger. In the first canto he overcomes Error only to be fooled by Archimago's deceptive appeal to the evidence of his senses. In the second, he vanquishes the clearly labeled Sans Foy but at the same time accepting uncritically Duessa when she calls herself Fidessa. The hero's apparent aimlessness in the central cantos is also in keeping with his picture as naïve Knight.

At this point of the narrative, Una is shown as a helpless maiden wandering in wilderness, susceptible to both menace and assistance represented by the savage figures she is made to encounter. Thus, in the third canto, we see one such cycle completed when the friendly lion is killed by Sans Loy. The end of the canto falls as she is carried off by this new, inimical figure of bestial lust. The next two cantos, the fourth and the fifth, in which her adventures are described, where Redcross visits the House of Pride and encounters Sans Joy. The gentle maiden's experiences in an uncivilized setting thus provide a backdrop for her youthful knight's equally passive role in a sophisticated world. Lucifera's relationship to the norm of chivalry is quite clear: her house is built on the sands, and her diabolic ancestry is seen in her name and retinue. In the dubious battle that ensues, it is only befitting that Redcross should win his limited victory after misinterpreting Duessa's shout of encouragement, and that his descent into the underworld to cure Sans Joy should present elements of considerable relevance to the hero's own situation.

The motifs gathered, in the infernal setting in the later part of Book I, of the daytime quests of the poem acquire ironic overtones. However, the descent to the underworld in general seems to be designed to dramatize the challenge of mortality to the hero's quest for identity. The story of Hippolytus's fall seems to have a special relevance for the hero whose naïve literalism has limited him to purely nominal victories over his foes. It has also blinded him to Una's pertinence to his quest. It is also a function of this same literal imagination that Redcross should be deprived of the vision of hell provided to the reader. His own vision is sufficient to rescue him from the House of Pride. But it also leaves him vulnerable to a new figure of pride who is more "natural" and "monstrous". Reason, presented as Dwarf, is able to protect Redcross from the "civilized" world of Lucifera. The panorama of victims in his dungeons is precisely the kind of underworld vision that the Dwarf can unfold to his master. There, the Old Testament names flow into a list of Romans:

The antique ruins of the *Romaines* fall.

It suggests through the epithets used for the Romans (stout, stubborn, sterne, highminded) that the stoic virtues on which the Redcross is currently depending are no better than synonyms of pride.

In Spenser's poem, nemesis seems to take the form of a balancing force that reasserts the validity of the natural cycles of time. Redcross leaves the House of Pride only to fall in weariness before the enervating fountain, which ironically commemorates the weary nymph of Dianna, where all his energetic resistance will be mocked as he falls prey to Orgoglio. As we have seen, the hero of Spenser's Book I of *The Faerie Queene* is very different from the Greeco-Roman and Italian or French models. No doubt, Spenser used those models for pattern or design of his epic. He used them for their mythologies and legends. He also used Platonic, Aristotelian and other ancient philosophic ideas. But he did not accept in full any of those. He evolved an outlook on life of his own. And to illustrate that outlook he shaped his hero of the poem, and the subsidiary heroes of different books representing a virtue each. The ideal that his hero represents seems a combination of values derived from the Renaissance humanism, Platonism, and Christian theology. Hence the values he embodies and represents are both secular as well as theological.

AS AN ALLEGORICAL POEM:

Following the wandering progress of Spenser's poem, *The Faerie Queene*, to the point where the poet left it, one may feel confused at its construction. As originally conceived, the poem's plot was rather loose, and in the course of its development, it became looser still. In the eighteenth century, Upton had the audacity to claim for Spenser's poem the unity of a classical epic. In view of the fact that *The Faerie Queene* is an incomplete poem, having only six out of twenty four books, it is not possible to pass any judgement on the poem's plot or structure with any measure of finality. In fact, even if the poem

had been completed, one thing is certain that its plot could not have come any closer to that of the classical epic. If a comparison must be sought for *The Faerie Queene*, one would find it in the Italian and French romances of the medieval period. Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* sounds much closer to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* than Homer's *Iliad* or Virgil's *Aeneid*.

The "adventures intermeddled, but rather as accidents and intendments," throw far more light upon the moral conception than is commonly acknowledged. But they tend to complicate the narrative. In fact, by their very interest and importance they obscure the development of an already inchoate plot. Spenser was aware of this, and towards the end of the sixth book he offered a defence of his rambling method:

Like as a ship, that through the Ocean wyde
Directs her course unto one certain cost,
Is met of many a counter winde and tyde,
With which her winged speed is let and crost,
And she her selfe in stormie surges tost;
Still winneth way, ne hath her compasse lost:
Right so it fares with me in this long way,

Whose course is often stayed, yet never is astray.

As Smith and Selincourt have observed, "Such a defence will make no converts. Those who are imbued with the classical horror of voyaging upon strange seas will travel uneasily in this Elizabethan privateer, which sails at the mercy of every wind and tide, and is always ready to tack or to follow any course that seems to promise a costly prize. They will rudely question the poet's seamanship, and accuse him of having lost his way, perhaps of having no way to lose."

Apart from the announced, and pronounced, moral allegory, *The Faerie Queene* has often a special and even topical significance. This significance is not coincident throughout with the main plot. It is generally fitful and allusive, appearing and disappearing as and when the characters and situations suggest a parallel to the real world. As Spenser himself has stated, "In that Faerie Queene I mean glory in my general intention, but in particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our sovereign the Queen, and her kingdom in Faerie Land." Here, Dryden's observation seems pertinent: "The original of every one of his knights was then living at the court of Queen Elizabeth, and he attributed to each of them that virtue which he thought most conspicuous in them." This should not, of course, imply that Spenser intended to draw portraits of Elizabeth, or of Leicester, even of Grey or Sidney. But he did see a possibility. And the beings who filled his visionary world took on, in the fashion of a dream, a likeness to those familiar to his waking life. It was very natural for a person like Spenser, who was a part of the political apparatus of his time, and remained a part until his last, to turn his mind continually to that vast stage of public life on which the players were the men he knew and loved. So,

as he developed his moral allegory, it kept acquiring at the same time political overtones. No doubt, quite often, the political allegory was almost a replica of the moral. This phenomenon is quite clear in the conduct of Book I, just as it is obvious in the conduct of Book V.

If Una is Truth who must be freed from Falsehood, Deceit and Hypocrisy, if she must be united to Holiness, Spenser would not fail to associate her with his own faith, and Duessa with Roman Catholicism. He would also not fail to identify them with those two great queens, Elizabeth and Mary. Also, in tracing the development of the Redcross knight in his efforts to achieve holiness, Spenser would naturally follow, episode by episode, the history of the English church in its fight with Rome. But such analogies are not always complete and consistent. Quite often, they are only suggestive as well as momentary. The two worlds of romance and politics converge for the moment only to part company. Different aspects of one and the same character appear under different guises. One of Spenser's ideal creations can shadow forth different historical figures. For example, Elizabeth is found in Gloria, in Belpheobe, in Una, in Britomart, in Mercilla. Similarly, Arthur is now Sidney, now Leicester. Again, Sir Calidore is at one time Sidney, at another Essex. Spenser generally idealized these characters, but he could also hint a fault as well as extol a virtue. For example, Grey's involvement in an intrigue with Mary Queen of Scots, which Elizabeth never forgave him, is glanced at in the subjugation of Archegal to Redegund. Similarly, in the vivid portrait of Timias the failings of Raleigh are as clearly shown as his splendid virtues. Such reflections of his own time enhanced the delight with which Spenser's readers would follow the adventures of the faery knights. At the same time, it also saved the poet from the possible dangers of an allegory that could become too abstract and remote to interest his readers.

Of course, allegory is not to every reader's taste. Some tend to believe that Spenser was led to adopt the allegorical mode, partly by the force of medieval tradition, and partly under the influence of contemporary ideas which recommended didactic function of poetry. As a matter of fact, Spenser was so influenced because he was of that idealistic temper which made possible the rise of allegorical poetry. Another reason probably was that Spenser could most readily express in that medium the rich and varied interests of a mind which continually traveled between the worlds of fact and fiction. As an idealist, Spenser would start from the actual world of his experience, distil from it what seems to be its essence, and create another world of moral and spiritual conception which would become as real for him as that from which he has created it. For sure, ideas depend for their reality upon the vividness with which they kindle his imagination. Thus, the poet's imaginative vision, which imparts to the world of fact higher reality by expressing the soul that informs it, imparts to the world of ideas a sensuous incarnation which utters its voice in song.

We can convincingly assert that in the allegory of *The Faerie Queene* these two worlds meet and fuse. It cannot, of course, be asserted with certainty

that the fusion is complete or perfect. The creatures of each world carry upon their forms traces of their origin. We may normally distinguish two types of allegory. In one type, the poet starts from the idea, and then initiates the process of incarnation. The poet abstracts human qualities into the rarefied atmosphere of thought, which are then presented to the imagination for conscious artistic treatment. The result is somewhat formal personification, cast in the traditional mould of medieval allegory. The manner of execution in this case is that of a pageant or a Morality. Much of the incidental allegory in *The Faerie Queene* is of this type. The other type of allegory is when the poet's mind is turned upon the warm realities of life. Human qualities, justice, temperance are still realized in their essence, but they are seen to be present in living human beings. Hence the poet does not present an abstract conception by a human symbol. He accepts under his idealizing vision of human being as the symbol of his conception. For instance, Britomart is not the abstract conception of chastity. She is a real woman who expresses through her person the essential quality of chastity, but not without some human weaknesses. Una may be Truth, but is much more. She is a woman with sufficient individuality. And such in the main is the structural allegory of *The Faerie Queene*. For sure, the characters are seldom presented with the subtle and complex detail of a realist.

Spenser's whole artistic method is that of idealization, and of emphasis on the essential. But for all that he bases it on real life. Also, it cannot always be decided whether the ideal conception or the character representing that ideal formed his initial inspiration. Who can say for certain whether in Sir Calidore he thought first of Courtesy or Sir Philip Sidney. Who can say whether he drew from Timias or from Raleigh or found himself in his delineation of reckless honouring, falling back unwittingly upon his knowledge of his daring and impetuous friend. Allegory of this kind is easily distinguishable from the more obvious personification, however vivid. It is marked by all the character of myth. It has complete artistic life apart from all its symbolism.

Thus, in *The Faerie Queene* real persons are idealized. The poet breathes life into his abstractions. For instance, Spenser sees his Hope not merely as a symbolic figure leaning upon anchor, but as a real woman with a face bearing signs of the anguish hidden in her heart. Similarly, Spenser sees Lord Grey not simply as sagacious and fair-minded person, but as the faery knight of Justice. The poet sets by the side of Grey a character named Talus, the iron man, that most powerful embodiment of Justice in the abstract. Then, we see in Sir Artegal and his remorseless squire two very different types of allegory, which are at once in their boldest contrast and yet in perfect harmony. The most interesting case of a mixture of different allegories is that of Graces, who dance before Colin upon the mount of Acidale. They are actually four, not three, in number. We see that in the midst of the three ancient "handmaids of Venus, daughters of delight," who symbolized for the Greeks the grace and charm of womanhood, is "placed paravaunt" the woman that Colin loved, the heroine of

Amoretti and the *Epithalamion*. And yet there is nothing incongruous between the ideal and the real; the two meet and their kinship is acknowledged.

In Spenser's poem, *The Faerie Queene*, even where the allegory is least spontaneous and quite dead, the poet is able to breathe life into what seems doomed to be mechanic and merely formal. One such case is the ingenious symbolism of the Castle of Alma. In all probability, it is borrowed from the driest scholasticism. Here, in the description of its lower regions, Spenser's art seems to sink to its lowest. We see here the mechanical figures of the "maister cooke Decoction" officiating with the Kitchen clerke Digestion." And yet even within these antiquated walls we meet with vividly real people. Like Sir Guyon, we find ourselves drawn to that strangely shy maiden, dressed in her thickly folded robe of blue. As Guyon addresses her, the flashing blood inflames her lovely face. The scene has a human appeal, which is not diminished when Alma reveals its ideal significance:

Why wonder yee
 Faire Sir at that, which ye so much embrace?
 She is the fountaine of your modestee;
 You shamefast are, but *Shamefastness* it selfe is shee.

Thus, the ideal conception of modesty is bodied forth in the lady. The human quality of modesty is the very essence of Guyon's personality. The two are shown meeting for one brief but vivid moment in the spacious halls of Alma, the Soul. Here, the wide world in which they meet is the ideal world of Spenser's imagination. We may sum up our discussion of allegory in *The Faerie Queene* with a cogent citation from Smith and Selincourt:

This world of faery land is wide enough to embrace all that was most precious to Spenser in his own experience. With its chivalrous combats and its graceful leisure, its tangle of incident and character, its dense forest and glades, and pleasant sunny interspaces, where the smoke rises from the homely cottage or the stream tickles down with a low murmur inviting repose and meditation, it could mirror both the world of his philosophic vision and the real world of Irish countryside, of court intrigues, of European politics, of his own loves and friendships. The romantic setting of the faery forest and the idealizing form of allegory are more than a picturesque convention. They are the fitting artistic expression of that mood in which he looked out on the strangeness and the beauty of life, and brooded over its inner meaning.

AS ROMANCE-EPIC:

Before we discuss, and can decide, the status of *The Faerie Queene* as an epic, we need to know the definition and descendance of the epic. Epic being the earliest and loftiest form of poetry also has the longest tradition in world

literature. The epic, or heroic poem, or simply long poem, is generally defined as a long narrative poem on a serious subject, related in an elevated style, and centred about an heroic figure on whose actions depends to some degree the fate of a nation or a race. Epics have been divided into two categories – the folk or primary epic and the literary or secondary epic. The folk or primary epics were shaped from the legends that developed in the heroic age. In that age, the nation was on the move, engaged in military conquest and expansion. In this group belong the Greek *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, both written by the blind poet Homer, as well as *Ramayana* and *Mahabhart*, both Indian, and *Beowulf*, an Anglo-Saxon epic whose author is not known. The literary or secondary epics were written by sophisticated craftsmen in deliberate imitation of the folk or primary epic. Of this kind is Virgil's Roman poem, the *Aeneid*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Although influenced by *Aeneid*, Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* are only loosely called epics, since they radically depart from the formal qualities of the original.

The epic as poetry was ranked by Aristotle (in his *Poetics*) as second only to tragedy in the hierarchy of genres. The Renaissance critics, however, considered epic superior to tragedy, and the highest form of all. The controversy of hierarchy apart, epic is decidedly the most ambitious and most exacting of poetic forms. It makes immense demands on the poet's knowledge, invention, and skill to sustain the scope, grandeur, and variety of a form which aspires to encompass the known world and its learning. Despite countless attempts over three thousand years, we possess only half a dozen or so epics of undisputed status. Literary epics commonly have the following features, derived from the folk epics of Homer in the west, and the Indian epics in the East. In the first place, the hero of an epic is of great national or international importance. Achilles in *Iliad*, Odysseus in *Odyssey*, Aeneas in *Aeneid*, Adam in *Paradise Lost*, Rama in *Ramayana*, and Arjuna in *Mahabhart*, are all great warriors or great men, who represent the ideals and aspirations of their respective societies that produced them. The second quality of an epic is the large canvas of its setting. The setting in an epic is always ample in scale, sometimes world-wide, or even larger. For example, Odysseus wanders over the Mediterranean basin (the whole of the world known to its author). In fact, in Book VI he descends even into the underworld. The scope of Milton's epic is all the more enormous; it is cosmic, including heaven, hell, and earth. The third quality of an epic is the grand action, involving heroic deeds in battle, such as the Trojan war, or a long and arduous journey bravely accomplished, such as the wanderings of Odysseus. *Paradise Lost* includes the war in Heaven, the journey of Satan to discover the newly created world, and his audacious attempt to outwit God by corrupting mankind. The fourth aspect of an epic is the participation of gods and other supernatural beings. For instance, the gods of Olympus in Homer's epics, Jehova, Christ, and the angels in *Paradise Lost*. This aspect of the epic is called *machinery*. The fifth aspect of an epic is its elevated style, befitting to the grand

subject and lofty hero. The poem is almost a ceremonial performance in a deliberately ceremonial style. Hence Milton's Latinate diction and stylized syntax, his resounding list of strange and sonorous names, and, above all, his *epic simile* help elevate the poem's style. The *epic similes* is an elaborate and sustained comparison, developed far beyond the specific points of parallel to the subject. The objective is to enlarge, elevate and exaggerate the subject in order to make it look larger than life size.

The debate about the poem's status notwithstanding, the use of epic similes by Spenser is deliberate and beyond dispute. Note, for instance, the following from Book I of *The Faerie Queene*:

His huge long tayle wound up in hundred foldes,
Does ourspred his long bras-scaly backe,
Whose wreathed boughts when ever he unfolds,
And thicke entangled knots adown does slacke,
Bespotted as with shields of red and blacke,
It sweepeth all the land behing him farre,
And of three furlongs does but little lacke;
And at the point two stings in-fixed are,

Both deadly sharpe, that sharpest steele exceeden farre.

There is, in fact, an abundance of such similes in Spenser. In fact, at times, the abundance starts sounding a little overdone. See, for instance, the following, which follows just a stanza after the above:

His blazing eyes, like two bright shining shields,
Did burne with wrath, and sparkled living lyre;
As two broad Beacons, set in open fields.
Send forth their flames farr off to evry shyre.
And warning give, that enemies conspyre,
With fire and sword the region to invade;
So flam'd his eyne with rage and rancorous yre:
But farre within, as in a hollow glade,

Those glaring lampes were set, that made a dreadfull shade.

There are several other conventions that the epic poets have been following, taking cue from the earliest practitioners of the genre. One such convention has been to open the poem by stating its theme, followed by an invocation to the muse to help accomplish the gigantic task of completing the long poem.

Here again Spenser consciously follows the epic convention. The poem opens with a set of four stanzas in which the poet makes an announcement of the poem's subject and invokes the muses to help him accomplish his heroic task of completing the ambitious narrative. The first stanza reads as under:

Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,
As time her taught, in lowly Shepherds weeds,
Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,
For trumpets stern to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,

And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;
 Whose praises having slept in silence long,
 Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds
 To blazen broad emongst her learned throng:

Fierce warres and faithful loves shall moralize my song.

Thus, Spenser shows his conscious connection with the epic poets. He departs with the classical tradition on the point of structure largely, and on the point of subject partly. Spenser chose the Italian poets, closer to him in time than the ancient classics of Greek and Roman poetry, and followed their model for the structuring of his most ambitious poem.

This more recent tradition of poetry dates back to the thirteenth century, wherefrom literary or secondary epic becomes the main form. Also, the poets in this tradition adopted Virgil as the source of inspiration. Virgil's influence is particularly apparent in the works of two great Italian poets Dante and Petrarch. Early in the fourteenth century Dante wrote his *Divine Commedia* (1310). Later in the century Petrarch wrote his epic *Africa* in Latin. The *Divine Commedia* is a personal epic, a kind of autobiographical and spiritual *Aeneid*. *Africa* records the struggle between Rome and Carthage. Neither Langland's *Piers Plowman* nor Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, though both are long poems, have any claims as conventional epics. But by virtue of their range, diversity, and scale they are of epic proportions. The same can be said of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Their imaginative depth and scope, too, rival the aspirations of their great epic predecessors. More than a hundred years later, two Italian poets created what can be called a new form of epic. This new form comprised of a long narrative written about romantic adventures and in comic spirit. Before these poets, the epic world had been overwhelmingly masculine. Boiardo's unfinished *Orlando Innamorato* (late 15th century) and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1532), which was a sequel to the former, established this new tradition. Orlando is driven mad by love for Angelica. But the heroine of the poem is Bradamante whose love affair with Ruggiero is the main subject of the work. The poem also contains a certain amount of mockery of chivalric ideals and knightly prowess.

Two other outstanding epics in the new tradition or form of Europe belong to the sixteenth century, namely Camoens's *Os Lusíadas* (1572) and Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1575). Of these, while the first is classical and Virgilian in spirit and structure, the second is Christian rather than classical or nationalistic. Camoens does for Portugal what Virgil had done for Rome. It has for its theme Vasco Da Gama's discovery of the sea-route to India. In the course of the narrative, Camoens covers the whole history of Portugal. In doing so, he creates a nationalistic epic in which the Portuguese wage a holy war against paganism. Tasso's subject is the recovery of Jerusalem in the First Crusade. It has many heroes and heroines and owes a good deal to the tradition of the medieval romance. It also contains a strong element of the chivalric and supernatural. It is also a didactic and allegorical poem.

Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1589, 1596) is an acknowledged greatest long poem in English of the Elizabethan age. Like the preceding Italian poems, it is a mixture of epic and romance. It is written in the specially designed stanza form now called the Spenserian stanza. He professedly planned the poem in twenty-four books, but only six could be completed, left unfinished in the middle of the seventh. That Spenser was conscious of writing the poem in the great epic tradition is evident in all aspects of his epic, including the opening announcement. In the prefatory letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, he also mentioned, as his four greatest predecessors, Homer, Virgil, Ariosto and Tasso. Spenser designed the poem as an elaborate allegory or, as he calls it, "darke conceit." He uses in the poem the material of the Arthurian legends and the Charlemagne romances. The hero of each book represents a virtue, making the poem throughout a didactic narrative. The structure of the poem is astonishingly complex, rich, and allusive. Also, it needs to be noted that *The Faerie Queene* is a courtesy book, the most elaborate and courtly of all books of etiquette of the Elizabethan age. As Spenser explains in his letter to Raleigh, "the generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." With *The Faerie Queene* comes to an end the tradition of the epic of chivalry, in fact, the whole cult of chivalry. But that did not affect its great influence on the subsequent narrative poets.

Although, as we have seen, *The Faerie Queene* combines within its fold both the traditions of the classical epic as well as the medieval romance, in its spirit it is neither classical nor medieval. Spenser gives his poem, through its allegorical structure, the spirit of the Renaissance ideal which combines Christian, Platonic and humanist codes. In that sense, it is the most complex epic poem of all the classical as well as medieval lot. The radical change in the spirit of *The Faerie Queene* from that of the classical epics need to be understood; else, we misjudge the merit of Spenser's work. To get at the nature of that spirit we shall have to go back to the end of the eleventh century poetry. It was during this period that the idea of the holy crusade, and hence of the Christian epic, was born. "We are right and these miscreants are wrong" (as Roland utters in the French epic) conveys the spirit that dominated the European epics after *Le Chauson de Roland*. This was something altogether new for epic poetry. The epic had always lived by conflict. Until this time, it was simply a conflict between two sides, with both sides almost equally protected by gods. Also, both sides were noble, one destined to prevail only with the help of superior power, or the accidental support of an immortal conceived in essentially human terms. Homer writes from the Greek point of view, but he does not suggest that the Greeks were right, and the Trojans were wrong. Virgil has moved perceptibly nearer to the idea of a hero with a divine mission. But he also does not suggest that the Trojans have any sacred or pre-ordained superiority over the Latins. In these epics one does not perceive any attempt to portray one side representing faith and the other faithlessness, one side as good and the other as evil.

The notion of the conflict having supernatural sanction is original with the Christian epic. This idea, in various forms and with varying degrees of intensity, runs all through the European epics after the French *Roland*. It is not quite absent in the more frivolous Italian epics. And it runs with all the weight in the operation of Redcross Knight and Sir Artegall in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Book I. To the readers of Ariosto, struck only by the fantasy and irony, the idea of the Christian crusade may look an absurdity. But there is a case to be made of it all the same. As for Tasso, the case needs no arguing. Writing in the full tide of the Counter-Reformation and completely expressing its spirit, he takes the holy war as his theme as well as his inspiration. It must, however, be added that neither in Ariosto nor in Tasso do the exigencies of the faith exclude chivalry and courtesy to those outside its bounds.

The Italian romance-epic benefitted the most from the Arthurian literature, from its vast and many-sided appeal. Like Charlemagne, Arthur was Christian prince, fighting against pagan enemies. With the disappearance of the great theme of national and Christian war against a pagan foe, the exploits of the individual knights of the Round-Table became deeds of individual prowess, undertaken for love or personal renown. True, the knights of the Round-Table sometimes fight against pagan or Saracen knights; but these are in no other way distinguished from the Christians. They are equally likely to be noble and brave. The code of chivalry embraces pagan and Christian alike. Also, the disappearance of the holy war affects the supernatural no less than the natural events. They are no longer parts of a providential scheme. They become individual enchantments, infinitely various, and mysterious in means and motive. Above all, it was the love theme that distinguished the Arthurian romances from the older epic. In Italy, it was above all the love stories, of Lancelot and Guinevere, of Tristan and Iseult, that represent the Arthurian cycle. Hence a new motive enters Italian romance literature – love and the fatal power of the heroine. We are already in sight of Spenser's Angelica and Bradamante. It is this grafting of the new Arthurian romance on to the old Carolingian stock that brings the romantic epic into being. It also accounts for the pervasive atmosphere of Arthurian romance in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*; of course, with the absence of specific Arthurian tales or specific debts to Malory. The Arthurian element is too obvious in Spenser to be denied or overlooked. But it came to him, not from Malory, but from his Italian sources. Whenever a different and distinctly British Arthurian element enters in *The Faerie Queene* the ordinary reader quite often fails to notice it.

Spenser's epic begins in the same manner in which does Boiardo's, though Spenser, affected by later notions of epic correctness, plunged in *medias res*, left what was chronologically the beginning to the end, and so never got to it at all. The two fountains of Cupid and Merlin, the one inspiring love and the other hate, which play a large part in the story, are similarly removed from the Carolingian and akin to the Arthurian spirit. Above all, there is the central

importance of the heroine, the delectable Angelica, whose caprices and enchantments control the entire intricate web. Spenser had read Boiardo as much as he had read Ariosto and Virgil. Boiardo's style is straightforward, easy and a little rustic. He tells his tale with a rather grand carelessness and an undertone of irony that is nearer to simple humour than to the finesse of Ariosto. His admiration for the virtues of chivalry is whole-hearted and perfectly genuine. There are many parallels between Boiardo and Spenser. A certain old-fashioned simplicity of mind brings him in some way closer to Spenser. But ever more important than that is the fact that he created Ariosto's world, and therefore, at one remove, form Spenser's world. He laid down the lines both of its adventures and its characters. All the principal characters in Ariosto are taken over from Boiardo. The principal heroes, Orlando, Rinaldo, Astolfo, Ferran, all subject to the whims of Angelica. The faithful lovers Ruggiero and Bradamante, Brandimarte and Fiordilige, etc., with their beguiling gardens; the magic lance, the shield, the lions, the dragons, the hermits, the salvage men; all these that make Boiardo's world are taken over bodily by Ariosto. Further, without these characters of Ariosto and Boiardo, there could not have been Spenser's Arthur, Guyon, Calidore, Artegall and Britomart, Scudamour and Amoret, Archimago, Duessa and Acrasia. Intricate adventures proliferating into many episodes, feats of arms inspired by love, and a background, however treated, of religious conflict – these are the materials that Spenser inherited from these Italian writers of romance-epic. It is also possible to find, besides one or two explicitly allegorical episodes, a general allegorical undertone to Boiardo's romance. And it is quite likely that Spenser read him in this way. It is, therefore, in these respects that Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is different from the classic epics of Homer and Virgil, and is similar to the romance-epics of Boiardo and Ariosto.

LITERARY ALLUSIONS:

It was quite inevitable that Spenser's faery land should be enriched with the spoils of literary reminiscence. A student from his youth, Spenser had lived a full and eager life in books. His imagination was kindled as much in the study as in the outside world. To know the sources of his art is to get familiar with the library to which the Elizabethan scholar had access. Spenser also drew with equal freedom from the Bible, from the Greek and Latin poets, from the writings of the Italian and French Renaissance, and from that medieval literature which the learned held up to contempt. *La Morte D'Arthur*, and kindred romances, *Sir Bevis*, *Guy of Warwick*, and the rest – “those feigned books of chivalry wherein,” says Ascham, “a man by reading them should be led to none other end but only to manslaughter and bawdry” – suggested to Spenser much incident and inspired many a noble reflection. His art was a compound of many simple elements extracted from many sources. Although he borrowed from his predecessors more than any other poet did, no one left as distinct a mark of his own personality on the borrowed material as he did. There is hardly an incident

or character in *The Faerie Queene* which cannot be traced in the writings of one or another writer that came before him. All that only proves the extent of his readings in earlier literature. However, more surprising than the extent and diversity of his reading is his power to combine in one composite picture materials drawn from very different sources. He is able to harmonize these borrowed materials because he leaves nothing as he found; his imagination colours all that passes through his mind. Thus, every particle included in the formation of the rich compound shows the distinctive imprint of the poet's personality. The routine distinctions between classical and romantic, ancient and modern, sacred and profane do not come in his way of assimilating and amalgamating them into his multi-coloured texture he designs for each of his poems. Spenser pursued such an eclectic method alike in the weaving of his plot, in its incidental embellishment, in the similes and allusions that enrich his style and drive home his imaginative conception.

The story of Una and Redcross knight in Book I of *The Faerie Queene* opens with suggestions of Malory's Gareth and Lynette. Here, the enchanter, who is their chief enemy, is not a distant relative of Ariosto's hermit, who deceives Angelica. Further, on their travels, Una and her knight meet with classical satyrs and Elizabethan courtiers. Their adventures at this time are reminiscent now of Virgil, now of *Sir Bevis* and *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, now of the *Apocalypse*. When their betrothal is described, its celebration marks a confusion of pagan and Christian rituals. However, despite all these echoes of earlier sources, the harmony of the imaginative atmosphere created with all these allusions is not disturbed by any individual element. Similarly, when we come upon the description of the ante-room in the house of Busirane, which is hung with goodly arras whereon, as in the castles of several medieval poets, are woven legends of classical mythology. Presumably, their source is Ovid, but nothing could be different from Ovid than the music and the feeling with which Spenser delineates them. Further, we see that over the portals of the room are inscribed the words *Be bold*, which are said to have come from the old wives' tale of Mr. Fox. Also, among the lovers whose "spotless pleasures" make glad the garden of Venus, David and Jonathan, Pylades and Orestes walk side by side. Then, in the dark river of Cocytus, Pilate stands next to Tamtalus.

Spenser's style does not undergo any change when it comes to giving utterance to his religious thoughts. For instance, the well of life into which the Redcross knight falls and sinks in his conflict with the Dragon, is likened, not merely to Silo or to Jordon, but to Cephise and to Hebrus, to the English Bath, and to the German Spau. The guardian angel, who watches over the prostate Sir Guyon after his fierce struggle with the temptations of Mammon, and evokes that superb expression of Christian humility and gratitude, "O why should heavenly God to men have such regard?", appears to Spenser as a fair young man "of wondrous beautie, and of freshest years," like to Phoebus, or "to

Cupido on Idaean hill.” A pedant may find this comparison rather ludicrous, and the more prosaic pietist may find it profane. But to Spenser it seemed quite natural, even inevitable. As Truth appealed to the poet in terms of beauty, so all beauty, whatever its source, could be brought to serve and to illuminate the highest truth.

Spenser brings this wealth of literary allusions in touch with his own observation of nature and of human character. The Irish scenery with which he was most familiar, and which resembled the traditional landscape of medieval romance, provided background for his poem, which is also often treated in a traditional manner. Also, as the fruit of intimate observation, it gave him pictures of vivid reality.

STRUCTURE OF THE FAERIE QUEENE:

It is a little odd that a poem, which is incomplete, should be subjected to the consideration of its plot and structure. And yet, there has been a running debate on the subject of the poem’s structure. One way of looking at the structure of *The Faerie Queene* is to see how far the proposed design of the 24 books has been followed in the six that are complete. Another is to forget about the proposed pattern and look for the structure of the existing poem in six books and a small fragment of the seventh. The difficulty that one experiences in considering the poem’s structure is, however, posed not by its incompleteness so much as the mixing of modes that the poet has deliberately effected. The poem consciously follows the epic model, the romance model, the allegorical mode, etc.; all within the framework of a single poem. As C. S. Lewis has observed, “Formally considered, *The Faerie Queene* is the fusion of two kinds, the medieval allegory and the more recent romantic epic of the Italians. Because it is allegory, and allegory neither strictly religious nor strictly erotic but universal, every part of the poet’s experience can be brought in: because it is romantic epic, a certain unity is immediately imposed on all that enters it, for all is embodied in romantic adventures. ‘Faerie land’ itself provides the unity – a unity not of plot but of *milieu*. *A priori* the ways of Faerie Land might seem ‘so exceeding spacious and wide’ that such a unity amounted to nothing, but this is not found to be so. Few poems have a greater harmony of atmosphere. The multiplicity of the stories, far from impairing the unity, supports it; for just that multiplicity, that packed fullness of ‘vehement adventure’, is the quality of Faerie Land; as tragedy is the quality of Hardy’s Wessex.”

Here, then, is one way of looking at the unity of the poem’s structure. The way is not to look at its unity in terms of Aristotalian beginning, middle and end, not in terms of a chain of incidents linked with each other on the principle of causality, nor in terms of the story of a single, or a set of characters. The unity of the poem’s structure, we are told, has to be seen in terms of its atmosphere. And the atmosphere of the Faerie Land, it is argued, is that of romance or romantic

adventure, just as in Hardy's Wessex, the atmosphere is that of tragedy. So we study the poem's structure in terms of its mood and atmosphere, not in traditional terms of incident and character. In Lewis's view, there is in *The Faerie Queene* the originality and fruitfulness of its structural invention. In his view, whatever incidental faults the poem may have, it decidedly has a healthy constitution. The matter and the form fit each other like hand and glove.

The primary structural idea (of atmospherical unity) is reinforced by two others, the first internal to each book, and the second striding across from book to book through the whole poem. Thus, Spenser seems to have decided that in each book there should be, what Lewis calls, an allegorical core (or shrine or inner stage) where the theme of the book would appear disentangled from the complex adventures and reveal its unity. The core of each book can be described as follows: in Book I, the House of Holiness; in Book II, the House of Alma; in Book III, the Garden of Adonis; in Book IV, the Temple of Venus; in Book V, the Church of Isis; and in Book VI, Mount Acidale. Since the position of the core in each book is not stable, no conclusion can be drawn based on the numbering of the two cantos of Book VII. Next in dignity to the core in each book comes the main allegorical story of the book. It may be Guyon's or Calidore's quest. Beyond that is a loose fringe of stories which may be fully allegorical (like Sendamore's visit to the cottage of Care) or merely typical (like Paridell's seduction of Hellenore) or not allegorical at all (like the story told by the Squire of Dames to Satyrane). So, the appearance of pathless wandering, which is very necessary to the poem's quality, is largely a work of deliberate and successful illusion. It is quite possible, although a little improbable, that the poet does not always know where he is going with regard to particular stories. But he is always very much in command with regard to the symphony of mood, the careful arrangement of different degrees of allegory and different degrees of seriousness. And it is in this symphony and symmetry that the poem's unity lies.

The unity of *The Faerie Queene's* structure is also to be seen in the symphony or symmetry of its imagery. As Northrop Frye has remarked, "To demonstrate a unity in *The Faerie Queene*, we have to examine the imagery of the poem rather than its allegory. It is Spenser's habitual technique, developing as it did out of emblematic visions he wrote in his nonage, to start with the image, not the allegorical translation of it, and when he says at the beginning of the final canto of Book II:

Now giv's this goodly frame of Temperance
Fairely to rise

one feels that the 'frame' is built out of the characters and places that are clearly announced to be what they are, not out of their moral or historical shadows." It is significant to note that Spenser prefaces his poem with sonnets to several patrons. And it is quite clear from those pieces that the poet meant to indicate to them that they are there somewhere in the poem. Of course, he does not specify where precisely anyone of them appears. However, the implication is that for

such readers the allegory is to be read more or less *ad libitum*. The expressions that Spenser chooses to use for allegory – “darke conceit,” “clowdily enwrapped” – emphasize that allegory’s deliberate vagueness. One example to this effect will suffice. It is quite clear in the poem that Belpheobe refers to Elizabeth, or so we believe. But, when Timias speaks of her, “to whom the heavens doe serve and sew,” can we really say, as someone does, that it is a reference to the storm that wrecked the Armada? Obviously, such a reading is only an example of a subjective allegorical meaning. In the work of Spenser, the greatest allegorical poet in English, the allegory can not merely be uncertain but even be muddled. Of course, Frye’s argument is not that we “let the allegory go,” but that it is evident in Spenser that the “imagery is prior in importance to it.”

We must, therefore, while looking for unity in the poem, also look for the structure of imagery. Centring around the quest and journey motives each book of *The Faerie Queene* moves through a pattern of conflict between the forces of good and those of evil. Since the world of *The Faerie Queene* is that of romance, the presence of good and evil is shown in the simplified terms of separate existence of the two. Hence, Spenser’s method is to make every virtue and vice visual, which makes the moral of every conflict clear, besides making the presentation interesting in terms of fable. Thus, fable follows fable, image follows image, character follows character, incident follows incident, and all moving in a simultaneous visual show of moral and spiritual journey through light and sound apparatus. The structure thus of imagery that emerges in the poem is multi-dimensional. Romance may simplify the complex reality of life into static characters and symbolic incidents, but it complicates the matter in the presentation of the equations between different characters and incidents. Hence in such a work as Spenser’s while philosophy may get simplified, in almost adolescent vision of life, the structure gets complicated by the very wealth of details. But one can always notice the repetitive tracks which one finds in the web of visual imagery. Thus, both allegory as well as imagery help notice the principles or patterns which contrive unity in the poem.

Still another way of finding an entry into the structure of *The Faerie Queene* to see where the unity of the poem lies is, as Rosemond Tuve has suggested: “By far the most striking element of structure which Spenser has caught from much attention to romances is the principle of entrelacement.... No doubt it is this characteristically ‘interrupted’ and interwoven structure which is referred to when Wilfred Owen distinguishes the typical ‘Ariostan structure’ of Books III and IV of *The Faerie Queene* from the contrasted ‘repetitive structure’ of Books I and II; Spenser is thought to have failed to accommodate these structures to each other when he conceived the idea of a ‘super-epic’, in which each Book should be a little epic or miniature *Aeneid*, with its separate hero, as in Books I and II. However, typical romance entrelacement, a thoroughly medieval development though altered by Ariosto for more suspense and variety, seems to me to characterize all Spenser’s designs.... The well organized Books I

and II are not little epics with separate heroes, but parts of a whole, connected as the parts of cyclical romances are ordinarily connected, and in fact showing extreme likeness to the way the different quests of the *Queste* are connected. The separate Books exhibit, as units and as parts of the unfinished whole, a romance's kind of coherence. It is unlike, even opposed to, that epic coherence which was most palatable to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and which was all the more attractive to the nineteenth century if the piece got its unity from an epic hero more visibly than from an epic action." These remarks sum up the substance of the debate about the structure of Spenser's poem. The critic is right in discouraging us from seeing the poem's unity in terms of the traditional epic form. He rightly puts us on the path of romance, which the poem obviously is, suggesting how romance form holds the key to the poem's unity. Of course, corroborating that unity in terms of the pattern of allegory or that of imagery does not, in any sense, contradict the romance structure. After all, romance quest is also to be about something and it would require some method and technique to make the quest or journey humanly interesting. The method and technique bring in allegory and imagery which, undisputedly, are the chief devices of Spenser as poet.

Although we see Spenser's poem closer to romance than epic, no one intends to deny the simple fact that Spenser deliberately tried to emulate epic structure and epic conventions. The problem arises only when we try to see epic in romance or romance in epic, and call it defective the moment we see any departure or deviation from the traditional form of an epic or romance. As Rosemand Tuve argues, "This web-structure has special possibilities of gradually discernible meaning as the woven pattern shows it is a pattern and *takes* shape. Hence it was a superbly invented instrument for conveying not only what we called the polyphonic nature of what is happening, but that which interested Spenser supremely, the fact to human minds what happens 'means' something is significant." Hence the real principle of unity, in this view, lies in "meanings" of happenings, *which inform what happened* and are not separable from the story. In a romance, the story can be advanced by conventions, such as customs of castles, quarrelsome knights provoking battles, stops for lodging, knights-errant who merely meet adventure, etc. It is such a use of significances as the cohering factor, not the fancifulness of romance, which makes it possible for the reader to move in and out of symbols like the 'real' places they are.

Although this mode of making different incidents cohere in a unity is used all over the poem, it is easier to observe in Books where a single hero achieves some objective or learns some great lesson. Unlike the epic, Spenser's poem does not depend on the sequential series of happenings, which is natural to a biography-of-hero principle of organization. In Spenser, we encounter a conception of structure very different from that which would give us an epic action towards which every events builds, or an epic hero whom every action ultimately exalts. In *The Faerie Queene*, structure is an interweaving of

unrelated parts which unobtrusively take shape as a pattern. In this poem, unity is not imparted by the series of a hero's exploits, nor by the development of a mind, nor even by a conflict. The virtue, which is sought by the hero of each book, acts as the unifying factor in every Book. This is quite a common thing in romance, but not so common in epic. Spenser inherited this structure from the Italian poets who preceded him, those who wrote romances. Through the inheritance of this structure, which was neither episodic nor articulated like an epic action, Spenser found it convenient to heighten the presentation of reigning themes to produce real allegory, and yet evade the problem which teases the modern writer, where and when the story is subordinate to allegory.

Thus, in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* the unifying principle of structure is not the *history* of a particular or an individual; the action is not a biography, a life, but an action. Allegory may have many definitions, all seen to agree to Sidney's remark on poetry, that it deals with things "in their universal consideration," so that we view abstractions themselves interacting. It seems Spenser acted brilliantly in realizing that a structure which weaves a tapestry before us is particularly well-suited to allegory, where pattern must overwhelm us. He also came out supremely successful at this secret conveying of unparaphrasable meaning. We need not obscure the poet's success by re-writing his stories into their allegories. Instead, we should take the whole images with all their depicted feelings as the true statements of his allegorical meanings.

SPENSER'S POETIC STYLE:

Spenser's art can be said to vary from homeliness to splendour, from the remoteness of romance to the closeness of common life. We can be sure that the greatness of his art lies, not in the one sphere or in the other, but in the fusion of both the spheres. And in this very fusion lies the secret of his style. It easily adapts itself to the matter or mood in hand. It is also the fitting expression of the poet's unique and graceful personality. His personality as poet may not be as forceful as that of Milton, but his character is no less indelibly stamped on all the different poems he wrote. Wordsworth and Keats have produced lines which could be mistaken for those of Milton, but no one has produced a stanza which could be mistaken for Spenser's. The distinctive qualities of his style can be found in its diction and its melody. Spenser was drawn to an archaism, which is inimitable because it is purely capricious. He was drawn to it because of its reminiscent picturesqueness as well as by its musical potentialities.

In his very first, and greatly successful, poem, the *Shepherd's Calendar*, Spenser had experimented in the use of archaic language. The diction of *The Faerie Queene* is a more mature product of his peculiar poetic talent. Undeterred by the criticism of his contemporaries, he took complete advantage of the fluid state of English in his day, not only to recover the obsolete, but to construct new words on the analogies of the old, and to adapt both his spelling and

pronunciation to the desired effects of cadence and melody. One of the aims of Spenser as poet was to perfect for himself an instrument from which he could extract a music as subtle as Chaucer's and by means of which he could create around his subject the atmosphere of an ideal antique world. The Chaucerian element in Spenser's language is like a distinct but not often perceived flavour. It can be tasted in occasional words, such as "warry," "encheason", or "solas". It can also be felt in the use of abstract nouns with romance terminations. Finally, it can be seen in the cadence or verbal reminiscence of such a line as "there many minstrales maken melodye." It clearly shows how from Chaucer he learnt the metrical value of the short syllable.

Spenser's poetic style is also marked by a special touch of the old romance. Malory and others had transplanted it from France. It gets expressed in such words as "prow", "persaunt", "belgardes", "heavperes", "paravaunt". We also need to remember that many of Spenser's supposed archaisms are those of his age. He did, of course, cherish words which though still in use were rapidly going out of fashion. The sustained colouring and atmosphere of Spenser's style, we find, is given by a constant use of words which are not so frequently found in Marlowe, Shakespeare, or Sidney. Thus, Spenser made the fullest use of the richly compounded language by freely adapting spelling, punctuation, and word-formation, to his needs. In order to lighten the movement and smooth the flow of his metre he could use old forms, "as whilom was the antique worldes guize." To suit the play of his melody or rhyme he could vary his forms, using "dreriment", or "drerihed", or "dreariness", "jollihed" or "jollitee". Spenser also created his own forms such as the adjective "daint", or the verb to "cherry". Spenser has invited criticism about his diction, which has been labelled arbitrary and illogical. Yet Spenser has grafted his so-called idiosyncrasies on to a firm and healthy stock of pure and simple English. His style is decidedly free from the involved and pedantic mannerisms which were very common in his day. Therefore, it can be said that Spenser was the first conscious inventor of a distinct poetic diction. His diction provoked Daniel, his contemporary, to comment that Spenser used "aged accents and untimely words"; and Ben Jonson to say that "in affecting the ancients he writ no language." However, while his contemporaries disparaged him, the romantics admired him. Note, how Coleridge comments: there was "no poet whose writings would safelier stand the test of Mr. Wordsworth's theory than Spenser."

It has been unanimously acclaimed that the distinctive quality of Spenserian melody found perfect expression in the verse form of *The Faerie Queene*. Throughout the huge length of the poem he heightens the effect proper to his interlacing rhyme-system by an unbroken assonance and alliteration, as also by the haunting repetition of word, phrase and cadence. His supreme *tour de force* in this method can be seen in his often cited stanzas from the *Bower of Bliss* in Book II. Of course, this method is habitual to him. Also, it is capable of infinite variation according to his needs. Puttenham, another contemporary of

Spenser, noted some of those rhetorical figures, such as “both auricular and sensible, by which all the words and clauses are made as well tunable to the ear as stirring to the mind,” that find perfect illustration in *The Faerie Queene*. At times, Spenser repeats a word in such a manner that it gives the line a metrical balance. Another time it enforces an obvious antithesis. At times, the iteration is little more than a play upon the meaning of the word. But more often, the word suggests a subtlety in the poet’s thought or feeling by the peculiar quality which it imparts to the music of the stanza:

Withal she laughed, and she blusht withal,
That blushing to her laughter gave more grace,
And laughter to her blushing, as did fall.

Spenser’s skill in playing with the recurrent word and phrase and cadence throughout a whole stanza is very much like that of an expert juggler who weaves in the air intricate patterns with various balls of different colours, and yet never allows any ball to go out of his control. Note, for example, the following:

Amongst those knights there were three brethren bold,
Three bolder brethren never were yborne,
Borne of one mother in one happie mold,
Borne at one burden in one happie morne,
That bore three such, three such not to be fond;
Her name was *Agape* whose children werne
All three as one, the first hight *Priamond*,
The second *Dymond*, and youngest *Triamond*.

Puttenham gave this device the name of “translacer, which is when you turn and translace a word with many sundry shapes as the Tailor doth his garment, and after that sort to play with him in your dittie.” Some say that Spenser was attracted to this device in the prose of Sidney; others, that he caught its true poetic use from his study of the Latin poets. Dryden called it the “turn” upon the word or the thought. He rightly recognized that the English master of this device was “Spenser, who had studied Virgil, and among his other excellences had copied that.”

One of the prominent aspects of Spenser’s poetic style is the music. He has been considered most musical among the English poets. His studied use of assonance and alliteration springs from his musical instinct. He employs assonance usually to give greater value to the vowel of the rhyme word, by anticipating it in some strong place within the line:

Weening some heavenly goddesse he did see,
Or else unweeting, what it else might be;

This use can be especially noticed in the Alexandrine, where the assonance will often be found to emphasize the caesura (a break or pause in a line of poetry, dictated by the natural rhythm of the language and/or enforced by punctuation):

Or A work of wondrous grace, and able soules to save.

That like a rose her silken leaves did fair unfold.

At times Spenser continues his assonance through a stanza, as in the following, where he emphasizes the rhyme vowels *ai* and *e* by contrasting them with the harder sound of *i*:

So there that right Sir *Calidore* did dwell,
 And long while after, whilst him list remaine,
 Dayly beholding the faire *Pastorell*,
 And feeding on the bayt of his owne bane.
 During which time he did her entertaine,
 With all kind courtesies, he could invent;
 And every day, her companie to gaine,
 When to the field she went, he with her went:
 So for to quench her fire, he did it more augment.

Spenser's most persistent stylistic device is alliteration, which he uses as much to mark his rhythm as to knit his verse together; as much to enforce his meaning as to enrich his melody. His source for this device was, decidedly, that earlier poetry of the Anglo-Saxon period which is alliterative by structure. Its artistic value was enhanced by his study of Chaucer, in whose poetry it is accidental rather than structural. He developed its musical possibilities to their utmost, so much so that it became for him an integral part of his melody, capable of sustaining his verse even when his poetic inspiration was at its lowest. Many of Spenser's favourite phrases, such as "loving lord", "girlonds gay", "silver sleepe", "lovely layes", "wide wilderness", are born of his love of alliteration. It becomes such a natural element of his music that at times it even influences, almost unconsciously, his choice of words. Note, for instance, the following:

I knockt, but no man answered me by name;
 I cald, but no man answerd to my clame.

Spenser knew the power of alliteration upon *w* to give the sense of vastness and desolation:

In all his wayes through this wide worldes wave.

It seems that in Spenser's mind certain combinations of consonants were associated with particular feelings or conceptions. He would always carry their use through several lines, sometimes even through an entire stanza. His alliteration upon *s* and *l* for conveying a sense of peace are particularly effective. The sense of peace is conveyed through "the senses lulled are in slumber of delight." One of the best examples of this type is the Despair's argument, which is rendered irrisitible by the music in which it is phrased:

Is not short paine well borne, that brings long ease,
 And layes the soule to sleepe in quiet grave?
 Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
 Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please.

Very similar is Arthur's dream of the faerie queene; the alliteration does the trick here also:

Whiles every sence the humour sweet embayd,
 And slombring soft my hart did steale away,
 Me seemed, by my side a royal Mayd
 Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay.

We need to note here that in all these citations the effect of the alliteration is strengthened by the use of the alliterative letter in the middle and end as well as at the beginning of the words.

All these are, of course, special uses. Apart from these uses, assonance as well as alliteration runs through Spenser's entire verse as an integral part of its melody. It sounds as a kind of sweet undertone. It blends with the regular rise and fall of the verse. It enhances the rhythmical appeal. Finally, it forms a total effect of indefinable grace and beauty.

A style like that of Spenser is always fraught with dangers as well as temptations. No wonder that Spenser did not escape them. No doubt, his finest music is strongly linked with his noblest imaginings, he could still convey, in music of a kind, any idea, however trivial, even though it was not always worth the carriage. In such cases, he ends up producing parodies of his own poetic self. He loses his imagination. His favourite and powerful devices become just threadbare artifice of a cunning metrical trickster. He fills out, then, the rhythmical structure of his stanza with words and phrases that add nothing to his picture. He gives then whole lines of comment. That is trite and commonplace. He never learnt the art of pruning, nor was he overcareful to weed. Although his verse has a vigour of its own, it is seldom rapid. His verse can be said to be the counterpart of that brooding habit in which he usually looked at life. Its sustaining principle was a slow circling movement that continually returned upon itself. The essential quality of Spenser's style is better summed up by the inspired lines of Wordsworth than by any prose criticism can do:

Sweet Spenser moving through his clouded heaven
 With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace.

To Spenser the significance of the situations that he chooses to describe as well as his attitude to them were more than situations themselves. The music in which his imagination phrased them was very much a part of their significance. To say this is, of course, to deny him supreme place among narrative poets, even among the writers of romance. Also, even those readers who like a story for its own sake often find him tedious. They turn with relief to Ariosto, Byron, or Scott. But the charm of his romantic world is not only conveyed through an appropriate poetic style, it is also enhanced by the sound and colour of his verse. The charm assumes the nature of enchantment. It carries us along, far away from the real world, and into the faerie land of people and places better or worse than the real. 'Style is the man.' The statement is more true in the case of Spenser than anyone else.

THE SPENSERIAN STANZA:

The unique and distinctive quality of Spenserian melody found perfect expression in the verse form of *The Faerie Queene*. The stanza form was his own invention. That is why it has come to be known as the Spenserian stanza. It is considered Spenser's greatest contribution to the development of English prosody. Perhaps it was Chaucer's *rhyme royal* (a b a b b c c) which called his attention to the effectiveness of a stanza with an uneven number of lines. The effects achieved in these two measures might well be said to represent the difference between the metrical genius of Chaucer and that of Spenser. He is also said to owe something to the *ottava rima* (a b a b a b c c). In all probability, Spenser relied more on *rhyme royal* than on *ottava rima* for forging his new stanza form. An evidence to this probability is the interlacing of his rhymes that brings his measure nearer to the stanza that he had borrowed from Chaucer for the opening of his *April* and *November* Eclogues (a b a b b c b c). But to admit this should not in any way detract from the absolute originality of the Spenserian stanza.

Spenser added ninth line to the *ottava rima* and made it longer by adding two more syllables. He made it decasyllabic. This line provides magnificent conclusion to the linked sweetness of the preceding eight. In the last line, the music of the whole stanza spreads and settles to a triumphant or a quiet close. Note, for instance, the following:

Nought is there under heaven's wide hollownesse,
That moves more dear compassion of mind,
Then beautie brought t'unworthy wretchednesse
Through envies snares or fortunes freakes
I, whether lately through her brightnesse blind,
Or through alleageance and fast fealtie,
Which I do owe unto all woman kind,
Feele my heart perst with so great agonie,
When such I see, that all for pittie I could die.

Its logical value to the metrical scheme lies in the fact that, standing separate from the rest by reason of its length, it constitutes a distinct climax. Thus, in a manner, it remains detached. And yet, because it is linked in rhyme with the foregoing quatrain, it never suffers the sharp isolation that often marks the final couplet of the *ottava rima* or the *rhyme royal*.

The ninth line, which is longer than the rest, and is the last line, is apparently fitted for sententious (a short, pithy statement which expresses an opinion) and reflective comment upon the situation. Note, for example, the following:

Ill wears he armes, that nill them use for Ladies sake

Thus, it is admirable for rounding off an episode, or concluding a canto. It is quite often the most beautiful line of a stanza, which gathers strength as it moves on, giving the last beautiful touch to a detailed description. Note, for instance, the following:

Loe where the dreadfull Death behind thy backe doth stond,
At times, it distils into one perfect sentence the emotion that the other eight lines
of the stanza have evoked, such as the following:

Ah Love, lay downe thy bow, the whiles I may respire.

This ninth long line, called Alexandrine, as a rule, has an almost regular iambic
beat, and a caesura which splits the line into two equal parts. Even with such a
construction, it can be put to various uses, as Spenser does in *The Faerie
Queene*. One of its uses is that it can express a tender beauty, such as the
following:

So faire a creature yet saw never sunny day.

It can also roll magnificently as when it tells

Of old Assaracus, and Inacbus divine

Or when it tells of

A sacrament prophane in mistery of wine.

At times, it can also be utterly simple, such as the following:

For all we have is this: what he list do, he may.

Spenser quite often gives it a slight variation from the normal type to give
expression to the subtlest grades of feeling. The addition of a syllable to the fifth
foot of the line makes it dance with the grace and easy movement of a bride:

When forth from virgin bowre she comes in th' early morne.

At times Spenser makes it avoid a marked caesura to gain an added length and a
more sustained and sinuous flow like that of a snake. Note, for instance, the
following:

Through the greene gras his long bright burnisht backe declares.

Also, when the line is split by the caesura into three equal parts instead of two, it
acquires a slow and halting movement, as of pain and weariness in the
following:

Their hearts were sicke, their sides were sore, their feete were lame.

As we have seen, Spenser attains in all these lines an effect which seems beyond
the scope of a decasyllabic verse. But to quote individual, isolated Alexandrine,
as we have done here, does not give a fair idea of their true value. For their
effect, these lines are dependent upon their vital relation with the metrical
scheme of the entire stanza of nine lines. No poet has the distinction of ever
weaving a web of verse as subtly intricate as Spenser's. Throughout the vast
length of *The Faerie Queene* Spenser heightens the effect proper to his
interlacing rhyme-system by a continuous assonance and alliteration, and by the
haunting repetition of word, phrase, and cadence. As the concluding quotation of
the beauty that Spenser created in his wonder of nine lines, here is a piece which
is so visual, so musical, and so stately:

As when two rams stird with ambitious pride,
Fight for the rule of the rich fleeced flocke,
Their horned fronts so fierce on either side
Do meete, with the terrour of the shocke

Astonied both, stand sencelesse as a blocke,
 Forgetful of the hanging victory:
 So stood these twaine, unmoved as a rocke,
 Both staring fierce, and holding idely
 The broken reliques of their former cruelty.

SPENSER AS POET'S POET:

Spenser has been known for over four hundred years now as the author of *The Faerie Queene*. More than any other poem in English, *Canterbury Tales* and *Paradise Lost* included, this has been a sort of source book for the subsequent poets. In this long poem, Spenser seems to have taken all poetic impressionism as his province. The poem is full of folklore, myth, and legend of all sorts. It is also crammed with influences Italian, medieval and classical. It is a peculiarly rich poem in pagan lore. Spenser's metaphysic of fertility and creation is, in fact, often nearer to the pagan and the naturalistic than to the Christian. As G. Wilson Knight has observed, "*The Faerie Queene* is more a storehouse for poets of the future than itself a poem. In this, if in no other sense, he is the 'poet's poet'.... Behind all our poetry there is unconsciously possessed legendary material: Spenser seems to have possessed it consciously."

Spenser has exercised the greatest influence on the subsequent generations of English poets. From Milton to Wordsworth, Shelly and Keats, to Tennyson, Swinburn and Bridges, his influence has been continuously felt. Descriptive or narrative, symbolic or allegorical, historical or mythological, for all kinds of poetry he has provided inspiration to the English poets. His stamp has been apparent and indelible on a large number of major English poets. When Milton described him as "our sage and serious poet Spenser," he not only praised his predecessor, but also acknowledged his debt to him. Milton's *Paradise Lost* shows that influence throughout its long narrative. Note, for instance, the following:

Another side, umbrageous Grots and Caves
 Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling Vine
 Lays forth her purple Grape, and gently creeps
 Luxuriant.

Milton is not "merely" or "simply" influenced here. The sudden dropping of the word "luxuriant," and isolating it, shows direct use of the rhetorical technique that Spenser made his own in describing the Bower of Bliss. The technique involves pleasing or alluring the reader and then suddenly revealing moral danger, often by making us realize the dangerous moral meanings in words that, in other contexts, could be innocent or merely descriptive. Of course, Milton stands the technique on its head. He makes use of it only to remind us, in present case with a genuine shock of recognition, that this garden (Garden of Eden), unlike Spenser's, is the true Eden. The point for us to note here is that the present use of Spenser involves on the part of Milton an active and critical

awareness of his poetic achievement. Like any great poet-critic Milton shows appreciation of Spenser's rhetorical device both for its verbal craftsmanship as well as for the way it renders and evaluates man's visions of and longing for a paradise on earth. It need to be remembered that among the poets who accept the reality of poetic genres and poetic styles and poetic conventions, writing a poem is often an act also of literary criticism. Much implicit commentary on Spenser is therefore to be found in the poems of his contemporaries and successors, which we the readers have to rediscover. It was not the rhetorical technique of Spenser's poetry which influenced him, but also his moral teaching. As Milton remarks in his famous tract on the freedom of press, *Areopagitica*, Spenser "I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas, describing true temperance under the person of Guyon, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon and the bower of earthly bliss, that he might see and know, and yet abstain."

That Spenser would become the poet's poet got recognition in the early seventeenth century itself. Sir Kenelm Digby, a contemporary of Milton, had said as much, even more, as early as 1638:

I hope that what he hath written will be a means that the English tongue will now receive no more alterations and changes but will remain and continue settled in that form it now hath. For excellent authors do draw unto them the study of posterity, and whoever is delighted with what he readth in another feeleth in himself a desire to express like things in a like manner.... Which maketh me confident that no fate nor length of time will bury Spenser's work and memory nor indeed alter that language that out of his school we now use....

Very much in the same vein comes an acknowledgement of his debt to Spenser from Dryden, "I must acknowledge that Virgil in Latin and Spenser in English have been my masters. Spenser has also given me the boldness to make use sometimes of his Alexandrine line, which we call, though improperly, the Pindaric, because Mr. Cowley has often employed it in his *Odes*...." The influence of Spenser on the eighteenth century has been no less. As John Hughes, talking of Spenser being an "oak" of the English poetic tradition, having "serious, exalted and elegant mind, a warm and boundless fancy and was an admirable imager of virtues and vices," proclaims: "the embellishments of description are rich and lavish in him beyond comparison; and as this is the most striking part of poetry, especially to young readers, I take it to be the reason that *he has been the father of more poets among us than any other of our writers*.... It will not seem strange, therefore, that Cowley, as he himself tells us, first caught his flame by reading Spenser; that our great Milton owed him for his original, as Mr. Dryden assures us; and that Dryden studied him and has bestowed more frequent commendations on him than on any other English poet."

In the nineteenth century, Spenser received greater and warmer reception and admiration than ever before. The Romantics found in him a kindred soul, Keats in particular, and sought confirmation in him of their own views on poetry. Note how fondly Wordsworth recalls his reading of Spenser:

In trellised shed with *clustering roses gay*,
 And, Mary! Oft *beside our blazing fire*,
 When years of wedded life were as a day
 Whose current answers to the heart's desire,
 Did we together read in Spenser's Lay
 How Una, *sad of soul*, in sad attire,
 The gentle Una, of celestial birth,
 To seek her knight *went wandering* o'er the earth.

Here is an instance, not merely of a tribute to a predecessor, but also an imitation of his verses. The underlined phrases, the alliteration, consonance and assonance, all show a close copying of the earlier poet. Imitating an old master is in itself the greatest tribute to him. Among the Romantics Keats shows much greater affinity with Spenser than Wordsworth or any other poet of that age. Others who imitated Spenser include Walter Scott, who wrote his *The Vision of Don Roderick* in Spenserian stanza form. Byron's *Childe Harold* and Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam* and *Adonais* are also composed in the same stanza form. Keat's *The Eve of St. Agnes* and an *Inimitation of Spenser* closely follow the poetic technique of Spenser, including his stanza form.

In a way, Spenser is inimitable. His voice is, no doubt, highly distinctive and recognizable. As Dryden said of Jonson, Fletcher and Shakespeare as dramatists, there are "no bays to be expected in their walks." Later, Tennyson, in the Victorian age, and then Swinburne, followed him as closely as did Keats. His influence continues, and will always continue, just as the influence of Homer and Virgil continues even today.

SUMMARY OF BOOK I:

The plot-structure of Book I of *The Faerie Queene* is perhaps the clearest of all Books, its message no less. It closely follows the structure of a romance narrative. It presents a quest or journey full of adventures as well as dangers. The Book I consist of 12 cantos. The events in each canto follow in the chronological order as under:

Canto I:

Una, a lady, who represents Truth, accompanies a knight named Redcross. The knight is on a mission to overthrow a dragon that has occupied the land of Una's parents. While going they lose their way in the Wandering Wood, where they encounter the monster Error. The Redcross knight, aided by Una, overcomes Error. Soon after, they come across Archimago, the enchanter. Unsuspecting, they go to his 'hermitage' to spend the night. He calls up infernal

spirits, sends one of them to Morpheus for fetching idle dreams of lust for the knight. He converts another spirit into someone resembling Una. This creature goes to the knight's bed. Although perplexed by the apparent change in virtuous "Una" (the false one in reality), he treats her gently and sends her away.

Canto 2:

Angered at the failure of his trick, Archimago converts one of the evil spirits into the like of the knight and sends him to Una's bed. At the same time, he calls Redcross knight to witness Una's "wanton lust and lewd embracement." Tormented by the sight, Redcross leaves the hermitage at dawn, leaving Una behind. When Una wakes up, she feels grieved finding herself alone. She starts in search of the knight. Now Archimago disguises as Redcross knight to create further misunderstanding in her mind. Meanwhile, Redcross knight encounters Sansfoy, a Saracen knight, whose companion is the wantonly beautiful woman Duessa. As Sans foy attacks him, the Redcross knight kills the attacker. Now Duessa changes side, denigrates the dead, gets closer to the Redcross knight, and tells him that her name is Fidessa. She craves the knight's mercy, which he extends. He falls for her charms and lies in dalliance under the shade of two mossy trees. When the knight plucks a bough from one of the trees to make garland for her, the tree speaks, revealing his name as knight Fradubio, who had abandoned his beloved Frelissa for Duessa. But, one day, when he had seen her in her true person as "filthy foule old woman," he had tried to escape her, she perceived his thoughts and imprisoned him and his beloved in these two trees. Even after receiving the tree's warning, the Redcross knight remains enchanted by Duessa.

Canto 3:

Searching for her knight, Una encounters a fierce Lion, who accompanies her as her guard and companion. When night falls, they stop at the cottage of blind Corceca and her daughter Abessa. When the Lion finds a robber, Kirkirapine, returning to the cottage with his loot stolen from the churches, the Lion kills the robber. Next morning, they resume their search for the knight and encounter on the way Archimago disguised as Redcross knight. Deceived by his disguise they feel overjoyed. As they are going along together, Sansloy, a Saracen knight, attacks Archimago (thinking he is Redcross knight). He does so in order to take revenge on Redcross knight who had killed his brother Sansjoy. In the encounter, Archimago gets injured, and then revealed as his helmet falls. Now Una feels perplexed and is in great distress. Attracted by her beauty, Sansloy tries to take her away, but the Lion resists and attacks Sansloy and gets killed. Sansloy succeeds in taking her away.

Canto 4:

Meanwhile the Redcross knight is led by Duessa to the House of Pride, where he meets Lucifera (Pride) and the other deadly sins, Idleness, Gluttony, Lechery, Avarice, Envy, and Wrath, and also Satan with them. Now, the third Saracen brother, Sansjoy, attacks the Redcross knight as a measure of revenge for the death of his brother Sansfoy, but Lucifera stops the fight and decrees a proper duet for the next day. At night, Duessa goes to Sansjoy's chamber, tells him of her love for his slain brother (Sansfoy) and also how she was captured by Redcross knight after her lover's slaughter. She puts herself under Sansjoy's protection.

Canto 5:

The next day takes place the fight between Redcross knight and Sansjoy. While about to fall, Sansjoy is saved from death by a "darksome cloud, presumably summoned on Duessa's behest, by the infernal powers. Under the cover of this cloud Sansjoy escapes. Duessa straight rushes to Redcross knight and acclaims him. At night she travels to the secret chamber in which Sansjoy is hiding in woeful plight. Then she goes to the abode of Night to incite her to avenge the deaths of her descendant Saracen brothers. Night accompanies Duessa, and both come to Sansjoy, bandage his wounds, and take him underworld to Aesculapines for treatment. When Duessa returns to the House of Pride, she finds the Redcross knight gone.

Canto 6:

While being harassed by the lustful Sansloy, Una is rescued by a troop of fauns and satyrs, who then worship her. She stays with them for a while and teaches them Truth. Now arrives Sir Satyrane (born of a satyr father and a human female), who helps her leave the fauns and satyrs, and travels with her. They meet Archimago on the way, this time disguised as a pilgrim. He misinforms them that the Redcross knight was dead, killed by Sansloy. Satyrane rides off to trace Sansloy, finds him, and fights with him.

Canto 7:

The Redcross knight, enfeebled by drink from an enchanted spring, is found by Duessa, who rebukes him for having deserted her. On getting reconciled the knight again makes love to her. In his unguarded position, the knight is seized by the giant Orgoglio, and is imprisoned in the dungeon of the latter's castle. As for Duessa, Orgoglio takes her for his leman (lover). The news of the capture of Redcross knight reaches Una, even possible death. At this point appears before Una Prince Arthur (the hero of the whole *Faerie Queene*), accompanied by his Squire Timias, and they proceed to liberate the Redcross Knight.

Canto 8:

Prince Arthur, Timias and Una reach Orgoglio's castle. A fight follows between Arthur and Orgoglio. Arthur slays the giant, captures Duessa, and at last finds the Redcross knight terribly wasted in the dungeon. Now Duessa is stripped of her rich garments, and is shown in her true person as filthy and ugly. Finding herself exposed she flees.

Canto 9:

Now Arthur reveals himself to Una as of unknown parentage, and tells her of his dream about the Faerie Queene, who is the object of his quest in this world. After being united, the Redcross knight and Una leave Arthur and Timias. On the way they encounter a knight named Sir Trevisan, who is fleeing from Despair. Moving further, they come upon the cave of Despair, where Redcross knight is tempted to suicide by Despair who helps him with a dagger. But since Una is with the knight and is not tempted by any such weakness, she snatches the dagger from him.

Canto 10:

Rescuing him from the cave of Despair Una brings the knight to the House of Holiness, where they are met by Dame Caelia, Faith, Hope and Charity. Here, Fidelia teaches him; Speranza gives him comfort; Amendment, Penance, and Remorse discipline him; and Charissa show him the path to heaven, sending Mercy to accompany him to the hermitage of Contemplation. Now, Contemplation shows him the new Jerusalem, and tells him of his origin and his future. He reveals that he is destined to be a Saint, in fact St. George, the patron saint of England. Having received all these instructions, Redcross knight returns to Una, who is waiting for him, and they proceed on their journey.

Canto 11:

The duo of Una and knight finally arrives at the kingdom of Una's parents, which lies ravaged by the Dragon. They make to the castle in which Una's parents are imprisoned. A fight ensues between the knight and the Dragon, in which Redcross gets sorely wounded, and on the fall of evening, is hurled on to the ground. However, the knight falls into "the well of life", which restores him to life again. The next day, the knight is again ready for the fight. In the terrible fight that ensues, the Redcross knight slips as he is recoiling from the Dragon's fiery breath, this time near "the tree of life" growing near the stream of life. Once again the knight is revived. The third day's battle begins, with the knight fully recovered at night, which ends in the death of the Dragon.

Canto 12:

With the Dragon now dead, all the inhabitants of the castle come out joyfully to have a look at the conquerer and the beast. Una's parents, the King and Queen of Eden, thank the Redcross knight and shower gifts on him. They

carry Una and the knight into the castle. The job done, the knight wishes to return to the court of the Faerie Queene. He tells them that he still has six more years of service before his avowed marriage to Una can take place. Una unveils. Meanwhile, a messenger arrives with a letter from “Fidessa” saying that the Redcross knight is affianced to her and that he has deserted her. The messenger is none else than Archimago. On being discovered, he is thrown into the dungeon. The king then performs the sacred betrothal rites for the duo of Una and the knight. It is followed by grand feast and celebration. The Book I ends with the Redcross knight’s return to the court of the Faerie Queene.

The Faerie Queene As A Gothic Poem:

In Letter 8 of his *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, Richard Hurd said, in 1762, the following:

When an architect examines a Gothic structure by Grecian rules, he finds nothing but deformity. But the Gothic architecture has its own rules, by which when it comes to be examined, it is seen to have its merit as well as the Grecian. The question is not which of the two is conducted in the simplest or truest taste, when scrutinized by the laws on which each is projected.

The same observation holds of the two sorts of poetry. Judge of *The Faerie Queene* by the classic models and you are shocked with its disorder; consider it with an eye to its Gothic original and you find it regular. The unity and simplicity of the former are more complete, but the latter has that sort of unity and simplicity which results from its nature.

The Faerie Queene then, as a Gothic poem, derives its method, as well as the other characters of its composition, from the established modes and ideas of chivalry.

To understand the nature of Spenser’s poem we need to know the world it pictures, its men and their manners, its hierarchy and occupations, its customs and conventions, its beliefs and beauties, etc.; for the poem’s structure is derived from the life style of that very world. Let us have a look at the outline and the essential nature of the faerie land.

Spenser’s world is the world of knight errantry. It was usual at the holding of any royal feast or festival for the knights to appear before the presiding Prince, and claim the privilege of being sent on any adventure to which the solemnity might give occasion. At such an occasion, the distressed will also flock in from all sides knowing that they can get their grievances redressed there. Now, making this practice as a foundation for the poet’s design, we can see how properly *The Faerie Queene* is conducted. Spenser speaks of this foundation in his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh which he added to the poem as a

preface: “I devise that the Fairy Queen kept her annual feast twelve days: upon which twelve several days, the occasions of the twelve several adventures happened; which being undertaken by twelve several knights, are in the twelve books severally handled.” Thus, we have here the poem’s design explained and the reason of it. The design arose out of the order of the subject. It was, thus, as requisite for *The Faerie Queene* to consist of the adventures of twelve knights as for the *Odyssey* to be confined to the adventures of one hero. Otherwise justice would not have been done to the poet’s subject. It is also pertinent to note here that the classic ideas of unity, for the same reason, have no place here and are in every view foreign to the purpose.

Therefore, just as we seek the unity of *Odyssey* in the relation of its several adventures of its hero, so do we seek the unity of *The Faerie Queene* in the relation of the adventures of several knights to its central figure, the Fairy Queen. In other words, here the unity is to be seen, not in terms of action, but in terms of design. The gothic method of design, which Spenser’s poem follows, can be understood from what is called the gothic method of design in gardening. We are told that a wood or grove cut out into many separate avenues was amongst the most favourite of the works of art which they attempted in this species of cultivation. These walks used to be distinct from each other. They had each their several destination, and terminated on their own proper objects. Yet the whole was brought together and considered under one view by the relation which these various openings had, not to each other, but to their common and concurrent center. On this pattern, drawn from the gothic ideas, Spenser seems to have designed his poem. But, as he knew also what belonged to classic composition, he was tempted to tie his subjects still closer together by one expedient of his own and by another taken from his classic models.

Spenser’s own was to interrupt the proper story of each Book by dispersing it into several. By this means he involved and intertwined the several actions together so that he could give something like the appearance of one action to his twelve adventures. For the conduct of this he had several examples before him in Italian poets. The other expedient that Spenser borrowed from the classics was by adopting one superior character who should be seen throughout. Prince Arthur, who has separate adventure of his own, is to have his part in each of the other. Thus, several actions are embodied by the interest which one principal hero has in them all. Now, considering *The Faerie Queene* as an epic or narrative poem constructed on gothic ideas, the unity of the poem can be easily seen in its *design*. But Spenser’s poem is not a simple narrative. It is also allegorical throughout. Spenser clearly subordinates the narration to his moral. As he himself announces in the very opening of the poem, “Fierce warres and faithful loves shall *moralize* my song.” That is, adventures of love and war shall serve as vehicle or instrument to convey the moral.

Now, under this idea the unity of *The Faerie Queene* becomes more apparent. His twelve knights have to exemplify as many virtues, out of which

one illustrious character is to be shaped. In this design, then, the role of Prince Arthur in each book becomes essential, and yet not principal, exactly as the poet has contrived it. This management of the poem has come under heavy criticism over the years. They say that it necessarily breaks the unity of design. Their argument is that either Arthur should have had no part in the different adventures, or he should have had the chief part. He should have done either nothing or more. Conventional criticism apart, there are such designs in the East. *Mahabhartā* is one example, where Lord Krishna plays a similar part. He appears only when others are not able to cope with the events on the 'good' side. He is to salvage every situation. The same is the case with Arthur. Both the characters are conceived with powers deemed superior to all others. There seems nothing wrong with this design so long as it offers an understandable pattern on that count. *The Faerie Queene* has a flawless design, offering a unity of its own, having no adventure for its own sake, and having all the very many for the sake of the grand purpose that governs the design.

Thus, howsoever faulty the conduct of the poem may seem in the literal narrative, it is very much appropriate in the allegorical, which is moral. Spenser's principal hero was not to have the twelve virtues in the same proportion in which they exist in the various persons of the knights – each of them his own. Such a character would not have been humanly probable. But he was to have so much of each as was requisite to form this superior character. The superiority of the human or superhuman character lies not in having any one superior virtue or having virtues in number more than the others. Having one or more virtues does not make a character superior to others. What makes him superior is the harmony or balance of all the virtues humans are capable of having. It is this proportion or harmony of all, not the excess of any one, which makes Arthur superior. The Greeks knew it. Spenser, who read them, knew it. We may have gone out of touch with this ancient concept of superiority or perfection. Aristotle's concept of unity or beauty is based on this harmony or proportion of parts. Spenser is therefore doing nothing unusual or unheard of in the creation of Arthur or designing of *The Faerie Queene*.

Obviously, this was the moral purpose of Spenser's poem. And what way of expressing this moral in the history but by making Prince Arthur appear in each adventure and in a manner subsidiary to each Book's proper hero? He may look inferior to each in his own specific virtue, he is superior to all by uniting in proportion the whole circle of their virtues in himself. And thus he arrives, at length, at the possession of that bright form of Glory, whose ravishing beauty, as he saw in a dream or vision, has led him out into these miraculous adventures in the land of the Fairy. The reasonable conclusion to the discussion is that, as an allegorical poem, the method of *The Faerie Queene* is governed by the justness of the moral. As a narrative poem, it is, obviously, conducted on the ideas and usage of chivalry. In either view, if taken by itself, the plan is defensible, quite comprehensible. Some say that the problem arises from the union of the two. To

us, there seems to be no such problem arising out of the poem's design. It is very clearly explained in the poet's letter to Raleigh, and as clearly conducted in the design of the poem. The romance and the allegory do not conflict with each other. They make only the two levels of the single narrative. The surface level, as is the case in any allegory, only illustrates in terms of humanly probable incidents and characters the abstract moral purpose of the poem. As such *The Faerie Queene* has, though incomplete, one of the most complex but cohesive design ever attempted in the long narrative, call it epic, if you so like. Spenser has fully succeeded in the execution of his moral plan of the poem. The poem, even as it is, in its incomplete form, makes a wonderful reading, so rich and varied in adventures, so solemn and single-minded in its moral purpose.

BOOK'S FOR FURTHER READING

1. C. S. Lewis. *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*. Oxford University Press, 1954.
2. C. S. Lewis. *The Allegory of Love*. Oxford University Press, 1936.
3. Hallett Smith. *Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meanings, and Expression*. Harvard University Press, 1952.
4. Paul J. Alpers (ed.). *Edmund Spenser*, in Penguin Critical Anthologies. Penguin Books, 1969.
5. William Nelson. *The Poetry of Edmund Spenser*. Columbia University Press, 1963.
6. William Nelson(ed.). *Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser*. Columbia University Press, 1961.
7. Graham Hough. *A Preface to the Faerie Queene*. Duckworth and Norton, 1962.
8. A. C. Hamilton. *The Structure of Allegory in The Faerie Queene*. Oxford University Press, 1961.

QUESTION BANK

1. Discuss Spenser as the poet's poet.
2. Examine the case of Spenser as a Renaissance poet.
3. Write a note on the poetic style of Edmund Spenser.
4. Discuss *The Faerie Queene* as an epic.
5. Examine the structure of *The Faerie Queene*.
6. Write a critical note on the narrative of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*.
7. Discuss the character of the Redcross knight as the hero of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*.
8. Write a note on the Spenserian stanza, considering its origin and significance.
9. Bring out the allegorical meaning of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*.
10. Discuss Ben Jonson's statement that Spenser "writ no language."

SPENSER
Faerie Queene

Unit-1: Spenser

Spenser's Life and Work

Although considerable information about Spenser's life is available from official records and from the writings of his contemporaries, the more valuable information can be obtained from his poetry itself. For instance, from a sonnet Spenser wrote in 1593, the year of his courtship, we can know when he was born. The year (1593), says Spenser, seems longer "then all those forty that my life outwent." We can easily infer from the sonnet that Spenser was born in or about 1542. We can also know from *Prothalamion*, where he speaks of

... mery London, my most kindly nurse,
That to me gave this life's first native source;
Though from another place I take my name,
An house of ancient fame,

that he was born and brought up in London, but that his parents were not Londoners. The reference to the "house of ancient fame" is to the Spencers of Althorpe, Northampton. Spenser received his school education at the Merchant Taylors, where Mulcaster was its first head master, who was a keen scholar with a generous conception of the aims of education. "It is not a mind," he wrote, "not a body, that we have to educate, but a man; and we can not divide him." This conception derives from the Humanist ideal of education; from, broadly, the culture of the Renaissance. The ideal of the perfect courtier, which Spenser later emulates and portrays, must have found its source in this early education. Mulcaster grounded his students in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. He also trained them daily in music both vocal and instrumental.

It was also at school that Spenser picked up French, and made his first attempts as a poet. Spenser translated certain sonnets of Petrarch and Du Bellay. Of his years at Pembroke college, Cambridge (1569-76) there is not much on record. But certain vital informations are available. The entry books of the college do make a reference to him as the recipient of allowances, "aegrotanti." It is considered possible that Spenser's chronic ill-health tended to develop in him the tendency to reflect and dream. He is considered among the most learned of the English poets. Even if some of his contemporaries have been better scholars, none has been as well read as Spenser. Of his contemporaries, Ben Jonson and, perhaps, Chapman alone could rival his knowledge of the classics. As Drummond has informed, Ben Jonson "did neither understand French nor Italiannes," whereas Spenser knew both quite well. Spenser was a known Greek scholar in his time. He was an enthusiastic student of both Plato and Aristotle. He was more profoundly influenced by the mystical element in Plato's thought, as revealed in the latter's *Symposium* and *Republic*. The Roman poetry also attracted Spenser both by its wealth of material which he could use for his own purpose, and by virtue of its style. It is also significant to note that while most Elizabethans turned chiefly to Ovid, Spenser was highly influenced by the art of Virgil.

At Cambridge Spenser formed a deep and lasting friendship with Gabriel Harvey, who was among the most notable figures at the university. There can be no doubt that Harvey was both a loyal and a valued friend of Spenser's, that he took keen interest in Spenser's career, and introduced him to those who were in the best position to further it. If he gave Spenser bad advice on literary matters, obviously Spenser seldom followed it. Years later, he delighted to refer to Harvey as his "entire friend". In 1576 Spenser earned the degree of M. A. and left Cambridge for the society of his Lancashire kinsfolk. Of his occupation at this place, we only know that he fell in love with a lady whose identity he veils under the name of Rosalind in the *Shepherd's Calendar*. She was both a conventional love figure of Elizabethan poetry as well as a sincere object of love. This love experience remained an integral part of Spenser's imagination for a long time in his life. Rosalind is again alluded to with chivalrous devotion in Spenser's poem *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. However,

whatever the depth of emotion for Rosalind, it did not save Spenser from the dangers and the delights of falling under other spells. The cautious Harvey had soon reason to warn his friend of the seductions of another “Rosalindula,” perhaps some lady of the court.

Spenser returned to London in 1578, where Harvey introduced him to Sidney and Leicester. Spenser looked up to Leicester as the acknowledged political leader of the Puritan faction, the most favourite of Elizabeth, who had not yet lost the hope that a marriage with the Queen might turn his fortunes. He got bound more closely to Sidney than to Leicester and their relation was not that of patron and protégé. Although yet a young man, Sidney was regarded the most brilliant figure at the court of Elizabeth. Sidney, recognized for his abilities all over Europe, was considered by his own countrymen as the ideal courtier. An earnest Protestant, Sidney saw in Roman Catholicism the greatest threat to his country’s liberty. He remained persistent in persuading Elizabeth for a strong action against Spain. Spenser accepted Sidney’s political ideals without any reservation. In other matters, too, he felt closer to Sidney than to any one else around him. The Puritanism of both Sidney and Spenser was deeply tinged with Platonic mysticism. Both made an attempt to adopt to modern life the ideals of mediaeval chivalry. They saw in the romance of medieval times an inspiring symbol for the battles they were to fight in their times. The soul of Sidney that was stirred by a rude ballad of Chary Chase and later found an intimate expression in *Arcadia* found kinship with the poet of the *Faerie Queene*. In their judgements upon art, however, the two friends were not in complete agreement. Sidney was more committed to fashion and precedent. He did not endorse Spenser’s bolder linguistic experiments because he “dare not allow, since neither Theocritus in Greek, Virgil in Latin, nor Sanazar in Italian, did affect it.” Sidney, in fact, went a step further to lead the scholars’ movement for establishing classical metres in English verse. And yet, Sidney did not fail to encourage Spenser in his ambitious project of the *Faerie Queene*, whereas Harvey only condemned it. Spenser’s dedication of his poem *The Ruins of Time* to Sidney’s sister, the countess of Pembroke, claims no equal friendship with “that most brave knight your noble brother deceased.” Sidney had also inspired Spenser in his youth and given him a model for the brave courtier in *Mother Hubberds Tale*. This noble friend continued in Spenser’s memory to vitalize some of his most beautiful conceptions in the *Faerie Queene*. Spenser’s elegy on the death of Sidney, *Astrophel*, although in pastoral form, underlines the poet’s deep sentiment for Sidney.

In Spenser as a poet, there is nothing of the realist. His genius expresses his emotion far more in verbal cadence, in melody of phrasing, than in the logical expressions of words. Even in his *Astrophel*, it is only through elaborate use of his characteristic effects of alliteration and repetition that he is able to give to his lay of lingering and tender pathos an effective expression of personal regard. It is not because *Astrophel* is an elegy that he uses the pastoral idiom. Pastoral idiom, for Spenser, was the most useful metaphor which could give an effective expression to his most intimate personal experience. It is not for nothing that the poet of the *Faerie Queene* was known as “Colin Clout” among his friends. Finally, when Spenser’s own Faerie land itself becomes pastoral, with Colin Clout straying into it, its hero, Sir Calidore, represents an ideal portrait of Sidney. Spenser’s first bid for poetic fame, in 1579, was also marked by his dedication of the book, the *Shepherd’s Calender*, to “the president of noblesse and of chevalrie, “Sir Philip Sidney”.

The Shepherd’s Calender

Spenser’s the *Shepherd’s Calender*, with its clear relations with the past, came to be recognized as a pioneering piece of a new movement. It appeared with explanatory and apologetic notes by an editor mentioned merely as E. K. Various scholarly views on the identity of the editor notwithstanding, the current critical opinion accepts the editor as Edward Kirk, a fellow student of Spenser at Cambridge and an enthusiastic disciple of Harvey. The poem has been accepted as a veiled autobiography of the poet, as a work of historic interest, and as a work of high intrinsic value. Spenser’s choice of the pastoral form was a happy one, for Virgilian eclogue was already popular. Its traditions in classical and Renaissance literature allowed Spenser a precedence for the allegorical use he made of it. The Shepherd’s cloak, in Spenser’s time, was an accepted disguise of the lover, the poet, the courtier, the pastor, and even the critic of contemporary life. Thus, the

poem could be made the repository of the poet's personal emotions, his religious and political beliefs, his hopes and fears for art. Spenser represents, in the dramatic personae, under a disguise sometimes dark, sometimes transparent, himself as well as his friends. Spenser appears disguised as Colin Clout, Gabriel Harvey as Hobbinol, and Rosalind, the object of his unhappy love. Several more personalities are represented under different names.

The poem's editor, E. K., has divided the Eclogues into Plaintive (1,6,11,12); Recreative, "such as certain matter of love, or commendation of special personages" (3,4,8); Moral, "which for the most part be mixed with some satirical bitterness" (2,5,7,9,10). The various motives of the work are so interwoven that no division can, in fact, be entirely satisfactory. There is an Eclogue written for every month of the calendar. For instance, love is the main theme of January and December alone. The April Eclogue is in praise of "the fayre queene of sheperds all." The February Eclogue brilliantly narrates the fable of the oak and the brier, contrasts old age with arrogant youth. Spenser's purpose in May, July and September, is clear enough:

*To teach the ruder shepherd how to feed his sheepe,
And from the falsers fraud his folded flocke to keepe,*

The most deeply interesting of all the Eclogues is, in fact, the October one. It takes the form of a dialogue between two shepherds, Cuddie and Piers. The subject of dialogue is the state of poetry in Spenser's time, the dialogue actually being between the two internal voices within the poet himself. Even more important than the contents of the *Shepherd's Calendar* is, however, the style in which it is composed. The poet's own attitude to his predecessors is equally important. The poet shows full knowledge of the pastorals of Greece, Italy, and France. He also adapts and translates from Mantuan and Marot. But he acknowledges his debt to Chaucer alone. At a time when his contemporaries were running after foreign models, it was Spenser's ambition to be English. His reversion to Chaucer is the boldest sign of his independence.

In the June Eclogue Spenser represents Harvey as calling Colin to the study of the classics, to which Colin modestly replies:

*Of Muses Hobbinol, I conne no skill,
For they bene daughters of the hyghest Jove,
I never lyst presume to Parnasse hyll,
But pyping low in shade of lowly grove
I play to plese myself, al be it ill.*

Colin's reply in the above lines barely conceals his deliberate conviction that his native poetry can benefit little from the rhetoric of classical and Italian imitation. Here, the poet asserts that his master is Tityrus alone, by which he means Chaucer. The reason why he is drawn to Chaucer most is that he considers Chaucer one of those who "have right well employed themselves to the beautifying and bettering of the English tongue."

The *Shepherd's Calendar* is no less experimental in its use of metre. Having no precedent in pastoral tradition for such metrical variety, Spenser was inspired solely by his own enthusiasm to explore the capabilities of his native language. Although he does owe something to his immediate predecessors both in England and France, he reaches back for his models to an earlier age. He makes attempt at forms suggested by the ballad, at the irregular four-stressed lines, at the regular line of five feet, all being traditional in English poetry. But in this, too, he finds the fullest and most natural expression in the metre of Chaucer. In the exquisite and varied melody of Spenser's poem lies, for sure, its greatest charm. But it also makes a further appeal to the admirer of Spenser's poetry. That appeal comes from the strange pastoral country that the poet creates in the poem. With its ideal atmosphere that imparts to intimate personal allusion the remoteness of romance; with its unique mixing of artifice and naturalness; of nature and convention, of deep moral earnestness and tender delicacy of feeling, Spenser's poem, despite all its borrowings, creates a world of its own. It lies along the high-road that leads him to Faery land.

The status of the *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) is the same as that of the *The Lyrical Ballads* (1798); both are literary events of the same kind. Like Wordsworth, Spenser appeared like heaven's benediction with the demand for homelier things and truer poetic language. He also aimed at fresher cadences, ballad simplicity, and a new social philosophy. Like Wordsworth, he did not stand alone, though for several years readers called him "the new poet," or Colin Clout, or "Immerito." The poem, consisting of twelve eclogues, is addressed to Philip Sidney in the most charming of all Spenser's dedications:

*Go, little book: thyself present,
As child whose parent is unkent,
To him that is the president
Of noblesse and of chivalry.*

The *Shepherd's Calendar* marks the turning point in the Elizabethan poetry. It also forms the first landmark in Spenser's career as a poet. He was only twenty-seven years old. The breadth and immediacy of the poem's intellectual basis and the variety of effects and rhythms obtained are what most call attention to the work.

The Ireland Experience

Only six months had passed after the publication of the *Shepherd's Calendar* when Spenser was appointed as secretary to the new governor of Ireland, Lord Grey of Wilton. Although the post in itself was highly honourable, the life of an administrator in Ireland was rather arduous. It checked for ten years the output of Spenser's poetry. He had started the composition of the *Faerie Queene* before he left England in August 1580, and it was not till late in 1589 that he was able to return and find a printer for the first three books, which appeared in 1590. This was the earliest publication to bear Spenser's name. He boldly dedicated the books, as later the entire poem, to Queen Elizabeth, who rewarded him by the grant of a pension of fifty pounds a year. In 1591, Spenser was able to issue two volumes of his minor poems. One of these volumes, *Daphnida*, is a long ceremonious elegy on the recent death of a lady of rank. The poem is notable for its beautiful metrical structure and delicate balancing of parts. It remains reminiscent of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, and has been considered Spenser's most consummate tribute to medieval art and to his great predecessor. The second volume entitled *Complaints, containing Sundry Small Poems of the World's Vanity*, consists of poems of mixed character, consisting of four parts, each carrying a signed dedication by Spenser to a lady of the court, namely, the Countess of Pembroke, and the three titled sisters of the Althorpe Spenser family with whom the poet claimed relationship. The four parts of the volume carry separate titles as *The Vision of Belley*, *Visions of Petrarch*, *Visions of The World's Vanity*, and *Ruins of Rome*. All the poems in the volume are in sonnet form, showing the growth of Spenser's style from its early beginnings to full maturity. The greatest poem, and the longest, in *Complaints* is *Mother Hubbard's Tale*. The significance of this poem is that it is Spenser's only ambitious effort in heroic couplets. There is no doubt about the poet's satiric intention. The tale actually consists of four tales of the malefactions of a fox and an ape, who in the first three live disguised in the world of men, but in the last inhabit a beast world. The satire moves on four levels, in which the poet successively attacks agricultural, clerical, social, and finally imperial mores. The poem, especially the picture of "the brave courtier" (Philip Sidney) in the third part, portrays conditions of the Elizabethan court, in the strongest couplet verse written by any poet before Dryden:

*So pitiful a thing is suitor's state...
Full little knowest thou that hast not tried,
What hell it is in suing long to bide:
To lose good days that might be better spent,
To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
To speed today, to be put back to-morrow;
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;*

*To have thy prince's grace, yet want her peers';
 To have thy asking, yet wait many years;
 To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares,
 To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs:
 To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
 To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.*

In the last tale, the fox becomes an apparent symbol of Burghley's imperiousness, avarice, and nepotism. It is not surprising that for this and other impudences, the *Complaints* volume was "called in" or suppressed, and that Spenser did not adventure further along this congenial but most dangerous path.

Spenser's next poem, *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, is, therefore, in a different tone altogether. It is also considered, in its attractiveness, only next to the *Epithalamion*. Although not printed until 1595, the poem is prefaced by a letter to Raleigh, dated from Spenser's Irish home, Kilcolman Castle, December 27, 1589–90, which made possible the publication of the first three books of the *Faerie Queene*. In *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, Spenser lays off his singing robes and reverts to the humble character of Colin Clout. He is shown safe in Ireland again among his shepherd mates, to whom he describes the great things and persons he has seen. The poem is written in pentameter quatrain of rustic type and language in keeping with the poem's character. Primarily, his purpose is to pay complements to Raleigh, the "Shepherd of the Ocean," whose meeting with Spenser in Munster, companionship on the voyage, and patronage at court are delightfully narrated. The pastoral note is admirably sustained. The poem is equally important as poetic autobiography, though far less sublime than Milton's *Lycidas*. The poem gives the impression that Spenser was now happily reconciled to his life in Ireland, and had sincerely abjured the enticements of courtly ambition. The poem ends in philosophic mood, with a Platonic praise of true love and a reassertion of Colin's loyalty to the loved and lost Rosalind.

Astrophel and Amoretti

Spenser's *Astrophel*, his elegy on the death of Philip Sydney, was printed in the same volume as *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*. The poem is the first of a group of poems by various poets on Sidney's death. Although published a little later, it was in all probability composed earlier than Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. Spenser's elegy is written in the same stanza as Shakespeare's. It figuratively represents Sidney's wound as caused, like Adonis's, by a tusked beast. An year later Spenser found himself enamoured of an English girl, named Elizabeth Boyle, who had come to Ireland with her brother and settled near Kilcolman. The account of the wooing and marriage in Spenser's *Amoretti* sequence of sonnets and *Epithalamion*, published together in 1595, is expressed in the same autobiographical frankness as in *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*. But in these later volumes we come across much greater depth of feeling. The courtship was, of course, not easy. The girl was proud and much his junior, with her family having greater ambitions for her. The fourth sonnet of the *Amoretti* sequence is dated, by internal evidence, January 1, 1593. In the nineteenth, "the merry cuckoo, messenger of spring" has commenced to sing. In the twenty-second Lent has begun. The sixtieth sonnet notes that the poet has been in love for one year. The sixty-second sonnet speaks of New Year, 1594. The sixty-eighth speaks of Easter. The seventieth sonnet speaks of May Day. Their marriage took place on St. Barnaby's Day, June 11, which by the Old Style calendar was the longest day of the year. In the *Amoretti* sonnets, except the eighth, which is of usual "Shakespearean" kind, Spenser employs his special form of linked quatrains, *a b a b bc bc cd cd ee*, which he had already used in the *Vision of the World's Vanity* and the *Dedication to Virgil's Gnat*. In terms of the content of these sonnets, they divide into three unequal parts. While sonnets 1-62 deal with unrequited love, sonnets 63-84 deal with the lovers' happiness, sonnets 85-88 deal with the four little lyrics on Cupid. It is naturally the second group which matters most. One of the notable features of these sonnets is Spenser's dabbling with the metaphysical conceit, commonly defined as a phase of the reaction against him. Although a less outstanding instance is sonnet no. 67, it merits

mention because not many poets have written so like a gentleman:

*Like as a huntsman after weary chase,
Seeing the game from him escape away,
Sits down to rest him in some shady place,
With panting hounds beguiled of their prey.
So, after long pursuit and vain assay,
When I all weary had the chase forsook,
The gentle deer return'd the selfsame way,
Thinking to quench her thirst at the next brook.
There she, beholding me with milder look,
Sought not to fly, but fearless still did bide,
Till I in hand her yet half-trembling took,
And with her own good will her firmly tied,
Strange thing, me seem'd, to see a beast so wild
So goodly won, with her own will beguil'd.*

Epithalamion Ana Prothalamion

Spenser's marriage, when finally arranged, was performed rather in a hurry. The *Epithalamion* is his gift to his bride and to himself. As he puts it, "I unto myself alone will sing." But the song has actually been his most universal passport to posterity. The *Faerie Queene* may not always, or in all respects, be admired, but the superiority of *Epithalamion* to everything else in its class has seldom been disputed. For one thing, it differs from the other marriage hymns in its larger range of melody. It is said that Spenser has used in this poem the total resources of his musical power. For another, it differs in its broader humanity; for in its twenty-three strophes some twenty hours of an Irish day are registered with a vividness that never seems to fade. And the poem differs most of all in striking the nearly unattainable line between too hot and too cold.

Spenser's *Prothalamion* is one of the casual results of his visit to London in 1596 to see Books IV–VI of the *Faerie Queene* through the press. *Epithalamion* had been printed the year before. On this visit to London, Spenser was made to concede to a request by the Earl of Worcester, who had to provide a state wedding for his two daughters, the Ladies Elizabeth and Katherine Somerset. Taking advantage of Spenser's presence in London at the time, the Earl commissioned him to write a marriage poem similar to the one he had done for the occasion of his own marriage. Although less than half the length of the other poem, *Prothalamion* is not much inferior in quality. In fact, the Earl got an extraordinary value for his money. The poem, some critics believe, is even more proportioned than the other one. However, the emotion of the earlier work could not be reproduced, nor did perhaps the poet make any attempt to do so. The brides and the bridegrooms remain lay-figures, but the poet's emotion on being in London once again, walking beside the Thames, comes out in fascinating verses. The spousal interest is delicately dismissed in the opening lines, in which Spenser expresses his old grievance against courts:

*Calm was the day...
When I, whom sullen care,
Through discontent of my long fruitless stay
In prince's court, and expectation vain
Of idle hopes, which still do fly away
Like empty shadows, did afflict my brain,
Walk'd forth to ease my pain
Along the shores of silver-streaming Thames.*

At the end of the poem, Spenser brings over his associations with "merry London, my most kindly nurse," expressing in lines that everyone remembers best. The marriage occasion actually gets pushed into the background as a decorative backcloth.

The Four Hymns

Preferred by an interesting letters to the Countesses of Cumberland and Warwick, date September 1, 1596, Spenser's *The Four Hymns* were published the same year. They are perhaps the latest publications of his life-time. It is perhaps the only time that Spenser so directly attempts a formal statement on the idealistic philosophy of Pagan-Christian blend and neo-Platonic brand. The philosophy, no doubt, is suffused over the whole of *The Faerie Queene*. Of course, *The Four Hymns* are more poetic than systematic. As the poet's letter explains, the first two poems, on the pagan theory of love and beauty, had been composed "in the greener times of my youth" when one of the sister countesses had urged Spenser to suppress them, he had been unable to do so by reason of the number of manuscript copies in circulation. Therefore, he resolved "at least to amend and by way of retraction to reform them, making instead of those two hymns of earthly or natural love and beauty two others of heavenly and celestial." These Hymns are written in delicate and accomplished rime royal, making it lend itself to abstruse exposition. The first two start from the notion that love is born of beauty as Cupid was of Venus. They develop the conception of love as the prime creative force (as is done in Plato's *Symposium*). They further demonstrate how man's moral progress takes place through the love of beauty at its successive levels. In the *Hymn of Heavenly Love*, Christ replaces Cupid as creative love. The poem becomes a rationalization of the Fall and Redemption, a sort of *Paradise Lost* in miniature.

Spenser retracted nothing in the later Hymns, which essentially remain as Greek as the earlier ones. They are also not much hampered by the new medium into which the doctrine has been translated. "For all that is good is beautiful and fair" is the core of Spenser's thought. The grand summary at the end of Heavenly Beauty is as frank neo-Platonism, or pure Platonism, as anything in the earlier two. The conception of love and beauty as a gradual infusion is one of the points that make Spenser stand apart from that other Hellenist, Marlowe, who stressed intuitive genius. In the second Hymn he categorically denies the Dead Shepherd's yet unpublished cliché:

*For all that like the beauty which they see
Straight do not love; for love is not so light
As straight to burn at first beholder's sight.*

One of the controversial pieces of Spenser's appeared in prose, namely, *A view of the present State of Ireland*. Although written in 1596, when Spenser was in England, it got into print much later in 1633. This treatise runs into 60,000 words, and is a well-planned dialogue on Irish laws, customs, and military government. Spenser's own opinions are expressed through a character named Irenius, who has recently arrived from Ireland. Another character, Eudoxus, interprets the opinion of Irenius. The prose style is beautiful, simple in diction and syntax, but with a periodic roll that marks it for the poet's prose, as in Irenius's condemnation of the social influence of the Irish bards. Large part of the essay shows sympathetic understanding of the antiquities, art, and customs of the island. But the poet's view in the treatise has been described as "brutal" by most critics. An example of the *View's* brutality is cited in the poet's blatant defence of the British policy of imposing reforms "by the sword." Unlike a "poet", Spenser suggests group removal of disloyal population to another part of the country and systematic starvation to check outlaws. He advocates mercy for the mean and submissive, but none for the great rebels like Tyrone. No wonder that barely four months after Spenser's book was ineffectively registered in London, Tyrone struck again. All Munster rose in unexpected tumult. Spenser's Kilcolman residence was destroyed, with also probably an important portion of *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser, now Sheriff of Cork, was sent to London in December 1598 with official dispatches about the revolt. Spenser died at Westminster, January 13, 1599, owing to the tensions he had been under. He was about 47 years of age, and at the peak of his career both as poet and civil servant.

The Faerie Queene

Mature critical opinion insists that Spenser's own life provides the key to much that is there in *The Faerie Queene*, which was his crowning achievement. Written for the most part during his long stay in Ireland, in the

wild and solitary part of the island, the poem is reminiscent of the world from which the poet, so to say, remained exiled for the better part of his life. It expresses his yearning for a fuller life, for an abundance of all the good things that his spirit and senses felt deprived of in the “hostile” country. The poem is also fully charged with his experience of those years in Ireland. The beauties of the countryside, the desolation of forest and hillside, the difficulties and dangers he was made to face living amidst rebellious people, the heroes and villains he actually encountered, the friends he made, and the women he loved, all find their places in the intricate structure of *The Faerie Queene*. The poem’s idealism, heightened by the poet’s desire to escape from sordid reality, is thus combined with a realism that bespeaks his sure sense of the imaginative value of all experience that is intensely lived.

Thus, in a sense, all the earlier poetry of Spenser has been a preparation and exercise for his unfinished epic, *The Faerie Queene*. It has been viewed as a great inclusive attempt by the poet to bring together in one rich pattern all the various strands of civilization with which he was acquainted. Spenser drew upon the medieval allegorical tradition in both its secular and religious form, on medieval romance, classical epic, Aristotelian ethics, Plato and Italian neo-Platonism, Renaissance Humanism, geography and folklore, Elizabethan patriotism and political thought, and almost every current of European thought and expression and convention which were the rich heritage of the Elizabethan age. He constructed his comprehensive poetic vision of *la condition humaine* as it was, in a context of ideal suggestion, what it should be. Spenser’s immediate model for *The Faerie Queene* was Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*. As Spenser told his friend Gabriel Harvey, he hoped to “overgo” the Italian epic. It provided Spenser the mould into which he could put his serious and complex vision. He might have used the older traditions and moulds, the vision that informs his poem was decidedly his.

Spenser prefixed to the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene* a letter addressed to Sir Walter Raleigh “expounding his whole intention in the course of his work”. He declared in this letter that “the general end . . . of all the book is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline”. He further pointed out that he had learned from Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, and Tasso, “by example of which excellent Poets I labour to portray in Arthur, before he was king, the image of a brave Knight, perhaps in the twelve private moral virtues, as Aristotle hath devised, which is the purpose of these first twelve books, which if I find to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encouraged to frame the other part of politic virtues in his person, after that he came to be king”. The letter goes on as under:

In that Faerie Queen I mean glory in my general intention, but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our soveraine the Queen, and her kingdom in Faery land. And yet in some places else I do otherwise shadow her, for considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royal Queen or Empress, the other of a most virtuous and beautiful Lady, this latter part in some places I do express in Belpheobe, ... So in the person of Prince Arthur I set forth magnificence [the Aristotelian megalopsychia, magnanimitas, greatness of soul] in particular, which virtue for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and containeth in it them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deeds of Arthur applicable to that virtue which I write of in that book. But of the XII other virtues I make XII other Knights the patrons, for the more variety of the history. Of which these books [i.e. the first three books, published in 1590] contain three, the first of the Knight of the Redcross, in whom I express Holiness; the second of Sir Guyon, in whom I set forth Temperance; the third of Britomartis, a lady Knight, in whom I picture Chastity.

Spenser further goes on to explain that he starts *in medias res* in proper epic fashion. But since only the three books are here presented, he had better explain what has happened before the events narrated there. “The beginning of my history,” he says, “if it were to be told by an Historiographer, should be the twelfth book, which is the last, where I devise that the Faery Queen kept her annual feast xii days, upon which xii several days the occasions of the xii several adventures happened, which being undertaken by xii several knights are

in these xii books severally handled and discussed.” Spenser does not stop here. He goes on to give a brief account of how the adventure of the Redcross Knight, of Sir Guyon, and of Britomart first started. And “many other adventures are intermeddled, but rather as accidents than intendments.”

Like Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*, Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* also remained incomplete. Chaucer had planned 120 tales, but could complete only twenty. Similarly, Spenser planned a total of 24 books, but completed only 6. While the first three books were published in 1590, the next three books were published in 1596. In 1609, almost ten years after Spenser’s death, a folio edition of the poem was published containing the first six books and a fragment of book VII entitled “Two Cantos of Mutability.” Thus, Spenser’s epic poem is far from complete, being only a fragment of the whole. Decidedly, in a work of such a complex design incompleteness is bound to present difficulties of comprehension and interpretation. Nevertheless, the work as it exists today is noble and impressive. It is long enough to enable us to assess its merit and excellence. It still remains one of the greatest poems in the English language; but its greatness is of a rather special kind.

Book I

The Book I of *The Faerie Queene* relates to the story of the Redcross Knight, who represents Holiness. He sets forth as the champion of Una, who represents truth, to slay the old Dragon that is devastating her father’s country. The very opening stanza of the poem (as well as of Book I) strikes the note of observed adventure:

*A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plain,
Y-clad in mighty arms and silver shield,
Wherein old dints of deep wounds did remain,
The cruel marks of many a bloody field;
Yet arms till that time never did he wield.
As much disdainng to the curb to yield.
Full jolly knight he seemed, and fair did sit,
As one for knightly jousts and fierce encounters fit.*

The Redcross knight becomes involved in a series of adventures which suggest (at a variety of levels) how man’s pursuit of holiness can be hindered by error, hypocrisy, false devotion, etc. At the same time, the Redcross knight is also Everyman, facing the ordinary temptations of this world. As such, he needs the help of Grace, represented by Prince Arthur. He also needs the help of Truth in order to attain the good life and achieve holiness. Thus, the Redcross knight both represents a quality (holiness) and represents man in search of that quality. Spenser also introduces in his narrative another level of meaning. He is also talking about the religious conditions in England, putting the Protestant against the Catholic view of the good life, thereby inducing many contemporary references.

In the multilayered complex of meanings that Spenser has woven into the narrative of *The Faerie Queene*, the adventures as well as the various levels they represent carry in them both the story and significance, adventure and allegory. The reader is carried through a structure subjected to reflections and refractions of various colours. While the major characters and adventures arouse both the story interest as well as the significance interest, the incidental minor characters may or may not have human qualities, which enrich the narrative psychologically and ethically. The allegorical significance of characters and incidents varies at different times and at different places. In the company of Una, the knight fights a successful battle against the monster Error. The Redcross Knight slays the monster Error, who is described as “most loathsome, filthy, foul and full of vile disdain.” The monster is prolific of her poisonous young, and, in the midst of the fight, vomits forth books and papers together with lumps of local flesh and “loathly frogs and toads.” Spenser’s description here is vigorous, skillful, and thoroughly “Spenserian” in the popular sense. The allegory, too, is highly simple, to the point of childishness. The description goes on showing how the knight is harassed by the monster’s “cursed spawn”:

*The same so sore annoyed has the Knight,
That wellnigh choked with the deadly stink
His forces fail, he can no longer fight.
Whose courage when the fiend perceived to shrink
She poured forth out of her hellish sink
Her fruitful cursed spawn of serpents small,
Deformed monsters, foul and black as ink,
Which swarming all about his legs and crawl,
And him encumbered sore, but could not hurt at all.*

This, for sure, is quite vigorous and effective. Both layers of meaning, literal as well as allegorical, are quite clear. But when we move to the next stanza, the tone changes altogether:

*As gentle Shepherd in sweet eventide
When ruddy Phoebus gins to welk in west,
High on an hill, his flock to viewen wide,
Marks which do bite their hasty supper best,
A cloud of cumbrous gnats do him molest,
All striving to infix their feeble stings,
That from their noyance he nowhere can rest,
But with his clownish hands their tender wings
He brusbeth oft, and oft doth mar their murmurings.*

The background of postoral life introduced here reminds one of Milton's similar comparisons in *Paradise Lost*. The sudden though brief metamorphosis of the Redcross knight here from a hero battling with a cursed spawn of serpents into a shepherd brushing off the innocent but annoying bring in a more human world. It establishes, as it were, a middle term between the world of heroic action on the one hand and the world of ethical ideals on the other. The transformation does not in any way spoil the force of the original incidents, because the change is introduced only as a simile. At the same time, it humanizes the heroic world, reminding us of the everyday world in which our ethical problems are to be faced and resolved.

Spenser moves in Book I, as he does in the others, through a much wider range of tones. There is, for instance, the note of pure and simple romantic adventure:

*At length they chanced to meet upon their way
An aged Sire, in long black weeds clad.*

Next, there is the pastoral:

*A little lowly Hermitage it was,
Down in a dale, hard by a forest's side.*

And then, there is the popular satirical:

*He told of Saints and Popes, and evermore
He strewed an Ave Mary after and before.*

Thus, he keeps shifting the tone further from the mythological, to the homely proverbial, to the moralizing and religions, and then to the lofty heroic. The astounding variety of verse, the richness of imagery and music, the wealth of adventure and significance, all combine to make the slow but steady colourful but complex movement of the narrative.

After slaying the monster Error, the Redcross knight has to soon encounter next the arch deceiver Archimago. This misleader of the knight is actually impersonating Guile and Fraud. He succeeds in deceiving the hero, making him distrust the integrity of his lady (Una) and take in her place Duessa. Since the hero is now enamoured of false Religion, he succeeds in defeating the pagan knights named Sans Foy and Sans Joy. But

since he is committed now to false Religion, he falls an easy prey to Orgoglio, the Giant of Pride. Now, Una brings to his aid the divine strength of Arthur. However, even though rescued from the sin of Pride, he is weakened by suffering and remorse, narrowly escaping the toils of Despayre. It is only after dwelling in the House of Holiness thereby learning the full meaning of the Christian faith that the Redcross knight gains strength to overcome the Dragon. Thus, he finally becomes worthy of winning the hand of Una, who represents Truth. Thus goes the surface or literal story of Book I. But each character and incident here, as well as elsewhere, is loaded with multiple meanings through allegorical suggestions. We need to know these allegorical meanings and significances of incidents and characters in Book I to fully appreciate the poem's richness and complexity.

Theme of Book I

C.S. Lewis, in his *Allegory of Love*, insists that "the subject of the first book is sanctification – the restoring of the soul to her lost paradisaical nature by holiness. This is presented in two interlocked allegories. Una's parents, who represent *homo*, or even, if you like, Adam and Eve, after long exclusion from their native land (which of course is Eden) by the Devil, are restored to it by Holiness whom Truth brings to their aid." That, says Lewis, is the first allegory. In the second, we are told, "we trace the genesis of Holiness; that is, the human soul, guided by truth, contends with various powers of darkness and finally attains sanctification and beats down Satan under her feet." Spenser chooses Truth as the heroine of both actions. The reason for this, in all probability, is owing to the age of Spenser being a time of religious doubt and controversy. At such a time, avoidance of error is as pressing a problem as, and in a sense prior to, the conquest of sin. It is for this very reason that the forces of illusion and deception, such as Archimago and Duessa, play such a part in the story of the Redcross knight. And it is for this very reason that St. George and Una get separated so easily. Moral instability and intellectual error, however, are inextricably mixed with each other. The knight's desertion of his lady symbolizes the soul's desertion of truth, and has an element of willful rebellion as well as of illusion.

Will was his guide and griefe led him astray.

The various temptations which the knight has to encounter can, for the most part, be easily recognized. The only difficulty he faces is to make distinction between Pride and Orgoglio. In the historical or political allegory, undoubtedly, Orgoglio is the dungeons of the Inquisition. But what is not obvious is his moral signification. However, if we do not forget that he is a blood relation to Disdain, and view, with imagination than intellect, the character of both giants, it is not difficult to get the inkling. Although Pride and Orgoglio are both pride, the one is pride within us, the other pride attacks us from outside. The outside attack of pride can be in the form of persecution, oppression, or ridicule. In other words, while the one (the internal) seduces us, the other (the external) browbeats us. There has been noticed some inconsistency in the utter hopelessness with which St. George, who is unarmed and newly roused from the fountain of sloth, staggers forward to meet Orgoglio; for it cannot be easily reconciled with this view. It is quite possible that the giant is a survival from some earlier version of the poem.

This can be called the allegorical core of the first book. Una's adventure carry much less load of allegory. Only in a very general sense, the lion, the satyrs, and Satyrane represent the world of unspoiled nature, which cannot hold Una: she blesses it and passes on her way. But to go beyond this and read more in it would be a mistake. We need not expect that Truth separated from soul could, or should, be allegorized as fully as the soul separated from Truth. Certain characters in the poem are only types; they are not personifications. Satyrane is very first of these characters. He is truly a child of nature. Although he is a knight, we are told that "in vaine glorious frays he little did delight." Decidedly, it is a deliberate rejection of that essential element of chivalry, which had survived, as the *duello*, into the courtly code of Spenser's time. Spenser, very clearly, emphasizes this anti-courtly character in Satyrane. When this character is introduced again some twenty-four contos later, we are reminded that he

*In vain sheows, that wont young knights bewitch
And courtly services, tooke no delight.*

One of the problems posed by the incompleteness of the poem is that we cannot say with certainty that Prince Arthur is the hero of the whole poem. We can only talk of the respective heroes of the six books that are complete. There we are very certain about the status of different characters. But the same certainty cannot be available about the hero of the entire poem. We do know from the preface that he personifies Magnificence and is seeking Gloriana, or Glory. But if it is considered how little one should know of Britomart from the mere statement that she is Chastity, it will be seen that this tells us little about Arthur. As C. S. Lewis observes, "And if we consider how little we should know of Spenser's "chastity" if we had never been to the Garden of Adonis, and how little of his "justice" if we had never been to the temple of Isis, or of his "courtesy" if we had never seen its connexion with the Graces on Mount Acidale, then we must conclude that we do not know what "Glory" would have come to mean in the completed poem. I have very little doubt... that Glory would have been spiritualized and Platonized into something very like the Form of the Good, or even the glory of God." It seems reasonable to argue that Spenser's whole method is such that we come to have a rather dim perception of his characters until we are met by them or their archetypes at the great allegorical centre of each book. For example, Amoret would reveal nothing of her real nature unless the Garden of Adonis and the Temple of Venus are known. Suppose they are lost, then the character would not carry the presently accepted connotations.

The Hero of Book I

Very much like Virgil's *Aeneid*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, echoing the former, begins on a note where we see the pastoral poet turning to become the epic poet:

*Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,
As time her taught in lowly Shepherds weeds,
Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,
For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,
And sing of knights and Ladies gentle deeds;
Whose prayers having slept in silence long,
Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds
To blazon broad emongst her learned throng:
Fierce warres and faithful loves shall moralize my song.*

Thus, the poet of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, like Virgil before him, sees himself as reaching poetic maturity only when he faces the realities of his own world and ceases to linger in an imagined paradise of rural simplicity. In fact, it is not merely the poet who is shown leaving the pastoral mode, it is the hero as well. There is a clear juxtaposition of the pastoral marks of the early Spenser and the native rusticity of the youthful St. George. The anonymous "new poete" of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, "Immerito" becomes the narrator of a poem whose hero had himself first appeared at Gloriana's court in the guise of "a tall clownishe younge man" and had "rested him on the floore, unfitted through his rusticity for a better place." We are told all this in Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh prefixed to *The Faerie Queene*. As we see in Book I of the poem, it is only after Una has seen him dressed in the armour of a Christian Knight, which she has brought with her to Fairyland, that he seems "the goodliest man in all that company" and wins her approval as the champion of her cause.

The hero of Book I is known only in terms of his armour until the tenth canto, when at the House of Holiness he learns that he is English and bears his name of George attributed to his childhood upbringing "in ploughmans state". Spenser's treatment of Redcross is rather periphrastic. It is an extreme instance of the poet's habit of repeatedly giving his characters names symbolic of their roles but announcing those names only after showing them in action, so that the names themselves become capsule summaries or mottoes. Spenser's rather extended emphasis on the anonymity of Redcross is directly related to the plot of Book I. As an unproved knight, Redcross is therefore only potentially St. George. Book I traces the steps by which the hero gains his identity. The poem's opening incidents present the ambiguous position of the Redcross. His armour, at first, is

a mere protection, or even a disguise. But there is a promise that it may become an image of his inner nature. The natural settings of the poem, too, stress the same ambiguity.

The first challenge to the hero, Redcross, comes as a consequence of a sudden shower which drives the knight and lady into the Wood of Error. In fleeing the shower, they have abandoned one kind of nature for another. Redcross and Una do not hesitate to take shelter. They find themselves in a wood with which they seem very familiar. They deliberately shroud themselves from the light, and praise the trees in a catalogue which reflects man's confident moral dissection of his universe. We are shown here that humans seem to share with the animals and birds a false sense of security which ignores the changing moods of nature, of which seasons are a reflection. It is only when they come upon the hollow cave of Error that they realize their position of being lost. Una belatedly recognizes this position. Until then, they seem content to identify the trees and append the appropriate moral or emblematic tags to each:

*The sayling Pine, the cedar proud and tall,
The vine-prop Elme.*

When Una urges caution at the mouth of Error's den, an accumulation of proverbs is nicely suggestive of perplexity:

*Be well aware, quoth then that Ladie milde,
Least suddaine mischiefe ye too rash prouoke:
The danger hid, the place unknowne and wilde,
Breeds dreadfull doubts: Oft fire is without smoke
And perill without show: therefore your stroke
Sir knight with-hold, till further trial made.
Ah Ladie (said he) shame were to revoke
The forward footing for an hidden shade:
Vertue gives her selfe light, through darknesse for to wade.*

The rapid exchange of comments reaches its climax when the Dwarf is moved to interject his own comment:

*... Fly fly (quoth then
The fearful Dwarf:) this is no place for living men*

The Error is to be overcome. But that can be done only when faith reinforces the knight's human powers. As Una urges,

*Add faith unto your force and be not faint
Strangle her, else she sure will strangle thee.*

The hero's next encounter on the journey to Holiness is with Archimago. Redcross and Una are "drowned in deadly sleepe" when Archimago begins his enchantment. They go to their sleep suspecting nothing, lulled as they are by easy platitudes and the appearance of a cloistered virtue. The temptations offered by Archimago bring into clear focus the present spiritual health of the hero, Redcross. In the hero's active conscience and his dependence on reason and the evidence of his senses there is implicit the combination of his strength and weakness. It is very much appropriate that Archimago's assault should be directed toward sexuality. The very sobriety and solemnity of the hero's pursuit of his quest becomes at once his strength as well as weakness. Here is a challenge to his naïve idealism in an area where his faith in a reality contrary to appearance is most difficult. He has overcome Error by following Una's advice, thereby adding faith to force. But when Archimago presents him, in his third and final phase of his temptation, with the apparent evidence of Una embracing a "young squire," such a faith becomes impossible. Thus, the final stage comes in his fall when he yields to Duessa and presents to Orgoglio the compromising spectacle which is prepared for his sight by Archimago. As is common in *The Faerie Queene* here lust is presented as primarily a dereliction of chivalric duties. It amounts to a "loosness," which is opposed to the "sternness" of the pursuit.

Although the hero, at this stage, is running away from the imagined lust of his chaste lady, he himself becomes a victim of lust by falling for Duessa. Thus, the parallel stories of Una and Redcross complement each other. Put together, these stories define the “divided personality” produced by the separation of the two. This shows the movement of Book I towards a meaningful return symbolized by the climactic killing of the Dragon, by the formal blazoning of the Knight’s armour, and by the betrothal scene - the solemnization of the union of Knight and Una. The pattern of Book I seems to stress the repetition of scenes in which he overcomes a clear and present threat only to fall prey to a hidden danger. In the first canto he overcomes Error only to be fooled by Archimago’s deceptive appeal to the evidence of his senses. In the second, he vanquishes the clearly labeled Sans Foy but at the same time accepting uncritically Duessa when she calls herself Fidessa. The hero’s apparent aimlessness in the central cantos is also in keeping with his picture as naïve Knight.

At this point of the narrative, Una is shown as a helpless maiden wandering in wilderness, susceptible to both menace and assistance represented by the savage figures she is made to encounter. Thus, in the third canto, we see one such cycle completed when the friendly lion is killed by Sans Loy. The end of the canto falls as she is carried off by this new, inimical figure of bestial lust. The next two cantos, the fourth and the fifth, in which her adventures are described, where Redcross visits the House of Pride and encounters Sans Joy. The gentle maiden’s experiences in an uncivilized setting thus provide a backdrop for her youthful knight’s equally passive role in a sophisticated world. Lucifera’s relationship to the norm of chivalry is quite clear: her house is built on the sands, and her diabolic ancestry is seen in her name and retinue. In the dubious battle that ensues, it is only befitting that Redcross should win his limited victory after misinterpreting Duessa’s shout of encouragement, and that his descent into the underworld to cure Sans Joy should present elements of considerable relevance to the hero’s own situation.

The motifs gathered, in the infernal setting in the later part of Book I, of the daytime quests of the poem acquire ironic overtones. However, the descent to the underworld in general seems to be designed to dramatize the challenge of mortality to the hero’s quest for identity. The story of Hippolytus’s fall seems to have a special relevance for the hero whose naïve literalism has limited him to purely nominal victories over his foes. It has also blinded him to Una’s pertinence to his quest. It is also a function of this same literal imagination that Redcross should be deprived of the vision of hell provided to the reader. His own vision is sufficient to rescue him from the House of Pride. But it also leaves him vulnerable to a new figure of pride who is more “natural” and “monstrous”. Reason, presented as Dwarf, is able to protect Redcross from the “civilized” world of Lucifera. The panorama of victims in his dungeons is precisely the kind of underworld vision that the Dwarf can unfold to his master. There, the Old Testament names flow into a list of Romans:

The antique ruins of the Romaines fall.

It suggests through the epithets used for the Romans (stout, stubborn, stern, highminded) that the stoic virtues on which the Redcross is currently depending are no better than synonyms of pride.

In Spenser’s poem, nemesis seems to take the form of a balancing force that reasserts the validity of the natural cycles of time. Redcross leaves the House of Pride only to fall in weariness before the enervating fountain, which ironically commemorates the weary nymph of Dianna, where all his energetic resistance will be mocked as he falls prey to Orgoglio. As we have seen, the hero of Spenser’s Book I of *The Faerie Queene* is very different from the Greeco-Roman and Italian or French models. No doubt, Spenser used those models for pattern or design of his epic. He used them for their mythologies and legends. He also used Platonic, Aristotelian and other ancient philosophic ideas. But he did not accept in full any of those. He evolved an outlook on life of his own. And to illustrate that outlook he shaped his hero of the poem, and the subsidiary heroes of different books representing a virtue each. The ideal that his hero represents seems a combination of values derived from the Renaissance humanism, Platonism, and Christian theology. Hence the values he embodies and represents are both secular as well as theological.

As An Allegorical Poem

Following the wandering progress of Spenser's poem, *The Faerie Queene*, to the point where the poet left it, one may feel confused at its construction. As originally conceived, the poem's plot was rather loose, and in the course of its development, it became looser still. In the eighteenth century, Upton had the audacity to claim for Spenser's poem the unity of a classical epic. In view of the fact that *The Faerie Queene* is an incomplete poem, having only six out of twenty four books, it is not possible to pass any judgement on the poem's plot or structure with any measure of finality. In fact, even if the poem had been completed, one thing is certain that its plot could not have come any closer to that of the classical epic. If a comparison must be sought for *The Faerie Queene*, one would find it in the Italian and French romances of the medieval period. Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* sounds much closer to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* than Homer's *Iliad* or Virgil's *Aeneid*.

The "adventures intermeddled, but rather as accidents and intendments," throw far more light upon the moral conception than is commonly acknowledged. But they tend to complicate the narrative. In fact, by their very interest and importance they obscure the development of an already inchoate plot. Spenser was aware of this, and towards the end of the sixth book he offered a defence of his rambling method:

*Like as a ship, that through the Ocean wyde
Directs her course unto one certain cost,
Is met of many a counter winde and tyde,
With which her winged speed is let and crost,
And she her selfe in stormie surges tost;
Still winneth way, ne hath her compasse lost:
Right so it fares with me in this long way,
Whose course is often stayed, yet never is astray.*

As Smith and Selincourt have observed, "Such a defence will make no converts. Those who are imbued with the classical horror of voyaging upon strange seas will travel uneasily in this Elizabethan privateer, which sails at the mercy of every wind and tide, and is always ready to tack or to follow any course that seems to promise a costly prize. They will rudely question the poet's seamanship, and accuse him of having lost his way, perhaps of having no way to lose."

Apart from the announced, and pronounced, moral allegory, *The Faerie Queene* has often a special and even topical significance. This significance is not coincident throughout with the main plot. It is generally fitful and allusive, appearing and disappearing as and when the characters and situations suggest a parallel to the real world. As Spenser himself has stated, "In that Faerie Queene I mean glory in my general intention, but in particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our sovereign the Queen, and her kingdom in Faerie Land." Here, Dryden's observation seems pertinent: "The original of every one of his knights was then living at the court of Queen Elizabeth, and he attributed to each of them that virtue which he thought most conspicuous in them." This should not, of course, imply that Spenser intended to draw portraits of Elizabeth, or of Leicester, even of Grey or Sidney. But he did see a possibility. And the beings who filled his visionary world took on, in the fashion of a dream, a likeness to those familiar to his waking life. It was very natural for a person like Spenser, who was a part of the political apparatus of his time, and remained a part until his last, to turn his mind continually to that vast stage of public life on which the players were the men he knew and loved. So, as he developed his moral allegory, it kept acquiring at the same time political overtones. No doubt, quite often, the political allegory was almost a replica of the moral. This phenomenon is quite clear in the conduct of Book I, just as it is obvious in the conduct of Book V.

If Una is Truth who must be freed from Falsehood, Deceit and Hypocrisy, if she must be united to Holiness, Spenser would not fail to associate her with his own faith, and Duessa with Roman Catholicism. He would also not fail to identify them with those two great queens, Elizabeth and Mary. Also, in tracing the development

of the Redcross knight in his efforts to achieve holiness, Spenser would naturally follow, episode by episode, the history of the English church in its fight with Rome. But such analogies are not always complete and consistent. Quite often, they are only suggestive as well as momentary. The two worlds of romance and politics converge for the moment only to part company. Different aspects of one and the same character appear under different guises. One of Spenser's ideal creations can shadow forth different historical figures. For example, Elizabeth is found in Gloria, in Belpheobe, in Una, in Britomart, in Mercilla. Similarly, Arthur is now Sidney, now Leicester. Again, Sir Calidore is at one time Sidney, at another Essex. Spenser generally idealized these characters, but he could also hint a fault as well as extol a virtue. For example, Grey's involvement in an intrigue with Mary Queen of Scots, which Elizabeth never forgave him, is glanced at in the subjugation of Archegal to Redegund. Similarly, in the vivid portrait of Timias the failings of Raleigh are as clearly shown as his splendid virtues. Such reflections of his own time enhanced the delight with which Spenser's readers would follow the adventures of the faery knights. At the same time, it also saved the poet from the possible dangers of an allegory that could become too abstract and remote to interest his readers.

Of course, allegory is not to every reader's taste. Some tend to believe that Spenser was led to adopt the allegorical mode, partly by the force of medieval tradition, and partly under the influence of contemporary ideas which recommended didactic function of poetry. As a matter of fact, Spenser was so influenced because he was of that idealistic temper which made possible the rise of allegorical poetry. Another reason probably was that Spenser could most readily express in that medium the rich and varied interests of a mind which continually traveled between the worlds of fact and fiction. As an idealist, Spenser would start from the actual world of his experience, distil from it what seems to be its essence, and create another world of moral and spiritual conception which would become as real for him as that from which he has created it. For sure, ideas depend for their reality upon the vividness with which they kindle his imagination. Thus, the poet's imaginative vision, which imparts to the world of fact higher reality by expressing the soul that informs it, imparts to the world of ideas a sensuous incarnation which utters its voice in song.

We can convincingly assert that in the allegory of *The Faerie Queene* these two worlds meet and fuse. It cannot, of course, be asserted with certainty that the fusion is complete or perfect. The creatures of each world carry upon their forms traces of their origin. We may normally distinguish two types of allegory. In one type, the poet starts from the idea, and then initiates the process of incarnation. The poet abstracts human qualities into the rarefied atmosphere of thought, which are then presented to the imagination for conscious artistic treatment. The result is somewhat formal personification, cast in the traditional mould of medieval allegory. The manner of execution in this case is that of a pageant or a Morality. Much of the incidental allegory in *The Faerie Queene* is of this type. The other type of allegory is when the poet's mind is turned upon the warm realities of life. Human qualities, justice, temperance are still realized in their essence, but they are seen to be present in living human beings. Hence the poet does not present an abstract conception by a human symbol. He accepts under his idealizing vision of human being as the symbol of his conception. For instance, Britomart is not the abstract conception of chastity. She is a real woman who expresses through her person the essential quality of chastity, but not without some human weaknesses. Una may be Truth, but is much more. She is a woman with sufficient individuality. And such in the main is the structural allegory of *The Faerie Queene*. For sure, the characters are seldom presented with the subtle and complex detail of a realist.

Spenser's whole artistic method is that of idealization, and of emphasis on the essential. But for all that he bases it on real life. Also, it cannot always be decided whether the ideal conception or the character representing that ideal formed his initial inspiration. Who can say for certain whether in Sir Calidore he thought first of Courtesy or Sir Philip Sidney. Who can say whether he drew from Timias or from Raleigh or found himself in his delineation of reckless honouring, falling back unwittingly upon his knowledge of his daring and impetuous friend. Allegory of this kind is easily distinguishable from the more obvious personification, however vivid. It is marked by all the character of myth. It has complete artistic life apart from all its symbolism.

Thus, in *The Faerie Queene* real persons are idealized. The poet breathes life into his abstractions. For instance, Spenser sees his Hope not merely as a symbolic figure leaning upon anchor, but as a real woman with a face bearing signs of the anguish hidden in her heart. Similarly, Spenser sees Lord Grey not simply as sagacious and fair-minded person, but as the faery knight of Justice. The poet sets by the side of Grey a character named Talus, the iron man, that most powerful embodiment of Justice in the abstract. Then, we see in Sir Artegal and his remorseless squire two very different types of allegory, which are at once in their boldest contrast and yet in perfect harmony. The most interesting case of a mixture of different allegories is that of Graces, who dance before Colin upon the mount of Acidale. They are actually four, not three, in number. We see that in the midst of the three ancient “handmaids of Venus, daughters of delight,” who symbolized for the Greeks the grace and charm of womanhood, is “placed paravaunt” the woman that Colin loved, the heroine of *Amoretti* and the *Epithalamion*. And yet there is nothing incongruous between the ideal and the real; the two meet and their kinship is acknowledged.

In Spenser’s poem, *The Faerie Queene*, even where the allegory is least spontaneous and quite dead, the poet is able to breathe life into what seems doomed to be mechanic and merely formal. One such case is the ingenious symbolism of the Castle of Alma. In all probability, it is borrowed from the driest scholasticism. Here, in the description of its lower regions, Spenser’s art seems to sink to its lowest. We see here the mechanical figures of the “maister cooke Decoction” officiating with the Kitchen clerke Digestion.” And yet even within these antiquated walls we meet with vividly real people. Like Sir Guyon, we find ourselves drawn to that strangely shy maiden, dressed in her thickly folded robe of blue. As Guyon addresses her, the flashing blood inflames her lovely face. The scene has a human appeal, which is not diminished when Alma reveals its ideal significance:

*Why wonder yee
Faire Sir at that, which ye so much embrace?
She is the fountaine of your modestee;
You shamefast are, but Shamefastness it selfe is shee.*

Thus, the ideal conception of modesty is bodied forth in the lady. The human quality of modesty is the very essence of Guyon’s personality. The two are shown meeting for one brief but vivid moment in the spacious halls of Alma, the Soul. Here, the wide world in which they meet is the ideal world of Spenser’s imagination. We may sum up our discussion of allegory in *The Faerie Queene* with a cogent citation from Smith and Selincourt:

This world of faery land is wide enough to embrace all that was most precious to Spenser in his own experience. With its chivalrous combats and its graceful leisure, its tangle of incident and character, its dense forest and glades, and pleasant sunny interspaces, where the smoke rises from the homely cottage or the stream tickles down with a low murmur inviting repose and meditation, it could mirror both the world of his philosophic vision and the real world of Irish countryside, of court intrigues, of European politics, of his own loves and friendships. The romantic setting of the faery forest and the idealizing form of allegory are more than a picturesque convention. They are the fitting artistic expression of that mood in which he looked out on the strangeness and the beauty of life, and brooded over its inner meaning.

As Romance-epic

Before we discuss, and can decide, the status of *The Faerie Queene* as an epic, we need to know the definition and descendance of the epic. Epic being the earliest and loftiest form of poetry also has the longest tradition in world literature. The epic, or heroic poem, or simply long poem, is generally defined as a long narrative poem on a serious subject, related in an elevated style, and centred about an heroic figure on whose actions depends to some degree the fate of a nation or a race. Epics have been divided into two categories – the folk or primary epic and the literary or secondary epic. The folk or primary epics were shaped from the

legends that developed in the heroic age. In that age, the nation was on the move, engaged in military conquest and expansion. In this group belong the Greek *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, both written by the blind poet Homer, as well as *Ramayana* and *Mahabhart*a, both Indian, and *Beowulf*, an Anglo-Saxon epic whose author is not known. The literary or secondary epics were written by sophisticated craftsmen in deliberate imitation of the folk or primary epic. Of this kind is Virgil's Roman poem, the *Aeneid*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Although influenced by *Aeneid*, Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* are only loosely called epics, since they radically depart from the formal qualities of the original.

The epic as poetry was ranked by Aristotle (in his *Poetics*) as second only to tragedy in the hierarchy of genres. The Renaissance critics, however, considered epic superior to tragedy, and the highest form of all. The controversy of hierarchy apart, epic is decidedly the most ambitious and most exacting of poetic forms. It makes immense demands on the poet's knowledge, invention, and skill to sustain the scope, grandeur, and variety of a form which aspires to encompass the known world and its learning. Despite countless attempts over three thousand years, we possess only half a dozen or so epics of undisputed status. Literary epics commonly have the following features, derived from the folk epics of Homer in the west, and the Indian epics in the East. In the first place, the hero of an epic is of great national or international importance. Achilles in *Iliad*, Odysseus in *Odyssey*, Aeneas in *Aeneid*, Adam in *Paradise Lost*, Rama in *Ramayana*, and Arjuna in *Mahabhart*a, are all great warriors or great men, who represent the ideals and aspirations of their respective societies that produced them. The second quality of an epic is the large canvas of its setting. The setting in an epic is always ample in scale, sometimes world-wide, or even larger. For example, Odysseus wanders over the Mediterranean basin (the whole of the world known to its author). In fact, in Book VI he descends even into the underworld. The scope of Milton's epic is all the more enormous; it is cosmic, including heaven, hell, and earth. The third quality of an epic is the grand action, involving heroic deeds in battle, such as the Trojan war, or a long and arduous journey bravely accomplished, such as the wanderings of Odysseus. *Paradise Lost* includes the war in Heaven, the journey of Satan to discover the newly created world, and his audacious attempt to outwit God by corrupting mankind. The fourth aspect of an epic is the participation of gods and other supernatural beings. For instance, the gods of Olympus in Homer's epics, Jehova, Christ, and the angels in *Paradise Lost*. This aspect of the epic is called *machinery*. The fifth aspect of an epic is its elevated style, befitting to the grand subject and lofty hero. The poem is almost a ceremonial performance in a deliberately ceremonial style. Hence Milton's Latinate diction and stylized syntax, his resounding list of strange and sonorous names, and, above all, his *epic simile* help elevate the poem's style. The *epic similes* is an elaborate and sustained comparison, developed far beyond the specific points of parallel to the subject. The objective is to enlarge, elevate and exaggerate the subject in order to make it look larger than life size. The debate about the poem's status notwithstanding, the use of epic similes by Spenser is deliberate and beyond dispute. Note, for instance, the following from Book I of *The Faerie Queene*:

*His huge long taylor wound up in hundred foldes,
Does oursprede his long bras-scaly backe,
Whose wreathed boughts when ever he unfolds,
And thicke entangled knots adown does slacke,
Bespotted as with shields of red and blacke,
It sweepeth all the land behing him farre,
And of three furlongs does but little lacke;
And at the point two stings in-fixed are,
Both deadly sharpe, that sharpest steele exceeden farre.*

There is, in fact, an abundance of such similes in Spenser. In fact, at times, the abundance starts sounding a little overdone. See, for instance, the following, which follows just a stanza after the above:

*His blazing eyes, like two bright shining shields,
Did burne with wrath, and sparkled living lyre;*

*As two broad Beacons, set in open fields.
Send forth their flames farr off to evry shyre.
And warning give, that enemies conspyre,
With fire and sword the region to invade;
So flam'd his eyne with rage and rancorous yre:
But farre within, as in a hollow glade,
Those glaring lampes were set, that made a dreadfull shade.*

There are several other conventions that the epic poets have been following, taking cue from the earliest practitioners of the genre. One such convention has been to open the poem by stating its theme, followed by an invocation to the muse to help accomplish the gigantic task of completing the long poem.

Here again Spenser consciously follows the epic convention. The poem opens with a set of four stanzas in which the poet makes an announcement of the poem's subject and invokes the muses to help him accomplish his heroic task of completing the ambitious narrative. The first stanza reads as under:

*Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,
As time her taught, in lowly Shepherds weeds,
Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,
For trumpets stern to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,
And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;
Whose praises having slept in silence long,
Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds
To blazen broad emongst her learned throng:
Fierce warres and faithful loves shall moralize my song.*

Thus, Spenser shows his conscious connection with the epic poets. He departs with the classical tradition on the point of structure largely, and on the point of subject partly. Spenser chose the Italian poets, closer to him in time than the ancient classics of Greek and Roman poetry, and followed their model for the structuring of his most ambitious poem.

This more recent tradition of poetry dates back to the thirteenth century, wherefrom literary or secondary epic becomes the main form. Also, the poets in this tradition adopted Virgil as the source of inspiration. Virgil's influence is particularly apparent in the works of two great Italian poets Dante and Petrarch. Early in the fourteenth century Dante wrote his *Divine Commedia* (1310). Later in the century Petrarch wrote his epic *Africa* in Latin. The *Divine Commedia* is a personal epic, a kind of autobiographical and spiritual *Aeneid*. *Africa* records the struggle between Rome and Carthage. Neither Langland's *Piers Plowman* nor Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, though both are long poems, have any claims as conventional epics. But by virtue of their range, diversity, and scale they are of epic proportions. The same can be said of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Their imaginative depth and scope, too, rival the aspirations of their great epic predecessors. More than a hundred years later, two Italian poets created what can be called a new form of epic. This new form comprised of a long narrative written about romantic adventures and in comic spirit. Before these poets, the epic world had been overwhelmingly masculine. Boiardo's unfinished *Orlando Innamorato* (late 15th century) and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1532), which was a sequel to the former, established this new tradition. Orlando is driven mad by love for Angelica. But the heroine of the poem is Bradamante whose love affair with Ruggiero is the main subject of the work. The poem also contains a certain amount of mockery of chivalric ideals and knightly prowess.

Two other outstanding epics in the new tradition or form of Europe belong to the sixteenth century, namely Camoens's *Os Lusíadas* (1572) and Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1575). Of these, while the first is classical and Virgilian in spirit and structure, the second is Christian rather than classical or nationalistic. Camoens does for Portugal what Virgil had done for Rome. It has for its theme Vasco Da Gama's discovery

of the sea-route to India. In the course of the narrative, Camoens covers the whole history of Portugal. In doing so, he creates a nationalistic epic in which the Portuguese wage a holy war against paganism. Tasso's subject is the recovery of Jerusalem in the First Crusade. It has many heroes and heroines and owes a good deal to the tradition of the medieval romance. It also contains a strong element of the chivalric and supernatural. It is also a didactic and allegorical poem.

Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1589, 1596) is an acknowledged greatest long poem in English of the Elizabethan age. Like the preceding Italian poems, it is a mixture of epic and romance. It is written in the specially designed stanza form now called the Spenserian stanza. He professedly planned the poem in twenty-four books, but only six could be completed, left unfinished in the middle of the seventh. That Spenser was conscious of writing the poem in the great epic tradition is evident in all aspects of his epic, including the opening announcement. In the prefatory letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, he also mentioned, as his four greatest predecessors, Homer, Virgil, Ariosto and Tasso. Spenser designed the poem as an elaborate allegory or, as he calls it, "darke conceit." He uses in the poem the material of the Arthurian legends and the Charlemagne romances. The hero of each book represents a virtue, making the poem throughout a didactic narrative. The structure of the poem is astonishingly complex, rich, and allusive. Also, it needs to be noted that *The Faerie Queene* is a courtesy book, the most elaborate and courtly of all books of etiquette of the Elizabethan age. As Spenser explains in his letter to Raleigh, "the generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." With *The Faerie Queene* comes to an end the tradition of the epic of chivalry, in fact, the whole cult of chivalry. But that did not affect its great influence on the subsequent narrative poets.

Although, as we have seen, *The Faerie Queene* combines within its fold both the traditions of the classical epic as well as the medieval romance, in its spirit it is neither classical nor medieval. Spenser gives his poem, through its allegorical structure, the spirit of the Renaissance ideal which combines Christian, Platonic and humanist codes. In that sense, it is the most complex epic poem of all the classical as well as medieval lot. The radical change in the spirit of *The Faerie Queene* from that of the classical epics need to be understood; else, we misjudge the merit of Spenser's work. To get at the nature of that spirit we shall have to go back to the end of the eleventh century poetry. It was during this period that the idea of the holy crusade, and hence of the Christian epic, was born. "We are right and these miscreants are wrong" (as Roland utters in the French epic) conveys the spirit that dominated the European epics after *Le Chanson de Roland*. This was something altogether new for epic poetry. The epic had always lived by conflict. Until this time, it was simply a conflict between two sides, with both sides almost equally protected by gods. Also, both sides were noble, one destined to prevail only with the help of superior power, or the accidental support of an immortal conceived in essentially human terms. Homer writes from the Greek point of view, but he does not suggest that the Greeks were right, and the Trojans were wrong. Virgil has moved perceptibly nearer to the idea of a hero with a divine mission. But he also does not suggest that the Trojans have any sacred or pre-ordained superiority over the Latins. In these epics one does not perceive any attempt to portray one side representing faith and the other faithlessness, one side as good and the other as evil.

The notion of the conflict having supernatural sanction is original with the Christian epic. This idea, in various forms and with varying degrees of intensity, runs all through the European epics after the French *Roland*. It is not quite absent in the more frivolous Italian epics. And it runs with all the weight in the operation of Redcross Knight and Sir Artegall in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Book I. To the readers of Ariosto, struck only by the fantasy and irony, the idea of the Christian crusade may look an absurdity. But there is a case to be made of it all the same. As for Tasso, the case needs no arguing. Writing in the full tide of the Counter-Reformation and completely expressing its spirit, he takes the holy war as his theme as well as his inspiration. It must, however, be added that neither in Ariosto nor in Tasso do the exigencies of the faith exclude chivalry and courtesy to those outside its bounds.

The Italian romance-epic benefitted the most from the Arthurian literature, from its vast and many-sided appeal. Like Charlemagne, Arthur was Christian prince, fighting against pagan enemies. With the disappearance of the great theme of national and Christian war against a pagan foe, the exploits of the individual knights of the Round-Table became deeds of individual prowess, undertaken for love or personal renown. True, the knights of the Round-Table sometimes fight against pagan or Saracen knights; but these are in no other way distinguished from the Christians. They are equally likely to be noble and brave. The code of chivalry embraces pagan and Christian alike. Also, the disappearance of the holy war affects the supernatural no less than the natural events. They are no longer parts of a providential scheme. They become individual enchantments, infinitely various, and mysterious in means and motive. Above all, it was the love theme that distinguished the Arthurian romances from the older epic. In Italy, it was above all the love stories, of Lancelot and Guinevere, of Tristan and Iseult, that represent the Arthurian cycle. Hence a new motive enters Italian romance literature – love and the fatal power of the heroine. We are already in sight of Spenser's Angelica and Bradamante. It is this grafting of the new Arthurian romance on to the old Carolingian stock that brings the romantic epic into being. It also accounts for the pervasive atmosphere of Arthurian romance in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*; of course, with the absence of specific Arthurian tales or specific debts to Malory. The Arthurian element is too obvious in Spenser to be denied or overlooked. But it came to him, not from Malory, but from his Italian sources. Whenever a different and distinctly British Arthurian element enters in *The Faerie Queene* the ordinary reader quite often fails to notice it.

Spenser's epic begins in the same manner in which does Boiardo's, though Spenser, affected by later notions of epic correctness, plunged in *medias res*, left what was chronologically the beginning to the end, and so never got to it at all. The two fountains of Cupid and Merlin, the one inspiring love and the other hate, which play a large part in the story, are similarly removed from the Carolingian and Akin to the Arthurian spirit. Above all, there is the central importance of the heroine, the delectable Angelica, whose caprices and enchantments control the entire intricate web. Spenser had read Boiardo as much as he had read Ariosto and Virgil. Boiardo's style is straightforward, easy and a little rustic. He tells his tale with a rather grand carelessness and an undertone of irony that is nearer to simple humour than to the finesse of Ariosto. His admiration for the virtues of chivalry is whole-hearted and perfectly genuine. There are many parallels between Boiardo and Spenser. A certain old-fashioned simplicity of mind brings him in some way closer to Spenser. But ever more important than that is the fact that he created Ariosto's world, and therefore, at one remove, form Spenser's world. He laid down the lines both of its adventures and its characters. All the principal characters in Ariosto are taken over from Boiardo. The principal heroes, Orlando, Rinaldo, Astolfo, Ferran, all subject to the whims of Angelica. The faithful lovers Ruggiero and Bradamante, Brandimarte and Fiordilige, etc., with their beguiling gardens; the magic lance, the shield, the lions, the dragons, the hermits, the salvage men; all these that make Boiardo's world are taken over bodily by Ariosto. Further, without these characters of Ariosto and Boiardo, there could not have been Spenser's Arthur, Guyon, Calidore, Artegall and Britomart, Scudamour and Amoret, Archimago, Duessa and Acrasia. Intricate adventures proliferating into many episodes, feats of arms inspired by love, and a background, however treated, of religious conflict – these are the materials that Spenser inherited from these Italian writers of romance-epic. It is also possible to find, besides one or two explicitly allegorical episodes, a general allegorical undertone to Boiardo's romance. And it is quite likely that Spenser read him in this way. It is, therefore, in these respects that Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is different from the classic epics of Homer and Virgil, and is similar to the romance-epics of Boiardo and Ariosto.

Literary Allusions

It was quite inevitable that Spenser's faery land should be enriched with the spoils of literary reminiscence. A student from his youth, Spenser had lived a full and eager life in books. His imagination was kindled as much in the study as in the outside world. To know the sources of his art is to get familiar with the library to which the Elizabethan scholar had access. Spenser also drew with equal freedom from the Bible, from the

Greek and Latin poets, from the writings of the Italian and French Renaissance, and from that medieval literature which the learned held up to contempt. *La Morte D'Arthur*, and kindred romances, *Sir Bevis*, *Guy of Warwick*, and the rest – “those feigned books of chivalry wherein,” says Ascham, “a man by reading them should be led to none other end but only to manslaughter and bawdry” – suggested to Spenser much incident and inspired many a noble reflection. His art was a compound of many simple elements extracted from many sources. Although he borrowed from his predecessors more than any other poet did, no one left as distinct a mark of his own personality on the borrowed material as he did. There is hardly an incident or character in *The Faerie Queene* which cannot be traced in the writings of one or another writer that came before him. All that only proves the extent of his readings in earlier literature. However, more surprising than the extent and diversity of his reading is his power to combine in one composite picture materials drawn from very different sources. He is able to harmonize these borrowed materials because he leaves nothing as he found; his imagination colours all that passes through his mind. Thus, every particle included in the formation of the rich compound shows the distinctive imprint of the poet's personality. The routine distinctions between classical and romantic, ancient and modern, sacred and profane do not come in his way of assimilating and amalgamating them into his multi-coloured texture he designs for each of his poems. Spenser pursued such an eclectic method alike in the weaving of his plot, in its incidental embellishment, in the similes and allusions that enrich his style and drive home his imaginative conception.

The story of Una and Redcross knight in Book I of *The Faerie Queene* opens with suggestions of Malory's Gareth and Lynette. Here, the enchanter, who is their chief enemy, is not a distant relative of Ariosto's hermit, who deceives Angelica. Further, on their travels, Una and her knight meet with classical satyrs and Elizabethan courtiers. Their adventures at this time are reminiscent now of Virgil, now of *Sir Bevis* and *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, now of the *Apocalypse*. When their betrothal is described, its celebration marks a confusion of pagan and Christian rituals. However, despite all these echoes of earlier sources, the harmony of the imaginative atmosphere created with all these allusions is not disturbed by any individual element. Similarly, when we come upon the description of the ante-room in the house of Busirane, which is hung with goodly arras whereon, as in the castles of several medieval poets, are woven legends of classical mythology. Presumably, their source is Ovid, but nothing could be different from Ovid than the music and the feeling with which Spenser delineates them. Further, we see that over the portals of the room are inscribed the words *Be bold*, which are said to have come from the old wives' tale of Mr. Fox. Also, among the lovers whose “spotless pleasures” make glad the garden of Venus, David and Jonathan, Pylades and Orestes walk side by side. Then, in the dark river of Cocytus, Pilate stands next to Tamtalus.

Spenser's style does not undergo any change when it comes to giving utterance to his religious thoughts. For instance, the well of life into which the Redcross knight falls and sinks in his conflict with the Dragon, is likened, not merely to Silo or to Jordon, but to Cephise and to Hebrus, to the English Bath, and to the German Spau. The guardian angel, who watches over the prostrate Sir Guyon after his fierce struggle with the temptations of Mammon, and evokes that superb expression of Christian humility and gratitude, “O why should heavenly God to men have such regard?”, appears to Spenser as a fair young man “of wondrous beautie, and of freshest years,” like to Phoebus, or “to Cupido on Idaean hill.” A pedant may find this comparison rather ludicrous, and the more prosaic pietist may find it profane. But to Spenser it seemed quite natural, even inevitable. As Truth appealed to the poet in terms of beauty, so all beauty, whatever its source, could be brought to serve and to illuminate the highest truth.

Spenser brings this wealth of literary allusions in touch with his own observation of nature and of human character. The Irish scenery with which he was most familiar, and which resembled the traditional landscape of medieval romance, provided background for his poem, which is also often treated in a traditional manner. Also, as the fruit of intimate observation, it gave him pictures of vivid reality.

Structure of the Faerie Queene

It is a little odd that a poem, which is incomplete, should be subjected to the consideration of its plot and structure. And yet, there has been a running debate on the subject of the poem's structure. One way of

looking at the structure of *The Faerie Queene* is to see how far the proposed design of the 24 books has been followed in the six that are complete. Another is to forget about the proposed pattern and look for the structure of the existing poem in six books and a small fragment of the seventh. The difficulty that one experiences in considering the poem's structure is, however, posed not by its incompleteness so much as the mixing of modes that the poet has deliberately effected. The poem consciously follows the epic model, the romance model, the allegorical mode, etc.; all within the framework of a single poem. As C. S. Lewis has observed, "Formally considered, *The Faerie Queene* is the fusion of two kinds, the medieval allegory and the more recent romantic epic of the Italians. Because it is allegory, and allegory neither strictly religious nor strictly erotic but universal, every part of the poet's experience can be brought in: because it is romantic epic, a certain unity is immediately imposed on all that enters it, for all is embodied in romantic adventures. 'Faerie land' itself provides the unity – a unity not of plot but of *milieu*. *A priori* the ways of Faerie Land might seem 'so exceeding spacious and wide' that such a unity amounted to nothing, but this is not found to be so. Few poems have a greater harmony of atmosphere. The multiplicity of the stories, far from impairing the unity, supports it; for just that multiplicity, that packed fullness of 'vehement adventure', is the quality of Faerie Land; as tragedy is the quality of Hardy's Wessex."

Here, then, is one way of looking at the unity of the poem's structure. The way is not to look at its unity in terms of Aristotelian beginning, middle and end, not in terms of a chain of incidents linked with each other on the principle of causality, nor in terms of the story of a single, or a set of characters. The unity of the poem's structure, we are told, has to be seen in terms of its atmosphere. And the atmosphere of the Faerie Land, it is argued, is that of romance or romantic adventure, just as in Hardy's Wessex, the atmosphere is that of tragedy. So we study the poem's structure in terms of its mood and atmosphere, not in traditional terms of incident and character. In Lewis's view, there is in *The Faerie Queene* the originality and fruitfulness of its structural invention. In his view, whatever incidental faults the poem may have, it decidedly has a healthy constitution. The matter and the form fit each other like hand and glove.

The primary structural idea (of atmospherical unity) is reinforced by two others, the first internal to each book, and the second striding across from book to book through the whole poem. Thus, Spenser seems to have decided that in each book there should be, what Lewis calls, an allegorical core (or shrine or inner stage) where the theme of the book would appear disentangled from the complex adventures and reveal its unity. The core of each book can be described as follows: in Book I, the House of Holiness; in Book II, the House of Alma; in Book III, the Garden of Adonis; in Book IV, the Temple of Venus; in Book V, the Church of Isis; and in Book VI, Mount Acidale. Since the position of the core in each book is not stable, no conclusion can be drawn based on the numbering of the two cantos of Book VII. Next in dignity to the core in each book comes the main allegorical story of the book. It may be Guyon's or Calidore's quest. Beyond that is a loose fringe of stories which may be fully allegorical (like Sendamore's visit to the cottage of Care) or merely typical (like Paridell's seduction of Hellenore) or not allegorical at all (like the story told by the Squire of Dames to Satyrane). So, the appearance of pathless wandering, which is very necessary to the poem's quality, is largely a work of deliberate and successful illusion. It is quite possible, although a little improbable, that the poet does not always know where he is going with regard to particular stories. But he is always very much in command with regard to the symphony of mood, the careful arrangement of different degrees of allegory and different degrees of seriousness. And it is in this symphony and symmetry that the poem's unity lies.

The unity of *The Faerie Queene*'s structure is also to be seen in the symphony or symmetry of its imagery. As Northrop Frye has remarked, "To demonstrate a unity in *The Faerie Queene*, we have to examine the imagery of the poem rather than its allegory. It is Spenser's habitual technique, developing as it did out of emblematic visions he wrote in his nonage, to start with the image, not the allegorical translation of it, and when he says at the beginning of the final canto of Book II:

*Now giv's this goodly frame of Temperance
Fairely to rise*

one feels that the 'frame' is built out of the characters and places that are clearly announced to be what they are, not out of their moral or historical shadows." It is significant to note that Spenser prefaces his poem with sonnets to several patrons. And it is quite clear from those pieces that the poet meant to indicate to them that they are there somewhere in the poem. Of course, he does not specify where precisely anyone of them appears. However, the implication is that for such readers the allegory is to be read more or less *ad libitum*. The expressions that Spenser chooses to use for allegory – "darke conceit," "clowdily enwrapped" – emphasize that allegory's deliberate vagueness. One example to this effect will suffice. It is quite clear in the poem that Belpheobe refers to Elizabeth, or so we believe. But, when Timias speaks of her, "to whom the heavens doe serve and sew," can we really say, as someone does, that it is a reference to the storm that wrecked the Armada? Obviously, such a reading is only an example of a subjective allegorical meaning. In the work of Spenser, the greatest allegorical poet in English, the allegory can not merely be uncertain but even be muddled. Of course, Frye's argument is not that we "let the allegory go," but that it is evident in Spenser that the "imagery is prior in importance to it."

We must, therefore, while looking for unity in the poem, also look for the structure of imagery. Centring around the quest and journey motives each book of *The Faerie Queene* moves through a pattern of conflict between the forces of good and those of evil. Since the world of *The Faerie Queene* is that of romance, the presence of good and evil is shown in the simplified terms of separate existence of the two. Hence, Spenser's method is to make every virtue and vice visual, which makes the moral of every conflict clear, besides making the presentation interesting in terms of fable. Thus, fable follows fable, image follows image, character follows character, incident follows incident, and all moving in a simultaneous visual show of moral and spiritual journey through light and sound apparatus. The structure thus of imagery that emerges in the poem is multi-dimensional. Romance may simplify the complex reality of life into static characters and symbolic incidents, but it complicates the matter in the presentation of the equations between different characters and incidents. Hence in such a work as Spenser's while philosophy may get simplified, in almost adolescent vision of life, the structure gets complicated by the very wealth of details. But one can always notice the repetitive tracks which one finds in the web of visual imagery. Thus, both allegory as well as imagery help notice the principles or patterns which contrive unity in the poem.

Still another way of finding an entry into the structure of *The Faerie Queene* to see where the unity of the poem lies is, as Rosemond Tuve has suggested: "By far the most striking element of structure which Spenser has caught from much attention to romances is the principle of entrelacement. . . . No doubt it is this characteristically 'interrupted' and interwoven structure which is referred to when Wilfred Owen distinguishes the typical 'Ariostan structure' of Books III and IV of *The Faerie Queene* from the contrasted 'repetitive structure' of Books I and II; Spenser is thought to have failed to accommodate these structures to each other when he conceived the idea of a 'super-epic', in which each Book should be a little epic or miniature *Aeneid*, with its separate hero, as in Books I and II. However, typical romance entrelacement, a thoroughly medieval development though altered by Ariosto for more suspense and variety, seems to me to characterize all Spenser's designs. . . . The well organized Books I and II are not little epics with separate heroes, but parts of a whole, connected as the parts of cyclical romances are ordinarily connected, and in fact showing extreme likeness to the way the different quests of the *Queste* are connected. The separate Books exhibit, as units and as parts of the unfinished whole, a romance's kind of coherence. It is unlike, even opposed to, that epic coherence which was most palatable to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and which was all the more attractive to the nineteenth century if the piece got its unity from an epic hero more visibly than from an epic action." These remarks sum up the substance of the debate about the structure of Spenser's poem. The critic is right in discouraging us from seeing the poem's unity in terms of the traditional epic form. He rightly puts us on the path of romance, which the poem obviously is, suggesting how romance form holds the key to

the poem's unity. Of course, corroborating that unity in terms of the pattern of allegory or that of imagery does not, in any sense, contradict the romance structure. After all, romance quest is also to be about something and it would require some method and technique to make the quest or journey humanly interesting. The method and technique bring in allegory and imagery which, undisputedly, are the chief devices of Spenser as poet.

Although we see Spenser's poem closer to romance than epic, no one intends to deny the simple fact that Spenser deliberately tried to emulate epic structure and epic conventions. The problem arises only when we try to see epic in romance or romance in epic, and call it defective the moment we see any departure or deviation from the traditional form of an epic or romance. As Rosemand Tuve argues, "This web-structure has special possibilities of gradually discernible meaning as the woven pattern shows it is a pattern and *takes* shape. Hence it was a superbly invented instrument for conveying not only what we called the polyphonic nature of what is happening, but that which interested Spenser supremely, the fact to human minds what happens 'means' something is significant." Hence the real principle of unity, in this view, lies in "meanings" of happenings, *which inform what happened* and are not separable from the story. In a romance, the story can be advanced by conventions, such as customs of castles, quarrelsome knights provoking battles, stops for lodging, knights-errant who merely meet adventure, etc. It is such a use of significances as the cohering factor, not the fancifulness of romance, which makes it possible for the reader to move in and out of symbols like the 'real' places they are.

Although this mode of making different incidents cohere in a unity is used all over the poem, it is easier to observe in Books where a single hero achieves some objective or learns some great lesson. Unlike the epic, Spenser's poem does not depend on the sequential series of happenings, which is natural to a biography-of-hero principle of organization. In Spenser, we encounter a conception of structure very different from that which would give us an epic action towards which every events builds, or an epic hero whom every action ultimately exalts. In *The Faerie Queene*, structure is an interweaving of unrelated parts which unobtrusively take shape as a pattern. In this poem, unity is not imparted by the series of a hero's exploits, nor by the development of a mind, nor even by a conflict. The virtue, which is sought by the hero of each book, acts as the unifying factor in every Book. This is quite a common thing in romance, but not so common in epic. Spenser inherited this structure from the Italian poets who preceded him, those who wrote romances. Through the inheritance of this structure, which was neither episodic nor articulated like an epic action, Spenser found it convenient to heighten the presentation of reigning themes to produce real allegory, and yet evade the problem which teases the modern writer, where and when the story is subordinate to allegory.

Thus, in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* the unifying principle of structure is not the *history* of a particular or an individual; the action is not a biography, a life, but an action. Allegory may have many definitions, all seen to agree to Sidney's remark on poetry, that it deals with things "in their universal consideration," so that we view abstractions themselves interacting. It seems Spenser acted brilliantly in realizing that a structure which weaves a tapestry before us is particularly well-suited to allegory, where pattern must overwhelm us. He also came out supremely successful at this secret conveying of unparaphrasable meaning. We need not obscure the poet's success by re-writing his stories into their allegories. Instead, we should take the whole images with all their depicted feelings as the true statements of his allegorical meanings.

Spenser's Poetic Style

Spenser's art can be said to vary from homeliness to splendour, from the remoteness of romance to the closeness of common life. We can be sure that the greatness of his art lies, not in the one sphere or in the other, but in the fusion of both the spheres. And in this very fusion lies the secret of his style. It easily adapts itself to the matter or mood in hand. It is also the fitting expression of the poet's unique and graceful personality. His personality as poet may not be as forceful as that of Milton, but his character is no less indelibly stamped on all the different poems he wrote. Wordsworth and Keats have produced lines which could be mistaken for

those of Milton, but no one has produced a stanza which could be mistaken for Spenser's. the distinctive qualities of his style can be found in its diction and its melody. Spenser was drawn to an archaism, which is inimitable because it is purely capricious. He was drawn to it because of its reminiscent picturesqueness as well as by its musical potentialities.

In his very first, and greatly successful, poem, the *Shepherd's Calendar*, Spenser had experimented in the use of archaic language. The diction of *The Faerie Queene* is a more mature product of his peculiar poetic talent. Undeterred by the criticism of his contemporaries, he took complete advantage of the fluid state of English in his day, not only to recover the obsolete, but to construct new words on the analogies of the old, and to adapt both his spelling and pronunciation to the desired effects of cadence and melody. One of the aims of Spenser as poet was to perfect for himself an instrument from which he could extract a music as subtle as Chaucer's and by means of which he could create around his subject the atmosphere of an ideal antique world. The Chaucerian element in Spenser's language is like a distinct but not often perceived flavour. It can be tasted in occasional words, such as "warry," "encheason", or "solas". It can also be felt in the use of abstract nouns with romance terminations. Finally, it can be seen in the cadence or verbal reminiscence of such a line as "there many minstrales maken melodye." It clearly shows how from Chaucer he learnt the metrical value of the short syllable.

Spenser's poetic style is also marked by a special touch of the old romance. Malory and others had transplanted it from France. It gets expressed in such words as "prow", "persaunt", "belgardes", "heavperes", "paravaunt". We also need to remember that many of Spenser's supposed archaisms are those of his age. He did, of course, cherish words which though still in use were rapidly going out of fashion. The sustained colouring and atmosphere of Spenser's style, we find, is given by a constant use of words which are not so frequently found in Marlowe, Shakespeare, or Sidney. Thus, Spenser made the fullest use of the richly compounded language by freely adapting spelling, punctuation, and word-formation, to his needs. In order to lighten the movement and smooth the flow of his metre he could use old forms, "as whilom was the antique worldes guize." To suit the play of his melody or rhyme he could vary his forms, using "dreriment", or "drerihed", or "dreariness", "jollihed" or "jollitee". Spenser also created his own forms such as the adjective "daint", or the verb to "cherry". Spenser has invited criticism about his diction, which has been labelled arbitrary and illogical. Yet Spenser has grafted his so-called idiosyncrasies on to a firm and healthy stock of pure and simple English. His style is decidedly free from the involved and pedantic mannerisms which were very common in his day. Therefore, it can be said that Spenser was the first conscious inventor of a distinct poetic diction. His diction provoked Daniel, his contemporary, to comment that Spenser used "aged accents and untimely words"; and Ben Jonson to say that "in affecting the ancients he writ no language." However, while his contemporaries disparaged him, the romantics admired him. Note, how Coleridge comments: there was "no poet whose writings would safelier stand the test of Mr. Wordsworth's theory than Spenser."

It has been unanimously acclaimed that the distinctive quality of Spenserian melody found perfect expression in the verse form of *The Faerie Queene*. Throughout the huge length of the poem he heightens the effect proper to his interlacing rhyme-system by an unbroken assonance and alliteration, as also by the haunting repetition of word, phrase and cadence. His supreme *tour de force* in this method can be seen in his often cited stanzas from the *Bower of Bliss* in Book II. Of course, this method is habitual to him. Also, it is capable of infinite variation according to his needs. Puttenham, another contemporary of Spenser, noted some of those rhetorical figures, such as "both auricular and sensible, by which all the words and clauses are made as well tunable to the ear as stirring to the mind," that find perfect illustration in *The Faerie Queene*. At times, Spenser repeats a word in such a manner that it gives the line a metrical balance. Another time it enforces an obvious antithesis. At times, the iteration is little more than a play upon the meaning of the word. But more often, the word suggests a subtlety in the poet's thought or feeling by the peculiar quality which it imparts to the music of the stanza:

*Withal she laughed, and she blusht withal,
That blushing to her laughter gave more grace,
And laughter to her blushing, as did fall.*

Spenser's skill in playing with the recurrent word and phrase and cadence throughout a whole stanza is very much like that of an expert juggler who weaves in the air intricate patterns with various balls of different colours, and yet never allows any ball to go out of his control. Note, for example, the following:

*Amongst those knights there were three brethren bold,
Three bolder brethren never were yborne,
Borne of one mother in one happie mold,
Borne at one burden in one happie morne,
That bore three such, three such not to be fond;
Her name was Agape whose children werne
All three as one, the first hight Priamond,
The second Dymond, and youngest Triamond.*

Puttenham gave this device the name of "translacer, which is when you turn and translace a word with many sundry shapes as the Tailor doth his garment, and after that sort to play with him in your dittie." Some say that Spenser was attracted to this device in the prose of Sidney; others, that he caught its true poetic use from his study of the Latin poets. Dryden called it the "turn" upon the word or the thought. He rightly recognized that the English master of this device was "Spenser, who had studied Virgil, and among his other excellences had copied that."

One of the prominent aspects of Spenser's poetic style is the music. He has been considered most musical among the English poets. His studied use of assonance and alliteration springs from his musical instinct. He employs assonance usually to give greater value to the vowel of the rhyme word, by anticipating it in some strong place within the line:

*Weening some heavenly goddesse he did see,
Or else unweeting, what it else might be;*

This use can be especially noticed in the Alexandrine, where the assonance will often be found to emphasize the caesura (a break or pause in a line of poetry, dictated by the natural rhythm of the language and/or enforced by punctuation):

*Or A work of wondrous grace, and able soules to save.
That like a rose her silken leaves did fair unfold.*

At times Spenser continues his assonance through a stanza, as in the following, where he emphasizes the rhyme vowels *ai* and *e* by contrasting them with the harder sound of *i*:

*So there that right Sir Calidore did dwell,
And long while after, whilest him list remaine,
Dayly beholding the faire Pastorell,
And feeding on the bayt of his owne bane.
During which time he did her entertaine,
With all kind courtesies, he could invent;
And every day, her companie to gaine,
When to the field she went, he with her went:
So for to quench her fire, he did it more augment.*

Spenser's most persistent stylistic device is alliteration, which he uses as much to mark his rhythm as to knit his verse together; as much to enforce his meaning as to enrich his melody. His source for this device was, decidedly, that earlier poetry of the Anglo-Saxon period which is alliterative by structure. Its artistic value

was enhanced by his study of Chaucer, in whose poetry it is accidental rather than structural. He developed its musical possibilities to their utmost, so much so that it became for him an integral part of his melody, capable of sustaining his verse even when his poetic inspiration was at its lowest. Many of Spenser's favourite phrases, such as "loving lord", "girlonds gay", "silver sleepe", "lovely layes", "wide wilderness", are born of his love of alliteration. It becomes such a natural element of his music that at times it even influences, almost unconsciously, his choice of words. Note, for instance, the following:

*I knockt, but no man aunswered me by name;
I cald, but no man answerd to my clame.*

Spenser knew the power of alliteration upon *w* to give the sense of vastness and desolation:

In all his wayes through this wide worldes wave.

It seems that in Spenser's mind certain combinations of consonants were associated with particular feelings or conceptions. He would always carry their use through several lines, sometimes even through an entire stanza. His alliteration upon *s* and *l* for conveying a sense of peace are particularly effective. The sense of peace is conveyed through "the senses lulled are in slumber of delight." One of the best examples of this type is the Despair's argument, which is rendered irrisitable by the music in which it is phrased:

*Is not short paine well borne, that brings long ease,
And layes the soule to sleepe in quiet grave?
Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please.*

Very similar is Arthur's dream of the faerie queene; the alliteration does the trick here also:

*Whiles every sence the humour sweet embayd,
And slombring soft my hart did steale away,
Me seemed, by my side a royal Mayd
Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay.*

We need to note here that in all these citations the effect of the alliteration is strengthened by the use of the alliterative letter in the middle and end as well as at the beginning of the words.

All these are, of course, special uses. Apart from these uses, assonance as well as alliteration runs through Spenser's entire verse as an integral part of its melody. It sounds as a kind of sweet undertone. It blends with the regular rise and fall of the verse. It enhances the rhythmical appeal. Finally, it forms a total effect of indefinable grace and beauty.

A style like that of Spenser is always fraught with dangers as well as temptations. No wonder that Spenser did not escape them. No doubt, his finest music is strongly linked with his noblest imaginings, he could still convey, in music of a kind, any idea, however trivial, even though it was not always worth the carriage. In such cases, he ends up producing parodies of his own poetic self. He loses his imagination. His favourite and powerful devices become just threadbare artifice of a cunning metrical trickster. He fills out, then, the rhythmical structure of his stanza with words and phrases that add nothing to his picture. He gives then whole lines of comment. That is trite and commonplace. He never learnt the art of pruning, nor was he overcareful to weed. Although his verse has a vigour of its own, it is seldom rapid. His verse can be said to be the counterpart of that brooding habit in which he usually looked at life. Its sustaining principle was a slow circling movement that continually returned upon itself. The essential quality of Spenser's style is better summed up by the inspired lines of Wordsworth than by any prose criticism can do:

*Sweet Spenser moving through his clouded heaven
With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace.*

To Spenser the significance of the situations that he chooses to describe as well as his attitude to them were more than situations themselves. The music in which his imagination phrased them was very much a part of

their significance. To say this is, of course, to deny him supreme place among narrative poets, even among the writers of romance. Also, even those readers who like a story for its own sake often find him tedious. They turn with relief to Ariosto, Byron, or Scott. But the charm of his romantic world is not only conveyed through an appropriate poetic style, it is also enhanced by the sound and colour of his verse. The charm assumes the nature of enchantment. It carries us along, far away from the real world, and into the faerie land of people and places better or worse than the real. 'Style is the man.' The statement is more true in the case of Spenser than anyone else.

The Spenserian Stanza

The unique and distinctive quality of Spenserian melody found perfect expression in the verse form of *The Faerie Queene*. The stanza form was his own invention. That is why it has come to be known as the Spenserian stanza. It is considered Spenser's greatest contribution to the development of English prosody. Perhaps it was Chaucer's *rhyme royal* (a b a b b c c) which called his attention to the effectiveness of a stanza with an uneven number of lines. The effects achieved in these two measures might well be said to represent the difference between the metrical genius of Chaucer and that of Spenser. He is also said to owe something to the *ottava rima* (a b a b a b c c). In all probability, Spenser relied more on *rhyme royal* than on *ottava rima* for forging his new stanza form. An evidence to this probability is the interlacing of his rhymes that brings his measure nearer to the stanza that he had borrowed from Chaucer for the opening of his *April* and *November* Eclogues (a b a b b c b c). But to admit this should not in any way detract from the absolute originality of the Spenserian stanza.

Spenser added ninth line to the *ottava rima* and made it longer by adding two more syllables. He made it decasyllabic. This line provides magnificent conclusion to the linked sweetness of the preceding eight. In the last line, the music of the whole stanza spreads and settles to a triumphant or a quiet close. Note, for instance, the following:

*Nought is there under heaven's wide hollownesse,
That moves more dear compassion of mind,
Then beautie brought t'unworthy wretchednesse
Through envies snares or fortunes freakes
I, whether lately through her brightnesse blind,
Or through alleageance and fast fealtie,
Which I do owe unto all woman kind,
Feele my heart perst with so great agonie,
When such I see, that all for pittie I could die.*

Its logical value to the metrical scheme lies in the fact that, standing separate from the rest by reason of its length, it constitutes a distinct climax. Thus, in a manner, it remains detached. And yet, because it is linked in rhyme with the foregoing quatrain, it never suffers the sharp isolation that often marks the final couplet of the *ottava rima* or the *rhyme royal*.

The ninth line, which is longer than the rest, and is the last line, is apparently fitted for sententious (a short, pithy statement which expresses an opinion) and reflective comment upon the situation. Note, for example, the following:

Ill wears he armes, that nill them use for Ladies sake

Thus, it is admirable for rounding off an episode, or concluding a canto. It is quite often the most beautiful line of a stanza, which gathers strength as it moves on, giving the last beautiful touch to a detailed description. Note, for instance, the following:

Loe where the dreadfull Death behind thy backe doth stonde,

At times, it distils into one perfect sentence the emotion that the other eight lines of the stanza have evoked, such as the following:

Ah Love, lay downe thy bow, the whiles I may respire.

This ninth long line, called Alexandrine, as a rule, has an almost regular iambic beat, and a caesura which splits the line into two equal parts. Even with such a construction, it can be put to various uses, as Spenser does in *The Faerie Queene*. One of its uses is that it can express a tender beauty, such as the following:

So faire a creature yet saw never sunny day.

It can also roll magnificently as when it tells

Of old Assaracus, and Inacbus divine

Or when it tells of

A sacrament prophane in mistery of wine.

At times, it can also be utterly simple, such as the following:

For all we have is this: what he list do, he may.

Spenser quite often gives it a slight variation from the normal type to give expression to the subtlest grades of feeling. The addition of a syllable to the fifth foot of the line makes it dance with the grace and easy movement of a bride:

When forth from virgin bowre she comes in th' early morne.

At times Spenser makes it avoid a marked caesura to gain an added length and a more sustained and sinuous flow like that of a snake. Note, for instance, the following:

Through the greene gras his long bright burnisht backe declares.

Also, when the line is split by the caesura into three equal parts instead of two, it acquires a slow and halting movement, as of pain and weariness in the following:

Their hearts were sicke, their sides were sore, their feete were lame.

As we have seen, Spenser attains in all these lines an effect which seems beyond the scope of a decasyllabic verse. But to quote individual, isolated Alexandrine, as we have done here, does not give a fair idea of their true value. For their effect, these lines are dependent upon their vital relation with the metrical scheme of the entire stanza of nine lines. No poet has the distinction of ever weaving a web of verse as subtly intricate as Spenser's. Throughout the vast length of *The Faerie Queene* Spenser heightens the effect proper to his interlacing rhyme-system by a continuous assonance and alliteration, and by the haunting repetition of word, phrase, and cadence. As the concluding quotation of the beauty that Spenser created in his wonder of nine lines, here is a piece which is so visual, so musical, and so stately:

*As when two rams stird with ambitious pride,
Fight for the rule of the rich fleeced flocke,
Their horned fronts so fierce on either side
Do meete, with the terrour of the shocke
Astonied both, stand sencelesse as a blocke,
Forgetful of the hanging victory:
So stood these twaine, unmoved as a rocke,
Both staring fierce, and holding idely
The broken reliques of their former cruelty.*

Spenser as Poet's Poet

Spenser has been known for over four hundred years now as the author of *The Faerie Queene*. More than any other poem in English, *Canterbury Tales* and *Paradise Lost* included, this has been a sort of source book for the subsequent poets. In this long poem, Spenser seems to have taken all poetic impressionism as his province. The poem is full of folklore, myth, and legend of all sorts. It is also crammed with influences Italian,

medieval and classical. It is a peculiarly rich poem in pagan lore. Spenser's metaphysic of fertility and creation is, in fact, often nearer to the pagan and the naturalistic than to the Christian. As G. Wilson Knight has observed, "*The Faerie Queene* is more a storehouse for poets of the future than itself a poem. In this, if in no other sense, he is the 'poet's poet' . . . Behind all our poetry there is unconsciously possessed legendary material: Spenser seems to have possessed it consciously."

Spenser has exercised the greatest influence on the subsequent generations of English poets. From Milton to Wordsworth, Shelly and Keats, to Tennyson, Swinburn and Bridges, his influence has been continuously felt. Descriptive or narrative, symbolic or allegorical, historical or mythological, for all kinds of poetry he has provided inspiration to the English poets. His stamp has been apparent and indelible on a large number of major English poets. When Milton described him as "our sage and serious poet Spenser," he not only praised his predecessor, but also acknowledged his debt to him. Milton's *Paradise Lost* shows that influence throughout its long narrative. Note, for instance, the following:

*Another side, umbrageous Grots and Caves
Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling Vine
Lays forth her purple Grape, and gently creeps Luxuriant.*

Milton is not "merely" or "simply" influenced here. The sudden dropping of the word "luxuriant," and isolating it, shows direct use of the rhetorical technique that Spenser made his own in describing the Bower of Bliss. The technique involves pleasing or alluring the reader and then suddenly revealing moral danger, often by making us realize the dangerous moral meanings in words that, in other contexts, could be innocent or merely descriptive. Of course, Milton stands the technique on its head. He makes use of it only to remind us, in present case with a genuine shock of recognition, that this garden (Garden of Eden), unlike Spenser's, is the true Eden. The point for us to note here is that the present use of Spenser involves on the part of Milton an active and critical awareness of his poetic achievement. Like any great poet-critic Milton shows appreciation of Spenser's rhetorical device both for its verbal craftsmanship as well as for the way it renders and evaluates man's visions of and longing for a paradise on earth. It need to be remembered that among the poets who accept the reality of poetic genres and poetic styles and poetic conventions, writing a poem is often an act also of literary criticism. Much implicit commentary on Spenser is therefore to be found in the poems of his contemporaries and successors, which we the readers have to rediscover. It was not the rhetorical technique of Spenser's poetry which influenced him, but also his moral teaching. As Milton remarks in his famous tract on the freedom of press, *Areopagitica*, Spenser "I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas, describing true temperance under the person of Guyon, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon and the bower of earthly bliss, that he might see and know, and yet abstain."

That Spenser would become the poet's poet got recognition in the early seventeenth century itself. Sir Kenelm Digby, a contemporary of Milton, had said as much, even more, as early as 1638:

I hope that what he hath written will be a means that the English tongue will now receive no more alterations and changes but will remain and continue settled in that form it now hath. For excellent authors do draw unto them the study of posterity, and whoever is delighted with what he readth in another feeleth in himself a desire to express like things in a like manner.... Which maketh me confident that no fate nor length of time will bury Spenser's work and memory nor indeed alter that language that out of his school we now use....

Very much in the same vein comes an acknowledgement of his debt to Spenser from Dryden, "I must acknowledge that Virgil in Latin and Spenser in English have been my masters. Spenser has also given me the boldness to make use sometimes of his Alexandrine line, which we call, though improperly, the Pindaric, because Mr. Cowley has often employed it in his *Odes*...." The influence of Spenser on the eighteenth century has been no less. As John Hughes, talking of Spenser being an "oak" of the English poetic tradition, having "serious, exalted and elegant mind, a warm and boundless fancy and was an admirable imager of

virtues and vices,” proclaims: “the embellishments of description are rich and lavish in him beyond comparison; and as this is the most striking part of poetry, especially to young readers, I take it to be the reason that *he has been the father of more poets among us than any other of our writers....* It will not seem strange, therefore, that Cowley, as he himself tells us, first caught his flame by reading Spenser; that our great Milton owed him for his original, as Mr. Dryden assures us; and that Dryden studied him and has bestowed more frequent commendations on him than on any other English poet.”

In the nineteenth century, Spenser received greater and warmer reception and admiration than ever before. The Romantics found in him a kindred soul, Keats in particular, and sought confirmation in him of their own views on poetry. Note how fondly Wordsworth recalls his reading of Spenser:

*In trellised shed with clustering roses gay,
And, Mary! Oft beside our blazing fire,
When years of wedded life were as a day
Whose current answers to the heart's desire,
Did we together read in Spenser's Lay
How Una, sad of soul, in sad attire,
The gentle Una, of celestial birth,
To seek her knight went wandering o'er the earth.*

Here is an instance, not merely of a tribute to a predecessor, but also an imitation of his verses. The underlined phrases, the alliteration, consonance and assonance, all show a close copying of the earlier poet. Imitating an old master is in itself the greatest tribute to him. Among the Romantics Keats shows much greater affinity with Spenser than Wordsworth or any other poet of that age. Others who imitated Spenser include Walter Scott, who wrote his *The Vision of Don Roderick* in Spenserian stanza form. Byron's *Childe Harold* and Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam* and *Adonais* are also composed in the same stanza form. Keat's *The Eve of St. Agnes* and an *Inimitation of Spenser* closely follow the poetic technique of Spenser, including his stanza form.

In a way, Spenser is inimitable. His voice is, no doubt, highly distinctive and recognizable. As Dryden said of Jonson, Fletcher and Shakespeare as dramatists, there are “no bays to be expected in their walks.” Later, Tennyson, in the Victorian age, and then Swinburne, followed him as closely as did Keats. His influence continues, and will always continue, just as the influence of Homer and Virgil continues even today.

Summary of Book I

The plot-structure of Book I of *The Faerie Queene* is perhaps the clearest of all Books, its message no less. It closely follows the structure of a romance narrative. It presents a quest or journey full of adventures as well as dangers. The Book I consist of 12 cantos. The events in each canto follow in the chronological order as under:

Canto 1

Una, a lady, who represents Truth, accompanies a knight named Redcross. The knight is on a mission to overthrow a dragon that has occupied the land of Una's parents. While going they lose their way in the Wandering Wood, where they encounter the monster Error. The Redcross knight, aided by Una, overcomes Error. Soon after, they come across Archimago, the enchanter. Unsuspecting, they go to his 'hermitage' to spend the night. He calls up infernal spirits, sends one of them to Morpheus for fetching idle dreams of lust for the knight. He converts another spirit into someone resembling Una. This creature goes to the knight's bed. Although perplexed by the apparent change in virtuous “Una” (the false one in reality), he treats her gently and sends her away.

Canto 2

Angered at the failure of his trick, Archimago converts one of the evil spirits into the like of the knight and sends him to Una's bed. At the same time, he calls Redcross knight to witness Una's “wanton lust and lewd

embracement.” Tormented by the sight, Redcross leaves the hermitage at dawn, leaving Una behind. When Una wakes up, she feels grieved finding herself alone. She starts in search of the knight. Now Archimago disguises as Redcross knight to create further misunderstanding in her mind. Meanwhile, Redcross knight encounters Sansfoy, a Saracen knight, whose companion is the wantonly beautiful woman Duessa. As Sansfoy attacks him, the Redcross knight kills the attacker. Now Duessa changes side, denigrates the dead, gets closer to the Redcross knight, and tells him that her name is Fidessa. She craves the knight’s mercy, which he extends. He falls for her charms and lies in dalliance under the shade of two mossy trees. When the knight plucks a bough from one of the trees to make garland for her, the tree speaks, revealing his name as knight Fradubio, who had abandoned his beloved Frelissa for Duessa. But, one day, when he had seen her in her true person as “filthy foule old woman,” he had tried to escape her, she perceived his thoughts and imprisoned him and his beloved in these two trees. Even after receiving the tree’s warning, the Redcross knight remains enchanted by Duessa.

Canto 3

Searching for her knight, Una encounters a fierce Lion, who accompanies her as her guard and companion. When night falls, they stop at the cottage of blind Corceca and her daughter Abessa. When the Lion finds a robber, Kirkirapine, returning to the cottage with his loot stolen from the churches, the Lion kills the robber. Next morning, they resume their search for the knight and encounter on the way Archimago disguised as Redcross knight. Deceived by his disguise they feel overjoyed. As they are going along together, Sansloy, a Saracen knight, attacks Archimago (thinking he is Redcross knight). He does so in order to take revenge on Redcross knight who had killed his brother Sansjoy. In the encounter, Archimago gets injured, and then revealed as his helmet falls. Now Una feels perplexed and is in great distress. Attracted by her beauty, Sansloy tries to take her away, but the Lion resists and attacks Sansloy and gets killed. Sansloy succeeds in taking her away.

Canto 4

Meanwhile the Redcross knight is led by Duessa to the House of Pride, where he meets Lucifera (Pride) and the other deadly sins, Idleness, Gluttony, Lechery, Avarice, Envy, and Wrath, and also Satan with them. Now, the third Saracen brother, Sanjoy, attacks the Redcross knight as a measure of revenge for the death of his brother Sansfoy, but Lucifera stops the fight and decrees a proper duet for the next day. At night, Duessa goes to Sansjoy’s chamber, tells him of her love for his slain brother (Sansfoy) and also how she was captured by Redcross knight after her lover’s slaughter. She puts herself under Sansjoy’s protection.

Canto 5

The next day takes place the fight between Redcross knight and Sansjoy. While about to fall, Sansjoy is saved from death by a “darksome cloud, presumably summoned on Duessa’s behest, by the infernal powers. Under the cover of this cloud Sansjoy escapes. Duessa straight rushes to Redcross knight and acclaims him. At night she travels to the secret chamber in which Sansjoy is hiding in woeful plight. Then she goes to the abode of Night to incite her to avenge the deaths of her descendant Saracen brothers. Night accompanies Duessa, and both come to Sansjoy, bandage his wounds, and take him underworld to Aesculapines for treatment. When Duessa returns to the House of Pride, she finds the Redcross knight gone.

Canto 6

While being harassed by the lustful Sansloy, Una is rescued by a troop of fauns and satyrs, who then worship her. She stays with them for a while and teaches them Truth. Now arrives Sir Satyrane (born of a satyr father and a human female), who helps her leave the fauns and satyrs, and travels with her. They meet Archimago on the way, this time disguised as a pilgrim. He misinforms them that the Redcross knight was dead, killed by Sansloy. Satyrane rides off to trace Sansloy, finds him, and fights with him.

Canto 7

The Redcross knight, enfeebled by drink from an enchanted spring, is found by Duessa, who rebukes him for having deserted her. On getting reconciled the knight again makes love to her. In his unguarded position, the knight is seized by the giant Orgoglio, and is imprisoned in the dungeon of the latter's castle. As for Duessa, Orgoglio takes her for his leman (lover). The news of the capture of Redcross knight reaches Una, even possible death. At this point appears before Una Prince Arthur (the hero of the whole *Faerie Queene*), accompanied by his Squire Timias, and they proceed to liberate the Redcross Knight.

Canto 8

Prince Arthur, Timias and Una reach Orgoglio's castle. A fight follows between Arthur and Orgoglio. Arthur slays the giant, captures Duessa, and at last finds the Redcross knight terribly wasted in the dungeon. Now Duessa is stripped of her rich garments, and is shown in her true person as filthy and ugly. Finding herself exposed she flees.

Canto 9

Now Arthur reveals himself to Una as of unknown parentage, and tells her of his dream about the Faerie Queene, who is the object of his quest in this world. After being united, the Redcross knight and Una leave Arthur and Timias. On the way they encounter a knight named Sir Trevisan, who is fleeing from Despair. Moving further, they come upon the cave of Despair, where Redcross knight is tempted to suicide by Despair who helps him with a dagger. But since Una is with the knight and is not tempted by any such weakness, she snatches the dagger from him.

Canto 10

Rescuing him from the cave of Despair Una brings the knight to the House of Holiness, where they are met by Dame Caelia, Faith, Hope and Charity. Here, Fidelia teaches him; Speranza gives him comfort; Amendment, Penance, and Remorse discipline him; and Charissa show him the path to heaven, sending Mercy to accompany him to the hermitage of Contemplation. Now, Contemplation shows him the new Jerusalem, and tells him of his origin and his future. He reveals that he is destined to be a Saint, in fact St. George, the patron saint of England. Having received all these instructions, Redcross knight returns to Una, who is waiting for him, and they proceed on their journey.

Canto 11

The duo of Una and knight finally arrives at the kingdom of Una's parents, which lies ravaged by the Dragon. They make to the castle in which Una's parents are imprisoned. A fight ensues between the knight and the Dragon, in which Redcross gets sorely wounded, and on the fall of evening, is hurled on to the ground. However, the knight falls into "the well of life", which restores him to life again. The next day, the knight is again ready for the fight. In the terrible fight that ensues, the Redcross knight slips as he is recoiling from the Dragon's fiery breath, this time near "the tree of life" growing near the stream of life. Once again the knight is revived. The third day's battle begins, with the knight fully recovered at night, which ends in the death of the Dragon.

Canto 12

With the Dragon now dead, all the inhabitants of the castle come out joyfully to have a look at the conquerer and the beast. Una's parents, the King and Queen of Eden, thank the Redcross knight and shower gifts on him. They carry Una and the knight into the castle. The job done, the knight wishes to return to the court of the Faerie Queene. He tells them that he still has six more years of service before his avowed marriage to Una can take place. Una unveils. Meanwhile, a messenger arrives with a letter from "Fidessa" saying that the Redcross knight is affianced to her and that he has deserted her. The messenger is none else than Archimago. On being discovered, he is thrown into the dungeon. The king then performs the sacred betrothal rites for the duo of Una and the knight. It is followed by grand feast and celebration. The Book I ends with the Redcross knight's return to the court of the Faerie Queene.

The Faerie Queene As A Gothic Poem

In Letter 8 of his *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, Richard Hurd said, in 1762, the following:

When an architect examines a Gothic structure by Grecian rules, he finds nothing but deformity. But the Gothic architecture has its own rules, by which when it comes to be examined, it is seen to have its merit as well as the Grecian. The question is not which of the two is conducted in the simplest or truest taste, when scrutinized by the laws on which each is projected.

*The same observation holds of the two sorts of poetry. Judge of *The Faerie Queene* by the classic models and you are shocked with its disorder; consider it with an eye to its Gothic original and you find it regular. The unity and simplicity of the former are more complete, but the latter has that sort of unity and simplicity which results from its nature.*

The Faerie Queene then, as a Gothic poem, derives its method, as well as the other characters of its composition, from the established modes and ideas of chivalry.

To understand the nature of Spenser's poem we need to know the world it pictures, its men and their manners, its hierarchy and occupations, its customs and conventions, its beliefs and beauties, etc.; for the poem's structure is derived from the life style of that very world. Let us have a look at the outline and the essential nature of the faerie land.

Spenser's world is the world of knight errantry. It was usual at the holding of any royal feast or festival for the knights to appear before the presiding Prince, and claim the privilege of being sent on any adventure to which the solemnity might give occasion. At such an occasion, the distressed will also flock in from all sides knowing that they can get their grievances redressed there. Now, making this practice as a foundation for the poet's design, we can see how properly *The Faerie Queene* is conducted. Spenser speaks of this foundation in his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh which he added to the poem as a preface: "I devise that the Fairy Queen kept her annual feast twelve days: upon which twelve several days, the occasions of the twelve several adventures happened; which being undertaken by twelve several knights, are in the twelve books severally handled." Thus, we have here the poem's design explained and the reason of it. The design arose out of the order of the subject. It was, thus, as requisite for *The Faerie Queene* to consist of the adventures of twelve knights as for the *Odyssey* to be confined to the adventures of one hero. Otherwise justice would not have been done to the poet's subject. It is also pertinent to note here that the classic ideas of unity, for the same reason, have no place here and are in every view foreign to the purpose.

Therefore, just as we seek the unity of *Odyssey* in the relation of its several adventures of its hero, so do we seek the unity of *The Faerie Queene* in the relation of the adventures of several knights to its central figure, the Fairy Queen. In other words, here the unity is to be seen, not in terms of action, but in terms of design. The gothic method of design, which Spenser's poem follows, can be understood from what is called the gothic method of design in gardening. We are told that a wood or grove cut out into many separate avenues was amongst the most favourite of the works of art which they attempted in this species of cultivation. These walks used to be distinct from each other. They had each their several destination, and terminated on their own proper objects. Yet the whole was brought together and considered under one view by the relation which these various openings had, not to each other, but to their common and concurrent center. On this pattern, drawn from the gothic ideas, Spenser seems to have designed his poem. But, as he knew also what belonged to classic composition, he was tempted to tie his subjects still closer together by one expedient of his own and by another taken from his classic models.

Spenser's own was to interrupt the proper story of each Book by dispersing it into several. By this means he involved and intertwined the several actions together so that he could give something like the appearance of one action to his twelve adventures. For the conduct of this he had several examples before him in Italian poets. The other expedient that Spenser borrowed from the classics was by adopting one superior character who should be seen throughout. Prince Arthur, who has separate adventure of his own, is to have his part in

each of the other. Thus, several actions are embodied by the interest which one principal hero has in them all. Now, considering *The Faerie Queene* as an epic or narrative poem constructed on gothic ideas, the unity of the poem can be easily seen in its *design*. But Spenser's poem is not a simple narrative. It is also allegorical throughout. Spenser clearly subordinates the narration to his moral. As he himself announces in the very opening of the poem, "Fierce warres and faithful loves shall *moralize* my song." That is, adventures of love and war shall serve as vehicle or instrument to convey the moral.

Now, under this idea the unity of *The Faerie Queene* becomes more apparent. His twelve knights have to exemplify as many virtues, out of which one illustrious character is to be shaped. In this design, then, the role of Prince Arthur in each book becomes essential, and yet not principal, exactly as the poet has contrived it. This management of the poem has come under heavy criticism over the years. They say that it necessarily breaks the unity of design. Their argument is that either Arthur should have had no part in the different adventures, or he should have had the chief part. He should have done either nothing or more. Conventional criticism apart, there are such designs in the East. *Mahabharta* is one example, where Lord Krishna plays a similar part. He appears only when others are not able to cope with the events on the 'good' side. He is to salvage every situation. The same is the case with Arthur. Both the characters are conceived with powers deemed superior to all others. There seems nothing wrong with this design so long as it offers an understandable pattern on that count. *The Faerie Queene* has a flawless design, offering a unity of its own, having no adventure for its own sake, and having all the very many for the sake of the grand purpose that governs the design.

Thus, howsoever faulty the conduct of the poem may seem in the literal narrative, it is very much appropriate in the allegorical, which is moral. Spenser's principal hero was not to have the twelve virtues in the same proportion in which they exist in the various persons of the knights – each of them his own. Such a character would not have been humanly probable. But he was to have so much of each as was requisite to form this superior character. The superiority of the human or superhuman character lies not in having any one superior virtue or having virtues in number more than the others. Having one or more virtues does not make a character superior to others. What makes him superior is the harmony or balance of all the virtues humans are capable of having. It is this proportion or harmony of all, not the excess of any one, which makes Arthur superior. The Greeks knew it. Spenser, who read them, knew it. We may have gone out of touch with this ancient concept of superiority or perfection. Aristotle's concept of unity or beauty is based on this harmony or proportion of parts. Spenser is therefore doing nothing unusual or unheard of in the creation of Arthur or designing of *The Faerie Queene*.

Obviously, this was the moral purpose of Spenser's poem. And what way of expressing this moral in the history but by making Prince Arthur appear in each adventure and in a manner subsidiary to each Book's proper hero? He may look inferior to each in his own specific virtue, he is superior to all by uniting in proportion the whole circle of their virtues in himself. And thus he arrives, at length, at the possession of that bright form of Glory, whose ravishing beauty, as he saw in a dream or vision, has led him out into these miraculous adventures in the land of the Fairy. The reasonable conclusion to the discussion is that, as an allegorical poem, the method of *The Faerie Queene* is governed by the justness of the moral. As a narrative poem, it is, obviously, conducted on the ideas and usage of chivalry. In either view, if taken by itself, the plan is defensible, quite comprehensible. Some say that the problem arises from the union of the two. To us, there seems to be no such problem arising out of the poem's design. It is very clearly explained in the poet's letter to Raleigh, and as clearly conducted in the design of the poem. The romance and the allegory do not conflict with each other. They make only the two levels of the single narrative. The surface level, as is the case in any allegory, only illustrates in terms of humanly probable incidents and characters the abstract moral purpose of the poem. As such *The Faerie Queene* has, though incomplete, one of the most complex but cohesive design ever attempted in the long narrative, call it epic, if you so like. Spenser has fully succeeded in the execution of his moral plan of the poem. The poem, even as it is, in its incomplete form, makes a wonderful reading, so rich and varied in adventures, so solemn and single-minded in its moral purpose.

Book's for Further Reading

1. C. S. Lewis. *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*. Oxford University Press, 1954.
2. C. S. Lewis. *The Allegory of Love*. Oxford University Press, 1936.
3. Hallett Smith. *Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meanings, and Expression*. Harvard University Press, 1952.
4. Paul J. Alpers (ed.). *Edmund Spenser*, in Penguin Critical Anthologies. Penguin Books, 1969.
5. William Nelson. *The Poetry of Edmund Spenser*. Columbia University Press, 1963.
6. William Nelson(ed.). *Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser*. Columbia University Press, 1961.
7. Graham Hough. *A Preface to the Faerie Queene*. Duckworth and Norton, 1962.
8. A. C. Hamilton. *The Structure of Allegory in The Faerie Queene*. Oxford University Press, 1961.

Question Bank

1. Discuss Spenser as the poet's poet.
2. Examine the case of Spenser as a Renaissance poet.
3. Write a note on the poetic style of Edmund Spenser.
4. Discuss *The Faerie Queene* as an epic.
5. Examine the structure of *The Faerie Queene*.
6. Write a critical note on the narrative of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*.
7. Discuss the character of the Redcross knight as the hero of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*.
8. Write a note on the Spenserian stanza, considering its origin and significance.
9. Bring out the allegorical meaning of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*.
10. Discuss Ben Jonson's statement that Spenser "writ no language."

ALEXANDER POPE
The Rape of the Lock

Unit-2: Alexander Pope

| | Chronology of Pope's Life | Related Historical & Literary Events |
|------|---|--|
| 1688 | (May 21 Pope born, Lombard St. London. | 'The Glorious Revolution' William of Orange becomes King of England. James II flees to France. |
| 1700 | Pope's family moves to Binfield in Windsor Forest. | Death of Dryden. |
| 1702 | | Death of William III. Accession of Queen Anne. Declaration of war on France. |
| 1705 | Becomes acquainted with Wycherley, Walsh, and other literary persons. | |
| 1709 | Pastorals. | Peace negotiations. |
| 1710 | Beginning of friendship with Caryll. | Fall of Whigs. Tory ministry formed under Robert Harley, later Lord Oxford. |
| 1711 | Essay on Criticism. | Swift's Conduct of the Allies. |
| 1712 | The Rape of the Lock (2 Canto version). First meets Swift, Gay, Arbuthnot, Parnell and Oxford. Beginning of Scriblerus Club. | |
| 1713 | Windsor-Forest. Proposals issued for translation of the Iliad. Painting lessons from Jervas. | Peace of Utrecht. Harley and Bolingbroke struggle for power within Tory party. |
| 1714 | Enlarged version of <i>The Rape of the Lock</i> . Scriblerus Club breaks up on death of Anne. | Death of Queen Anne. Accession of George I. Tories fall from power. |
| 1715 | <i>The Temple of Fame</i> . <i>Iliad</i> , Books I-IV. Friendship with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu begins. | Impeachment of Oxford and Bolingbroke. Oxford put in Tower, Bolingbroke flees to France. Jacobite rebellion. |
| 1716 | <i>Iliad</i> , Books V-VIII. Family move to Chiswick. | Septennial Act. |
| 1717 | <i>Iliad</i> , Books IX-XII. Pope's Works including 'Eloisa to Abelard' and 'Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady'. (October) Pope's father dies. | |
| 1718 | <i>Iliad</i> , Books XIII-XVI. | Death of Parnell. |
| 1719 | Pope and his mother move to Twickenham. | Death of Addison. Defoe's <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> . |
| 1720 | <i>Iliad</i> , Books XVII-XXIV. | South Sea Bubble. |
| 1721 | Pope's edition of Parnell's Poems with Epistle to Oxford' as Preface. Begins work on edition of Shakespeare. | Robert Walpole becomes Lord Treasurer. |
| 1722 | Begins work on translation of the <i>Odyssey</i> with Fenton and Broome. | Atterbury charged with complicity in a plot to reinstate the Pretender. |

- 1723 Pope's edition of Buckingham's Works, seized by Government on suspicion of Jacobite passages. Pope appears before House of Lords as witness at Atterbury's trial. Atterbury found guilty of Jacobitism and exiled. Bolingbroke pardoned and returns for brief stay.
- 1725 Pope's edition of Shakespeare in 6 volumes. *Odyssey*, Vols I-III. Bolingbroke returns from exile and settles near Pope at Dawlay Farm.
- 1726 *Odyssey* IV-V. Swift visits Pope. Friendship with Spence begins. Bolingbroke begins. *The Craftsman*. Theobald's *Shakespeare Restored*. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.
- 1727 Pope-Swift Miscellanies' I-II. Swift's second visit to Pope. Death of George I. Accession of George II.
- 1728 Pope-Swift Miscellanies, III, inci. Peri Bathous. *The Dunciad*, in 3 Books, with Theobald as hero. Gay's *Beggar's Opera*. The War with the Dunces reaches a peak.
- 1729 The Dunciad Variorum. Swift's *Modest Proposal*.
- 1731 *Epistle to Burlington*. Pope-Swift Miscellanies, IV.
- 1732 *Epistle to Bathurst*. *Imitation of Horace*, Satire II, i. Death of Gay. Hogarth's prints of *The Harlot's Progress*.
- 1733 *An Essay on Man*, Epistles I-III. (June) Death of Pope's mother. Pope becomes more committed to the Patriot opposition. Walpole's Excise Scheme defeated. Bolingbroke's 'Dissertation upon Parties' appeared in *The Craftsman*.
- 1734 Epistle to Cobham. *Essay on Man*, Epistle IV. *Imitation of Horace*, Satire II, ii.
- 1735 *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. *Epistle to a Lady*. Pope's Works, vol. II. Curll's edition of Pope's letters. Prince of Wales visits Pope at Twickenham. Death of Arbuthnot and Lord Peterborough. Bolingbroke returns to France. Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*.
- 1737 *Imitation of Horace*, Epistle II, ii. Authorized edition of Pope's letters. *Imitation of Horace*, Epistle II, i. Death of Queen Caroline. Prince of Wales heads Patriot opposition. Crousaz attacks *An Essay on Man*.
- 1738 *Imitation of Horace*, Epistle I, vi. *Imitation of Horace*, Epistle I, i. Epilogue to the Satires. Bolingbroke returns from France and stays with Pope at Twickenham. Dr. Johnson's London.
- 1739 Spends winter with Ralph Allen at Prior Park near Bath. Warburton's *Vindication of the Essay on Man* defends Pope against Crousaz.
- 1740 First meets Warburton. Refurbishes his grotto. Handel's *Messiah* receives its first performance, in Dublin.
- 1741 Publisher Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus. Works closely with Warburton on revised edition of his poems.
- 1742 *The New Dunciad* (i.e. Book IV). Walpole resigns.
- 1743 *The Dunciad* in Four Books, with Cibber replacing Theobald as hero. Pope's health deteriorates.

The Age of Pope

The revolution of 1688, which banished the last Stuart kings and called William of Orange to the throne, marks the end of the long drawn struggle of England for the political freedom. Once the goal of the political freedom was attained, thereafter the English people spent their energies in efforts to improve their political systems through discussions in order to bring about reforms in their socio-political life for which the votes were necessary. And to get the votes the people of England were to be approached with ideas, facts, arguments and information. So the newspaper was born and the first newspaper, *The Daily Courant*, appeared in London in 1702. Literature in the widest sense of the term, including books, newspapers, magazines and other forms of writing, focuses on the complete society that played an instrumental role in the progress of the nation. It makes some sense if one takes into account the political scenario of the age, but it attains a greater significance if one considers on the whole the circumstances, which were very largely favourable to all round development of the nation. In his comprehensive book, *A History of English Literature*, Louis Cazamian describes the literary scene and summaries its history thus:

“The Revolution 1688 does not constitute a break from the past; it inaugurates an organic and regular progress. The upper middle classes associate themselves with the nobility in the exercise of power a more extensive section of the nation participates in political influence and directs culture. . . . The classical ideal of art, elaborated under the Restoration in an atmosphere of aristocratic elegance, finds full realization during the reign of Queen Anne and George I in a broadened society, whose members are growing more numerous and so diverse, but where the spirit of literature is undergoing no essential change.”

By the modern standards, the nation was parochial and sharply stratified. This kind of society could express itself most adequately in its high art because it has the potential to convey the whole truth.

(A) Social Development of the Age

The first half of the eighteenth century brought remarkable and rapid changes in the English society. Uptill now the society was governed by the narrow and obsolete standards of the Middle Ages and there was no freedom to question them or even to differ from them. The society was cultivating the art of living together, while still holding different opinions on various urgent issues. The social historians cite the example of the mushroom growth of the coffeehouses as the centers of sociability. In a single generation nearly two thousand public coffeehouses sprang up in London alone, and the number of private clubs is equally astonishing. The new social life and culture had its effect on the language and manners of the people. Though the typical Londoner of Queen Anne’s days was rude and even a little vulgar in his tastes; the city itself was filthy, the streets unlighted and infested with the rowdies and bands of petty thieves, but outwardly men sought to refine themselves as per the prevailing standards. To have a “good form” and elegant manners was the first priority and duty if one wished to be a part of a refined society or wrote literature. Briefly, this superficial elegance fully registers itself in every book or poem of the age.

On the political scene, the Government still had its opposing parties Tory and Whig and the Church was divided into Catholics, Anglicans and Dissenters, but the growing social life subsided many antagonisms, and gave the impression of peace and unity. The writers of the age participated in the religious and political debates through their writings. The scientists like Newton and philosophical thinkers like Locke and the religious men like Wesley, all recommended the virtues of moderation in their respective fields of thought. They argued from reason and Scripture, and used mild satire to deal with their opponents, instead denouncing them vehemently. W.J.Long has beautifully summed up the tendencies of the period stating:

“ ... *the general tendency of the age was toward toleration. Man had found himself in the long struggle for personal liberty; now he turned to the task of discovering his neighbour; of finding in Whig and Tory, in Catholic and Protestant, in Anglican and Dissenter, the same general human characteristics, that he found in himself. This good work was helped, moreover by the spread of education and by the growth of the national spirit.... Under their many differences they were all alike Englishmen.*”

In the latter half of the eighteenth century the political and social progress is almost bewildering. The modern form of cabinet government responsible to Parliament and the people had been established under George I; in 1757, the cynical and corrupt practices of Walpole, Premier of the first Tory cabinet, were replaced by the more enlightened policies of Pitt. Schools and colleges were established; coffeehouses and clubs increased in number, books and magazines multiplied and the press became the greatest visible power in England. The preachers like Wesley and Whitefield brought a tremendous spiritual revival known as Methodism that was felt by all the churches of England. Outside her own borders three great men – Clive in India, Wolfe on the plains of Abraham, Cook in Australia and the islands of Pacific discovered the hidden wealth of the new lands and spread the world-wide empire of the Anglo-Saxons

(B) Some Social Practices of the Age And their Projection In Literature

The writers of the age were greatly influenced by the social condition of the age and their range was restricted to the town. They wrote for the critics of the Coffeehouses, for the noblemen from whom they expected patronage, and for the political party they were pledged to support. At the level of the political life in which most of the eminent writers participated with two important things in mind: (i) There was the custom of patronage and the writers wished to attach themselves to a patron and (ii) they were keen to take part active part in the political strife and even a writer like Swift was obliged to do so. Politicians divided themselves into two hostile camps, Whigs and Tories. The patriotic sentiment was more of a matter to be demonstrated than a thing to be felt. The poets and the writers wrote satires and lampoons on their patron's political enemies. Compton-Rickett observes:

“ At first, the poet or the pamphleteer attaches himself to some influential Minister using his pen on behalf of this gentleman's cause. Afterwards when the minister found he could get his work done more cheaply than by hiring man of taste, the literary man was thrown upon the suffrages of the public then rising into existence.”

Patronage existed even in the days of Dr. Johnson. The story how Dr. Johnson sought Lord Chesterfield's help for preparing his *Dictionary* and what happened in the end is well known. In due course of time, the reading public increased and it put the custom of the author's dependence on a patron to an end. The most significant change in the eighteenth century society was the induction of the coffeehouse and club culture in the cities. It was at these places that the politicians and clergymen, lawyers and literary men discussed the problems of the age. Not only that they came in direct contact with the public and the readers also. At these coffeehouses the wits assembled to exchange repartees and the moralists to deliver their sermons; the satirists gathered to attack vices and vicious men and the literary artists to discuss their proposals of their forthcoming works. As it is commonly acknowledged, “The well-known writers of the day congregated at these places and talked to their friends and criticized their rivals. It was at the coffeehouse that Pope met Dryden. It was from here that Addison discoursed to his selected circles and Dr. Johnson delivered many of his talks. These writers found their subject matters from these surroundings besides meeting their friends and foes. It is worthwhile to note that there came into existence separate coffeehouses of Whigs and Tories and they would not go to the coffeehouses of another party. It was so, may be, to avoid confrontation or to retain their privacy. The periodicals were published for the pleasure and profit of these visitors of the coffeehouses and books were judged not on their merit, but according to the political beliefs of the authors. Impartial criticism hardly existed. There was violence and hostility, which affected the literary criticism. His enemies even threatened Pope in that way and he took care to carry pistol with him for the personal safety while going out of Twickenham.

One of the common social practices was that of snuff-taking which started towards the end of the eighteenth century, and it grew extremely popular. Both men and women used snuff and they seldom went out without a snuff-box with them. If Addison and Steele recommended to their readers of *Tatler* to take three dishes of 'bohea' and two pinches of snuff, Pope showed in *The Rape of the Lock*, its place in the fashionable society and mildly criticized its use.

The age of Pope suffered from certain vices, which are projected in its literature especially in the novel. Prominent among them were dueling, drunkenness and gambling. Fielding, the father of modern English novel and Goldsmith mentioned dueling in their novels; even Dr. Johnson defended it and Sir Walter Scott was willing to accept a challenge in his old age for a comment he made about Napoleon. Drunkenness was a wide spread weakness among all the ranks and level of people. Similarly, all the classes of people practised gambling. John Dennis mentions in his book, *The Age of Pope*, that

“This evil was exhibited on a national scale by the establishment of the South Sea Company, which exploded in 1720.... At Bath, which was then the center of English fashion, it reigned supreme; and the physicians even recommended it to their patients as a form of distraction. In the greenrooms of the theatres, as Mrs Bellany assures us, thousands were often lost and won in a single night. Among fashionable ladies the passion was quite as strong as among men...”

Pope highlighted this fashion in *The Rape of the Lock* by showing Belinda playing a game of Ombre and losing it which seems to be the cause of the whole problem. Similarly, the ladies of the fashionable society adopted the custom of receiving visitors in their bedroom. The following couplet of *The Rape of the Lock* refers to it directly:

*The fair ones feel such maladies as these.
When each new nightdress gives a new disease.*

Wits, who formed a significant group in the eighteenth century society, displayed their flair for intelligent and cleverness in interacting with people specially ladies. Their tone of gallantry was often carried to the point of absurdity; for instance, take the character of Sir Plume from *The Rape of the Lock*. Even Pope himself in his letter to Judith Cowper professed to worship her as much as any female saint in heaven, and used still stronger protestations of love and admiration for Lady Montagu. The irony is that women in that age were treated as pretty triflers, who were meant more to amuse men than elevate them. For their plight they themselves were responsible to a great extent. Lord Chesterfield made a very candid remark about it that, “No flattery is either too high or too low for them. They will greedily swallow the highest and gratefully accept the lowest.”

The Augustan Age had other drawbacks like political corruption, dirty party strife and low morals. These problems started with King Charles, who along with his courtiers and statesmen, ignored these practices and the situation could not improve even during the reign of William and Mary. Queen Anne had an instinctive respect for moral law but being a “meekly stupid” person could not do much. However, the corruption was not limited to the domain of politics only, but infiltrated to almost every aspect of social life. Even religion was not spared from such degeneration and was used to serve personal ends.

These common flaws in the age should not make us underrate certain very high qualities, which make it a great age, “the silver age” as Ian Jack called it. It was a great age of high political philosophy and oratory; it was an age when England won the continental wars and built up a mighty empire in India. The progress in the literature, art and music too was rapid. The novel attained an unprecedented robust life at the hands of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne. Reynolds and Gainsborough, Romney and Wilson established schools of portrait and landscape painting. Under the inspiring leadership of Handel, the power of music was felt, as it was never experienced before. Sciences and inventions made rapid progress. Poets and writers enjoyed a status and position in society and were given important posts in government. If Addison could gain a pension and subsequently a high official position because of his powerful pen, Pope was the first poet to live comfortably by the sale of his works and could cherish friendships with the highest statesman and aristocrats of England. Briefly, the Age of Pope honoured its creative artists and promoted the talents of the nation.

Major Literary Characteristics

The term “Augustan” as Sainsbury points out, is “sometimes applied to the whole period during which Pope wrote, sometimes limited to the reign of Queen Anne, and sometimes extended backwards so as to include

the age of Dryden. If the last use of the term is considered to be the best, the “Augustan” Age in English literature begins with the accession of Charles II in 1660. It covers the whole of Restoration period of which Dryden is the greatest writer and extends to the classical school, which develops approximately with Pope. Its traditions continue till 1798 when Wordsworth published the *Lyrical Ballads*. From this point of view, the “Augustan” age includes the age of Dryden (1660-1700), and the Age of Pope (1700-1744). Briefly the term “Augustan Age” includes the period of both the great writers, Dryden and Pope, and it originated in Dr. Johnson’s famous comparison of Dryden with the Augustans when the former dealt with the English language and Literature and the latter with the city of Rome. He says:

“To Dryden we owe... the refinement of our language, and much to the correctness of our sentiments. By him we were taught ... to think naturally and express forcibly... What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden... he found it brick and he left it marble.”

However, the Augustanism in English Literature implies veneration for the Roman classics, their thought and way of life. In the British history this period is of great significance and marks a beginning of a new society and a new literature. These changes were the outcome of the complex socio- political events, which had been occurring since the dawn of the seventh century. If the Elizabethan literature presents deep and intense emotions and boundless flights of imagination, which forms the texture of its plays and other literary genres, there is a gradual change in the tone and literary temperament of the writers, for example, in the last plays of Shakespeare. A clear touch of intellectuality and even philosophy as in the Metaphysical School of Poetry directly indicates the changes. During the early decades of the seventeenth century English literature was striving for regularity, restraint, reason, order and balance. During the reign of Charles-II, which began in 1660, the King and aristocracy both helped to create an environment for this sort of literature. During the Restoration period the court with its elegance and an ordered balance becomes the center of fashion both in life and literature. The London society prided itself in exerting the deterministic influence on the literature of the time, which became the literature of the “town”, of London society.

The contemporary France also influenced the literature of the Restoration Age. King Charles-II and his courtiers, including a number of writers who were with them, had spent many years of their exile in France, where they imbibed the French culture, and many new tendencies of French Literature. When they returned to England, they tried their best to enforce the French ideals in the realm of literature. Neo-classicism developed earlier in France than in England. Therefore the variety of influences which mark the new literature bear the impact of France as well as of the classics which were prevalent in the contemporary France. It was specially so in the case of poetry. “The character and rhythm of the English classical lines are fixed, so to speak, by the authority of inner choice, which in its turn is prompted, accentuated and even controlled by the cadence of French verse.” There also began a search for the authority of rules, and in this matter the authority of Latin poet, Horace, and of the French poet Boileau came to be accepted. As the characteristics of the new literature are restraint, rationality, a desire for order, balance and a composed tone, to attain these qualities, the classical writers like Ben Jonson were adored, though they did not lose sight of the Renaissance writers like Beaumont and Fletcher and in certain aspects Shakespeare also. The main themes of the new literature of the Restoration period were parody, comedy, satire, analytical reasoning and criticism.

In 1700 begins the Neo-Classical Age, which continues with full force during the lifetime of Pope. Though its traditions prevail till the end of the eighteenth century, Pope is undoubtedly the greatest representative of the Neo-Classical Age as he accentuates and modifies the general traits of the new literature of the Restoration period. It is amazing that the literature of the Age of Pope, which is termed “Classical,” is not so either in its inspiration or in form. It does not come very near to the literature of antiquity or the French model. The poets of the Neo-Classical school look for their model in Latin literature and all Latin poets, including Augustans like Horace and Ovid, have the Italian love for the beauty of nature. For illustration, consider Wordsworth, who has more in common with Virgil than Pope. Therefore the eighteenth century classicism is termed

“pseudo” classicism. The poets and writers of this period, no doubt, cherished deeply the desire to observe the aesthetic rules of the ancients but to achieve their end they imitated the French writers, who also observed the classical rules. Hence their actual achievement, that is, their writings, instead of being termed classical, are called Neo-Classical. The literary historians like A. N. Whitehead call it “the silver age of the ... European Renaissance,” which is a period between the civil wars and the middle of the eighteenth century. Briefly, the ideals produced by the interaction of medievalism and the vigorous classical and Continental influences of the new age provided the background which supported poets in their endeavours to match the literary standards of the literatures of Greece and Rome.

These Neo-Classical writers have a marked distrust of originality and inspiration. They have a two-fold idea before them which they strictly follow: (i) Simple orderliness in idea and (ii) Smooth balance in form. They care more for form than for the spirit of literature; more for the expression than for the thing expressed. Pope suggests his idea for poetry in the famous following couplet:

*True wit is Nature to advantage dressed
What oft was thought but never so well expressed.*

Pope was not “uttering a barren half-truth” characteristic of an age lacking in originality but repeating a simple, commonplace idea, which constantly guided them. In other words, the general tendency of the literature of the age was to look at life critically, to emphasize intellect rather than imagination, the form rather than the content of a sentence. Writers tried hard to repress all emotion and enthusiasm and to use only precise and elegant methods of expression. This is what is often meant by the “classicism” of the ages of Pope and Johnson. Actually, the classical movement in this age had become “pseudo-classical” which means partly or false classical.

The poets of the Neo-Classical school aim at the perfection of form, for which they labour hard. To achieve two most significant characteristics “The scrupulous searching for a perfection” and “the sovereignty of Form” the writers of the Age strove persistently. Dr. Johnson made very perceptive remarks about Pope’s efforts to achieve the desired effect in the art of versification when he observed:

“ By perpetual practice, language had in his mind a systematical arrangement; having always the same use of words, he had words so selected and combined as to be ready at his call.”

Such a laboured work of art will, no doubt, possess exquisite glitter and polish but it would lack spontaneity and novelty, which occurs only when the creative imagination is allowed a free play. Dr. Johnson again defends the approach of the Neo-Classical poets and says about Pope:

“New sentiments and new images others may produce; but to attempt any further improvement of versification will be dangerous. Art and diligence have now done their best and what shall be added will be the effort of tedious toil and needless curiosity... If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?”

The Neo-Classical school of poetry is dominated by reason and correctness. As Geoffrey Tillotson puts it asserting the value of correctness and Intellectual quality in Pope’s poetry that

“Pope satisfies the expectation in a thousand ways.To make his kind of poetry he relied partly on the intellectual quality of what he was saying. And his poetry served to demonstrate the proximity, interpenetrableness, of the intellect and the emotions...”

In his book, *On the Poetry of Pope* he makes it specifically clear that “ For Pope and his contemporaries the word *correctness* had full colour of novelty.” He elaborates the idea in relation to Nature, Design, Language and Versification of Pope showing how through the common and teachable element in literature he follows the principle of correctness. As the Augustan age broadens and intensifies the practice of free rational inquiry, which the Restoration could apply only in an incomplete way, the literature of the period finds therein its true inspiration whether in its poetry or prose. It earns the age another name by which it designates

itself, that is, “The Age of Prose and Reason”. If in its poetry Pope is the center, and so to say its symbol, in prose it is Addison who carries the rational as the scruple of his style and Swift becomes one of the greatest masters of English prose. Pat Rogers rightly comments in his book, *Introduction to Pope*, that

“*Pope was a representative writer of his time, to a far greater degree than Swift, Richardson and even Defoe. An outsider in the social sense, he was nonetheless able to infuse his best work with a sharp contemporary tang. Furthermore he did not disdain the superficial polish of Augustan vers de societe.*”

Pope’s life and works

Pope was born on 21 May 1688. He was the only child of the second marriage of a prosperous London linen-merchant. Pope’s father, who was the son of clergyman, could rank as a gentleman. Pope was born when his mother was already forty-six and his father forty-two. His lifelong devotion to his elderly parents, whom he cared for till the time of their respective deaths, is one of the most moving and significant aspects of his life. He loved them tenderly through out their lives and they loved him and were his refuge against the cruelty of the world. The household was a most happy and contented one. What an irony it is that if he was tiny, tall people crowded around him; though he was deformed, people with beautiful shapes surrounded him and were proud of knowing him. Pope’s father, who was a successful businessman and was perhaps influenced by commercial trips to Portugal, had become converted to Roman Catholicism. The family lived over his warehouse in Lombard Street. But when James II fled and William and Mary succeeded, it became the law that Roman Catholics must live at least ten miles away from the Cities of London and Westminster. Several laws were passed forbidding Catholics preventing their children from being taught by Catholic priests, compelling them to forfeit two-thirds of their estates or the value thereof. And, of course, they were prevented from serving in Parliament or holding any office of profit under the Crown. His parents thought it was best to live out of London and he himself found it inadvisable to come up to town for medical attention during his illness. As a result the elder Alexander Pope finally settled in a small farm in Windsor Forest at Binfield in Berkshire, taking his savings with him in large wooden boxes, perhaps he distrusted William’s new Bank of England. Pope was about twelve years old then. Soon, the Old Mr. Pope made friends not only among the Romanist country gentry but also, because of his son’s precious poetic talent and lively ways, with a staunch protestant Whig like Sir William Trumbull, who held a high office under William. However, the anti-Catholic laws became a major factor in determining the course of Pope’s life. Though the literary historians have disagreed with the account of Pope’s ancestry and its endless mystifications, but none can question that Pope had terribly poor health caused by the curvature in his backbone, which left him almost invalid. As the biographical details of Pope’s early childhood are not fully known, nothing could be definitely said about its causes. However, Edith Sitwell states in her book, *Alexander Pope* that

“It is probable that Pope inherited at least some tendency to deformity from his father, who suffered from a slight curvature of the spine. It is quite undoubted that he inherited from his mother those terrible headaches that made his later life martyrdom. But, his half-sister Mrs. Rackett told Spence that he was a pretty little boy, with happy laughter, clear eyes and round rosy cheeks that healthy children have. He had too gentle and affectionate disposition, and it was as a small child that the sweetness of his voice earned him the loving name of “the little nightingale.”

George Fraser mentions with considerable certainty in his book, *Alexander Pope*, that as a child Pope suffered two accidents: one, probably at Lombard Street or possibly in Binfield he had been trampled on by a large cow; second, later on from drinking bad milk from one of the Binfield cows. He developed that disease of curvature of the spine, which made it necessary, in his later years, for him to be sewn every morning into a tight pair of corsets and to have his withered legs warmed and disguised by three thick pairs of woolen stockings. He was almost a dwarf, well under five feet high (four feet six, in fact). What is particularly sad is that his earlier portrait, painted before these accidents, shows a chubby, cheerful little boy

with every promise of healthy growth .A renowned scholar like Geoffrey Tillotson in Pope and Human Nature gives an entirely different reason for his being a permanent invalid. He says: “As a result of too much of study (so he thought), he acquired a curvature of the spine and some tubercular infection which limited his growth”

In *A Preface to Pope*, I.R.F.Godon points out that Pope’s health was seriously impaired by some kind of tubercular disease of bones, which was known as Pott’s disease and it was inevitable that his deformity and poor health should interfere with his activities throughout what he pathetically calls ‘This long Disease, my Life’ in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. He actually was so weak that he was not able to dress and undress himself, and neither went to bed nor rose without help. Sympathy with Pope’s character and for his sufferings shines through every page of Doctor Johnson’s essay, though the poet’s faults are not glossed over. None, who knew his sufferings, would fail to be saddened by “the tragedy of this man “whose body was too frail for the terrible burden of his genius, and whose life was one long torture of pain and weakness and humiliation caused by the knowledge of his deformity,” as Edith Sitwell put it. Pope, who had perhaps the most subtle and sensitive feeling for beauty of form, realized painfully how his own outward form raised feelings of mockery or coarse pity in the beholders.

Pope had been to two schools for Catholics in London, learning little or nothing, but the move to Binfield brought Pope’s formal education to a close. Henceforth, he largely educated himself. In June 1739 he told Spence that:

“ When I had done with my priests I took to reading by myself, for which I had a very great eagerness and enthusiasm, especially for poetry. In a few years I had dipped into a great number of the English, French, Italian, Latin and Greek poets. This I did without any design but that of pleasing myself, and got the languages by hunting after the stories in several poets I read, rather than read the books to get the languages. I followed everywhere as my fancy led me, and was like a boy gathering flowers in the woods and fields just as they fall in his way. I still look upon these five or six years as the happiest part of my life.”

At Binfield his father set him to writing ‘rhymes’ and some of his early efforts survive, mainly neat imitations of the earlier court poets of his own century. Though there is a patchy imitation of Chaucer also. Pope grew interested in poetry at a very early age as he himself told Spence in March 1743 “I began writing verses of my own invention farther back than I can remember”. There is some slight exaggeration in the claim which he later on made in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* that,

*As yet a Child, nor yet a Fool to Fame,
I lisp’d in Numbers, for the Numbers came.*

His mother gave Spence similar testimony:

“Mr. Pope’s father ... was no poet, but he used to set him to make English verses when very young. He was pretty difficult in being pleased and used often to send him back to new turn them. ‘These are not good rhymes’ he would say, for that was my husband’s word for verses.”

He was also busy with translations from Latin and even Greek though he was never in any profound sense a scholar. Self-taught, like many poetic translators, he learned the syntax of his original from the sense rather than the sense from the syntax. Pope too had ambitions towards original verse. A projected epic on Alcander, Prince of Rhodes, of which he wrote four books of about one thousand verses each, in the end came to nothing; besides, he had roughed out and shown to his friends his first pastorals before 1705. Earlier at the age of twelve Pope was not only extending his reading and writing he was also developing his literary acquaintance. He got to know the literary wits at Will’s Coffee House, and was taken to see Dryden, a great writer then. The boy could immediately see that Dryden belonged to the world of books and serious writers but not to a polished society, as he himself was to belong. The particular members of the Will’s group that Pope got to know apart from Trumbull were the critic William Walsh; the poet Samuel Garth; the dramatists

William Wycherley and William Congreve; and the actor Thomas Betterton. These were all older and distinguished literary men by the time Pope knew them and it was obviously not mere coincidence that they should all share an enthusiasm for the young man's ability and company. He wrote to these worldly men of letters regularly but with Wycherly and Walsh Pope struck up particularly close friendship. He helped the old playwright prepare his verse for publication and maintained a long correspondence with him. It was from Walsh that he received the famous advice to make 'correctness' his study and aim: Pope stated:

"When about fifteen, I got acquainted with Mr. Walsh. He encouraged me much, and used to tell me that there was one way left of excelling, for though we had had several great poets, we never had any one great poet that was correct—and he desired me to make that my study and aim."

Pope really had a surprising range of social circle for two specific reasons: (i) In Pope's age an enormous importance was attached to poetic talent by well-bred and educated people. Hence could say that "Nature's chief Masterpiece is writing well," and (ii) Windsor Forest, where the family had settled, was a favourite haunt of Catholic recusant families, like Blounts. They clung together with a certain disregard for social distinctions that were important for the Protestants. As it was, he was mainly self-educated and a precocious boy. He was a reader in several languages, which he managed to teach himself. Being an incessant scribbler, he turned out verse upon verse in imitation of the poets he read. The best of his early writings are the famous "Ode On Solitude" and a paraphrase of St. Thomas a Kempis, which he did at the age of twelve. He became more precocious as he grew in age. It in no way means that he was aiming at a slow laborious correctness. Pope was, in fact, brilliant and he wrote best when he wrote most rapidly. Though his home was in Windsor Forest, he frequently visited London and made friends with many of the well-known men of letters, such as Wycherley, Congreve, Garth and Walsh. Pope interacted and corresponded with them on the serious subjects like the art of versification. He showed them the manuscript of the *Pastorals* which a few years later became his first published work in 1709.

From 1708 to 1717 were the years of experimental writings as well as of great expansion in his personal and social life. They mark a period during which Pope spent more time in London than at any other stage of his life, and at the same time he continued to visit his Catholic acquaintances in Binfield. They include making of the lasting and major friendships with Gay, Swift, Arbuthnot, Bolingbroke and Oxford among his literary and political friends, and with Carylls, Englefields and Blounts among the Catholic friends. It also includes his first meeting with Martha Blount for whom he developed a love that, despite all the barriers, endured till his death. It is notable that throughout his life, Pope has been dearly admired by women who were ready to make friends of him and confide in him. His true and life long friend among women was Martha or 'Patty' Blount. Though she was not brilliant and had lost her charms and sweetness of expression, which had attracted Pope to her first, but she cared for him with the tenderness of a nurse. Even Warburton, who strongly disliked her, admitted that when Pope was on his last sick-bed her entrance would stir him into new cheerfulness and life. In 1716, Pope's family moved from Binfield to Chiswick but the sudden death of his father on 23rd October 1717 brought this period of carefree gaiety to a close. After the death of his father, he became solely responsible for his seventy-five year old mother.

The eight years from the time of Pope's first published work, the *Pastorals* (May 1709) to the time of the first edition of his collected Works (June 1717) form a fairly cohesive unit in his life. This period was of extraordinary poetic activity, which he later described as wandering in 'Fancy's maze'. Pope tried his hand at half a dozen different kinds of poetry ranging from pastoral and georgic as (*Windsor –Forest*), to didactic (*Essay on Criticism*) to elegiac (*The Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*), to heroic (*Eloisa to Abelard*) to mock epic (*The Rape of the Lock*), to actual epic (the translation of the *Iliad*). When he attempted a variety of poetical works it was as if he was trying to judge where his strength lay. The period begins with the publication of the *Pastorals*. They were greatly admired by Pope's Tory friends at Will's but they immediately brought him into conflict with London's rival literary group, Addison's 'little Senate' of

Whig writers who met at Button's Coffee-House. The quarrel ensued because of the great admiration of Addison's friend Ambrose Philips's *Pastorals*, which were undoubtedly inferior to the young Pope's *Pastorals* and for totally ignoring Pope. Nearly every publication of Pope was attended with this sort of critical and personal dispute. It is indeed ironical that age that had set literary standards like decorum and wit and other rules indulged in this kind of conflicts for literary standing and made it the part and parcel of the literary scene in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Following the model of Boileau and Horace, he tried his hand at a poem about writing of poetry and produced the *Essay on Criticism* in 1711.

It was an ambitious attempt for a young man as in it Pope wished to compress and chisel out the wisdom of all past ages regarding criticism and poetry. The poem is fundamentally a starting point to establish quintessentially neoclassical assumptions about literature in the eighteenth century. Its reception was quiet at first but then John Dennis's furious attack in his "Reflections upon an Essay upon Criticism" made Pope retire sensibly in the country to his Catholic friends like John Caryl who lived in Ladyholt, near West Harting in Sussex. It was during this period that Caryl suggested to Pope the subject matter of the most delightful of his poems *The Rape of the Lock*. The poem was written as Pope told Spence later on to "make a jest" of the estrangement between two Catholic families, the Fermors and the Peters, and "to laugh them together again." It was *Le Lutrin* (1674) by Boileau *Dispensary* by Garth that gave him the brilliant idea of writing in a mock-epic form which he fulfilled in *The Rape of Lock*; it consisted of two Cantos and was published in 1712. Addison praised it as "a delicious little thing" but advised the poet not to attempt at its improvement. Pope attributed that advice to jealousy. It is Pope's masterpiece, which comes nearer to being a "creation" than anything Pope has written. Its instant success caused Pope to lengthen the poem by three more Cantos; in order to make it a more effective burlesque of an epic poem, he introduces gnomes, sprites, sylphs and salamanders, instead of the gods of the epics. The poem is well worth reading as an expression of the artificial life of the age—of its cards, parties, toilettes, lapdogs, tea-drinking, snuff-taking, and many more idle vanities. It was brought out in 1714 in its present form.

Pope moved back to London in 1713, where he joined the group of the writers who strongly supported the Tory Government. His landscape poem called "Windsor Forest", published in the same year, was meant to celebrate the Treaty of Utrecht. It was taken to be a statement of his party commitment despite his own attempts to maintain neutrality:

*In Moderation placing all my Glory,
While Tories call me Whigs, and Whigs a Tory.*

However, during this year he lived mostly with his painter friend Jervas, who has been a pupil of the famous portrait painter Sir Godfrey Kneller, and studied painting seriously.

The following spring Pope became involved with the Scriblerus Club with Swift, Parnell, Gay, Arbuthnot, Robert Harley, Lord Oxford and Pope himself as its members. They shared a common philosophical belief in conserving the best from the past not as a dead unit but as a living thing and had a scorn for false and superfluous taste in learning. They also planned to produce the *Memoirs of Marinus Scriblerus* to burlesque over the works of the pedantic scholars but there was an abrupt end of the activities of the Club because of the death of Queen Anne on 1st August 1714. The members of the club dispersed to attend to their own literary pursuits. During these days Pope got an opportunity to pay back to Dennis what he did to Pope after the publication of his *Pastorals* Pope published *The Narrative of Dr. Robert Norris* in which he invented a fictive episode in Dennis' life and D. Norris was called to cure him of his lunacy. The piece is full of farcical jinks that completely destroy Dennis. In October 1713, Pope published his proposals to translate the *Iliad* and turned his attention almost entirely to Homer. It was his major literary occupation for next six years. It was a difficult task as he told Spence years later: "In the beginning of my translating the *Iliad* I wished anybody would hang me a hundred times. It sat so heavily on my mind at first that I often used to dream of it and so do sometimes still." By June 1715 the first four books were published in one volume. From this time onwards

he proceeded with the task at the rate of four books a year until the poem was completed in May 1720. The fame of Pope's *Iliad*, which was financially the most successful book, was due to the fact that he interpreted Homer in an elegant, artificial language of his own age. Even the Homeric characters lose their original strength and become the fashionable men of the court.

One of the most important aspects of Pope's personal life these years was his increasing intimacy with the Blount sisters whom he met in 1711. Within one month after meeting them Pope wrote to his friend Cromwell praising them as "two of the finest faces in the Universe." Theresa Blount, whom Pope admired, first, was the same age as Pope and Martha, for whom his affection grew stronger, was two years younger. In times of trouble and pain, Pope turned to them for comfort and solace. When his father suddenly died on 23rd Oct. 1717, it was to Martha that he wrote: "My poor Father dyed last night. Believe, since I don't forget you this moment, I never shall." For the next sixteen years the responsibility of his life was to look after his aged mother who was "so affected" by the death of his father.

Two of many more experiments made at this stage deserve a mention, they are: "Eloisa to Abelard" and "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate lady".

The former shows Pope's high-flown devotion for the great Whig beauty, lady Mary Wortley Montagu, but later on when she managed to hurt Pope's vanity, he made rather venomous and obscene references to her while the latter poem is a striking original poem. The year 1717 was the triumphant year of Pope's life as he brought out his beautifully printed book which contained his best works including his perfectly revised version of *The Rape of the Lock*, the famous proverbs of *Essay on Criticism* and exquisitely musical versification of the *Pastorals*, but none the less it is a volume of experiments. Pope knew now where his strength lay. Looking back on these experiments in his later years, he was accustomed to make a distinction between earlier 'Fanciful' poems and his mature work in which he wrote of 'Truth' and 'the Heart.' This was a deliberate change, conscious canalizing of his poetical power. From henceforth, with the exception of his translation of Homer, Social Comment and Social Philosophy were to be his theme, but this theme is already found in parts of 1717 volume, for instance take "the grave Clarissa's" speech of the 5th Canto of *The Rape of the Lock*.

Various changes took place in Pope's life after his father's death. He had already moved from Binfield to Chiswick in his lifetime itself, in March 1719 he moved with his mother to a new house at Twickenham, which was to be his last residence. He amused himself there with constructing a grotto, a kind of gnomes' cave full of glittering crystals. This grotto, it appeared, housed his dreams of romance. On the whole, the improvement that he wrought on his house, garden and grotto became the chief source of relaxation in life as well as an integral part of his art. He set out to establish his small estate at Twickenham, which he affectionately called Twitnam, as a symbol of those cultural and civilized values- literacy, honesty, generosity and hospitality- , which seemed to be crumbling all about him in Hanoverian England.

No doubt, Pope was recognized as the foremost poet of his day. He made a wide circle of several friends and several enemies as well because he had certain strong likes and dislikes, for instance, he did not like being patronized as much as Addison liked patronizing. It led to Addison's role in supporting a rival translation of Homer. However, his domestic life was much quieter and the translation of Homer was now absorbing all his time and energies. It was completed in 1720 and was well received but some of his contemporaries had not approved it. The great scholar, Bentley said: "It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer." Pope, however, did not go back to writing poetry. He turned instead to editing. He wrote to Caryl in October 1722 saying:

"I must again sincerely protest to you that I have wholly given over scribbling, at least anything of my own, but am become by due gradation of dullness, from a poet a translator, and from a translator a mere editor."

His main editorial project was an edition of Shakespeare that would supersede Rowe's which appeared in six Volumes finally in March 1725. Though the preface was a perceptively written piece but the text itself was

hastily collated and emended. A disapproval was expressed of the edition of Shakespeare, particularly, the scholar named Theobald exposed its deficiencies in his book called *Shakespeare Restored* Pope also edited the posthumous edition of his friend Parnell's *Poems*, which was published in 1721 and Duke of Buckingham's *Works* which appeared in 1723. As his own comment indicates, Pope was not a particularly good and successful editor, but the indiscreet attacks on his works and his character during the fifteen years had made him peculiarly sensitive about them. He was smarting under these attacks and was determined to repay them. Of that there is no doubt. He comforted himself by reflecting that he was maintaining the highest literary standards and that his enemies were pedants and other ordinary persons who were devoid of spirit, taste and good sense. However, the other major work belonging to these years was the translation of *Odyssey*. Pope was led into this venture by an extraordinary success of his translation of the *Iliad*. But his heart was no longer in translation. Therefore he engaged two Cambridge scholars as his collaborators, William Broome and Elijah Fenton to help him. The initial idea was that they would translate and Pope would revise and polish it, but the collaboration got him into all sorts of problems; as a result, in the end Broome translated eight books, Fenton four and Pope the remaining twelve. Pope made over 5000/= Pounds, and Broome and Fenton got under 1000/= between them. Pope's financial independence as an author was now completely secured. He by his own hard work became the first English author to be able to live off his writings and needed no patron. His description of himself as "Un-plac'd, unpensioned, no Man's Heir, or Slave", in his *Imitation of Horace, Satire 11*, written in 1733, best sums up his justifiable pride. Four years later still he put the same thought slightly differently in his *Imitation of Horace, Epistle 11, ii* (68-69):

*But (thanks to Homer) since I live and thrive,
Indebted to no Prince or Peer alive.*

Pope's labour was great, but the reward was great too. Pope paid a heavy cost of his health and gaiety of temperament by long labours of translations and comparative solitude stooping over the table for long daily hours, which made him a man older than his years. It was now that Pope's powers of verse showed a gift for lighter and gayer conversational satire on the minor follies in a Horatian tone. Not only that, satire, a mode in which he had as yet given glimpses of his genius as in *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Narrative of Dr. Norris*, was to become for the rest of his life the vehicle for its fulfillment.

Pope had been facing attacks by many envious cotemporaries and he bore them bravely and said, "These things are my diversions"; though his face

contorted with agony, he had the sense to feel that even silence shows contempt. His fury in his great satire, *The Dunciad*, was aroused by Theobald's comments on Pope's edition of Shakespeare. *The Dunciad*, published first 1728, is a mock-epic like *The Rape of the Lock* but with a difference. The former is dark, furious but more somber, often more magnificent and less easily appreciated while the latter is sparking, bright, delightful, and renowned poem. *The Dunciad* has always been a controversial poem. It was of course written as such: Pope meant to annihilate his enemies. There is undoubtedly a strong element of personal revenge about *The Dunciad*, but it is important to recognize that the poem grew out of the most profound and deep-rooted of all Pope's feelings about literature. "At its base is the firmly held belief that bad literature, indeed bad art generally, is immoral, and if allowed to spread unchecked will corrupt and eventually destroy civilization. The artist's duty therefore is a moral duty" as I.R.F. Gordon remarked. The first version of *Dunciad* consists of three books that centered on the crowning of King Tibbard (Lewis Theobald) as King of the Dunes, and came to the climax with a vision of the future in which the Goddess of Dulness held full dominion. In 1728 version, it is still a vision but by the time of the revised *Dunciad*, in four books, of 1743, the vision has become an actuality. George Fraser writes in his book, *Alexander Pope*, that,

"He is writing in The Dunciad not light Horatian but Juvenalian tragical satire, which at moments...is not a mockery of the sublime but true sublime. the end of the fourth book of the revised Dunciad has a Miltonic grandeur."

All this time Pope's health had been deteriorating. In 1728 his ailment had become so bad that in August he agreed to go to Bath to see if the waters would help him. He stayed there for ten weeks but there was no appreciable improvement. Partly because of his own health and partly because of his mother's failing condition, the five years from 1728 to 1733 were the most painful days of his life.

In the winter of 1730 Pope told his friend Spence of a new work which he was contemplating. It was to write a series of verse epistles, of which first four or five would be on "The Nature of Man" and the rest would be on "Moderation" or "the Use of Things". This work was not completed but Pope never gave up the intention till the end of his life. In June 1730 itself he wrote to Swift: "Yet am I just now writing, (or rather planning) a book, to make mankind look upon this life with comfort and pleasure, and put morality in good humour." The first poem actually to be published was the *Epistle to Burlington*, the famous amateur architect. The poem, which is one of the most characteristic works of Pope's maturity, presents an entertaining

selection of examples of taste in architecture and landscape gardening, and concludes with some suggestions for a worthier use of money. Within the next four years three more *Moral Essays* were published as well as a group of four epistles entitled *An Essay on Man*, which was intended to serve as the introduction to a larger work Pope had in mind. The former, with their brilliant observation of human nature, provide better reading than the latter, in which Pope is concerned to "vindicate the ways of God to man" based on the doctrine that 'whatever is, is right.' But, the *Essay on Man*, in which there is much proverbial, and philosophical wisdom that 'springs eternal in the human breast' is the best known and most quoted of all Pope's work. Except in form it is not poetry, and when one considers it as an essay one finds that there are innumerable literary ornaments and for its thought structure it has a deistic basis as there are no unanswered questions or problems in Pope's philosophy. To be precise, Pope, who had no philosophy of his own borrowed it from his friend Boilingbroke and the notion of vindication is perfectly accomplished in four poetical epistles: Epistle I discusses the nature and state of man concerning his relations to the universe; Epistle II shows man with respect to himself as an individual; Epistle III considers man with respect to society, and Epistle IV man in his relationship to happiness. The essence of the poem is summed up in a few lines:

*All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction that thou canst see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good:
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.*

Though Pope, a true Christian humanist, is "speaking in the spirit, though not in the language of Fenelon and the Gospel" to use the words of Fraser, his *An Essay on Man* was received with a lot of noise and recrimination as if to indicate to Pope that his *Dunciad*, far from destroying his enemies, had multiplied them. Pope was deeply distressed by these attacks, which coaxed him to think out his position as a satirist, and to ponder the ethics of writing satire. The form his defence took was to 'imitate' the first satire of the second book of Horace, itself a defence of satire,; That is to say, he loosely translated this satire, substituting modern parallels for contemporary allusions in the original. In this poem, the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735), a further defence of himself and his writings, and in the *Epilogue to the Satires* (1738), his last word on the subject, Pope contended that "the satirist's duty is to uphold a standard of moral rectitude and to point out deviations from that standard by chastising the most notorious and powerful offender" to use the words of Geoffrey Tillotson.

Pope's standards are expounded and defended not only in the *Moral Essays* but in his miscellaneous satires. *Imitations of Horace* (1733-8), entitled Satire 1, which is a paraphrase of the first satire of the second book of Horace, in form of a dialogue between the poet and William Forrescue the lawyer. Pope defends himself against the charge of malignity and professes to be inspired only by the love of virtue. However, he inserts in it a gross attack on his former friend, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. He was prompted by the success of

Satire 1 which was followed by *Imitations of Horace's Satire 11,ii, and 1,ii (Sober Advice from Horace)* in 1734, and *Epistle 1,iv; 11,ii, 11,i, and 1,1, in 1737*. In these *Satires* he recommends the standards, which were the old Horatian standards of Temperance, of Contentment with a modest Competence. Above all, he recommends that one must cultivate an honest, open-hearted, and serene disposition. Though Pope himself was not completely successful in living up to these standards, but there is no doubt that these standards were real to him.

Sick as he was, he was facing continual encounter with pain, and was actively preoccupied with writing till the end. During the last two years his condition became critical. He died of an asthmatical dropsy on 30th May 1744, on the ninth day of his fifty-seventh year and was buried in Twickenham church. In his last illness he was watched over by many friends like Bolingbroke, Marchmont, Martha Blount and Spence. They appreciated his tenderness and love and thought themselves to be honoured by his friendship. From 1709 to 1744 he dominated English poetry and remained the representative poet of the century who dared to speak out as boldly through his writings as he did in his life.

Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*: An Introduction

Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is an authentic and living picture of the actual happening in the eighteenth century society. Some time during the summer of 1711 the circle of prominent Catholic families in home counties was deeply disturbed by the rash act of Robert, 7th Lord Peter, in removing a lock from the head of the famous beauty, Arabella Fermor. Pope himself told his first 'biographer,' Joseph Spence:

"The stealing of Miss Belle Fermor's hair was taken too seriously, and caused an estrangement between the two families, though they have lived long in great friendship before. A common acquaintance and well-wisher to both desired me to write a poem to make a jest of it, and laugh them together again. It was in this view that I wrote my Rape of the Lock, which was well received and had its effect in the two families."

The first version of the poem in two cantos was written in less than a fortnight sometime in August / September 1711. The well-wisher was Pope's friend John Caryll, to whom the poem's invocation refers. It is not sure that Pope personally knew any of the families concerned but when the manuscript was circulated among them, the lady "vouchsafed to view" and Lord Peter "approved". And apparently it succeeded in healing the breach between them. Here two things form the kernel of the poem: first, a small matter led to a serious quarrel between two Catholic families and secondly, it is Pope's handling of the incident in a light and playful manner, which put the discord to an end. He treated the subject on the model of Boileau's *Le Lutrin*, which makes it a mock-heroic poem.

The first version appeared with Miss Fermor's permission anonymously in 1712. It received the praise of Addison who called it "a delicate little thing," but he advised Pope not to enlarge it or improve it. Pope distrusted his advice. In 1714 appeared the second and revised version of the poem in five cantos by adding the "machinery" of sylphs, gnomes etc., which Pope adopted from the mysteries of the *Rosicrucians*. In other words, he introduced the domesticated supernatural agents, including the Cave of Spleen, the scene at Belinda's toilet and the game of Ombre. He told Spence that

"the machinery was added afterwards to make it look a little more considerable; and the scheme of adding it was much liked and approved of by several of my friends, and particularly by Dr. Garth, who, as he was one of the best-natured men in the world, was very fond of it."

It was Dr. Garth's *The Dispensary* (1699) which served as a model for his mock-epic, *The Rape of the Lock*.

Pope's satire did displease and disturb all the parties concerned for its indelicate innuendoes and some odd resemblances with the living characters around. It gave offence to Miss Fermor as the scandal had gone too far. He not only failed to please her but also earned the hostility of Sir George Brown about which he reported

to Spence later: “Nobody but Sir George Brown was angry, and he was so a good deal and for a long time. He could not bear that Sir Plume should talk *nothing* but *nonsense*...” Similarly ‘Baron’, who might be interested in marrying her as per the internal literary evidence, chose another bride just two months before the poem was issued. In *A Key to the Lock*, Pope tried to placate Sir George Brown showing two men as possible candidates for the role of Sir Plume; as for Arabella, Pope’s dedication to the second and enlarged version of 1714 was contrived especially to give her favour and even to help her to get out of a rather silly and embarrassing position. Pope wrote to John Caryl on 9th January, 1714:

“The dedication to Arabella and the enlarged poem of 1714 take us from the complicated and ultimately unimportant tangle of social trivia into subtlety and permanent fabric of the poem’s creation. For the original events, which led to the poem, the dedication stresses only the central one.

As to the following Cantos, all the passages of them are as Fabulous, as the Vision at the Beginning, or the Transformation at the End; (Except the loss of your Hair, which I always name with Reverence). The Human persons are as Fictitious as the Airy ones; and the Character of Belinda, as it is now manag’d, resembles you in nothing but in Beauty.”

Pope’s concern, beneath these courtesies, is now for his art. As the last lines of the fifth canto confirm this. They celebrate the lasting fame which poetry has granted to the ephemeral lock. Thus, Pope transforms the passing social event into permanent relevance.

If the first version of 1712 sold poorly, while the revised version of 1714 was very well received, which sold 3000 copies within four days. The only other addition or alterations came in 1717, when Pope decided ‘to open more clearly the MORAL of the poem’ by adding Clarissa’s speech in canto five. Her role so far has been to hand over the fatal scissors to the Baron in the third Canto. Ever since the publication of the poem in its final version *The Rape of the Lock* has almost always enjoyed an enthusiastic and delighted reception. R.K. Root has quoted a letter of George Berkley to Pope in his book, *The Poetical Career Of Alexander Pope* in which he writes:

“I have accidentally met with your Rape of the Lock here (in Leghorn!), having never seen before. Style, painting, judgement, spirit, I had already admired in other of your writings; but in this I am charmed with the magic of your invention, with all those images, allusions, and inexplicable beauties, which you raise so surprisingly, and at the same time so naturally out of a trifle.”

Pope did suffer for such charges against him as plagiarism of Garth and Boileau, which stemmed from the personal animosity and professional rivalries, literary in-fighting and personality conflicts in the first half of the eighteenth century. The first real adjustments in the critical reaction to Pope begin in the second half of the century and are due mainly to new movements in taste and aesthetics created by the writers like Edmund Burke and Joseph Warton who displays some of the eighteenth century notions about poetry and is confident at the same time of the new criteria which led him to observe that Pope is more a ‘Man of Wit,’ and a ‘Man of Sense’ than a ‘True Poet.’ Radically new responses in the later part of the century made the critics highlight different aspects of his poetry though the preconceptions hampered the fair judgements. The Romantic critics like Hazlitt, Byron and others admired Pope, and Campbell goes to the extent of saying about *The Rape of the Lock*: “There is no finer gem than this poem in all the *lighter* treasures of English fancy.”

In the nineteenth century, the criticism of Pope’s work has really more historical interest than intrinsic value. It was read and appreciated with a limited delight. Actually a little has changed since Warton’s claim that it was “the best Satire Extant.” The responsibility of saving Pope from utter neglect and to present him in the true perspective has fallen on the twentieth century scholars. Modern readings of Pope and *The Rape of the Lock* have revised most of the ideas propounded by the Romantics and have asserted that he is a serious writer who is justified in using satire as the vehicle of real imagination. They have focused on the following themes of Pope:

- (a) The moral seriousness and imaginative intelligence with its “full richness and complexity.”
- (b) The social realities and Pope’s witty manipulation of them.
- (c) Pope’s powerful rejection of the superficialities and the artificialities of social *mores* in contemporary contexts.
- (d) The serious relevance of human passion especially about sex and religion.
- (e) Technical innovations like the density of allusions, metaphors and mimicking to maintain what J.S.Cunningham calls a “continuous doubleness of apprehension” by which the poet combined the flirtation with sublime, bathetic with poignant and trivial with significant.

This sort of serious study has accorded to Pope’s works a proportionate praise.

The Rape of the Lock as a Burlesque

According to Pope that first principle of criticism “is to consider the nature of the piece, and the intension of the author” as he put it in the postscript of his translation of the *Odyssey*. In this poem neither is in doubt. The title and the opening lines of the poem contain a kernel of the whole. The incident on which the poem is founded had caused a breach between the two Catholic families and it was suggested to Pope that he should write a poem “to make a jest of it and laugh them together again.” The writing of a narrative poem was the most obvious method and no variety of narrative was more suitable than the mock-heroic. Pope himself called *The Rape of the Lock* a “heroi-comical poem,”—a form so highly praised by Dryden, but the literary affiliations of the poem are of a complicated kind. On the one hand, it belongs to a class of literature called “burlesque,” which is also a parody and at the same time it has some of the features of a Farce as well. To call it a “mock-epic” is to add another dimension as the term mocking implies laughing at something critically and the term epic adds a highly serious motif to the narrative. A brief analysis would make it absolutely clear that the poem may fit into a variety of comic and satirical writings. .

Some critics assess that it is essentially a burlesque because “A burlesque is a parody on a large scale, in which not a single poem but a whole type or style of literature is travestied, the language and thought proper to a serious theme being reproduced in setting forth something ridiculous and trivial.” There are many famous literary burlesques, for instance take *Batrachomyomachia*—a poem in which the battle of Frog and Mice is described in the language of Homer, or *Don Quixote*—the burlesque of chivalry, or *Hudibras*—the burlesque of Puritanism. *The Rape of the Lock* is a burlesque of epic poetry at large and “contains parodies of Homer, Virgil, Statius, Ariosto, Spenser and Milton”.

The writers of burlesque should be thoroughly acquainted with the manner he intends to parody, and he should have no genuine reverence, admiration or sympathy for it. Pope knew very well the phraseology of the ancient epics. At the same time he was capable of a real appreciation of Homer and Virgil. Therefore, he was fit for the task of parodying the ancient epic.

The burlesque is partly a matter of treatment and partly a matter of language. By treating an insignificant subject in the manner of an epic the poem parodies that form of poetry. Instead of grand passions and great fights between heroes in which the immortals take part; we have as the theme of *The Rape of the Lock* a petty amorous quarrel assisted by the spirit of the air. The epic portrays an age around the personality of a god or a demi-god, and its characters are heroes, *The Rape of the Lock*, on the other hand, gives us the picture of a fashionable society. The central figure in that picture is a pretty young girl, and other characters are a rash youth, a foolish dandy and a few frivolous women. The place of deep and genuine passions found in the ancient epics is given to a succession of mock passions. Ariel’s fears associated with an impending danger are travesty of genuine fears.

*This day, black omens threat the brightest Fair,
That e’ver deserved a watchful spirit’s Care;
Some dire disaster, or by Force, or Slight;*

*But what, or where, the fates have wrapt in Night,
Whether the nymph shall break Diana's laws,
Or some frail China Jar receive a flaw.*

Likewise, Belinda's anger, when the lock of hair is removed from her head is sheer exaggeration of true passion:

*Then flashed the living Lightning from her Eyes,
And Screams of Horror rend the affrighted Skies.
Nor louder Shrieks to pitying Heaven are cast,
When Husbands, or when Lap-dogs breathe their last;
Or when rich China Vessels fallen from high,
In glittering Dust and painted Fragments lie,*

Thus, by its trivial theme, puny characters and false and exaggerated sentiments, the poem becomes a parody of an epic.

Besides, there are other incidents and features, which also suggest that the poem is a burlesque. As Addison wrote in *Spectator* No249 defining the varieties of burlesque:

*"Burlesque is of two kinds, the first represents mean persons in the accoutrements of heroes,
the other describes great persons acting and speaking like basest among the people."*

Pope exercised his talent in both the kinds, that is, in diminution and in aggrandizement. Agamemnon's sceptre dwindles to become Belinda's bodkin. Lord Peter builds an altar to the god of love but what kind of altar is it?

*Of twelve vast French Romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three Garters, half a pair of Gloves;
And all the Trophies of his former Loves.
With tender Billet-doux he lights the Pyre,
And breathes three amorous sighs to raise the Fire.*

Likewise, a battle is drawn forth to combat on a velvet plain like the Greeks; but it turns out to be a game of cards on the fashionable card-table. Geoffrey Tillotson has summed up some other characteristics of this poem stating:

*"We find a supernatural being threatening his inferior with torture; but it is sylph, not Jove
and the tortures are neither thunder-bolts nor pains of Hades, but cruelties devised
ingeniously from the requisites of the toilet table.... The epic is a long poem; The Rape of
the Lock is short. The story of the epic covers years; that of The Rape of the Lock hours.
The gods of the epic are stupendous creatures; Pope's sylph tiny."*

These are some of the examples of the epic grandeur presented on a diminutive scale. But, its reverse is also present in *The Rape of the Lock*

As Hazlitt points out:

*"The most glittering appearance is given to every thing, to paste, pomatum, billet-doux,
and patches.... A toilet is described with the solemnity of an altar raised to the goddess of
vanity, and the history of a silver bodkin is given with all the pomp of heraldry."*

Pope is a master of the type of humour, which emerges from presenting small things in a grand form. A remarkable instance of this type of aggrandisement is the speech of Clarissa in *The Rape of the Lock* She begins thus:

*Say, why are Beauties prais'd and honour'd most
The wise Man's Passion, and the vain man's Toast?
Why deck'd with all that Land and Sea afford,
Why Angels call'd and Angel-like ador'd?*

Clarissa swells and talks like a Homeric sage and effectively moves in the well-devised direction of the text. It has been rightly assessed that ,

“The burlesque is both- a matter of treatment and a matter of language. There are number of lines and passages which are the parodies of Virgil”.

For instance, consider the following lines as examples:

1. Slight is the Subject, but not so the Praise
If She inspires and He approved my Lays.

(Canto 1.11. 5-6)

This couplet parodies the following lines of Virgil from *Georgics IV*:

*Slight is the subject but the praise not small,
If heaven assist and Phoebus hear my call*

“Heaven” and “Phoebus” in Virgil are replaced by “she”(Belinda) and “he”(Caryll) in Pope.

2. The following couplet of Pope, again, is a parody of Virgil:

*Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive,
And love of Ombre, after death survive,*

(Canto1,11, 55-56)

Similarly Virgil says:

*The love of horses which they had alive
And care of chariot after death survive*

3. The seven folds in the petticoat of Belinda refer to the shields of Ajax, which was made of seven bull’s hides:

*Oft have we known that seven-fold fence to fail,
Though stiff with hoops; and armed with ribs of whale,*

(Canto11,11,267-268)

Thus, there are many proofs to surmise that Pope in *The Rape of the Lock* was seriously attempting to write a burlesque with two purposes in mind, (a) to laugh away the conflict and (b) to expose playfully the follies of the fair sex and the artificialities of his age.

Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* as a Mock- Heroic Poem

Despite its literary affiliation to other kinds of witty narratives, Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* is most obviously a mock-heroic poem. It had been evolved for the very purpose of ‘diminishing’ a quarrel and combines in it two kinds of writing in which the age of Pope was really interested: Epic and Satire. Pope’s handling of this genre has been so unique that it ceases to be an imitation of either of these forms and acquires an unprecedented novelty. Pope had two instances of this kind of writing in mind—Boileau’s *Le Lutrin* and Garth’s *The Dispensary*—which Pope followed with keen interest. They were suitable models but none of them was so brilliant as Pope’s poem. It appears that Pope might have aspired to write a consummate example of the mock-heroic genre before Lord Peter gave him the occasion by stealing the lock. In other words, the quarrel of the Peters and the Fermors family gave him the subject matter and opportunity for realizing that idea as an actual poem.

Some of the modern critics think that mock –heroic poem is primarily a satire on the epic, but the writers of the Augustan Age took it differently. The technical brilliance of *The Rape of the Lock* is largely due to the fact that Pope had studied Shakespearean drama and Milton’s epic and builds from both his poem . Preserving the essence of the heroic poetry, he gives it a humorous treatment and it was not a less worthy ambition in an age which had different requirements and a changed mental horizon.

The writers who ridiculed the epic in Augustan age were the authors of burlesques and travesties and their object was, as Dennis put it “a very scurvy one .”In a mock-epic a dignified genre is turned to witty use

without being cheapened in anyway. The poet has an opportunity of ridiculing through incongruity and offering his reader the sophisticated pleasure of recognizing ironical parallels to familiar passages of Homer and Virgil. If a mock- heroic poem is a 'parody' of the epic, it is so in the Augustan sense, not in the modern. The 'new purpose' of the frequent 'allusions' throughout *The Rape of the Lock* is not to ridicule a literary form but to organize a chaos into an order by setting a lovers' tiff in true perspective with their help.

The fact that the 1712 version of *The Rape of the Lock* consists of no more than 334 lines and takes over only a few characteristics of the epic, makes it clear that Pope's concern was less with Homer and Virgil than with Miss Fermor and Lord Peter. In its 1714 form it becomes the masterpiece of the mock- heroic because it imbibes the maximum amount of the epic qualities. Here, the mockery takes different forms and employs different devices. The proposition of using an epic form for the purpose of 'diminishing' the affair of the lock of hair, is in itself the general mockery of the epic form and substance—the epic manner with its invocations, the descriptions, the moralizing asides, the speeches opening with 'He said', its battles, its machinery, its journeys on water and down to the underworld and its harangues are some of the structural features modeled on the epic. Clearly, the purpose of the poet at this stage was neither to ridicule the heroic genre nor to provide a humorous parallel to all the principal ingredients of epic, but to serve the occasion for which poem was written. This remains true of the 1714 version, in which Pope increased the length of the poem from two cantos to five, totalling 794 lines in all, and added such further 'allusions' to the epic as the visit to the Cave of Spleen like the epic hero's visit to the underworld, the game of Ombre resembling other heroic games, the adoring of Belinda which parallels the arming of Achilles, and above all the extensive 'machinery' of Ariel and sylphs. Pope was fully conversant with the formidable mass of criticism in which the function and nature of epic machinery is discussed as he himself had planned for writing an epic. Le Bossu had said that 'the Machinery crowns the whole work' while Dryden concluded, "no heroic poem can be writ on the Epicurean (i.e. atheistical) principles.

In the first version of the poem, the supernatural agents play practically no part Pope realized that if a more extended mock epic was to be attempted, machinery of a more striking sort had to be invented. Pope could either revive the classical deities or would have taken personified moral qualities but he preferred to choose a machinery based on the *Rosicrucian* spirit, which proved to be fanciful and thus suitable for a mock-epic. For the action of the poem it was the most suitable invention. Geoffrey Tillotson aptly observes:

"Pope, like any epic poet, had already made the action of the poem take place on the knees of the gods: it was Heaven and 'the powers' which, granting half the baron's prayer, wrested from the fingers the lock they had allowed him to cut. But from the start it must have been obvious to Pope that the epics usually allotted their celestials more room and colour than his own poem did, and his literary mockery accordingly gained in quality as the supernatural machinery gained in quantity."

Ian Jack says in *Augustan Satire: Intention and Idiom In English Poetry, 1660-1750*: "The epic poet's task of arousing 'admiration' was particularly associated with the supernatural machinery of his poem. In the description of the sylphs and their actions Pope made his own bid to arouse admiration". Besides, It is rightly pointed out that,

"Each epic poem has some peculiar passion, which distinguishes it in particular from other epic poems, and constitutes a kind of singular and individual difference between these poems of the same species. These singular passions correspond to the character of the hero."

The peculiar passion of each epic is surprisingly different. If in *Iliad* it is *Anger* and *Terror*, the *softer* and *tender* passions reign in the *Aeneid*. So coquetry and pride are the reigning passions in Pope's mock epic about Belinda's stolen lock.

A mock –heroic poem has been thought of primarily as a satire on the epic, but the vast difference made by the nature of Pope's subject has often been overlooked. *Le Lutrín*, *The Dispensary* and *The Rape of the*

Lock are all mock-heroic poems describing a quarrel; but while the first two describe the quarrels between the lazy priests and grubby physicians, the third is concerned with a quarrel in the *beau monde*. The nature of Pope's subject and his intention creates an immense difference between his mock-epic and those of Boileau and Garth.

Another quality lies in the descriptions in *The Rape of the Lock*, which are 'mock-heroic' in a very different sense from other poems of the same genre. While others, like Dryden and Garth, had described ugly things with ironical elevation of style, Pope had objects of great beauty to describe. Ian Jack says that Pope's "poem is shot through with strands of silk from the fashionable world."

Joseph Warton in his *Essay on Pope* says, "If Virgil has merited such perpetual commendation for exalting his bees, by the majesty and magnificence of his diction, does not Pope deserve equal praises for the pomp and luster of his language on so trivial a subject"? His style is heroic and it is evident from the opening lines onwards:

*What dire Offence from am'rous Causes springs,
What mighty Contests rise from trivial things,
I sing....*

The inversion of the order of words and the use of the relatively pompous diction adds dignity to the verse. A similar elevation is particularly noticeable at the end of Canto III:

*What Time wou'd spare, from Steel receives its date,
And Monuments, like Men, submit to fate!
Steel cou'd the Labour of the Gods destroy,
And strike to Dust th' Imperial Towers of Troy;
Steel cou'd the Works of mortal pride confound,
And hew Triumphal Arches to the Ground,
What wonder then, fair Nymph! thy Hairs shou'd feel
The cong'ring Force of unresisted Steel?*

Pope makes the serious use of what is basically Homer's style. The similarity of idiom between *The Rape of the Lock* and Homer is nowhere more striking than in the descriptions of the battles between the *beaux* and *belles* and between the opposing cards in the game of Ombre:

*Now move to War her Sable Matadores,
In Show like Leaders of swarthy Moors...*

It is because of the idiom that "Pope's mock-epic differs from that of epic itself only in being more brilliant and more laboured that he was able to work into the texture of his verse such numerous and such parodies of the classical epics." Of several passages in *The Rape of the Lock*, where the style is deliberately lowered, the most obvious is the description of Sir Plume, "With his earnest eyes, and round unthinking face" he says, "Give her the Hair." Gildon called this style as "something New; Heroic Doggrel". There are many speeches through out *The Rape of the Lock* which add the dignified 'colours of rhetoric' associated with the heroic poem. They fulfill two important functions: (i) They wittily emphasize the poet's 'high seriousness' and (ii) They provide remarkably effective transitions. Pope was right when he said in the Postscript to the *Odyssey* that "the use of pompous expression for low actions...is... the perfection of Mock Epic."

Periphrasis is one of the common manifestations of the eighteenth century poetic diction. Pope uses many periphrases as 'uncommon appellations' For instances, for the scissors with which Lord Peter performs the rape – "two-edg'd Weapon," "little Engine," "glittering Forfex," "fatal Engine," "Sheers," and "meeting Points." The epic methods of 'heightening' the effects are used not for ridiculing them but to produce the desired ends. Through them he emphasizes the artificiality of the milieu, which he presents. Similarly by yoking together the ideas which belong to very different levels Pope produces strongly satirical effect and also shows topsy-turvy values in Belinda's world.

It is relevant to note that Pope's poem contains a very few directly 'diminishing' images as they are used in a satire but it has a large number of mock-heroic images which intensify the effect of the fundamental irony. For illustration consider the following lines:

*Not fierce Othello in so loud a Strain
Roar'd for the handkerchief that caus'd his pain.*

The apotheosis of the lock is drawn from the Roman myth:

*So Rome's great Founder to the Heav'ns withdrew,
To Proculus alone confess'd in view.*

There are some images which are particularly found in a mock-heroic poem, for example consider the comparison of Belinda to the sun at the beginning of Canto II:

*Not with more Glories, in the Etherial plain,
The sun first rises over the purpled Main,
Than issuing forth, the Rival of his beams
Launch'd on the Bosom of the silver Themes.*

There is a paradox about this image, which is the paradox about the whole poem. In a mock-heroic poem the subject of the poem is compared to something great and made ridiculous by comparison. It is as Pope pointed out in the Postscript to the *Odyssey* a deliberate transgression against the rules of proportion and mechanics. "It is using a vast force to lift a feather." The image is an exaggeration of the same imaginative truth as is in the line: "Belinda smil'd, and all the World was gay." There is an element of incongruity and the heroic idiom of the poem has its measure of appropriateness as well as inappropriateness, which establishes its claim as a mock-heroic masterpiece.

Briefly, *The Rape of the Lock* is not a poem against anybody. Pope only wished to laugh the quarrel out of the court and does not want to give serious offence to anybody. In short his purpose is "to conciliate everybody by means of mirth" to use the expression of Ian Jack.

Themes of Love & Marriage And the Character of Belinda

Love is such an obvious theme in *The Rape of the Lock* that it plays a title part in the poem. Whenever the critics attempted to analyze the themes they invariably commented on the love affair, which is the main force motivating the action of the narrative. Dr. Johnson observed that "the subject of the poem..(is)... an event below the common incidents of the common life", Geoffrey Tillotson thought that the rejection of the hero by the heroine was unaccountable. Though many Twentieth century critics felt that the theme of love in the poem was too weak to invite analysis, but Cleanth Brooks stated that the poem is about "war of the sexes over the rites of possession." It appears that Belinda and Baron might have gone there, like many young people, to find a suitable match to get married- he to another woman and she to another man. The poem does not show that they were concerned with finding 'a mate'; rather it confirms that in true neo-classical tradition they feigned 'death' and believed in sophisticated love and shunning marriage. Both of them, however, wage a mock war in a mock-heroic poem. Hugo. M. Reichard has summed up the idea thus: "The plot of the poem (is) a contest of wiles between commanding personalities- an uninhibited philanderer and an invincible flirt." Pope himself seems to be sharing this opinion as he puts it in his own words in *The Rape of the Lock* and in other poems. Addison & Steele who also projected in their papers many members of Belinda's and Baron's species but they certainly do not contain Belinda and the Baron and Pope's world of things.

The axis of the story of *The Rape of the Lock* is the character of Belinda who, Brooks thinks, is "out to catch a husband." As per the norms of the day the girl would be well advised to become somebody's wife before the heyday of her reigning beauty passes away. Belinda is not one of those girls who plan for marriage. In other words, there is not the slightest sign that she is thinking of marriage. The only characteristic feature of her personality, that catches the attention of the readers first, is "Belinda's self-sufficiency as a

reigning beauty.” Clarissa pointedly reminds her that ‘since locks will turn to grey... she who scorns a man, must die a maid’ (Canto V, 26-28) but Belinda persistently disdains wedlock. Reichard assertively says “Her quest is plainly, not for a man in her life, but for men at her feet.” Pope makes it clear that Belinda is keen to be wanted; she devotes herself “to the destruction of mankind” and even rejects a man. She no doubt likes “with youthful lords to roam” and chooses “to reject a lord” as her lover or husband. She not only declines the improper advances of the Baron, but she “oft rejects” other offers also.

If one judges Belinda on the evidences of the text and the opinions of the critics like Murry, Addison and Steele one would simply agree with Reichard that, “Pope’s heroine is not a bride-to-be but a coquette par excellence.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines this word ‘coquette’ thus:

“a woman (more or less young) who uses arts to gain the admiration and affection of men, merely for the gratification of vanity or from a desire of conquest, and without any intention of responding to the feelings aroused; a woman who habitually trifles with the affections of men.”

On the whole the word coquette stands for a self-loving woman who indulges in winning the hearts and throwing them away. Belinda fits reasonably well into such descriptions. Her patience before her dressing table and her fondness for the barges and courts, her delight in love letters, the bounds she puts on her blandishments and the assault she inflicts on the Baron support the idea that she is extremely self- admiring and self- loving dame. As Addison had concluded in *Tatler*, No. 107, “They are the most charming, but the most unworthy sort of women.”

It is interesting to note that Ariel, who is an expert witness, himself like other sylphs, is a deceased and metamorphosed coquette. He is associated with live coquettes by the way of duty because they protect the “fair and chaste” girls like Belinda. They guide them through flirtations and keep them fancy- free. It is the chosen few women who are under the care of the sylphs but the services of all the sylphs are exclusively for such women. On the one hand, they distract them from the seductive treats of one man, and on the other, they draw them to the advances of another man.

Belinda’s behaviour fully matches her retinue though everything she says or does is a plain coquetry. When the Baron approaches her with the scissors, for instance, to cut the lock, “Thrice she looked back, and thrice the foe drew near.” This sort of turning back may be enchanting allurement, or it may be only an innocent response to the twitches of warning of the sylph. Pope has made her perform on the Thames barge, in the most natural and fascinating manner. “She executes a tour de force of flirtation” to borrow an expression from Reichard’s article entitled: “The Love Affair in Pope’s *Rape of the Lock*”. Pope presents her thus:

*Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone,
But every Eye was fixed on her alone...
Favours to none, to all she Smiles extends,
Oft she rejects, but never once offends,
Bright as the sun, her Eyes the Gazers strikes,
And, like the Sun, they shine on all alike.*

Belinda skillfully maintains the style that suits her charms without losing her grace. She keeps her chastity in tact even when she offers temptations and she rejects the advances of some young men. Belinda’s motive is just not easily traceable and her conduct is stultifying. As the poem grows, the purpose of Belinda also becomes clear, that is, living in the present and enjoying her status as a maiden of infinite beauty. She shuns the dull glories of a virtuous housewife. Her motives are three fold: ‘Vanity’, the desire of conquest and self-love. After her defeat she herself protests that she does not know “what mov’d my mind with youthful lords to roam.” With a characteristic inconsistency in her behaviour she says: “Oh had I rather un-admired remain’d /in some lone isle.” Belinda has taken all pains with her charms and has got her tresses curled to seize and enslave the hearts of men before she comes to the Hampton Court. She plays her cards against the two

dashing, adventurous Knights for the fame in the game of Ombre. Here Pope renders that Belinda's ruling passion is unmistakably pride, which asserts in her personality in the dual sense of self-conceit and self-assertion. Pope uses the sylphs to expose it for many purposes because they are as solicitous as the girl herself not only in the matter of dress and coiffure, but also in the inner, instinctive gratification. Ariel addresses Belinda: "Fairest of mortals, Hear and believe! Thy own importance know." Ariel merely says what Belinda believes; His words are only the echo of Belinda's own sense of values. His message on honour is the most impressive. It begins and ends thus:

*What guards the Purity of melting Maids...?
'Tis but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know,
Tho' Honour is the Word with Men below.*

The sylph that keeps the young maiden chaste represents something different from 'honour' that preserves her in the worldly sense of the term.

The term honour means a sense of 'self-respect', or 'nobleness of mind' as

Dr. Johnson would take it or 'a concern for good taste' as Brooks signifies it but Pope plays on the shades of meaning in the spectrum of *honour*. Consider Thalestris' outburst:

*Honor forbid! At whose unrival'd Shrine
Ease, Pleasure, Virtue, All, our sex resign.*

If at the first glance, honour seems to mean 'chastity', the word slowly fades into the meaning as 'reputation.' Any discussion about the significance of true love must take into consideration the essential meaning of the term honour. Like all the classical poets, Pope brings out the relevance of love only if it is genuinely associated with honour. However, in the eighteenth century interpretation of the word has been brought to the forefront by Ariel when he tells Belinda: "'Tis but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know, / Tho' Honour is the Word with Men below." He means that it is pride rather than nobility that keeps the young girl like her pure. It is interesting to note that sylph behind Belinda's purity is symbolically her *alter ego*.

Belinda displays her real self most vividly at her dressing table. The scene is set in religious metaphor. Her vanity table is taken as an altar where she plays the double role. She is in person the chief 'priestess' and in the mirror the 'goddess'. Brooks resolves the mystery with a paradox when he says: "Such is the paradox of beauty –worship, she can be both the sincere devotee and the divinity herself." He feels that Pope himself was amused by the vanity of Belinda's performance. Hazlitt comes very close to the first principle of Belinda's soul as well as Pope's text when he says:

"A toilette is described with the solemnity of an altar raised to the "Goddess" of vanity. .. In keeping with her honour, Belinda's religion is primarily not beauty worship, but self-worship."

Belinda is her own goddess, which according to Oxford Dictionary means 'woman whom one worships or devotedly admires.' The line like "puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billet-doux," builds the meaning through contrast between heaven and self, piety and vanity and ultimately shows the chaos of values which create the environment in which even love loses its substance and significance. Not only that, when she bends to her own image in the mirror, she is enamored by her own image. She worships the deity and decks her to evoke the worship of mankind. These are in earnest 'the sacred rites of pride.'

Belinda's antagonist, the Baron, is also unconventional. She fails to maneuver the male into matrimony and assaults the well bred lord and he too attacks the gentle belle. Since Belinda's lock is "an amatory symbol," the pursuit of it involves the Baron in a lover's toil. His aims are to kiss and tell- 'on his foe to die.' Baron burns the previous trophies of love because he believes that Belinda's pretty lock of hair will make the grandest trophies. Hence:

*Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
By Force to ravish, or by Fraud betray.*

Baron's preference for fraud or force shows that Baron's adventurism has no place for persuasion and matrimony.

In the game of Ombre which is a parlour version of the epic battle, the Baron and Belinda encounter each other by name for the first time. Ariel, who has strict rules of heart, would not like Belinda to lose her heart to any young man. Momentary success of the diamonds in the game makes the whole environment a kind of challenge to Belinda's virtue. When the queen of heart is taken Belinda's cheeks turn pale because Belinda holds the king that can take the Baron's ace of heart, she averts the catastrophe and emerges out of the crisis with new honours as a heart-breaker. Within moments the tables are turned. On the way she falls in love and the earthly lover is probably the Baron. It does not directly affect her status or her adventures. Belinda tactfully keeps her new ideas about love to herself but betrays no sign of languishing into a wife. On the contrary, she flaunts Clarissa's suggestions about housewifery and marriage. When she tries to retrieve the lock she symbolically seeks to spike the Baron's claims. Never-the less, after falling in love, Belinda is not all what she used to be. Ariel and other sylphs leave her because she does not meet the desired standards of purity and honour. Hazlitt comments that on this occasion "You hardly know whether to laugh or weep." Ariel's painful departure is an indication that the worst is yet to come. The theft of Belinda's lock is degrading because the lock like the handkerchief in Othello would cause the possibility of a greater scandal as Thalestris prophesies:

*Gods! Shall the Ravisher display your Hair,
While the Fops envy, and the Ladies stare!*

.....
*Methinks already I your tears survey,
Already hear horrid things they say,
Already see you a degraded Toast,
And all your Honour in a Whisper lost!*

Belinda is also anxious and somehow wants to get rid of such publicity, which is worst than intimacy. She tries to recover it by words in the fourth canto and by force in the fifth Canto. The battle is fierce and the young men prefer dying at the hands of these beautiful ladies than withdraw: dying here is physically as well as metaphorically. While other men dwindle and faint, only one man, Sir Plume, is bold and eccentric enough to draw Clarissa down. Even this unthinking fellow awakes to the unreality of the warfare and allows himself to be slain by the frowns of Chloe. On the whole, it is the belles and not the beaux who enjoy the initiative in Belinda's war. Reichard has very aptly observed:

"When the girls rush bravely forward, they are flirting, not with death or dishonour, but with men.. and they limit themselves to light-hearted artillery."

The double point of her 'bodkin' -lovely hair ornament flourished as a dagger – is utterly disarming. Even more breath-taking is her 'charge of snuff.' Like a nerve gas this 'dust' is an absolute weapon; its 'atoms' completely explode his pretensions to manhood. This fraternizing suits not only the mock-heroics and manners of drawing rooms, but also the envy felt by fops for another beau's conquest and the joy felt by belles for another beauty's shame. However, it adds new pleasure even to death, and turns on Belinda favourably. Single-handedly she wins the war. For Jove's scale the singular 'lady's hair' outweighs the multiple 'men's wits.' The Baron suffers humiliation as he is thrown out by a snip of her fingers. 'The lock, obtained with guilt' has been 'kept with pain.' Belinda threatens the Baron who exposed her honour to unfair whispers, to put him to an everlasting shame with a hairpin. To restore to the prewar equilibrium it is necessary that none is the gainer or the loser. After they have fought this game of love and honour with cards, scissors and snuff, their ambitious aims are thwarted and the contest is drawn. The disappearance of the lock has left the baron without a trophy of conquest and Belinda without a trophy of reprisal.

In the end, the star, which is born from the lost lock of Belinda, shines to her advantage but it is hers only by the special providence of Pope's poetry. He has graced her career with sense and good humour:

*This Lock, the Muse shall consecrate to Fame,
And mid'st the Stars inscribes Belinda's Name.*

The poet invests her with a finer glory than she could ever achieve by her own art of beauty or love.

Supernatural Element in *The Rape of the Lock*

Pope introduced the supernatural agents in the second edition of the poem when he enlarged two cantos to five cantos. His choice of the supernatural shows how alive he was to the literature, which even could not be counted on to help him to be a poet. Pope found in the *Rosicrucian* doctrine many hints about the Sylphs specially in *Le Comte de Gabalis*, a roman written forty years ago in France by Abbe de Monfaucon de Villars, and which has been twice translated into English. The short novel is itself a skit on the sylphs of the system, the Rosicrucian philosophy, which had been inaugurated in Germany a hundred years earlier. Since the machinery of a serious epic is derived from established mythology, Pope's adoption of the machinery from the Rosicrucians was well known to be counted as established. Pope, then, owed to *Gabalis* the right to assume the existence of this particular system of elemental sprites who could change their sex at will, but the main attraction through out the novel is laid on their attractions for men as 'elementary' mistresses. In Pope's poem, on the other hand, they figure primarily as the allies of women in their unceasing war with men. Pope took from this novel what he could conveniently develop as per the design of his poem; for instance, in *Gabalis* all the sylphs are 'good' but Pope following the traditional categories of spirits, makes gnomes 'bad' wickedly contriving vexations for the ladies. He makes them more like the factious celestials of the epics. According to the Rosicrucians,

"the four elements are inhabited by spirits, which they call sylphs, gnomes, nymphs and salamanders. The gnomes or demons of earth delight in mischiefs; but the sylphs, whose habitation is in the air, are the best conditioned creatures imaginable. For they say, any mortals may enjoy the most intimate familiarities with these gentle spirits, upon a condition very easy to all true adepts, an inviolate preservation of chastity."

Pope also borrows the opinion that transmigrated souls protect their friends on earth, and conspire against their enemies; he makes the sylphs guardians of maidens and this again carries its epic reference since the epic heroes are provided with their divine guardians. He is, however, more interested than de Villars in the living conditions of the sylphs and goes for help to another French book, that is Fontenelle's *Pluralite de Mondes*. It is on this basis of the scientific whims of Fontenelle that Pope's fancy scrupulously build up its universe, for example, take 77-86 line from Canto II.

Like Milton's angels again, Pope's sylphs are invulnerable, i.e., if their bodies are divided they can come together again. Pope borrows the idea of their regimentation and names them, for instance, "The light Militia of the lower sky." Ian Jack made an insightful observation that,

"The main thing that he took over was merely the licence to invent a fantastic race whose presence would make every trivial incident in his poem 'appear of utmost importance'. The sylphs are mirrors added to his scene. By them the central action is reflected and multiplied a hundredfold, gaining in subtlety and mystery as well as in ironical importance."

The creation of the sylphs allowed Pope's imagination a much wider scope than before. The whole of English poetry contains no passage of description more exquisite than that of the sylphs in Canto II of *The Rape of the Lock*. Of the four "Elementary Nations" Pope concentrates on the sylphs, whose region is the air; and air is the element which marks every line of this description:

*He summons strait his Denizen of Air;
The lucid Squadrons round the Sails repair:*

*Soft o’ver the Shrouds Ariel Whispers breathe,
That seem’d but Zephyrs to the Train beneath.
Some to the Sun their Insect-Wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in the Cloud of Gold.
Transparent Forms, too fine for mortal Sight,
Loose to the Wind their airy Garments flew,
Thin glittering textures of the filmy Dew.*

Fully immersed in the ethereal beauty of the sylphs, Pope describes some of the colours, which these sprites display:

*Dipt in the richest Tincture of the Skies,
Where Light disports in ever-mingling Dies,
While ev’ry Beam new transient Colours flings,
Colours that change whene’er they wave their Wings.
Amid the Circle, on the gilded Mast,
Superior by the Head was Ariel plac’d;
His Purple Pinions opening to the Sun,
He raised his Azure Wand, and thus begun.*

Pope borrowed the idea of Ariel from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, and got so fascinated by the beauty of the sprites, which are essentially the product of his own imagination, that he went much ahead of the given idea. Ian Jack has remarked in this context: “Through out the poem the senses are flattered as delicately as they are in Belinda’s world itself.”

In his letter to Arabella Fermor Pope explains the term “machinery” and its use in the epic. He says:

“the machinery, madam, is a term invented by the critics, to signify that part which the deities, angels, or demons are made to act in a poem: For the ancient poets are in one respect like many modern ladies; let an action be never so trivial in itself, they always make it appear of the utmost importance. These machines I determined to raise on a new and odd foundation, the Rosicrucian doctrine of Spirits.”

The machinery gives Pope an unrivalled opportunity of indulging in his descriptive powers and to follow the epic design more effectively as the “machinery” of sylphs is a parody on gods and goddesses in classical epics. In an epic the immortals intervene in action. They control the destiny of men and determine their success or failure. In *The Rape of the Lock* sylphs intervene in the small stratagems of love. Ariel tells Belinda that hundreds of sylphs attend the fair ones and zealously guard their chastity:

*What guards the purity of melting maids,
In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades
.....
'Tis their sylph, the wise celestials know,
Though honour is the word with men below.*

The sylphs contrive what is known as the levity of women. If a woman rejects a lover or prefers one suitor to another, it is because of the secret contrivance of sylphs. This is how the sylphs control the course of women’s love on this earth, and guides them through its mystic mazes. It is because of their secret influence that

*With varying vanities, from every part,
They shift the moving toyshop of their heart.*

As in the epic gods govern the human destiny; in Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* the sylphs influence the course of human affairs, especially love. Exactly like the gods, they intervene in the events as they develop. A thousand sprites try to prevent Lord Peter from cutting Belinda’s lock:

*Swift to the Lock a thousand sprites repair,
A thousand wings, by turn, blow back the hair:
And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear
Thrice she looked back and thrice the foe drew near.*

Against the brilliant background of the eighteenth century society, Pope's gorgeous descriptions about the sylphs make the poem an exceptionally fascinating piece of poetic creation.

As the gods have their favourites among mortals, so sylphs have their favourites among beauties. Belinda is the favourite of Ariel who acts like the guardian angel. He could not, however, protect her hair because he viewed "an earthly lover lurking in her heart." Thus, the gods in the classical epics are travestied in *The Rape of the Lock* through the "machinery" of the sylphs. Geoffrey Tillotson says that the scale in *The Rape of the Lock* is that of diminution. The mock-epic poem presents the methods of the epic on a diminutive scale. The sylphs are like the gods of epic on a diminutive scale. In a world of trivialities they take recourse to petty stratagems. They are quite suited to the world of *The Rape of the Lock*. Precisely, the "machinery" in the poem is a splendid and superb invention and achievement of Pope's imagination.

Pope as a Satirist

Of the entire genre that makes up the Western literary tradition, satire is the only form invented by the Romans rather than the Greeks. The Latin noun from which the word 'satire' is taken is 'satura' which means a medley, a variety of things or topics. The main aim of the comic satire developed by Horace is to castigate and thus to correct the prevailing follies and vices of the age. The Augustan age is the golden period of English satire because the finest and the most powerful satires were written in this age. It is not Pope but his friend Swift who was the great natural satirist and prior to him was Dryden. Pope uses this skill differently because he shows a sneaking liking for the society or the things he attacked through his satire. If Pope makes conventional attacks on pride, he had a dangerous kind of pride himself. He says:

*Yes, I am proud; — I must be proud to see
Men not afraid of god, afraid of me...*

Pope could not be a satirist like Swift because he had taken a sanguine and cheerful view of London society. He loved London as the great centre of all pleasures and amenities of life and became, as Lowell aptly points out, "the delineator of manners" and the poet of society whose follies and frivolities also he knew well. Pope was temperamentally respectful to great lords, powerful statesmen, learned lawyers, courtly manners and loved his neighbour and he made these factors known publicly. Pope was almost an invalid depending very much on the expensive life-style, glitter and gold of the society and close friendships. He could not take grim and limited view of the possibilities of life as a great satirist is bound to do. In his *Essay on Man* and *Moral Essays* Pope had taken a positive view of the power of reason to regulate passion and the tendency, implanted by God himself, of our self-love, the spring of all our energies, to grow into social love. He loved his age and his society, and if he criticized them, it had only one purpose, that is, to purge them of their limitations. Some of Pope's best writing in his satires is invective against his enemies or compliments to his friends-, which have all the eloquence of true feeling. Other pieces of excellent writing in Pope's satires are in the nature of an emotional autobiography; a kind of apology, as in the Arbothnot poem, for a life shut up in literature because it could have no other outlet, an apology that moves effectively between the self-mocking, the proud and the sad. In his satirical skill Pope comes next to Dryden, his later poems are more satirical in nature than his earlier ones and the note of satire is present in almost everything he wrote. He has a moral tendency, which naturally expresses itself in terms of satire.

Pope's important satirical works are, *The Dunciad*, *The Moral Essay* and *the Imitation of Horace* and similar epistles and satires. In *The Dunciad*, his moral excuse was that he was defending a high civilization against forces of stupidity and corruption that were threatening to destroy it. No doubt, he ridicules dullness in literary works, but he also attacks his enemies who had given him real or imaginary offence. He attacks

Theobald, because he found fault with his edition of Shakespeare. Mark Jacobs says that it is “a poem that holds one’s attention by being at once broadly comic and strikingly nasty.” It is probably the most powerful and original of all Pope’s poems, but also the least charming; whereas elsewhere he always seems to write with ease, here one is conscious of recurrent triumph but also of continual effort. However, “it displays Pope’s majestic power which raised satirical poetry to a grandeur” to use George Fraser’s expression. Likewise, he attacks Colly Cibber for he ridiculed a play in which Pope had some share. Besides, Pope ridiculed his old enemy Dennis, who harassed him all his life and remained an enemy. He bitterly satirized Lintot who accused him of unfair dealings with his collaborators in his translation of *Odyssey*. In his *Imitations of Horace* Pope attacks grossly his former friend, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and in his *Epistles to Dr. Arbuthnot* he caricatures Addison who was once his friend.

There are two aspects of Pope’s satire- impersonal and personal. “His satires are basically directed against the follies of polite society, against corruption in politics, and against false values in art, particularly the art of poetry.” But, this is also not the whole truth about Pope’s satires because it is not as impersonal as stated by a critic. Pope did not succeed in emancipating himself from personal spite and in generalizing his dislikes. Talking about *The Dunciad* John Dennis says:

“The theme is a mean one. Pope from his social eminence at Twickenham, looks with scorn on the authors who write for bread, and with malignity on the authors whom he regarded as his enemies. There is, for the most part, little elevation in his method of treatment, and we can almost fancy that we see a cruel joy in the poet’s face as he impales his victims of his wrath...There is no part of it which can be read with unmixed pleasure, if we except the noble lines which conclude the satire.”

This estimate may sound bitter but is true to some extent. Pope attacked in his satires not only *man* but also *men* and his attack on *men* is really conspicuous and ruthless. Pope could not forgive even his friends if they annoyed him or gave him offence real or imaginary.

When an attempt is made to assess the ethical values of Pope’s satire, it leads to certain controversies. What concern us most are its wit, vigour, brilliance and beauty of form. Saintsbury sums up Pope’s contribution as a writer of satires thus:

“It is in his later Essay, his Epistles, his Satires and his Dunciad that Pope’s genius shows at its very greatest. They are no doubt mosaics—the “Atticus” passage was pretty in Epistle to Arbuthnot- but this is no defect in them.... Here he reigns triumphant. His philosophy may be always shallow and sometimes mere nonsense; his satire may lack the large Olympian sweep of Dryden, but he looked on society, and on humanity, as that society happened for the time to express it, with an unclouded eye, and he expressed views with a pen that never stumbled, never made slips of form, and always said the right thing in the right way...”

Even in *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope has carried the responsibility of a satirist in the most dignified manner. He knew the social circle whose follies and frivolities are exposed in the poem. Besides, it presents the attitude of the age towards women. We have already seen that wits addressed ladies in a tone of gallantry, but in reality they were treated like pretty triflers. Addison also deplored the treatment given to them and added that “the toilet is the great scene of business, and the right adjustment of their hair, the principal employment of their lives.” Belinda, like the ladies of her age, seems to be devoted to the similar pursuits related to toilet and tea, Ombre and armour. Her mornings are spent in the adoration of “the cosmetic powers”, “Puffs, powders, patches and bibles” which make up her beauty. After her make up which repaired her ‘smiles,’ she sallies forth to conquer the hearts of the young men. Her main occupations are balls, games and masquerades. This sort of life, deprived of any work or serious engagement obviously, results in petty act of removing the lock of a woman. Pope exposes the hollowness of the class, which is pompous only from without but is shallow within. It is a poem in which the coxcomb and dandies on the one hand and frivolous

and pretentious woman on the other display their vanities. When invested in a grand attire of epic, their frivolities become all the more glaring and interesting. Pope does portray the life of the age from the point of view of a moralist. His purpose is to present their weaknesses with a view to improving them. When Pope presents their smallness, he is not condemning them rather he is amused by their follies, which he believes, must be corrected. Humour does not arise from a great and serious purpose. It emerges from a situation in which a lady loses a lock of her hair, or from a conflict in which a man is slain with a woman's bodkin.

Thus, the satire in *The Rape of the Lock* exposes the life of the age in playful manner and the picture is saturated with a gentle irony. The "instructive hours" are passed by exchanging the scandals, and by "singing, laughing and ogling." The trivialities are drawn with exquisite skill; they are meant to amuse and should not be taken more seriously than Pope meant them to be. Joseph Warton has summed up the whole issue stating that,

"The Rape of the Lock is the Best satire extant; that it contains the truest and the liveliest picture of modern life; that the subject is of a more elegant nature, as well as more artfully conducted, than that of any other heroi-comic poem. Pope here appears in the light of a man of gallantry, and of a thorough knowledge of the world; and indeed he had nothing, in his carriage and deportment, of that affected singularity, which induced some men of genius to despise, and depart from, the established rules of politeness and civil life."

In fact, Pope's satire was mostly leveled against folly. He says, "Fools rush to my head, and I write".

Pope's Language, Art of Versification and The Heroic Couplet

Pope's verbal workmanship is unparalleled. He is the master of clean-cut and incisive phraseology and "ornamental extravagances" of the eighteenth century diction which has been attacked by the later critics principally on three grounds: (a) that it was a new borrowing from Latin, for example, take the word *dehorting*, or its use in the original Latin sense; or the word *obvious*; these words were already borrowed and developed in meaning, for example *obvious*;(b) that it adapted a Latin method of phrasing, for example, *fleecy care*; and (c) that it was used too much. Against the first objection the only reply is that the poets of the age were experimenters; for the second the only justification can be that it was Latin and therefore it provided cultivated pleasure. *Fleecy care* is good as sound. It is also subtle and complex as meaning. This kind of phrase provided an excellent method of compression, especially since it is often an abstract and a concrete, which are clashed together. This method of compression by periphrasis, of comprehensive description and designation acting simultaneously, becomes one of the most prominent items in the poetic diction of the eighteenth century. Another favourite phrase is Adjective + a group of words: for example, *the feather'd kind*. The poets of the eighteenth century attained the stateliness befitting the Classical poets especially Virgil, his conception of poetry and his gracefulness by adopting their metre. They achieved it by avoiding low words like *fish* and *sheep*. There is another reason for this poetic diction. It is notable that it is principally used in reference to external nature. The eighteenth century inherited the Renaissance creed that man is the monarch in his world. Dryden and Pope looked at the external nature for what it could show them of splendour or beauty or even of mystery they superimposed on nature by allotting it a due and fit place in the human scheme. In other words, they made a selection from nature of elements that suited their interests, and superimposed on nature some of their own civilized humanity. Briefly the writers justified the use of Latin diction, phrases and expression used excessively. Pope, being an extremely laborious craftsman, learnt through constant labour and practice the art of expressing his ideas in the best words and phrases. To achieve the perfection of form, his one great concern was to express "the best thought within his compass in the best words." Pope corrected his lines with meticulous care, polished and repolished them. Dr. Johnson speaks of Pope's "incessant and unwearied diligence" and adds that "Pope was not content to satisfy; he desired to excel, therefore always endeavoured to do his best He examined lines and words with minute and punctilious observation, and retouched every part with indefatigable diligence, till he had left nothing to be forgiven."

Pope believes that there should be correctness of diction. Certain poems require to draw from a fund of acknowledged poetic diction, others require original diction. As Geoffrey Tillotson observes: “He requires that language should be appropriate. There should be no incongruity between the length in space (or time) and the length in meaning, between decoration and substance, between obsolete and modern.” Appropriateness is the cardinal virtue for Pope in life as well as literature. In *Essay on Criticism* Pope says:

*Expression is the dress of thought, and still
Appears more decent, as more suitable
For diff'rent styles with diff'rent subjects sort,
As several garbs with country, town and court.*

Pope firmly believed that the style should be adapted to the subject. He had rules for a variety of styles even for the appropriate placing of the preposition:

‘What is your opinion (asks the Boswellian Spence) of placing preposition at the end of a sentence?’—It is certainly wrong: but I have made a rule to myself about them some time ago, and I think verily ’tis the right one. We use them so in common conversation: and that use will authorize one, I think, for doing the same in slighter pieces, but not in formal ones.’

Pope cannot endure stiffness, which is created with high words and metaphors. He wanted his language to be appropriate and hence “there is no diction in satires” to borrow the expression of Tillotson. In the moral poetry Pope uses the words almost with freedom and fearlessness of Shakespeare. This freedom can be seen nowhere more readily than in Pope’s verbs of the ‘poetic diction’ which were predominantly of Latin origin. He is free but at the same time he is not free to use any word that comes to his head, because like all, his poems, the satires are addressed to the cultured society of his time. As Tillotson says:

“Poeticisms are barred. These must be no merely ornamental epithets, and no compound ones. The epithet must therefore fall into its prose order, that is, it must precede the noun...”

Such rules apply unless ‘appropriateness’ demands their temporary suspension. Coleridge, in *Biographia Literaria*, considered that in satires, Pope was a poet of ‘almost faultless position and choice of words.’ Pope inherited the Elizabethan dread that English language had a limited future. Hence his occupation with correctness in language is aimed partly at keeping English afloat. In his book *On the Poetry of Pope* Tillotson reflects on Pope’s fancy for Latinizing English:

“His envy of the adamant of Latin led him to respect and extend the seventeenth-century practice of latinizing English. In his early works his respect was shown mainly in vocabulary and methods of phrasing, in the later work mainly in the close Latin-like packing of line, and the precise correctness of each word used. Correctness was a likely preservative.”

Pope wished to be concise in the meaning and the use of words. That perhaps was the first requirement for writing in the heroic couplet. He enunciated the rules which he felt were valuable for the writing of couplets. Though Dryden did not invent the couplet but he improved upon his predecessors and turned it into a powerful medium of expression. Besides, he broke the monotony of the couplet by frequent use of triplets and Alexandrines. In the *Epistle to Augustus*, Pope summarizes the history of seventeenth century versification, pays his tribute to Dryden though he thinks of him an “incorrect versifier”.

The bulk of Pope’s poetry is written in the heroic couplets because, as Pope believed, it attracts attention to itself as a metre and carries an “unpretentious elegance”. He learned his metrical devices from Dryden but he narrowed down its metrical scope considerably. He discarded the triplet and Alexandrine by which Dryden introduced variety in his verse and brought more subtle variations of rhythm within the closed couplet. Tillotson rightly points out that

“Heroic couplets had not always been written in the way Pope wrote them. He may be said to have regarded them as if they were stanzas, self-contained; or, if not quite that, as having a beginning, middle and end even though at the end stood a gate and a gate which on some occasions he opened to allow the sense to drive through. That is, the couplet may belong to the paragraph, even more than to itself: but if so, it is only because Pope deliberately chose to open the gate.”

Pope enunciated in letters to Cromwell and Walsh some of the principles upon which he worked in the heroic couplets such as “of the feet, the quantities and the pauses”. In the collected Works of 1717 he writes:

“..... There are indeed certain Niceties, which, tho’ not much observed even by correct versifiers, I cannot but think, deserve to be better regarded.” Briefly they are:

1. It is not enough that nothing offends the ear, but a good poet will adapt the very Sounds, as well as Words, to the things he treats of.
2. In any smooth English verse of ten syllables, there is naturally a *Pause* at the fourth, fifth, or sixth syllables
3. Another nicety is in relation to Expletives, whether words or syllables... ‘Do’ before verbs plural is absolutely such ... which are almost always used for the sake of rhyme...
4. I would also object to the irruption of Alexandrine verses, of twelve syllables ... I am of the same opinion as to Triple Rhimes.
5. I could equally object to the Repetition of the same Rhimes within four or six of each other, as tiresome to the ear thro’ their Monotony.
6. Monosyllabic Lines, unless very artfully managed, are stiff, or languishing: but may be beautiful to express Melancholy, slowness, or Labour.
7. To come to Hiatus, or Gap between two words, which is caused by two vowels opening on each other.... I think the rule in this case is either to use Caesura (by which Pope meant the elision of one of the vowels or admit Hiatus, for Caesura sometimes offends the ear more than the Hiatus....

As these rules confirm, Pope’s first need is onomatopoeia. There are thousands of examples of Pope’s beautiful use of onomatopoeic effects through so many varieties of patterns. For instance, consider how Pope provides an antithesis as well as an echo in the following line:

*“So sweetly warble, or so smoothly flow”
Or take an instance of unbalance between two parts:
“More bright than moon, yet fresh as early day.”*

Or the line:

“ Fresh as the moon, and as the season fair.”

in which there is an inversion of music but not an inversion of meaning. Tillotson’s observation is remarkable when he says: “ Pope’s regard for versification which, to speak approximately, began in the cause of music and continued in the cause of meaning, was the major element in his effect and his effectiveness.”

Pope’s greatest triumph in the couplet lies in his making it dramatic with the help of the mechanics of his art which make them satisfying as complete stanzas and there is no doubt that Pope looked on the couplet as capable of attaining a temporary unity in itself. There are three significant qualities which make them astonishingly unpredictable: (a) He introduces in them a subtler variety of rhythm, and adds to it an incomparable lightness and polish. One of the critics of Pope has summed up the beauty of his couplet thus: “Light, bright, glittering, varied in a manner almost impossible to account for, tipped over with the nearest, sharpest rhyme, volleying on the dazzled, though at times at any rate satiated reader, a sort of salvo of feud artifice, skipping,

crackling, scattering colour and sound all round and about him.” (b) There is a quality of the verbal colouring and metre on the large scale. Pope’s meaning is achieved through his metre as much as through his words. “Pope, seeing the value of conciseness, saw also that the heroic couplet- that of all metres- could be patterned and rhythm’d so as to save words, so as to complete the subtlety of a meaning which otherwise would have taken up more space. The metre whispers to the reader the sense, the tone, the nuance which those words have not needed to be used for.”(c) Pope’s couplet are self-sufficient so that they are curiously detachable even when lacking grammatical independence. From the stand-point of sense each couplet of Pope is complete in itself. He introduces in them “sense pause” and “grammatical pause.” to present a complete thought

To sum up Pope’s art of poetry it can be said that Pope with his concepts of correctness about human nature and society, art and values has risen above the old myth of being a satirical poet and has become “ a conscious Augustan prophet” whose greatness is to voice the ideas and ideals of his age” to use the expression of S.L. Goldburg who further adds:

“ *He has created for his age, and in another sense for ours as well, ... But that life and that artistic intelligence of it gleams most brightly as they also reflect the ‘chaos’ and ‘darkness’ that paradoxically sustain them.*”

Being a great writer, Pope did not deliver exactly what his audience had ordered. There are codes and secret messages in his work; there is a constant thread of myth, irrationality and fancy but he was sufficiently a man of his time who used the poetic idiom then in fashion, who used the inherited idiom with absolute mastery. He is a ‘social’ poet who knew his people; he is a poet of ‘correctness’, he is a ‘creative’ poet who is conscious of his responsibility and uses his art effectively. In the Preface to his volume of 1717 Pope observed that ‘the life of a Wit is a warfare upon earth;’ and the epigram makes an apt comment on his work, though in a more complex sense than he could have meant when he made it. “The highest life of his Wit is certainly a warfare, not only directed *at* the earth he inhabited, but also an inextricable part of it. At his greatest, he does not simply oppose clear-cut doctrines or principles against an imperfect word, but participates in the endless conflicts that make it imperfect”. As a poet Pope carries more inclusive, more subtle, more relaxed and more mature sense of life around him.

Assignments

Note: Answer the following questions.

1. What are the characteristic features of the ‘Augustan age’, which is also known as the Age of Pope?
2. Write an essay on Pope as a Neo-classical poet and a true representative of the eighteenth century.
3. Discuss Pope as a Satirist with special reference to *The Rape of the Lock*.
4. Consider Pope as a writer of Heroic couplets.
5. Discuss *The Rape of the Lock* as a mock-epic poem.
6. Write an essay on the supernatural ‘machinery’ in *The Rape of the Lock*
7. What are the qualities of Belinda’s character? Illustrate your answer.
8. Geoffrey Tillotson calls Pope as a poet of “correctness?” Elucidate the statement.
9. Discuss Pope’s art of versification. Give illustrations to support your answer.
10. What are the structural qualities of *The Rape of the Lock*?
11. Discuss the theme of love in *The Rape of the Lock*.
12. “In *The Rape of the Lock* Pope himself is fascinated by the glitter of his own age.” Discuss the remark.
13. What is the significant moral message of *The Rape of the Lock*?

14. Discuss Pope as a poet. Give a reasoned answer.
15. What are the limitations or demerits of Pope as a poet?

Note: Answer the following questions in about *two hundred* words.

1. What is a heroic couplet?
2. Discuss the opening lines of the first Canto of *The Rape of the Lock*
3. What are the epic qualities in *The Rape of the Lock*? Give two examples to support your answer.
4. Pope has recommended “certain niceties” for poetry. Discuss any three of them briefly.
5. Write a note on Sylphs.
6. What is the difference between the first and the second version of *The Rape of the Lock*?
7. What happens to Belinda’s lock at the end of the poem?
8. What was the purpose of writing the poem, *The Rape of the Lock*?
9. Discuss the role of Clarissa.
10. What is the significance of the title of *The Rape of the Lock*?
11. What is a Satire?
12. Discuss the significance of the metre in Pope’s poetry.
13. Write a note on Pope’s classicism.
14. Point out any two qualities of Pope’s craftsmanship.
15. What are the features that make Pope’s poetry autobiographical?

Books Useful for the Students

Poems

Complete Editions

The Poems of Alexander Pope: the Twickenham Edition. General Editor, John Butt, 6 vols. Its 7, London, 1939-61. This is the definitive edition.

The poems of Alexander Pope, ed. John Butt, London, 1963, new ed. 1965. A one-volume edition of the Twickenham Text with selected annotations.

The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope, ed. Herbert Davis, London, 1966. Oxford Standard Authors Edition.

Letters

The correspondence of Alexander Pope, ed. G. Sherburn, 5 vols. Oxford, 1956.

Letters of Alexander Pope, A selection edited by J. Butt, London, 1960.

George Sherburn, The Early Career of Alexander Pope, Oxford, 1934. The standard biography up to 1727.

Edith Sitwell, Alexander Pope, London, 1930. In spite of its sentimentality this book still has some value for its sympathetic account of Pope.

Joseph Spence, Anecdotes, Observations, and Characters of Books and Men, Collected from the Conversation of Mr. Pope and other Eminent Persons of His Time.

(I) ed. S.W. Singer, 1820. Newly introduced by Bonamy Dobree, London, 1964.

(II) Ed. J.M. Osborn, 2 vols. Oxford, 1966. An essential source for Pope’s life.

W.K. Wimsatt, The Portraits of Alexander Pope, New Haven and London, 1965. An interesting and beautifully produced book.

Criticism

A.L. Williams, *Pope's 'Dunciad': A Study of its Meaning*, London, 1955.

Arden, John M., *Something Like Horace: Studies in the Art and Allusion of Pope's Horatian Satires*. Nashville, Tennessee, 1969.

Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, Cambridge, Mass., 1936, Repr. 1950. See Chaps. VI-IX for an illuminating study of some key ideas in the 18th century.

Bateson, F.W. and Joukovsky, N.A (eds), *Alexander Pope: A Critical Anthology*, Harmondsworth, 1971.

Cleanth Brooks, 'The Case of Miss Arabella Fermor', in *Sewanee Review*, vol. LI, no. 4, 1943, pp. 505-24; also in *The Well-Wrought Urn*, New York, 1947.

Dixon, Peter, *The World of Pope's Satires: An Introduction to the 'Epistles' and 'Imitations of Horace'*, London, 1968.

Dobree, Bonamy, *Alexander Pope*, London, 1951.

Douglas Knight, *Pope and the Heroic Tradition, A Critical Study of His Iliad*, New Haven and London, 1951.

Edith Sitwell, *Alexander Pope*, London, 1930.

Evan Jones, 'Verse, Prose and Pope: A Form of Sensibility', in *The Melbourne Critical Review*, No. 4, 1961, pp. 30-40.

Geoffrey Tillotson, *On the Poetry of Pope*, London, 1938, rev. ed. 1950. The best book by a distinguished Pope scholar.

Geoffrey Tillotson, *Pope and Human Nature*, Oxford, 1958.

Geoffrey Tillotson, 'Alexander Pope, I and II', Two essays in *Essays in Criticism and Research*, Cambridge, 1942.

George Sherburn, 'Pope at Work', in *Essays on the Eighteenth Century Presented to David Nichol Smith*, Oxford, 1945, pp. 49-64.

G. Wilson Knight, *The Poetry of Alexander Pope: Laureate of Peace*, London, 1955, Paperback 1965. See Chapter 'The Vital Flame', originally published in *The Burning Oracle*, London, 1939. The rest of the book is not as helpful as this chapter.

Ian Jack, *Augustan Satire: intention and Idiom in English Poetry 1660-1750*. Oxford, 1952. Chaps. V-VII.

John Butt, *The Augustan Age*, London, 1950. Has a useful chapter on Pope.

J. Sutherland, *A preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry*, London, 1948. a sound introduction to the period.

J.S. Cunningham, *Pope: The 'Rope of the Lock'*, London, 1961. A detailed analysis of the poem.

Maynard Mack, Ed., *Essential Articles for the Study of Alexander Pope*, London, U.S.A. Printing, 1965. A valuable collection although of uneven quality. See in particular the essays by Auden, Brooks, Cameron, Empson, Griffith, Jack, Knight, Sutherland, Williams, and Wimsatt.

Maynard Mack, 'Wit and Poetry and Pope': Some observations on his Imagery', in *Pope and his Contemporaries: Essays presented to George Sherburn*, ed J. L. Clifford and L. Landa, Oxford, 1949, pp. 320-40. The other essays in this book are also worth reading.

M. Price. *To the Places of Wisdom*, New York, 1964. Includes a good essay on Pope.

Norman Ault, *New Light on Pope*, London, 1949.

Owen Ruffhead, *The Life of Alexander Pope*, London, 1769.

R.A. Brower, *Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion*, Oxford, 1959. On the richness and meaning of classical allusion in Pope.

Rebecca Price Parkin, *The Poetic Workmanship of Alexander Pope*, Minneapolis, 1955.

R.W. Rogers, *The Major Satires of Alexander Pope*, Urbana, Ill., 1955.

T.R. Edwards, *This Dark Estate: A Reading of Pope*, Berkeley, 1963.

Warren, Austin, *Alexander Pope as Critic and Humanist*, Princeton 1929.

William Empson, 'Wit in the Essay on Criticism', in *The Hudson Review*, vol II, No. 4, 1950, pp. 559-77; also in *The Structure of Complex Words*, London, 1951. Difficult but interesting.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

| | CHRONOLOGY OF POPE'S LIFE | RELATED HISTORICAL & LITERARY EVENTS |
|------|--|--|
| 1688 | (May 21 Pope born, Lombard St. London. | 'The Glorious Revolution' William of Orange becomes King of England. James II flees to France. |
| 1700 | Pope's family moves to Binfield in Windsor Forest. | Death of Dryden. |
| 1702 | | Death of William III. Accession of Queen Anne. Declaration of war on France. |
| 1705 | Becomes acquainted with Wycherley, Walsh, and other literary persons. | |
| 1709 | Pastorals. | Peace negotiations. |
| 1710 | Beginning of friendship with Caryll. | Fall of Whigs. Tory ministry formed under Robert Harley, later Lord Oxford. |
| 1711 | Essay on Criticism. | Swift's Conduct of the Allies. |
| 1712 | The Rape of the Lock (2 Canto version). First meets Swift, Gay, Arbuthnot, Parnell and Oxford. Beginning of Scriblerus Club. | |
| 1713 | Windsor-Forest. Proposals issued for translation of the Iliad. Painting lessons from Jervas. | Peace of Utrecht. Harley and Bolingbroke struggle for power within Tory party. |
| 1714 | Enlarged version of <i>The Rape of the Lock</i> . Scriblerus Club breaks up on death of Anne. | Death of Queen Anne. Accession of George I. Tories fall from power. |
| 1715 | <i>The Temple of Fame. Iliad</i> , Books I-IV. Friendship with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu begins. | Impeachment of Oxford and Bolingbroke. Oxford put in Tower, Bolingbroke flees to France. Jacobite rebellion. |
| 1716 | <i>Iliad</i> , Books V-VIII. Family move to Chiswick. | Septennial Act. |

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|------|---|---|
| 1717 | <i>Iliad</i> , Books IX-XII. Pope's Works including 'Eloisa to Abelard' and 'Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady'. (October) Pope's father dies. | |
| 1718 | <i>Iliad</i> , Books XIII-XVI. | Death of Parnell. |
| 1719 | Pope and his mother move to Twickenham. | Death of Addison. Defoe's <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> . |
| 1720 | <i>Iliad</i> , Books XVII-XXIV. | South Sea Bubble. |
| 1721 | Pope's edition of Parnell's Poems with Epistle to Oxford' as Preface. Begins work on edition of Shakespeare. | Robert Walpole becomes Lord Treasurer. |
| 1722 | Begins work on translation of the <i>Odyssey</i> with Fenton and Broome. | Atterbury charged with complicity in a plot to reinstate the Pretender. |
| 1723 | Pope's edition of Buckingham's Works, seized by Government on suspicion of Jacobite passages. Pope appears before House of Lords as witness at Atterbury's trial. | Atterbury found guilty of Jacobitism and exiled. Bolingbroke pardoned and returns for brief stay. |
| 1725 | Pope's edition of Shakespeare in 6 volumes. <i>Odyssey</i> , Vols I-III. | Bolingbroke returns from exile and settles near Pope at Dawlay Farm. |
| 1726 | <i>Odyssey</i> IV-V. Swift visits Pope. Friendship with Spence begins. | Bolingbroke begins. <i>The Craftsman</i> . Theobald's <i>Shakespeare Restored</i> . Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> . |
| 1727 | Pope-Swift Miscellanies' I-II. Swift's second visit to Pope. | Death of George I. Accession of George II. |
| 1728 | Pope-Swift Miscellanies, III, inci. Peri Bathous. <i>The Dunciad</i> , in 3 Books, with Theobald as hero. | Gay's <i>Beggar's Opera</i> . The War with the Dunces reaches a peak. |
| 1729 | The <i>Dunciad Variorum</i> . | Swift's <i>Modest Proposal</i> . |
| 1731 | <i>Epistle to Burlington</i> . Pope-Swift Miscellanies, IV. | |

- 1732 *Epistle to Bathurst. Imitation of Horace*, Satire II, i. Death of Gay. Hogarth's prints of *The Harlot's Progress*.
- 1733 *An Essay on Man*, Epistles I-III. (June) Death of Pope's mother. Pope becomes more committed to the Patriot opposition. Walpole's Excise Scheme defeated. Bolingbroke's 'Dissertation upon Parties' appeared in *The Craftman*.
- 1734 Epistle to Cobham. *Essay on Man*, Epistle IV. *Imitation of Horace*, Satire II, ii.
- 1735 *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot. Epistle to a Lady*. Pope's Works, vol. II. Curll's edition of Pope's letters. Prince of Wales visits Pope at Twickenham. Death of Arbuthnot and Lord Peterborough. Bolingbroke returns to France. Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*.
- 1737 *Imitation of Horace*, Epistle II, ii. Authorized edition of Pope's letters. *Imitation of Horace*, Epistle II, i. Death of Queen Caroline. Prince of Wales heads Patriot opposition. Crousaz attacks *An Essay on Man*.
- 1738 *Imitation of Horace*, Epistle I, vi. *Imitation of Horace*, Epistle I, i. Epilogue to the Satires. Bolingbroke returns from France and stays with Pope at Twickenham. Dr. Johnson's London.
- 1739 Spends winter with Ralph Allen at Prior Park near Bath. Warburton's *Vindication of the Essay on Man* defends Pope against Crousaz.
- 1740 First meets Warburton. Refurbishes his grotto.
- 1741 Publisher *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*. Works closely with Warburton on revised edition of his poems. Handel's *Messiah* receives its first performance, in Dublin.
- 1742 *The New Dunciad* (i.e. Book IV). Warburton's *Vindication of the Essay on Man* defends Pope against Crousaz.
- 1743 *The Dunciad* in Four Books, with Cibber replacing Theobald as hero. Pope's health deteriorates.
- 1744 (May 30) Pope dies at Twickenham.

The Age of Pope

The revolution of 1688, which banished the last Stuart kings and called William of Orange to the throne, marks the end of the long drawn struggle of England for the political freedom. Once the goal of the political freedom was attained, thereafter the English people spent their energies in efforts to improve their political systems through discussions in order to bring about reforms in their socio-political life for which the votes were necessary. And to get the votes the people of England were to be approached with ideas, facts, arguments and information. So the newspaper was born and the first newspaper, *The Daily Courant*, appeared in London in 1702. Literature in the widest sense of the term, including books, newspapers, magazines and other forms of writing, focuses on the complete society that played an instrumental role in the progress of the nation. It makes some sense if one takes into account the political scenario of the age, but it attains a greater significance if one considers on the whole the circumstances, which were very largely favourable to all round development of the nation. In his comprehensive book, *A History of English Literature*, Louis Cazamian describes the literary scene and summaries its history thus:

“The Revolution 1688 does not constitute a break from the past; it inaugurates an organic and regular progress. The upper middle classes associate themselves with the nobility in the exercise of power a more extensive section of the nation participates in political influence and directs culture. The classical ideal of art, elaborated under the Restoration in an atmosphere of aristocratic elegance, finds full realization during the reign of Queen Anne and George 1 in a broadened society, whose members are

growing more numerous and so diverse, but where the spirit of literature is undergoing no essential change.”

By the modern standards, the nation was parochial and sharply stratified. This kind of society could express itself most adequately in its high art because it has the potential to convey the whole truth.

(A) Social Development of the Age:

The first half of the eighteenth century brought remarkable and rapid changes in the English society. Uptill now the society was governed by the narrow and obsolete standards of the Middle Ages and there was no freedom to question them or even to differ from them. The society was cultivating the art of living together, while still holding different opinions on various urgent issues. The social historians cite the example of the mushroom growth of the coffeehouses as the centers of sociability. In a single generation nearly two thousand public coffeehouses sprang up in London alone, and the number of private clubs is equally astonishing. The new social life and culture had its effect on the language and manners of the people. Though the typical Londoner of Queen Anne’s days was rude and even a little vulgar in his tastes; the city itself was filthy, the streets unlighted and infested with the rowdies and bands of petty thieves, but outwardly men sought to refine themselves as per the prevailing standards. To have a “good form” and elegant manners was the first priority and duty if one wished to be a part of a refined society or wrote literature. Briefly, this superficial elegance fully registers itself in every book or poem of the age.

On the political scene, the Government still had its opposing parties Tory and Whig and the Church was divided into Catholics, Anglicans and Dissenters, but the growing social life subsided many antagonisms, and gave the impression of peace and unity. The writers of the age participated in the

religious and political debates through their writings. The scientists like Newton and philosophical thinkers like Locke and the religious men like Wesley, all recommended the virtues of moderation in their respective fields of thought. They argued from reason and Scripture, and used mild satire to deal with their opponents, instead denouncing them vehemently. W.J.Long has beautifully summed up the tendencies of the period stating:

“ ... the general tendency of the age was toward toleration. Man had found himself in the long struggle for personal liberty; now he turned to the task of discovering his neighbour, of finding in Whig and Tory, in Catholic and Protestant, in Anglican and Dissenter, the same general human characteristics, that he found in himself. This good work was helped, moreover by the spread of education and by the growth of the national spirit.... Under their many differences they were all alike Englishmen.”

In the latter half of the eighteenth century the political and social progress is almost bewildering. The modern form of cabinet government responsible to Parliament and the people had been established under George 1; in 1757, the cynical and corrupt practices of Walpole, Premier of the first Tory cabinet, were replaced by the more enlightened policies of Pitt. Schools and colleges were established; coffeehouses and clubs increased in number, books and magazines multiplied and the press became the greatest visible power in England. The preachers like Wesley and Whitefield brought a tremendous spiritual revival known as Methodism that was felt by all the churches of England. Outside her own borders three great men – Clive in India, Wolfe

on the plains of Abraham, Cook in Australia and the islands of Pacific discovered the hidden wealth of the new lands and spread the world –wide empire of the Anglo-Saxons.

(B) Some Social Practices of the Age And their Projection In Literature

The writers of the age were greatly influenced by the social condition of the age and their range was restricted to the town. They wrote for the critics of the Coffeehouses, for the noblemen from whom they expected patronage, and for the political party they were pledged to support. At the level of the political life in which most of the eminent writers participated with two important things in mind: (i) There was the custom of patronage and the writers wished to attach themselves to a patron and (ii) they were keen to take part active part in the political strife and even a writer like Swift was obliged to do so. Politicians divided themselves into two hostile camps, Whigs and Tories. The patriotic sentiment was more of a matter to be demonstrated than a thing to be felt. The poets and the writers wrote satires and lampoons on their patron's political enemies. Compton–Rickett observes:

“ At first, the poet or the pamphleteer attaches himself to some influential Minister using his pen on behalf of this gentleman's cause. Afterwards when the minister found he could get his work done more cheaply than by hiring man of taste, the literary man was thrown upon the suffrages of the public then rising into existence.”

Patronage existed even in the days of Dr. Johnson. The story how Dr. Johnson sought Lord Chesterfield's help for preparing his *Dictionary* and what happened in the end is well known. In due course of time, the reading

public increased and it put the custom of the author's dependence on a patron to an end. The most significant change in the eighteenth century society was the induction of the coffeehouse and club culture in the cities. It was at these places that the politicians and clergymen, lawyers and literary men discussed the problems of the age. Not only that they came in direct contact with the public and the readers also. At these coffeehouses the wits assembled to exchange repartees and the moralists to deliver their sermons; the satirists gathered to attack vices and vicious men and the literary artists to discuss their proposals of their forthcoming works. As it is commonly acknowledged, "The well-known writers of the day congregated at these places and talked to their friends and criticized their rivals. It was at the coffeehouse that Pope met Dryden. It was from here that Addison discoursed to his selected circles and Dr. Johnson delivered many of his talks. These writers found their subject matters from these surroundings besides meeting their friends and foes. It is worthwhile to note that there came into existence separate coffeehouses of Whigs and Tories and they would not go to the coffeehouses of another party. It was so, may be, to avoid confrontation or to retain their privacy. The periodicals were published for the pleasure and profit of these visitors of the coffeehouses and books were judged not on their merit, but according to the political beliefs of the authors. Impartial criticism hardly existed. There was violence and hostility, which affected the literary criticism. His enemies even threatened Pope in that way and he took care to carry pistol with him for the personal safety while going out of Twickenham.

One of the common social practices was that of snuff-taking which started towards the end of the eighteenth century, and it grew extremely popular. Both men and women used snuff and they seldom went out without a snuff-

box with them. If Addison and Steele recommended to their readers of *Tatler* to take three dishes of ‘bohea’ and two pinches of snuff, Pope showed in *The Rape of the Lock*, its place in the fashionable society and mildly criticized its use.

The age of Pope suffered from certain vices, which are projected in its literature especially in the novel. Prominent among them were dueling, drunkenness and gambling. Fielding, the father of modern English novel and Goldsmith mentioned dueling in their novels; even Dr. Johnson defended it and Sir Walter Scott was willing to accept a challenge in his old age for a comment he made about Napoleon. Drunkenness was a wide spread weakness among all the ranks and level of people. Similarly, all the classes of people practised gambling. John Dennis mentions in his book, *The Age of Pope*, that

“This evil was exhibited on a national scale by the establishment of the South Sea Company, which exploded in 1720.... At Bath, which was then the center of English fashion, it reigned supreme; and the physicians even recommended it to their patients as a form of distraction. In the greenrooms of the theatres, as Mrs Bellany assures us, thousands were often lost and won in a single night. Among fashionable ladies the passion was quite as strong as among men...”

Pope highlighted this fashion in *The Rape of the Lock* by showing Belinda playing a game of Ombre and losing it which seems to be the cause of the whole problem. Similarly, the ladies of the fashionable society adopted the custom of receiving visitors in their bedroom. The following couplet of *The Rape of the Lock* refers to it directly:

The fair ones feel such maladies as these.

When each new nightdress gives a new disease.

Wits, who formed a significant group in the eighteenth century society, displayed their flair for intelligent and cleverness in interacting with people specially ladies. Their tone of gallantry was often carried to the point of absurdity; for instance, take the character of Sir Plume from *The Rape of the Lock*. Even Pope himself in his letter to Judith Cowper professed to worship her as much as any female saint in heaven, and used still stronger protestations of love and admiration for Lady Montagu. The irony is that women in that age were treated as pretty triflers, who were meant more to amuse men than elevate them. For their plight they themselves were responsible to a great extent. Lord Chesterfield made a very candid remark about it that, “No flattery is either too high or too low for them. They will greedily swallow the highest and gratefully accept the lowest.”

The Augustan Age had other drawbacks like political corruption, dirty party strife and low morals. These problems started with King Charles, who along with his courtiers and statesmen, ignored these practices and the situation could not improve even during the reign of William and Mary. Queen Anne had an instinctive respect for moral law but being a “meekly stupid” person could not do much. However, the corruption was not limited to the domain of politics only, but infiltrated to almost every aspect of social life. Even religion was not spared from such degeneration and was used to serve personal ends.

These common flaws in the age should not make us underrate certain very high qualities, which make it a great age, “the silver age” as Ian Jack called it. It was a great age of high political philosophy and oratory; it was an age

when England won the continental wars and built up a mighty empire in India. The progress in the literature, art and music too was rapid. The novel attained an unprecedented robust life at the hands of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne. Reynolds and Gainsborough, Romney and Wilson established schools of portrait and landscape painting. Under the inspiring leadership of Handel, the power of music was felt, as it was never experienced before. Sciences and inventions made rapid progress. Poets and writers enjoyed a status and position in society and were given important posts in government. If Addison could gain a pension and subsequently a high official position because of his powerful pen, Pope was the first poet to live comfortably by the sale of his works and could cherish friendships with the highest statesman and aristocrats of England. Briefly, the Age of Pope honoured its creative artists and promoted the talents of the nation.

Major Literary Characteristics:

The term “Augustan” as Sainsbury points out, is “sometimes applied to the whole period during which Pope wrote, sometimes limited to the reign of Queen Anne, and sometimes extended backwards so as to include the age of Dryden. If the last use of the term is considered to be the best, the “Augustan” Age in English literature begins with the accession of Charles 11 in 1660. It covers the whole of Restoration period of which Dryden is the greatest writer and extends to the classical school, which develops approximately with Pope. Its traditions continue till 1798 when Wordsworth published the *Lyrical Ballads*. From this point of view, the “Augustan” age includes the age of Dryden (1660-1700), and the Age of Pope (1700-1744).

Briefly the term “Augustan Age” includes the period of both the great writers, Dryden and Pope, and it originated in Dr. Johnson’s famous comparison of Dryden with the Augustans when the former dealt with the English language and Literature and the latter with the city of Rome. He says:

“To Dryden we owe... the refinement of our language, and much to the correctness of our sentiments. By him we were taught ... to think naturally and express forcibly... What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden... he found it brick and he left it marble.”

However, the Augustanism in English Literature implies veneration for the Roman classics, their thought and way of life. In the British history this period is of great significance and marks a beginning of a new society and a new literature. These changes were the outcome of the complex socio-political events, which had been occurring since the dawn of the seventh century. If the Elizabethan literature presents deep and intense emotions and boundless flights of imagination, which forms the texture of its plays and other literary genres, there is a gradual change in the tone and literary temperament of the writers ,for example ,in the last plays of Shakespeare. A clear touch of intellectuality and even philosophy as in the Metaphysical School of Poetry directly indicates the changes. During the early decades of the seventeenth century English literature was striving for regularity, restraint, reason, order and balance. During the reign of Charles-II, which began in 1660, the King and aristocracy both helped to create an environment for this sort of literature. During the Restoration period the

court with its elegance and an ordered balance becomes the center of fashion both in life and literature. The London society prided itself in exerting the deterministic influence on the literature of the time, which became the literature of the “town”, of London society.

The contemporary France also influenced the literature of the Restoration Age. King Charles-II and his courtiers, including a number of writers who were with them, had spent many years of their exile in France, where they imbibed the French culture, and many new tendencies of French Literature. When they returned to England, they tried their best to enforce the French ideals in the realm of literature. Neo-classicism developed earlier in France than in England. Therefore the variety of influences which mark the new literature bear the impact of France as well as of the classics which were prevalent in the contemporary France. It was specially so in the case of poetry. “The character and rhythm of the English classical lines are fixed, so to speak, by the authority of inner choice, which in its turn is prompted, accentuated and even controlled by the cadence of French verse.” There also began a search for the authority of rules, and in this matter the authority of Latin poet, Horace, and of the French poet Boileau came to be accepted. As the characteristics of the new literature are restraint, rationality, a desire for order, balance and a composed tone, to attain these qualities, the classical writers like Ben Jonson were adored, though they did not lose sight of the Renaissance writers like Beaumont and Fletcher and in certain aspects Shakespeare also. The main themes of the new literature of the Restoration period were parody, comedy, satire, analytical reasoning and criticism.

In 1700 begins the Neo-Classical Age, which continues with full force during the lifetime of Pope. Though its traditions prevail till the end of the eighteenth century, Pope is undoubtedly the greatest representative of the Neo-Classical Age as he accentuates and modifies the general traits of the new literature of the Restoration period. It is amazing that the literature of the Age of Pope, which is termed "Classical," is not so either in its inspiration or in form. It does not come very near to the literature of antiquity or the French model. The poets of the Neo-Classical school look for their model in Latin literature and all Latin poets, including Augustans like Horace and Ovid, have the Italian love for the beauty of nature. For illustration, consider Wordsworth, who has more in common with Virgil than Pope. Therefore the eighteenth century classicism is termed "pseudo" classicism. The poets and writers of this period, no doubt, cherished deeply the desire to observe the aesthetic rules of the ancients but to achieve their end they imitated the French writers, who also observed the classical rules. Hence their actual achievement, that is, their writings, instead of being termed classical, are called Neo-Classical. The literary historians like A. N. Whitehead call it "the silver age of the ... European Renaissance," which is a period between the civil wars and the middle of the eighteenth century. Briefly, the ideals produced by the interaction of medievalism and the vigorous classical and Continental influences of the new age provided the background which supported poets in their endeavours to match the literary standards of the literatures of Greece and Rome.

These Neo-Classical writers have a marked distrust of originality and inspiration. They have a two-fold idea before them which they strictly follow: (i) Simple orderliness in idea and (ii) Smooth balance in form. They care more for form than for the spirit of literature; more for the expression

than for the thing expressed. Pope suggests his idea for poetry in the famous following couplet:

True wit is Nature to advantage dressed
 What oft was thought but never so well expressed.

Pope was not “uttering a barren half-truth” characteristic of an age lacking in originality but repeating a simple, commonplace idea, which constantly guided them. In other words, the general tendency of the literature of the age was to look at life critically, to emphasize intellect rather than imagination, the form rather than the content of a sentence. Writers tried hard to repress all emotion and enthusiasm and to use only precise and elegant methods of expression. This is what is often meant by the “classicism” of the ages of Pope and Johnson. Actually, the classical movement in this age had become “pseudo-classical” which means partly or false classical.

The poets of the Neo-Classical school aim at the perfection of form, for which they labour hard. To achieve two most significant characteristics “The scrupulous searching for a perfection” and “the sovereignty of Form” the writers of the Age strove persistently. Dr. Johnson made very perceptive remarks about Pope’s efforts to achieve the desired effect in the art of versification when he observed:

“ By perpetual practice, language had in his mind a systematical arrangement; having always the same use of words, he had words so selected and combined as to be ready at his call.”

Such a laboured work of art will, no doubt, possess exquisite glitter and polish but it would lack spontaneity and novelty, which occurs only when

the creative imagination is allowed a free play. Dr. Johnson again defends the approach of the Neo-Classical poets and says about Pope:

“New sentiments and new images others may produce; but to attempt any further improvement of versification will be dangerous. Art and diligence have now done their best and what shall be added will be the effort of tedious toil and needless curiosity... If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?”

The Neo-Classical school of poetry is dominated by reason and correctness. As Geoffrey Tillotson puts it asserting the value of correctness and Intellectual quality in Pope’s poetry that

“Pope satisfies the expectation in a thousand ways.To make his kind of poetry he relied partly on the intellectual quality of what he was saying. And his poetry served to demonstrate the proximity, interpenetrableness, of the intellect and the emotions...”

In his book, *On the Poetry of Pope* he makes it specifically clear that “ For Pope and his contemporaries the word *correctness* had full colour of novelty.” He elaborates the idea in relation to Nature, Design, Language and Versification of Pope showing how through the common and teachable element in literature he follows the principle of correctness. As the Augustan age broadens and intensifies the practice of free rational inquiry, which the Restoration could apply only in an incomplete way, the literature of the period finds therein its true inspiration whether in its poetry or prose. It earns the age another name by which it designates itself, that is, “The Age of Prose and Reason”. If in its poetry Pope is the center, and so to say its symbol, in

prose it is Addison who carries the rational as the scruple of his style and Swift becomes one of the greatest masters of English prose. Pat Rogers rightly comments in his book, *Introduction to Pope*, that

“ Pope *was* a representative writer of his time, to a far greater degree than Swift, Richardson and even Defoe. An outsider in the social sense, he was nonetheless able to infuse his best work with a sharp contemporary tang. Furthermore he did not disdain the superficial polish of Augustan *vers de societe*.”

Pope's life and works:

Pope was born on 21 May 1688. He was the only child of the second marriage of a prosperous London linen-merchant. Pope's father, who was the son of clergyman, could rank as a gentleman. Pope was born when his mother was already forty-six and his father forty-two. His lifelong devotion to his elderly parents, whom he cared for till the time of their respective deaths, is one of the most moving and significant aspects of his life. He loved them tenderly through out their lives and they loved him and were his refuge against the cruelty of the world. The household was a most happy and contented one. What an irony it is that if he was tiny, tall people crowded around him; though he was deformed, people with beautiful shapes surrounded him and were proud of knowing him. Pope's father, who was a successful businessman and was perhaps influenced by commercial trips to Portugal, had become converted to Roman Catholicism. The family lived over his warehouse in Lombard Street. But when James II led and William and Mary succeeded, it became the law that Roman Catholics must live at least ten miles away from the Cities of London and Westminster. Several laws were passed forbidding Catholics preventing their children from being taught by Catholic priests, compelling them to forfeit two-thirds of their estates or the value thereof. And, of course, they were prevented from serving in Parliament or holding any office of profit under the Crown. His parents thought it was best to live out of London and he himself found it inadvisable to come up to town for medical attention during his illness. As a

result the elder Alexander Pope finally settled in a small farm in Windsor Forest at Binfield in Berkshire, taking his savings with him in large wooden boxes, perhaps he distrusted William's new Bank of England. Pope was about twelve years old then. Soon, the Old Mr. Pope made friends not only among the Romanist country gentry but also, because of his son's precious poetic talent and lively ways, with a staunch protestant Whig like Sir William Trumbull, who held a high office under William. However, the anti-Catholic laws became a major factor in determining the course of Pope's life. Though the literary historians have disagreed with the account of Pope's ancestry and its endless mystifications, but none can question that Pope had terribly poor health caused by the curvature in his backbone, which left him almost invalid. As the biographical details of Pope's early childhood are not fully known, nothing could be definitely said about its causes. However, Edith Sitwell states in her book, *Alexander Pope* that

“It is probable that Pope inherited at least some tendency to deformity from his father, who suffered from a slight curvature of the spine. It is quite undoubted that he inherited from his mother those terrible headaches that made his later life martyrdom. But, his half-sister Mrs. Rackett told Spence that he was a pretty little boy, with happy laughter, clear eyes and round rosy cheeks that healthy children have. He had too gentle and affectionate disposition, and it was as a small child that the sweetness of his voice earned him the loving name of “the little nightingale.”

George Fraser mentions with considerable certainty in his book, *Alexander Pope*, that as a child Pope suffered two accidents: one, probably at Lombard Street or possibly in Binfield he had been trampled on by a large cow; second, later on from drinking bad milk from one of the Binfield cows. He developed that disease of curvature of the spine, which made it necessary, in his later years, for him to be sewn every morning into a tight pair of corsets and to

have his withered legs warmed and disguised by three thick pairs of woolen stockings. He was almost a dwarf, well under five feet high (four feet six, in fact). What is particularly sad is that his earlier portrait, painted before these accidents, shows a chubby, cheerful little boy with every promise of healthy growth .A renowned scholar like Geoffrey Tillotson in Pope and Human Nature gives an entirely different reason for his being a permanent invalid. He says: “As a result of too much of study (so he thought), he acquired a curvature of the spine and some tubercular infection which limited his growth”

In *A Preface to Pope*, I.R.F.Godon points out that Pope’s health was seriously impaired by some kind of tubercular disease of bones, which was known as Pott’s disease and it was inevitable that his deformity and poor health should interfere with his activities throughout what he pathetically calls ‘This long Disease, my Life’ in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. He actually was so weak that he was not able to dress and undress himself, and neither went to bed nor rose without help. Sympathy with Pope’s character and for his sufferings shines through every page of Doctor Johnson’s essay, though the poet’s faults are not glossed over. None, who knew his sufferings, would fail to be saddened by “the tragedy of this man “whose body was too frail for the terrible burden of his genius, and whose life was one long torture of pain and weakness and humiliation caused by the knowledge of his deformity,” as Edith Sitwell put it. Pope, who had perhaps the most subtle and sensitive feeling for beauty of form, realized painfully how his own outward form raised feelings of mockery or coarse pity in the beholders.

Pope had been to two schools for Catholics in London, learning little or nothing, but the move to Binfield brought Pope’s formal education to a

close. Henceforth, he largely educated himself. In June 1739 he told Spence that:

“When I had done with my priests I took to reading by myself, for which I had a very great eagerness and enthusiasm, especially for poetry. In a few years I had dipped into a great number of the English, French, Italian, Latin and Greek poets. This I did without any design but that of pleasing myself, and got the languages by hunting after the stories in several poets I read, rather than read the books to get the languages. I followed everywhere as my fancy led me, and was like a boy gathering flowers in the woods and fields just as they fall in his way. I still look upon these five or six years as the happiest part of my life.”

At Binfield his father set him to writing ‘rhymes’ and some of his early efforts survive, mainly neat imitations of the earlier court poets of his own century. Though there is a patchy imitation of Chaucer also. Pope grew interested in poetry at a very early age as he himself told Spence in March 1743 “I began writing verses of my own invention farther back than I can remember”. There is some slight exaggeration in the claim which he later on made in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* that,

As yet a Child, nor yet a Fool to Fame,
I lisp’d in Numbers, for the Numbers came.

His mother gave Spence similar testimony:

“Mr. Pope’s father ... was no poet, but he used to set him to make English verses when very young. He was pretty difficult in being pleased and used often to send him back to new turn

them. ‘These are not good rhymes’ he would say, for that was my husband’s word for verses.”

He was also busy with translations from Latin and even Greek though he was never in any profound sense a scholar. Self-taught, like many poetic translators, he learned the syntax of his original from the sense rather than the sense from the syntax. Pope too had ambitions towards original verse. A projected epic on Alcander, Prince of Rhodes, of which he wrote four books of about one thousand verses each, in the end came to nothing; besides, he had roughed out and shown to his friends his first pastorals before 1705. Earlier at the age of twelve Pope was not only extending his reading and writing he was also developing his literary acquaintance. He got to know the literary wits at Will’s Coffee House, and was taken to see Dryden, a great writer then. The boy could immediately see that Dryden belonged to the world of books and serious writers but not to a polished society, as he himself was to belong. The particular members of the Will’s group that Pope got to know apart from Trumbull were the critic William Walsh; the poet Samuel Garth; the dramatists William Wycherley and William Congreve; and the actor Thomas Betterton. These were all older and distinguished literary men by the time Pope knew them and it was obviously not mere coincidence that they should all share an enthusiasm for the young man’s ability and company. He wrote to these worldly men of letters regularly but with Wycherly and Walsh Pope struck up particularly close friendship. He helped the old playwright prepare his verse for publication and maintained a long correspondence with him. It was from Walsh that he received the famous advice to make ‘correctness’ his study and aim: Pope stated:

“When about fifteen, I got acquainted with Mr. Walsh. He encouraged me much, and used to tell me that there was one

way left of excelling, for though we had had several great poets, we never had any one great poet that was correct—and he desired me to make that my study and aim.”

Pope really had a surprising range of social circle for two specific reasons: (i) In Pope’s age an enormous importance was attached to poetic talent by well-bred and educated people. Hence could say that “Nature’s chief Masterpiece is writing well,” and (ii) Windsor Forest, where the family had settled, was a favourite haunt of Catholic recusant families, like Blounts. They clung together with a certain disregard for social distinctions that were important for the Protestants. As it was, he was mainly self-educated and a precocious boy. He was a reader in several languages, which he managed to teach himself. Being an incessant scribbler, he turned out verse upon verse in imitation of the poets he read. The best of his early writings are the famous “Ode On Solitude” and a paraphrase of St. Thomas a Kempis, which he did at the age of twelve. He became more precocious as he grew in age. It in no way means that he was aiming at a slow laborious correctness. Pope was, in fact, brilliant and he wrote best when he wrote most rapidly. Though his home was in Windsor Forest, he frequently visited London and made friends with many of the well-known men of letters, such as Wycherley, Congreve, Garth and Walsh. Pope interacted and corresponded with them on the serious subjects like the art of versification. He showed them the manuscript of the *Pastorals* which a few years later became his first published work in 1709.

From 1708 to 1717 were the years of experimental writings as well as of great expansion in his personal and social life. They mark a period during which Pope spent more time in London than at any other stage of his life,

and at the same time he continued to visit his Catholic acquaintances in Binfield. They include making of the lasting and major friendships with Gay, Swift, Arbuthnot, Bolingbroke and Oxford among his literary and political friends, and with Carylls, Englefields and Blounts among the Catholic friends. It also includes his first meeting with Martha Blount for whom he developed a love that, despite all the barriers, endured till his death. It is notable that throughout his life, Pope has been dearly admired by women who were ready to make friends of him and confide in him. His true and life long friend among women was Martha or 'Patty' Blount. Though she was not brilliant and had lost her charms and sweetness of expression, which had attracted Pope to her first, but she cared for him with the tenderness of a nurse. Even Warburton, who strongly disliked her, admitted that when Pope was on his last sick-bed her entrance would stir him into new cheerfulness and life. In 1716, Pope's family moved from Binfield to Chiswick but the sudden death of his father on 23rd October 1717 brought this period of carefree gaiety to a close. After the death of his father, he became solely responsible for his seventy-five year old mother.

The eight years from the time of Pope's first published work, the *Pastorals* (May 1709) to the time of the first edition of his collected Works (June 1717) form a fairly cohesive unit in his life. This period was of extraordinary poetic activity, which he later described as wandering in 'Fancy's maze'. Pope tried his hand at half a dozen different kinds of poetry ranging from pastoral and georgic as (*Windsor –Forest*), to didactic (*Essay on Criticism*) to elegiac (*The Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*), to heroic (*Eloisa to Abelard*) to mock epic (*The Rape of the Lock*), to actual epic (the translation of the *Iliad*). When he attempted a variety of poetical works it was as if he was trying to judge where his strength lay. The period

begins with the publication of the *Pastorals*. They were greatly admired by Pope's Tory friends at Will's but they immediately brought him into conflict with London's rival literary group, Addison's 'little Senate' of Whig writers who met at Button's Coffee-House. The quarrel ensued because of the great admiration of Addison's friend Ambrose Philips's *Pastorals*, which were undoubtedly inferior to the young Pope's *Pastorals* and for totally ignoring Pope. Nearly every publication of Pope was attended with this sort of critical and personal dispute. It is indeed ironical that age that had set literary standards like decorum and wit and other rules indulged in this kind of conflicts for literary standing and made it the part and parcel of the literary scene in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Following the model of Boileau and Horace, he tried his hand at a poem about writing of poetry and produced the *Essay on Criticism* in 1711.

It was an ambitious attempt for a young man as in it Pope wished to compress and chisel out the wisdom of all past ages regarding criticism and poetry. The poem is fundamentally a starting point to establish quintessentially neoclassical assumptions about literature in the eighteenth century. Its reception was quiet at first but then John Dennis's furious attack in his "Reflections upon an Essay upon Criticism" made Pope retire sensibly in the country to his Catholic friends like John Caryll who lived in Ladyholt, near West Harting in Sussex. It was during this period that Caryll suggested to Pope the subject matter of the most delightful of his poems *The Rape of the Lock*. The poem was written as Pope told Spence later on to "make a jest" of the estrangement between two Catholic families, the Fermors and the Peters, and "to laugh them together again." It was *Le Lutrin* (1674) by Boileau *Dispensary* by Garth that gave him the brilliant idea of writing in a mock-epic form which he fulfilled in *The Rape of Lock*; it consisted of two

Cantos and was published in 1712. Addison praised it as “ a delicious little thing” but advised the poet not to attempt at its improvement. Pope attributed that advice to jealousy. It is Pope’s masterpiece, which comes nearer to being a “creation” than anything Pope has written. Its instant success caused Pope to lengthen the poem by three more Cantos; in order to make it a more effective burlesque of an epic poem, he introduces gnomes, sprites, sylphs and salamanders, instead of the gods of the epics. The poem is well worth reading as an expression of the artificial life of the age—of its cards, parties, toilettes, lapdogs, tea-drinking, snuff-taking, and many more idle vanities. It was brought out in 1714 in its present form.

Pope moved back to London in 1713, where he joined the group of the writers who strongly supported the Tory Government. His landscape poem called “Windsor Forest”, published in the same year, was meant to celebrate the Treaty of Utrecht. It was taken to be a statement of his party commitment despite his own attempts to maintain neutrality:

In Moderation placing all my Glory,
While Tories call me Whigs, and Whigs a Tory.

However, during this year he lived mostly with his painter friend Jervas, who has been a pupil of the famous portrait painter Sir Godfrey Kneller, and studied painting seriously.

The following spring Pope became involved with the Scriblerus Club with Swift, Parnell, Gay, Arbuthnot, Robert Harley, Lord Oxford and Pope himself as its members. They shared a common philosophical belief in conserving the best from the past not as a dead unit but as a living thing and had a scorn for false and superfluous taste in learning. They also planned to produce the *Memoirs of Marinus Scriblerus* to burlesque over the works of the pedantic scholars but there was an abrupt end of the activities of the Club

because of the death of Queen Anne on 1st August 1714. The members of the club dispersed to attend to their own literary pursuits. During these days Pope got an opportunity to pay back to Dennis what he did to Pope after the publication of his *Pastorals* Pope published *The Narrative of Dr. Robert Norris* in which he invented a fictive episode in Dennis' life and D. Norris was called to cure him of his lunacy. The piece is full of farcical jinks that completely destroy Dennis. In October 1713, Pope published his proposals to translate the *Iliad* and turned his attention almost entirely to Homer. It was his major literary occupation for next six years. It was a difficult task as he told Spence years later: "In the beginning of my translating the *Iliad* I wished anybody would hang me a hundred times. It sat so heavily on my mind at first that I often used to dream of it and so do sometimes still." By June 1715 the first four books were published in one volume. From this time onwards he proceeded with the task at the rate of four books a year until the poem was completed in May 1720. The fame of Pope's *Iliad*, which was financially the most successful book, was due to the fact that he interpreted Homer in an elegant, artificial language of his own age. Even the Homeric characters lose their original strength and become the fashionable men of the court.

One of the most important aspects of Pope's personal life these years was his increasing intimacy with the Blount sisters whom he met in 1711. Within one month after meeting them Pope wrote to his friend Cromwell praising them as "two of the finest faces in the Universe." Theresa Blount, whom Pope admired, first, was the same age as Pope and Martha, for whom his affection grew stronger, was two years younger. In times of trouble and pain, Pope turned to them for comfort and solace. When his father suddenly died

on 23rd Oct. 1717, it was to Martha that he wrote: “My poor Father dyed last night. Believe, since I don’t forget you this moment, I never shall.” For the next sixteen years the responsibility of his life was to look after his aged mother who was “so affected” by the death of his father.

Two of many more experiments made at this stage deserve a mention, they are: “Eloisa to Abelard” and “Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate lady”.

The former shows Pope’s high-flown devotion for the great Whig beauty, lady Mary Wortley Montagu, but later on when she managed to hurt Pope’s vanity, he made rather venomous and obscene references to her while the latter poem is a striking original poem. The year 1717 was the triumphant year of Pope’s life as he brought out his beautifully printed book which contained his best works including his perfectly revised version of *The Rape of the Lock*, the famous proverbs of *Essay on Criticism* and exquisitely musical versification of the *Pastorals*, but none the less it is a volume of experiments. Pope knew now where his strength lay. Looking back on these experiments in his later years, he was accustomed to make a distinction between earlier ‘Fanciful’ poems and his mature work in which he wrote of ‘Truth’ and ‘the Heart.’ This was a deliberate change, conscious canalizing of his poetical power. From henceforth, with the exception of his translation of Homer, Social Comment and Social Philosophy were to be his theme, but this theme is already found in parts of 1717 volume, for instance take “the grave Clarissa’s” speech of the 5th Canto of *The Rape of the Lock*.

Various changes took place in Pope’s life after his father’s death. He had already moved from Binfield to Chiswick in his lifetime itself, in March 1719 he moved with his mother to a new house at Twickenham, which was to be his last residence. He amused himself there with constructing a grotto, a kind of gnomes’ cave full of glittering crystals. This grotto, it appeared,

housed his dreams of romance. On the whole, the improvement that he wrought on his house, garden and grotto became the chief source of relaxation in life as well as an integral part of his art. He set out to establish his small estate at Twickenham, which he affectionately called Twitnam, as a symbol of those cultural and civilized values- literacy, honesty, generosity and hospitality-, which seemed to be crumbling all about him in Hanoverian England.

No doubt, Pope was recognized as the foremost poet of his day. He made a wide circle of several friends and several enemies as well because he had certain strong likes and dislikes, for instance, he did not like being patronized as much as Addison liked patronizing. It led to Addison's role in supporting a rival translation of Homer. However, his domestic life was much quieter and the translation of Homer was now absorbing all his time and energies. It was completed in 1720 and was well received but some of his contemporaries had not approved it. The great scholar, Bentley said: "It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer." Pope, however, did not go back to writing poetry. He turned instead to editing. He wrote to Caryll in October 1722 saying:

"I must again sincerely protest to you that I have wholly given over scribbling, at least anything of my own, but am become by due gradation of dullness, from a poet a translator, and from a translator a mere editor."

His main editorial project was an edition of Shakespeare that would supersede Rowe's which appeared in six Volumes finally in March 1725. Though the preface was a perceptively written piece but the text itself was hastily collated and emended. A disapproval was expressed of the edition of

Shakespeare, particularly, the scholar named Theobald exposed its deficiencies in his book called *Shakespeare Restored* Pope also edited the posthumous edition of his friend Parnell's *Poems*, which was published in 1721 and Duke of Buckingham's *Works* which appeared in 1723. As his own comment indicates, Pope was not a particularly good and successful editor, but the indiscreet attacks on his works and his character during the fifteen years had made him peculiarly sensitive about them. He was smarting under these attacks and was determined to repay them. Of that there is no doubt. He comforted himself by reflecting that he was maintaining the highest literary standards and that his enemies were pedants and other ordinary persons who were devoid of spirit, taste and good sense. However, the other major work belonging to these years was the translation of *Odyssey*. Pope was led into this venture by an extraordinary success of his translation of the *Iliad*. But his heart was no longer in translation. Therefore he engaged two Cambridge scholars as his collaborators, William Broome and Elijah Fenton to help him. The initial idea was that they would translate and Pope would revise and polish it, but the collaboration got him into all sorts of problems; as a result, in the end Broome translated eight books, Fenton four and Pope the remaining twelve. Pope made over 5000/= Pounds, and Broome and Fenton got under 1000/= between them. Pope's financial independence as an author was now completely secured. He by his own hard work became the first English author to be able to live off his writings and needed no patron. His description of himself as "Un-plac'd, unpensioned, no Man's Heir, or Slave", in his *Imitation of Horace, Satire 11*, written in 1733, best sums up his justifiable pride. Four years later still he put the same thought slightly differently in his *Imitation of Horace, Epistle 11, ii* (68-69):

But (thanks to *Homer*) since I live and thrive,

Indebted to no Prince or Peer alive.

Pope's labour was great, but the reward was great too. Pope paid a heavy cost of his health and gaiety of temperament by long labours of translations and comparative solitude stooping over the table for long daily hours, which made him a man older than his years. It was now that Pope's powers of verse showed a gift for lighter and gayer conversational satire on the minor follies in a Horatian tone. Not only that, satire, a mode in which he had as yet given glimpses of his genius as in *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Narrative of Dr. Norris*, was to become for the rest of his life the vehicle for its fulfillment.

Pope had been facing attacks by many envious cotemporaries and he bore them bravely and said, "These things are my diversions"; though his face contorted with agony, he had the sense to feel that even silence shows contempt. His fury in his great satire, *The Dunciad*, was aroused by Theobald's comments on Pope's edition of Shakespeare. *The Dunciad*, published first 1728, is a mock-epic like *The Rape of the Lock* but with a difference. The former is dark, furious but more somber, often more magnificent and less easily appreciated while the latter is sparking, bright, delightful, and renowned poem. *The Dunciad* has always been a controversial poem. It was of course written as such: Pope meant to annihilate his enemies. There is undoubtedly a strong element of personal revenge about *The Dunciad*, but it is important to recognize that the poem grew out of the most profound and deep-rooted of all Pope's feelings about literature. "At its base is the firmly held belief that bad literature, indeed bad art generally, is immoral, and if allowed to spread unchecked will corrupt and eventually destroy civilization. The artist's duty therefore is a moral duty" as I.R.F. Gordon remarked. The first version of *Dunciad* consists of

three books that centered on the crowning of King Tibbard (Lewis Theobald) as King of the Dunes, and came to the climax with a vision of the future in which the Goddess of Dulness held full dominion. In 1728 version, it is still a vision but by the time of the revised *Dunciad*, in four books, of 1743, the vision has become an actuality. George Fraser writes in his book, Alexander Pope,

that,

“He is writing in The Dunciad not light Horatian but Juvenalian tragical satire, which at moments...is not a mockery of the sublime but true sublime. the end of the fourth book of the revised Dunciad has a Miltonic grandeur.”

All this time Pope's health had been deteriorating. In 1728 his ailment had become so bad that in August he agreed to go to Bath to see if the waters would help him. He stayed there for ten weeks but there was no appreciable improvement. Partly because of his own health and partly because of his mother's failing condition, the five years from 1728 to 1733 were the most painful days of his life.

In the winter of 1730 pope told his friend Spence of a new work which he was contemplating. It was to write a series of verse epistles, of which first four or five would be on “The Nature of Man” and the rest would be on “Moderation” or “the Use of Things”. This work was not completed but Pope never gave up the intention till the end of his life. In June 1730 itself he wrote to Swift: “Yet am I just now writing, (or rather planning) a book, to make mankind look upon this life with comfort and pleasure, and put morality in good humour.” The first poem actually to be published was the

Epistle to Burlington, the famous amateur architect. The poem, which is one of the most characteristic works of Pope's maturity, presents an entertaining selection of examples of taste in architect and landscape gardening, and concludes with some suggestions for a worthier use of money. Within the next four years three more *Moral Essays* were published as well as a group of four epistles entitled *An Essay on Man*, which was intended to serve as the introduction to a larger work Pope had in mind. The former, with their brilliant observation of human nature, provide better reading than the latter, in which Pope is concerned to "vindicate the ways of God to man" based on the doctrine that 'whatever is, is right.' But, the *Essay on Man*, in which there is much proverbial, and philosophical wisdom that 'springs eternal in the human breast' is the best known and most quoted of all Pope's work. Except in form it is not poetry, and when one considers it as an essay one finds that there are innumerable literary ornaments and for its thought structure it has a deistic basis as there are no unanswered questions or problems in Pope's philosophy. To be precise, Pope, who had no philosophy of his own borrowed it from his friend Boilingbroke and the notion of vindication is perfectly accomplished in four poetical epistles: Epistle I discusses the nature and state of man concerning his relations to the universe; Epistle II shows man with respect to himself as an individual; Epistle III considers man with respect to society, and Epistle IV man in his relationship to happiness. The essence of the poem is summed up in a few lines:

All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
 All chance, direction that thou canst see;
 All discord, harmony not understood;
 All partial evil, universal good:

And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.

Though Pope, a true Christian humanist, is “speaking in the spirit, though not in the language of Fenelon and the Gospel” to use the words of Fraser, his *An Essay on Man* was received with a lot of noise and recrimination as if to indicate to Pope that his *Dunciad*, far from destroying his enemies, had multiplied them. Pope was deeply distressed by these attacks, which coaxed him to think out his position as a satirist, and to ponder the ethics of writing satire. The form his defence took was to ‘imitate’ the first satire of the second book of Horace, itself a defence of satire; That is to say, he loosely translated this satire, substituting modern parallels for contemporary allusions in the original. In this poem, the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735), a further defence of himself and his writings, and in the *Epilogue to the Satires*(1738), his last word on the subject, Pope contended that “the satirist’s duty is to uphold a standard of moral rectitude and to point out deviations from that standard by chastising the most notorious and powerful offender” to use the words of Geoffrey Tillotson.

Pope’s standards are expounded and defended not only in the *Moral Essays* but in his miscellaneous satires. *Imitations of Horace* (1733-8), entitled *Satire 1*, which is a paraphrase of the first satire of the second book of Horace, in form of a dialogue between the poet and William Forrescue the lawyer. Pope defends himself against the charge of malignity and professes to be inspired only by the love of virtue. However, he inserts in it a gross attack on his former friend, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. He was prompted by the success of *Satire 1* which was followed by *Imitations of Horace’s Satire 11,ii, and 1,ii (Sober Advice from Horace)* in 1734, and *Epistle 1,iv; 11,ii, 11,i, and 1,I, in 1737*. In these *Satires* he recommends the standards,

which were the old Horatian standards of Temperance, of Contentment with a modest Competence. Above all, he recommends that one must cultivate an honest, open-hearted, and serene disposition. Though Pope himself was not completely successful in living up to these standards, but there is no doubt that these standards were real to him.

Sick as he was, he was facing continual encounter with pain, and was actively preoccupied with writing till the end. During the last two years his condition became critical. He died of an asthmatical dropsy on 30th May 1744, on the ninth day of his fifty-seventh year and was buried in Twickenham church. In his last illness he was watched over by many friends like Bolingbroke, Marchmont, Martha Blount and Spence. They appreciated his tenderness and love and thought themselves to be honoured by his friendship. From 1709 to 1744 he dominated English poetry and remained the representative poet of the century who dared to speak out as boldly through his writings as he did in his life.

Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*: An Introduction

Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is an authentic and living picture of the actual happening in the eighteenth century society. Some time during the summer of 1711 the circle of prominent Catholic families in home counties was deeply disturbed by the rash act of Robert, 7th Lord Peter, in removing a lock from the head of the famous beauty, Arabella Fermor. Pope himself told his first 'biographer,' Joseph Spence:

“ The stealing of Miss Belle Fermor's hair was taken too seriously, and caused an estrangement between the two families, though they have lived long in great friendship before. A common acquaintance and well-wisher to both desired me to

write a poem to make a jest of it, and laugh them together again. It was in this view that I wrote my *Rape of the Lock*, which was well received and had its effect in the two families.”

The first version of the poem in two cantos was written in less than a fortnight sometime in August / September 1711. The well-wisher was Pope’s friend John Caryll, to whom the poem’s invocation refers. It is not sure that Pope personally knew any of the families concerned but when the manuscript was circulated among them, the lady “vouchsafed to view” and Lord Peter “approved”. And apparently it succeeded in healing the breach between them. Here two things form the kernel of the poem: first, a small matter led to a serious quarrel between two Catholic families and secondly, it is Pope’s handling of the incident in a light and playful manner, which put the discord to an end. He treated the subject on the model of Boileau’s *Le Lutrin*, which makes it a mock-heroic poem.

The first version appeared with Miss Fermor’s permission anonymously in 1712. It received the praise of Addison who called it “a delicate little thing,” but he advised Pope not to enlarge it or improve it. Pope distrusted his advice. In 1714 appeared the second and revised version of the poem in five cantos by adding the “machinery” of sylphs, gnomes etc., which Pope adopted from the mysteries of the *Rosicrucians*. In other words, he introduced the domesticated supernatural agents, including the Cave of Spleen, the scene at Belinda’s toilet and the game of Ombre. He told Spence that

“the machinery was added afterwards to make it look a little more considerable; and the scheme of adding it was much liked and approved of by several of my friends, and particularly by Dr. Garth, who, as he was one of the best-natured men in the world, was very fond of it.”

It was Dr. Garth's *The Dispensary* (1699) which served as a model for his mock-epic, *The Rape of the Lock*.

Pope's satire did displease and disturb all the parties concerned for its indelicate innuendoes and some odd resemblances with the living characters around. It gave offence to Miss Fermor as the scandal had gone too far. He not only failed to please her but also earned the hostility of Sir George Brown about which he reported to Spence later: "Nobody but Sir George Brown was angry, and he was so a good deal and for a long time. He could not bear that Sir Plume should talk *nothing* but *nonsense*..." Similarly 'Baron', who might be interested in marrying her as per the internal literary evidence, chose another bride just two months before the poem was issued. In *A Key to the Lock*, Pope tried to placate Sir George Brown showing two men as possible candidates for the role of Sir Plume; as for Arabella, Pope's dedication to the second and enlarged version of 1714 was contrived especially to give her favour and even to help her to get out of a rather silly and embarrassing position. Pope wrote to John Caryll on 9th January, 1714:

"The dedication to Arabella and the enlarged poem of 1714 take us from the complicated and ultimately unimportant tangle of social trivia into subtlet and permanent fabric of the poem's creation. For the original events, which led to the poem, the dedication stresses only the central one.

As to the following Cantos, all the passages of them are as Fabulous, as the Vision at the Beginning, or the Transformation at the End; (Except the loss of your Hair, which I always name with Reverence). The Human persons are as Fictitious as the Airy ones; and the Character of

Belinda, as it is now manag'd, resembles you in nothing but in Beauty.”

Pope's concern, beneath these courtesies, is now for his art. As the last lines of the fifth canto confirm this. They celebrate the lasting fame which poetry has granted to the ephemeral lock. Thus, Pope transforms the passing social event into permanent relevance.

If the first version of 1712 sold poorly, while the revised version of 1714 was very well received, which sold 3000 copies within four days. The only other addition or alterations came in 1717, when Pope decided ‘to open more clearly the MORAL of the poem’ by adding Clarissa's speech in canto five. Her role so far has been to hand over the fatal scissors to the Baron in the third Canto. Ever since the publication of the poem in its final version *The Rape of the Lock* has almost always enjoyed an enthusiastic and delighted reception. R.K. Root has quoted a letter of George Berkley to Pope in his book, *The Poetical Career Of Alexander Pope* in which he writes:

“I have accidentally met with your *Rape of the Lock* here (in Leghorn!), having never seen before. Style, painting, judgement, spirit, I had already admired in other of your writings; but in this I am charmed with the magic of your invention, with all those images, allusions, and inexplicable beauties, which you raise so surprisingly, and at the same time so naturally out of a trifle.”

Pope did suffer for such charges against him as plagiarism of Garth and Boileau, which stemmed from the personal animosity and professional rivalries, literary in-fighting and personality conflicts in the first half of the

eighteenth century. The first real adjustments in the critical reaction to Pope begin in the second half of the century and are due mainly to new movements in taste and aesthetics created by the writers like Edmund Burke and Joseph Warton who displays some of the eighteenth century notions about poetry and is confident at the same time of the new criteria which led him to observe that Pope is more a ‘Man of Wit,’ and a ‘Man of Sense’ than a ‘True Poet.’ Radically new responses in the later part of the century made the critics highlight different aspects of his poetry though the preconceptions hampered the fair judgements. The Romantic critics like Hazlitt, Byron and others admired Pope, and Campbell goes to the extent of saying about *The Rape of the Lock*: “ There is no finer gem than this poem in all the *lighter* treasures of English fancy.”

In the nineteenth century, the criticism of Pope’s work has really more historical interest than intrinsic value. It was read and appreciated with a limited delight. Actually a little has changed since Warton’s claim that it was “the best Satire Extant.” The responsibility of saving Pope from utter neglect and to present him in the true perspective has fallen on the twentieth century scholars. Modern readings of Pope and *The Rape of the Lock* have revised most of the ideas propounded by the Romantics and have asserted that he is a serious writer who is justified in using satire as the vehicle of real imagination. They have focused on the following themes of Pope:

- (a) The moral seriousness and imaginative intelligence with its “full richness and complexity.”
- (b) The social realities and Pope’s witty manipulation of them.
- (c) Pope’s powerful rejection of the superficialities and the artificialities of social *mores* in contemporary contexts.

- (d) The serious relevance of human passion especially about sex and religion.
- (e) Technical innovations like the density of allusions, metaphors and mimicking to maintain what J.S.Cunningham calls a “continuous doubleness of apprehension” by which the poet combined the flirtation with sublime, bathetic with poignant and trivial with significant.

This sort of serious study has accorded to Pope’s works a proportionate praise.

The Rape of the Lock as a Burlesque:

According to Pope that first principle of criticism “is to consider the nature of the piece, and the intension of the author” as he put it in the postscript of his translation of the *Odyssey*. In this poem neither is in doubt. The title and the opening lines of the poem contain a kernel of the whole. The incident on which the poem is founded had caused a breach between the two Catholic families and it was suggested to Pope that he should write a poem “to make a jest of it and laugh them together again.” The writing of a narrative poem was the most obvious method and no variety of narrative was more suitable than the mock-heroic. Pope himself called *The Rape of the Lock* a “heroic-comical poem,”-- a form so highly praised by Dryden, but the literary affiliations of the poem are of a complicated kind. On the one hand, it belongs to a class of literature called “burlesque,” which is also a parody and at the same time it has some of the features of a Farce as well. To call it a “mock-epic” is to add another dimension as the term mocking implies laughing at something critically and the term epic adds a highly serious

motif to the narrative. A brief analysis would make it absolutely clear that the poem may fit into a variety of comic and satirical writings. .

Some critics assess that it is essentially a burlesque because “A burlesque is a parody on a large scale, in which not a single poem but a whole type or style of literature is travestied, the language and thought proper to a serious theme being reproduced in setting forth something ridiculous and trivial.” There are many famous literary burlesques, for instance take *Batrachomyomachia* – a poem in which the battle of Frog and Mice is described in the language of Homer, or *Don Quixote* – the burlesque of chivalry, or *Hudibras* – the burlesque of Puritanism. *The Rape of the Lock* is a burlesque of epic poetry at large and “contains parodies of Homer, Virgil, Statius, Ariosto, Spenser and Milton”.

The writers of burlesque should be thoroughly acquainted with the manner he intends to parody, and he should have no genuine reverence, admiration or sympathy for it. Pope knew very well the phraseology of the ancient epics. At the same time he was capable of a real appreciation of Homer and Virgil. Therefore, he was fit for the task of parodying the ancient epic.

The burlesque is partly a matter of treatment and partly a matter of language. By treating an insignificant subject in the manner of an epic the poem parodies that form of poetry. Instead of grand passions and great fights between heroes in which the immortals take part; we have as the theme of *The Rape of the Lock* a petty amorous quarrel assisted by the spirit of the air. The epic portrays an age around the personality of a god or a demi-god, and its characters are heroes, *The Rape of the Lock*, on the other hand, gives us the picture of a fashionable society. The central figure in that picture is a pretty young girl, and other characters are a rash youth, a foolish dandy and a few frivolous women. The place of deep and genuine passions found in

the ancient epics is given to a succession of mock passions. Ariel's fears associated with an impending danger are travesty of genuine fears.

This day, black omens threat the brightest Fair,
That e' ver deserved a watchful spirit's Care;
Some dire disaster, or by Force, or Slight;
But what, or where, the fates have wrapt in Night.
Whether the nymph shall break *Diana's* laws,
Or some frail *China* Jar receive a flaw.

Likewise, Belinda's anger, when the lock of hair is removed from her head is sheer exaggeration of true passion:

Then flashed the living Lightning from her Eyes,
And Screams of Horror rend the affrighted Skies.
Nor louder Shrieks to pitying Heaven are cast,
When Husbands, or when Lap- dogs breathe their last;
Or when rich *China* Vessels fallen from high,
In glittering Dust and painted Fragments lie,

Thus, by its trivial theme, puny characters and false and exaggerated sentiments, the poem becomes a parody of an epic.

Besides, there are other incidents and features, which also suggest that the poem is a burlesque. As Addison wrote in *Spectator* No249 defining the varieties of burlesque:

“Burlesque is of two kinds, the first represents mean persons in the accoutrements of heroes, the other

describes great persons acting and speaking like
basest among the people.”

Pope exercised his talent in both the kinds, that is, in diminution and in aggrandizement. Agamemnon’s sceptre dwindles to become Belinda’s bodkin. Lord Peter builds an alter to the god of love but what kind of alter is it?

Of twelve vast French Romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three Garters, half a pair of Gloves;
And all the Trophies of his former Loves.
With tender *Billet-doux* he lights the Pyre,
And breathes three amorous sighs to raise the Fire.

Likewise, a battle is drawn forth to combat on a velvet plain like the Greeks; but it turns out to be a game of cards on the fashionable card-table. Geoffrey Tillotson has summed up some other characteristics of this poem stating:

“ We find a supernatural being threatening his inferior with torture; but it is sylph, not Jove and the tortures are neither thunder-bolts nor pains of Hades, but cruelties devised ingeniously from the requisites of the toilet table.... The epic is a long poem; *The Rape of the Lock* is short. The story of the epic covers years; that of *The Rape of the Lock* hours. The gods of the epic are stupendous creatures; Pope’s sylph tiny.”

These are some of the examples of the epic grandeur presented on a diminutive scale. But, its reverse is also present in *The Rape of the Lock* As Hazlitt points out:

“ The most glittering appearance is given to every thing, to paste, pomatum, billet-doux, and patches.... A toilet is

described with the solemnity of an altar raised to the goddess of vanity, and the history of a silver bodkin is given with all the pomp of heraldry.”

Pope is a master of the type of humour, which emerges from presenting small things in a grand form. A remarkable instance of this type of aggrandisement is the speech of Clarissa in *The Rape of the Lock*. She begins thus:

Say, why are Beauties prais'd and honour'd most
The wise Man's Passion, and the vain man's Toast?
Why deck'd with all that Land and Sea afford,
Why Angels call'd and Angel-like ador'd?

Clarissa swells and talks like a Homeric sage and effectively moves in the well-devised direction of the text. It has been rightly assessed that ,

“The burlesque is both- a matter of treatment and a matter of language. There are number of lines and passages which are the parodies of Virgil”.

For instance, consider the following lines as examples:

1. Slight is the Subject, but not so the Praise

If She inspires and He approved my Lays.

(Canto 1.11. 5-6)

This couplet parodies the following lines of Virgil from *Georgics IV*:

Slight is the subject but the praise not small,

If heaven assist and Phoebus hear my call

“Heaven” and “Phoebus” in Virgil are replaced by “she”(Belinda) and “he”(Caryll) in Pope.

2. The following couplet of Pope, again, is a parody of Virgil:

Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive,
And love of Ombre, after death survive,

(Canto1,11, 55-56)

Similarly Virgil says:

The love of horses which they had alive
And care of chariot after death survive

3. The seven folds in the petticoat of Belinda refer to the shields of Ajax, which was made of seven bull's hides:

Oft have we known that seven-fold fence to fail,
Though stiff with hoops; and armed with ribs of whale,

(Canto11,11,267-268)

Thus, there are many proofs to surmise that Pope in *The Rape of the Lock* was seriously attempting to write a burlesque with two purposes in mind, (a) to laugh away the conflict and (b) to expose playfully the follies of the fair sex and the artificialities of his age.

Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* as a Mock- Heroic Poem:

Despite its literary affiliation to other kinds of witty narratives, Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is most obviously a mock-heroic poem. It had been evolved for the very purpose of 'diminishing' a quarrel and combines in it two kinds of writing in which the age of Pope was really interested: Epic and Satire. Pope's handling of this genre has been so unique that it ceases to be an imitation of either of these forms and acquires an unprecedented

novelty. Pope had two instances of this kind of writing in mind--Boileau's *Le Lutrin* and Garth's *The Dispensary*—which Pope followed with keen interest. They were suitable models but none of them was so brilliant as Pope's poem. It appears that Pope might have aspired to write a consummate example of the mock-heroic genre before Lord Peter gave him the occasion by stealing the lock. In other words, the quarrel of the Peters and the Fermors family gave him the subject matter and opportunity for realizing that idea as an actual poem.

Some of the modern critics think that mock –heroic poem is primarily a satire on the epic, but the writers of the Augustan Age took it differently. The technical brilliance of *The Rape of the Lock* is largely due to the fact that Pope had studied Shakespearean drama and Milton's epic and builds from both his poem . Preserving the essence of the heroic poetry, he gives it a humorous treatment and it was not a less worthy ambition in an age which had different requirements and a changed mental horizon.

The writers who ridiculed the epic in Augustan age were the authors of burlesques and travesties and their object was, as Dennis put it “a very scurvy one .”In a mock-epic a dignified genre is turned to witty use without being cheapened in anyway. The poet has an opportunity of ridiculing through incongruity and offering his reader the sophisticated pleasure of recognizing ironical parallels to familiar passages of Homer and Virgil. If a mock- heroic poem is a ‘parody’ of the epic, it is so in the Augustan sense, not in the modern. The ‘new purpose’ of the frequent ‘allusions’ throughout *The Rape of the Lock* is not to ridicule a literary form but to organize a chaos into an order by setting a lovers’ tiff in true perspective with their help.

The fact that the 1712 version of *The Rape of the Lock* consists of no more than 334 lines and takes over only a few characteristics of the epic, makes it

clear that Pope's concern was less with Homer and Virgil than with Miss Fermor and Lord Peter. In its 1714 form it becomes the masterpiece of the mock- heroic because it imbibes the maximum amount of the epic qualities. Here, the mockery takes different forms and employs different devices. The proposition of using an epic form for the purpose of 'diminishing' the affair of the lock of hair, is in itself the general mockery of the epic form and substance—the epic manner with its invocations, the descriptions, the moralizing asides, the speeches opening with 'He said', its battles, its machinery, its journeys on water and down to the underworld and its harangues are some of the structural features modeled on the epic. Clearly, the purpose of the poet at this stage was neither to ridicule the heroic genre nor to provide a humorous parallel to all the principal ingredients of epic, but to serve the occasion for which poem was written. This remains true of the 1714 version, in which Pope increased the length of the poem from two cantos to five, totalling 794 lines in all, and added such further 'allusions' to the epic as the visit to the Cave of Spleen like the epic hero's visit to the underworld, the game of Ombre resembling other heroic games, the adoring of Belinda which parallels the arming of Achilles, and above all the extensive 'machinery' of Ariel and sylphs. Pope was fully conversant with the formidable mass of criticism in which the function and nature of epic machinery is discussed as he himself had planned for writing an epic. Le Bossu had said that 'the Machinery crowns the whole work' while Dryden concluded, "no heroic poem can be writ on the Epicurean (i.e. atheistical) principles.

In the first version of the poem, the supernatural agents play practically no part Pope realized that if a more extended mock epic was to be attempted, machinery of a more striking sort had to be invented. Pope could either

revive the classical deities or would have taken personified moral qualities but he preferred to choose a machinery based on the *Rosicrucian* spirit, which proved to be fanciful and thus suitable for a mock-epic. For the action of the poem it was the most suitable invention. Geoffrey Tillotson aptly observes:

“Pope, like any epic poet, had already made the action of the poem take place on the knees of the gods: it was Heaven and ‘the powers’ which, granting half the baron’s prayer, wrested from the fingers the lock they had allowed him to cut. But from the start it must have been obvious to Pope that the epics usually allotted their celestials more room and colour than his own poem did, and his literary mockery accordingly gained in quality as the supernatural machinery gained in quantity.”

Ian Jack says in *Augustan Satire: Intention and Idiom In English Poetry, 1660-1750*: “The epic poet’s task of arousing ‘admiration’ was particularly associated with the supernatural machinery of his poem. In the description of the sylphs and their actions Pope made his own bid to arouse admiration”. Besides, It is rightly pointed out that,

“Each epic poem has some peculiar passion, which distinguishes it in particular from other epic poems, and constitutes a kind of singular and individual difference between these poems of the same species. These singular passions correspond to the character of the hero.”

The peculiar passion of each epic is surprisingly different. If in *Iliad* it is *Anger* and *Terror*, the *softer* and *tender* passions reign in the *Aeneid*. So

coquetry and pride are the reigning passions in Pope's mock epic about Belinda's stolen lock.

A mock –heroic poem has been thought of primarily as a satire on the epic, but the vast difference made by the nature of Pope's subject has often been overlooked. *Le Lutrin*, *The Dispensary* and *The Rape of the Lock* are all mock –heroic poems describing a quarrel; but while the first two describe the quarrels between the lazy priests and grubby physicians, the third is concerned with a quarrel in the *beau monde*. The nature of Pope's subject and his intention creates an immense difference between his mock-epic and those of Boileau and Garth.

Another quality lies in the descriptions in *The Rape of the Lock*, which are 'mock-heroic' in a very different sense from other poems of the same genre. While others, like Dryden and Garth, had described ugly things with ironical elevation of style, Pope had objects of great beauty to describe. Ian Jack says that Pope's "poem is shot through with strands of silk from the fashionable world."

Joseph Warton in his *Essay on Pope* says, "If Virgil has merited such perpetual commendation for exalting his bees, by the majesty and magnificence of his diction, does not Pope deserve equal praises for the pomp and luster of his language on so trivial a subject"? His style is heroic and it is evident from the opening lines onwards:

What dire Offence from am'rous Causes springs,
 What mighty Contests rise from trivial things,
 I sing....

The inversion of the order of words and the use of the relatively pompous diction adds dignity to the verse. A similar elevation is particularly noticeable at the end of Canto III:

What Time wou'd spare, from Steel receives its date,
 And Monuments, like Men, submit to fate!
 Steel cou'd the Labour of the Gods destroy,
 And strike to Dust th' Imperial Towers of Troy;
 Steel cou'd the Works of mortal pride confound,
 And hew Triumphal Arches to the Ground,
 What wonder then, fair Nymph!thy Hairs shou'd feel
 The conq'ring Force of unresisted Steel?

Pope makes the serious use of what is basically Homer's style. The similarity of idiom between *The Rape of the Lock* and Homer is nowhere more striking than in the descriptions of the battles between the *beaux* and *belles* and between the opposing cards in the game of Ombre:

Now move to War her Sable Matadores,
 In Show like Leaders of swarthy Moors...

It is because of the idiom that "Pope's mock-epic differs from that of epic itself only in being more brilliant and more laboured that he was able to work into the texture of his verse such numerous and such parodies of the classical epics." Of several passages in *The Rape of the Lock*, where the style is deliberately lowered, the most obvious is the description of Sir Plume, "With his earnest eyes, and round unthinking face" he says, "Give her the Hair." Gildon called this style as "something New; Heroic Doggrel". There are many speeches through out *The Rape of the Lock* which add the dignified 'colours of rhetoric' associated with the heroic poem. They fulfill two important functions: (i) They wittily emphasize the poet's 'high

seriousness' and (ii) They provide remarkably effective transitions. Pope was right when he said in the Postscript to the *Odyssey* that "the use of pompous expression for low actions...is... the perfection of Mock Epick." Periphrasis is one of the common manifestations of the eighteenth century poetic diction. Pope uses many periphrases as 'uncommon appellations' For instances, for the scissors with which Lord Peter performs the rape – "two-edg'd Weapon," "little Engine," "glittering Forfex," "fatal Engine," "Sheers," and "meeting Points." The epic methods of 'heightening' the effects are used not for ridiculing them but to produce the desired ends. Through them he emphasizes the artificiality of the milieu, which he presents. Similarly by yoking together the ideas which belong to very different levels Pope produces strongly satirical effect and also shows topsy-turvy values in Belinda's world.

It is relevant to note that Pope's poem contains a very few directly 'diminishing' images as they are used in a satire but it has a large number of mock-heroic images which intensify the effect of the fundamental irony. For illustration consider the following lines:

Not fierce Othello in so loud a Strain
Roar'd for the handkerchief that caus'd his pain.

The apotheosis of the lock is drawn from the Roman myth:

So Rome's great Founder to the Heav'ns withdrew,
To Proculus alone confess'd in view.

There are some images which are particularly found in a mock-heroic poem, for example consider the comparison of Belinda to the sun at the beginning of Canto II:

Not with more Glories, in the Etherial plain,

The sun first rises over the purpled Main,
 Than issuing forth, the Rival of his beams
 Launch'd on the Bosom of the silver *Themes*.

There is a paradox about this image, which is the paradox about the whole poem. In a mock-heroic poem the subject of the poem is compared to something great and made ridiculous by comparison. It is as Pope pointed out in the Postscript to the *Odyssey* a deliberate transgression against the rules of proportion and mechanics. "It is using a vast force to lift a feather." The image is an exaggeration of the same imaginative truth as is in the line: "Belinda smil'd, and all the World was gay." There is an element of incongruity and the heroic idiom of the poem has its measure of appropriateness as well as inappropriateness, which establishes its claim as a mock-heroic masterpiece.

Briefly, *The Rape of the Lock* is not a poem against anybody. Pope only wished to laugh the quarrel out of the court and does not want to give serious offence to anybody. In short his purpose is "to conciliate everybody by means of mirth" to use the expression of Ian Jack.

Themes of Love & Marriage And the Character of Belinda:

Love is such an obvious theme in *The Rape of the Lock* that it plays a title part in the poem. Whenever the critics attempted to analyze the themes they invariably commented on the love affair, which is the main force motivating the action of the narrative. Dr. Johnson observed that "the subject of the poem..(is)... an event below the common incidents of the common life", Geoffrey Tillotson thought that the rejection of the hero by

the heroine was unaccountable. Though many Twentieth century critics felt that the theme of love in the poem was too weak to invite analysis, but Cleanth Brooks stated that the poem is about “war of the sexes over the rites of possession.” It appears that Belinda and Baron might have gone there, like many young people, to find a suitable match to get married- he to another woman and she to another man. The poem does not show that they were concerned with finding ‘a mate’; rather it confirms that in true neo-classical tradition they feigned ‘death’ and believed in sophisticated love and shunning marriage. Both of them, however, wage a mock war in a mock-heroic poem. Hugo. M. Reichard has summed up the idea thus: “ The plot of the poem (is) a contest of wiles between commanding personalities- an uninhibited philanderer and an invincible flirt.” Pope himself seems to be sharing this opinion as he puts it in his own words in *The Rape of the Lock* and in other poems. Addison & Steele who also projected in their papers many members of Belinda’s and Baron’s species but they certainly do not contain Belinda and the Baron and Pope’s world of things.

The axis of the story of *The Rape of the Lock* is the character of Belinda who, Brooks thinks, is “out to catch a husband.” As per the norms of the day the girl would be well advised to become somebody’s wife before the heyday of her reigning beauty passes away. Belinda is not one of those girls who plan for marriage. In other words, there is not the slightest sign that she is thinking of marriage. The only characteristic feature of her personality, that catches the attention of the readers first, is “ Belinda’s self-sufficiency as a reigning beauty.” Clarissa pointedly reminds her that ‘since locks will turn to grey... she who scorns a man, must die a maid”(Canto V, 26-28) but Belinda persistently disdains wedlock. Reichard assertively says “Her quest is plainly, not for a man in her life, but for men at her feet. ”Pope makes it

clear that Belinda is keen to be wanted; she devotes herself “to the destruction of mankind” and even rejects a man. She no doubt likes “with youthful lords to roam” and chooses “to reject a lord” as her lover or husband. She not only declines the improper advances of the Baron, but she “oft rejects” other offers also.

If one judges Belinda on the evidences of the text and the opinions of the critics like Murry, Addison and Steele one would simply agree with Reichard that, “Pope’s heroine is not a bride-to-be but a coquette par excellence.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines this word ‘coquette’ thus:

“a woman (more or less young) who uses arts to gain the admiration and affection of men, merely for the gratification of vanity or from a desire of conquest, and without any intention of responding to the feelings aroused; a woman who habitually trifles with the affections of men.”

On the whole the word coquette stands for a self-loving woman who indulges in winning the hearts and throwing them away. Belinda fits reasonably well into such descriptions. Her patience before her dressing table and her fondness for the barges and courts, her delight in love letters, the bounds she puts on her blandishments and the assault she inflicts on the Baron support the idea that she is extremely self-admiring and self-loving dame. As Addison had concluded in *Tatler*, No. 107, “They are the most charming, but the most unworthy sort of women.”

It is interesting to note that Ariel, who is an expert witness, himself like other sylphs, is a deceased and metamorphosed coquette. He is associated with live coquettes by the way of duty because they protect the “fair and

chaste” girls like Belinda. They guide them through flirtations and keep them fancy-free. It is the chosen few women who are under the care of the sylphs but the services of all the sylphs are exclusively for such women. On the one hand, they distract them from the seductive treats of one man, and on the other, they draw them to the advances of another man.

Belinda’s behaviour fully matches her retinue though everything she says or does is a plain coquetry. When the Baron approaches her with the scissors, for instance, to cut the lock, “Thrice she looked back, and thrice the foe drew near.” This sort of turning back may be enchanting allurements, or it may be only an innocent response to the twitches of warning of the sylph. Pope has made her perform on the Thames barge, in the most natural and fascinating manner. “She executes a tour de force of flirtation” to borrow an expression from Reichard’s article entitled: “The Love Affair in Pope’s *Rape of the Lock*”. Pope presents her thus:

Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone,
 But every Eye was fixed on her alone...
 Favours to none, to all she Smiles extends,
 Oft she rejects, but never once offends,
 Bright as the sun, her Eyes the Gazers strikes,
 And, like the Sun, they shine on all alike.

Belinda skillfully maintains the style that suits her charms without losing her grace. She keeps her chastity in tact even when she offers temptations and she rejects the advances of some young men. Belinda’s motive is just not easily traceable and her conduct is stultifying. As the poem grows, the purpose of Belinda also becomes clear, that is, living in the present and enjoying her status as a maiden of infinite beauty. She shuns the dull glories of a virtuous housewife. Her motives are three fold: ‘Vanity’, the desire of

conquest and self-love. After her defeat she herself protests that she does not know “what mov’d my mind with youthful lords to roam.” With a characteristic inconsistency in her behaviour she says: “Oh had I rather unadmired remain’d /in some lone isle.” Belinda has taken all pains with her charms and has got her tresses curled to seize and enslave the hearts of men before she comes to the Hampton Court. She plays her cards against the two dashing, adventurous Knights for the fame in the game of Ombre. Here Pope renders that Belinda’s ruling passion is unmistakably pride, which asserts in her personality in the dual sense of self-conceit and self-assertion. Pope uses the sylphs to expose it for many purposes because they are as solicitous as the girl herself not only in the matter of dress and coiffure, but also in the inner, instinctive gratification. Ariel addresses Belinda: “Fairest of mortals, Hear and believe! Thy own importance know.” Ariel merely says what Belinda believes; His words are only the echo of Belinda’s own sense of values. His message on honour is the most impressive. It begins and ends thus:

What guards the Purity of melting Maids...?
 ’Tis but their *Sylph*, the wise Celestials know,
 Tho’ Honour is the Word with Men below.

The sylph that keeps the young maiden chaste represents something different from ‘honour’ that preserves her in the worldly sense of the term.

The term honour means a sense of ‘self-respect’, or ‘nobleness of mind’ as Dr. Johnson would take it or ‘a concern for good taste’ as Brooks signifies it but Pope plays on the shades of meaning in the spectrum of *honour*. Consider Thalestris’ outburst:

Honor forbid! At whose unrival’d Shrine

Ease, Pleasure, Virtue, All, our sex resign.

If at the first glance, honour seems to mean ‘chastity’, the word slowly fades into the meaning as ‘reputation.’ Any discussion about the significance of true love must take into consideration the essential meaning of the term honour. Like all the classical poets, Pope brings out the relevance of love only if it is genuinely associated with honour. However, in the eighteenth century interpretation of the word has been brought to the forefront by Ariel when he tells Belinda: “’Tis but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know, / Tho’ Honour is the Word with Men below.” He means that it is pride rather than nobility that keeps the young girl like her pure. It is interesting to note that sylph behind Belinda’s purity is symbolically her *alter ego*.

Belinda displays her real self most vividly at her dressing table. The scene is set in religious metaphor. Her vanity table is taken as an altar where she plays the double role. She is in person the chief ‘priestess’ and in the mirror the ‘goddess’. Brooks resolves the mystery with a paradox when he says: “Such is the paradox of beauty –worship, she can be both the sincere devotee and the divinity herself.” He feels that Pope himself was amused by the vanity of Belinda’s performance. Hazlitt comes very close to the first principle of Belinda’s soul as well as Pope’s text when he says:

A toilette is described with the solemnity of an altar raised to the “Goddess” of vanity. .. In keeping with her honour, Belinda’s religion is primarily not beauty worship, but self-worship.”

Belinda is her own goddess, which according to Oxford Dictionary means ‘woman whom one worships or devotedly admires.’ The line like “puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billet-doux,” builds the meaning through contrast between heaven and self, piety and vanity and ultimately shows the chaos of

values which create the environment in which even love loses its substance and significance. Not only that, when she bends to her own image in the mirror, she is enamored by her own image. She worships the deity and decks her to evoke the worship of mankind. These are in earnest ‘the sacred rites of pride.’

Belinda’s antagonist, the Baron, is also unconventional. She fails to maneuver the male into matrimony and assaults the well bred lord and he too attacks the gentle belle. Since Belinda’s lock is “an amatory symbol,” the pursuit of it involves the Baron in a lover’s toil. His aims are to kiss and tell-‘on his foe to die.’ Baron burns the previous trophies of love because he believes that Belinda’s pretty lock of hair will make the grandest trophies. Hence:

Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
By Force to ravish, or by Fraud betray.

Baron’s preference for fraud or force shows that Baron’s adventurism has no place for persuasion and matrimony.

In the game of Ombre which is a parlour version of the epic battle, the Baron and Belinda encounter each other by name for the first time. Ariel, who has strict rules of heart, would not like Belinda to lose her heart to any young man. Momentary success of the diamonds in the game makes the whole environment a kind of challenge to Belinda’s virtue. When the queen of heart is taken Belinda’s cheeks turn pale because Belinda holds the king that can take the Baron’s ace of heart, she averts the catastrophe and emerges out of the crisis with new honours as a heart- breaker. Within moments the tables are turned. On the way she falls in love and the earthly lover is probably the Baron. It does not directly affect her status or her adventures. Belinda tactfully keeps her new ideas about love to herself but betrays no

sign of languishing into a wife. On the contrary, she flaunts Clarissa's suggestions about housewifery and marriage. When she tries to retrieve the lock she symbolically seeks to spike the Baron's claims. Nevertheless, after falling in love, Belinda is not all what she used to be. Ariel and other sylphs leave her because she does not meet the desired standards of purity and honour. Hazlitt comments that on this occasion "You hardly know whether to laugh or weep." Ariel's painful departure is an indication that the worst is yet to come. The theft of Belinda's lock is degrading because the lock like the handkerchief in Othello would cause the possibility of a greater scandal as Thalestris prophesies:

Gods! Shall the Ravisher display your Hair,
While the Fops envy, and the Ladies stare!

.....

Methinks already I your tears survey,
Already hear horrid things they say,
Already see you a degraded Toast,
And all your Honour in a Whisper lost!

Belinda is also anxious and somehow wants to get rid of such publicity, which is worst than intimacy. She tries to recover it by words in the fourth canto and by force in the fifth Canto. The battle is fierce and the young men prefer dying at the hands of these beautiful ladies than withdraw: dying here is physically as well as metaphorically. While other men dwindle and faint, only one man, Sir Plume, is bold and eccentric enough to draw Clarissa down. Even this unthinking fellow awakes to the unreality of the warfare and allows himself to be slain by the frowns of Chloe. On the whole, it is the belles and not the beaux who enjoy the initiative in Belinda's war. Reichard has very aptly observed:

“When the girls rush bravely forward, they are flirting, not with death or dishonour, but with men.. and they limit themselves to light–hearted artillery.”

The double point of her ‘bodkin’ -lovely hair ornament flourished as a dagger – is utterly disarming. Even more breath-taking is her ‘charge of snuff.’ Like a nerve gas this ‘dust’ is an absolute weapon; its ‘atoms’ completely explode his pretensions to manhood. This fraternizing suits not only the mock-heroics and manners of drawing rooms, but also the envy felt by fops for another beau’s conquest and the joy felt by belles for another beauty’s shame. However, it adds new pleasure even to death, and turns on Belinda favourably. Single-handedly she wins the war. For Jove’s scale the singular ‘lady’s hair’ outweighs the multiple ‘men’s wits.’ The Baron suffers humiliation as he is thrown out by a snip of her fingers. ‘ The lock, obtained with guilt’ has been ‘kept with pain.’ Belinda threatens the Baron who exposed her honour to unfair whispers, to put him to an everlasting shame with a hairpin. To restore to the prewar equilibrium it is necessary that none is the gainer or the loser. After they have fought this game of love and honour with cards, scissors and snuff, their ambitious aims are thwarted and the contest is drawn. The disappearance of the lock has left the baron without a trophy of conquest and Belinda without a trophy of reprisal.

In the end, the star, which is born from the lost lock of Belinda, shines to her advantage but it is hers only by the special providence of Pope’s poetry. He has graced her career with sense and good humour:

This Lock, the Muse shall consecrate to Fame,
And mid’st the Stars inscribes Belinda’s Name.

The poet invests her with a finer glory than she could ever achieve by her own art of beauty or love.

Supernatural Element in *The Rape of the Lock*

Pope introduced the supernatural agents in the second edition of the poem when he enlarged two cantos to five cantos. His choice of the supernatural shows how alive he was to the literature, which even could not be counted on to help him to be a poet. Pope found in the *Rosicrucian* doctrine many hints about the Sylphs specially in *Le Comte de Gabalis*, a roman written forty years ago in France by Abbe de Monfaucon de Villars, and which has been twice translated into English. The short novel is itself a skit on the sylphs of the system, the Rosicrucian philosophy, which had been inaugurated in Germany a hundred years earlier. Since the machinery of a serious epic is derived from established mythology, Pope's adoption of the machinery from the Rosicrucians was well known to be counted as established. Pope, then, owed to *Gabalis* the right to assume the existence of this particular system of elemental sprites who could change their sex at will, but the main attraction through out the novel is laid on their attractions for men as 'elementary' mistresses. In Pope's poem, on the other hand, they figure primarily as the allies of women in their unceasing war with men. Pope took from this novel what he could conveniently develop as per the design of his poem; for instance, in *Gabalis* all the sylphs are 'good' but Pope following the traditional categories of spirits, makes gnomes 'bad' wickedly contriving vexations for the ladies. He makes them more like the factious celestials of the epics. According to the Rosicrucians,

“the four elements are inhabited by spirits, which they call sylphs, gnomes, nymphs and salamanders. The gnomes or demons of earth delight in mischiefs; but the sylphs, whose habitation is in the air, are the best conditioned creatures imaginable. For they say, any

mortals may enjoy the most intimate familiarities with these gentle spirits, upon a condition very easy to all true adepts, an inviolate preservation of chastity.”

Pope also borrows the opinion that transmigrated souls protect their friends on earth, and conspire against their enemies; he makes the sylphs guardians of maidens and this again carries its epic reference since the epic heroes are provided with their divine guardians. He is, however, more interested than de Villars in the living conditions of the sylphs and goes for help to another French book, that is Fontenelle’s *Pluralite de Mondes*. It is on this basis of the scientific whims of Fontenelle that Pope’s fancy scrupulously build up its universe, for example, take 77-86 line from Canto II.

Like Milton’s angels again, Pope’s sylphs are invulnerable, i.e., if their bodies are divided they can come together again. Pope borrows the idea of their regimentation and names them, for instance, “The light Militia of the lower sky.” Ian Jack made an insightful observation that,

“The main thing that he took over was merely the licence to invent a fantastic race whose presence would make every trivial incident in his poem ‘appear of utmost importance’. The sylphs are mirrors added to his scene. By them the central action is reflected and multiplied a hundredfold, gaining in subtlety and mystery as well as in ironical importance.”

The creation of the sylphs allowed Pope’s imagination a much wider scope than before. The whole of English poetry contains no passage of description more exquisite than that of the sylphs in Canto II of *The Rape of the Lock*. Of the four “Elementary Nations” Pope concentrates on the sylphs, whose

region is the air; and air is the element which marks every line of this description:

He summons strait his Denizen of Air;
 The lucid Squadrons round the Sails repair:
 Soft o’ver the Shrouds Ariel Whispers breathe.
 That seem’d but Zephyrs to the Train beneath.
 Some to the Sun their Insect-Wings unfold,
 Waft on the breeze, or sink in the Cloud of Gold.
 Transparent Forms, too fine for mortal Sight,
 Loose to the Wind their airy Garments flew,
 Thin glittering textures of the filmy Dew.

Fully immersed in the ethereal beauty of the sylphs, Pope describes some of the colours, which these sprites display:

Dipt in the richest Tincture of the Skies,
 Where Light disports in ever-mingling Dies,
 While ev’ry Beam new transient Colours flings,
 Colours that change whene’er they wave their Wings.
 Amid the Circle, on the gilded Mast,
 Superior by the Head was Ariel plac’d;
 His Purple Pinions opening to the Sun,
 He raised his Azure Wand, and thus begun.

Pope borrowed the idea of Ariel from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, and got so fascinated by the beauty of the sprites, which are essentially the product of his own imagination, that he went much ahead of the given idea. Ian Jack has remarked in this context: “Through out the poem the senses are flattered as delicately as they are in Belinda’s world itself.”

In his letter to Arabella Fermor Pope explains the term “machinery” and its use in the epic. He says:

“ the machinery, madam, is a term invented by the critics, to signify that part which the deities, angels, or demons are made to act in a poem: For the ancient poets are in one respect like many modern ladies; let an action be never so trivial in itself, they always make it appear of the utmost importance. These machines I determined to raise on a new and odd foundation, the Rosicrucian doctrine of Spirits.”

The machinery gives Pope an unrivalled opportunity of indulging in his descriptive powers and to follow the epic design more effectively as the “machinery” of sylphs is a parody on gods and goddesses in classical epics. In an epic the immortals intervene in action. They control the destiny of men and determine their success or failure. In *The Rape of the Lock* sylphs intervene in the small stratagems of love. Ariel tells Belinda that hundreds of sylphs attend the fair ones and zealously guard their chastity:

What guards the purity of melting maids,
 In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades

 ’Tis their sylph, the wise celestials know,
 Though honour is the word with men below.

The sylphs contrive what is known as the levity of women. If a woman rejects a lover or prefers one suitor to another, it is because of the secret contrivance of sylphs. This is how the sylphs control the course of women’s love on this earth, and guides them through its mystic mazes. It is because of their secret influence that

With varying vanities, from every part,
They shift the moving toyshop of their heart.

As in the epic gods govern the human destiny; in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* the sylphs influence the course of human affairs, especially love. Exactly like the gods, they intervene in the events as they develop. A thousand sprites try to prevent Lord Peter from cutting Belinda's lock:

Swift to the Lock a thousand sprites repair,
A thousand wings, by turn, blow back the hair:
And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear
Thrice she looked back and thrice the foe drew near.

Against the brilliant background of the eighteenth century society, Pope's gorgeous descriptions about the sylphs make the poem an exceptionally fascinating piece of poetic creation.

As the gods have their favourites among mortals, so sylphs have their favourites among beauties. Belinda is the favourite of Ariel who acts like the guardian angel. He could not, however, protect her hair because he viewed "an earthly lover lurking in her heart." Thus, the gods in the classical epics are travestied in *The Rape of the Lock* through the "machinery" of the sylphs. Geoffrey Tillotson says that the scale in *The Rape of the Lock* is that of diminution. The mock-epic poem presents the methods of the epic on a diminutive scale. The sylphs are like the gods of epic on a diminutive scale. In a world of trivialities they take recourse to petty stratagems. They are quite suited to the world of *The Rape of the Lock*. Precisely, the "machinery" in the poem is a splendid and superb invention and achievement of Pope's imagination.

Pope as a Satirist

Of the entire genre that makes up the Western literary tradition, satire is the only form invented by the Romans rather than the Greeks. The Latin noun from which the word ‘satire’ is taken is ‘satura’ which means a medley, a variety of things or topics. The main aim of the comic satire developed by Horace is to castigate and thus to correct the prevailing follies and vices of the age. The Augustan age is the golden period of English satire because the finest and the most powerful satires were written in this age. It is not Pope but his friend Swift who was the great natural satirist and prior to him was Dryden. Pope uses this skill differently because he shows a sneaking liking for the society or the things he attacked through his satire. If Pope makes conventional attacks on pride, he had a dangerous kind of pride himself. He says:

Yes, I am proud; -- I must be proud to see

Men not afraid of god, afraid of me...

Pope could not be a satirist like Swift because he had taken a sanguine and cheerful view of London society. He loved London as the great centre of all pleasures and amenities of life and became, as Lowel aptly points out, “the delineator of manners” and the poet of society whose follies and frivolities also he knew well. Pope was temperamentally respectful to great lords, powerful statesmen, learned lawyers, courtly manners and loved his neighbour and he made these factors known publicly Pope was almost an invalid depending very much on the expensive life-style, glitter and gold of the society and close friendships. He could not take grim and limited view of the possibilities of life as a great satirist is bound to do. In his *Essay on Man* and *Moral Essays* Pope had taken a positive view of the power of reason to regulate passion and the tendency, implanted by God himself, of our self-love, the spring of all our energies, to grow into social love. He loved his age

and his society, and if he criticized them, it had only one purpose, that is, to purge them of their limitations. Some of Pope's best writing in his satires is invective against his enemies or compliments to his friends-, which have all the eloquence of true feeling. Other pieces of excellent writing in Pope's satires are in the nature of an emotional autobiography; a kind of apology, as in the Arbothnot poem, for a life shut up in literature because it could have no other outlet, an apology that moves effectively between the self-mocking, the proud and the sad. In his satirical skill Pope comes next to Dryden, his later poems are more satirical in nature than his earlier ones and the note of satire is present in almost everything he wrote. He has a moral tendency, which naturally expresses itself in terms of satire.

Pope's important satirical works are, *The Dunciad*, *The Moral Essay and the Imitation of Horace* and similar epistles and satires. In *The Dunciad*, his moral excuse was that he was defending a high civilization against forces of stupidity and corruption that were threatening to destroy it. No doubt, he ridicules dullness in literary works, but he also attacks his enemies who had given him real or imaginary offence. He attacks Theobald, because he found fault with his edition of Shakespeare. Mark Jacobs says that it is "a poem that holds one's attention by being at once broadly comic and strikingly nasty." It is probably the most powerful and original of all Pope's poems, but also the least charming; whereas elsewhere he always seems to write with ease, here one is conscious of recurrent triumph but also of continual effort. However, "it displays Pope's majestic power which raised satirical poetry to a grandeur" to use George Fraser's expression. Likewise, he attacks Colly Cibber for he ridiculed a play in which Pope had some share. Besides, Pope ridiculed his old enemy Dennis, who harassed him all his life and remained an enemy. He bitterly satirized Lintot who accused him of

unfair dealings with his collaborators in his translation of *Odyssey*. In his *Imitations of Horace* Pope attacks grossly his former friend, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and in his *Epistles to Dr. Arbuthnot* he caricatures Addison who was once his friend.

There are two aspects of Pope's satire- impersonal and personal. "His satires are basically directed against the follies of polite society, against corruption in politics, and against false values in art, particularly the art of poetry." But, this is also not the whole truth about Pope's satires because it is not as impersonal as stated by a critic. Pope did not succeed in emancipating himself from personal spite and in generalizing his dislikes. Talking about *The Dunciad* John Dennis says:

"The theme is a mean one. Pope from his social eminence at Twickenham, looks with scorn on the authors who write for bread, and with malignity on the authors whom he regarded as his enemies. There is, for the most part, little elevation in his method of treatment, and we can almost fancy that we see a cruel joy in the poet's face as he impales his victims of his wrath...There is no part of it which can be read with unmixed pleasure, if we except the noble lines which conclude the satire."

This estimate may sound bitter but is true to some extent. Pope attacked in his satires not only *man* but also *men* and his attack on *men* is really conspicuous and ruthless. Pope could not forgive even his friends if they annoyed him or gave him offence real or imaginary.

When an attempt is made to assess the ethical values of Pope's satire, it leads to certain controversies. What concern us most are its wit, vigour,

brilliance and beauty of form. Saintsbury sums up Pope's contribution as a writer of satires thus:

“It is in his later *Essay*, his *Epistles*, his *Satires* and his *Dunciad* that Pope's genius shows at its very greatest. They are no doubt mosaics—the “Atticus” passage was pretty in *Epistle to Arbuthnot*- but this is no defect in them.... Here he reigns triumphant. His philosophy may be always shallow and sometimes mere nonsense; his satire may lack the large Olympian sweep of Dryden, but he looked on society, and on humanity, as that society happened for the time to express it, with an unclouded eye, and he expressed views with a pen that never stumbled, never made slips of form, and always said the right thing in the right way...”

Even in *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope has carried the responsibility of a satirist in the most dignified manner. He knew the social circle whose follies and frivolities are exposed in the poem. Besides, it presents the attitude of the age towards women. We have already seen that wits addressed ladies in a tone of gallantry, but in reality they were treated like pretty triflers. Addison also deplored the treatment given to them and added that “the toilet is the great scene of business, and the right adjustment of their hair, the principal employment of their lives.” Belinda, like the ladies of her age, seems to be devoted to the similar pursuits related to toilet and tea, Ombre and armour. Her mornings are spent in the adoration of “the cosmetic powers”, “Puffs, powders, patches and bibles” which make up her beauty. After her make up which repaired her ‘smiles,’ she sallies forth to conquer the hearts of the

young men. Her main occupations are balls, games and masquerades. This sort of life, deprived of any work or serious engagement obviously, results in petty act of removing the lock of a woman. Pope exposes the hollowness of the class, which is pompous only from without but is shallow within. It is a poem in which the coxcomb and dandies on the one hand and frivolous and pretentious woman on the other display their vanities. When invested in a grand attire of epic, their frivolities become all the more glaring and interesting. Pope does portray the life of the age from the point of view of a moralist. His purpose is to present their weaknesses with a view to improving them. When Pope presents their smallness, he is not condemning them rather he is amused by their follies, which he believes, must be corrected. Humour does not arise from a great and serious purpose. It emerges from a situation in which a lady loses a lock of her hair, or from a conflict in which a man is slain with a woman's bodkin.

Thus, the satire in *The Rape of the Lock* exposes the life of the age in playful manner and the picture is saturated with a gentle irony. The "instructive hours" are passed by exchanging the scandals, and by "singing, laughing and ogling." The trivialities are drawn with exquisite skill; they are meant to amuse and should not be taken more seriously than Pope meant them to be. Joseph Warton has summed up the whole issue stating that,

"The Rape of the Lock is the Best satire extant; that it contains the truest and the liveliest picture of modern life; that the subject is of a more elegant nature, as well as more artfully conducted, than that of any other heroi-comic poem. Pope here appears in the light of a man of gallantry, and of a thorough knowledge of the world; and indeed he had nothing, in his carriage and

deportment, of that affected singularity, which induced some men of genius to despise, and depart from, the established rules of politeness and civil life.”

In fact, Pope’s satire was mostly leveled against folly. He says, “Fools rush to my head, and I write”.

Pope’s Language, Art of Versification and The Heroic Couplet

Pope’s verbal workmanship is unparalleled. He is the master of clean-cut and incisive phraseology and “ornamental extravagances” of the eighteenth century diction which has been attacked by the later critics principally on three grounds: (a) that it was a new borrowing from Latin, for example, take the word *dehorting*, or its use in the original Latin sense; or the word *obvious*; these words were already borrowed and developed in meaning, for example *obvious*;(b) that it adapted a Latin method of phrasing, for example, *fleecy care*; and (c) that it was used too much. Against the first objection the only reply is that the poets of the age were experimenters; for the second the only justification can be that it was Latin and therefore it provided cultivated pleasure. *Fleecy care* is good as sound. It is also subtle and complex as meaning. This kind of phrase provided an excellent method of compression, especially since it is often an abstract and a concrete, which are clashed together. This method of compression by periphrasis, of comprehensive description and designation acting simultaneously, becomes one of the most prominent items in the poetic diction of the eighteenth century. Another favourite phrase is

Adjective + a group of words: for example, *the feather'd kind*. The poets of the eighteenth century attained the stateliness befitting the Classical poets especially Virgil, his conception of poetry and his gracefulness by adopting their metre. They achieved it by avoiding low words like *fish* and *sheep*. There is another reason for this poetic diction. It is notable that it is principally used in reference to external nature. The eighteenth century inherited the Renaissance creed that man is the monarch in his world. Dryden and Pope looked at the external nature for what it could show them of splendour or beauty or even of mystery they superimposed on nature by allotting it a due and fit place in the human scheme. In other words, they made a selection from nature of elements that suited their interests, and superimposed on nature some of their own civilized humanity. Briefly the writers justified the use of Latin diction, phrases and expression used excessively. Pope, being an extremely laborious craftsman, learnt through constant labour and practice the art of expressing his ideas in the best words and phrases. To achieve the perfection of form, his one great concern was to express "the best thought within his compass in the best words." Pope corrected his lines with meticulous care, polished and repolished them. Dr. Johnson speaks of Pope's "incessant and unwearied diligence" and adds that "Pope was not content to satisfy; he desired to excel, therefore always endeavoured to do his best He examined lines and words with minute and punctilious observation, and retouched every part with indefatigable diligence, till he had left nothing to be forgiven."

Pope believes that there should be correctness of diction. Certain poems require to draw from a fund of acknowledged poetic diction, others require

original diction. As Geoffrey Tillotson observes: “ He requires that language should be appropriate. There should be no incongruity between the length in space (or time) and the length in meaning, between decoration and substance, between obsolete and modern.” Appropriateness is the cardinal virtue for Pope in life as well as literature. In *Essay on Criticism* Pope says:

Expression is the dress of thought, and still
Appears more decent, as more suitable
For diff’rent styles with diff’rent subjects sort,
As several garbs with country, town and court.

Pope firmly believed that the style should be adapted to the subject. He had rules for a variety of styles even for the appropriate placing of the preposition:

‘What is your opinion (asks the Boswellian Spence) of placing preposition at the end of a sentence?’—It is certainly wrong: but I have made a rule to myself about them some time ago, and I think verily ’tis the right one. We use them so in common conversation: and that use will authorize one, I think, for doing the same in slighter pieces, but not in formal ones.”

Pope cannot endure stiffness, which is created with high words and metaphors. He wanted his language to be appropriate and hence “there is no diction in satires” to borrow the expression of Tillotson. In the moral poetry Pope uses the words almost with freedom and fearlessness of Shakespeare. This freedom can be seen nowhere more readily than in Pope’s verbs of the ‘poetic diction’ which were predominantly of Latin origin. He is free but at the same time he is not free to use any word that comes to his head, because

like all, his poems, the satires are addressed to the cultured society of his time. As Tillotson says:

“ Poeticisms are barred. These must be no merely ornamental epithets, and no compound ones. The epithet must therefore fall into its prose order, that is, it must precede the noun...”

Such rules apply unless ‘appropriateness’ demands their temporary suspension. Coleridge, in *Biographia Literaria*, considered that in satires, Pope was a poet of ‘almost faultless position and choice of words.’ Pope inherited the Elizabethan dread that English language had a limited future. Hence his occupation with correctness in language is aimed partly at keeping English afloat. In his book *On the Poetry of Pope* Tillotson reflects on Pope’s fancy for Latinizing English:

“His envy of the adamant of Latin led him to respect and extend the seventeenth –century practice of latinizing English. In his early works his respect was shown mainly in vocabulary and methods of phrasing, in the later work mainly in the close Latin-like packing of line, and the precise correctness of each word used. Correctness was a likely preservative.”

Pope wished to be concise in the meaning and the use of words. That perhaps was the first requirement for writing in the heroic couplet. He enunciated the rules which he felt were valuable for the writing of couplets. Though Dryden did not invent the couplet but he improved upon his predecessors and turned it into a powerful medium of expression. Besides, he broke the monotony of the couplet by frequent use of triplets and

Alexandrines. In the *Epistle to Augustus*, Pope summarizes the history of seventeenth century versification, pays his tribute to Dryden though he thinks of him an “incorrect versifier”.

The bulk of Pope’s poetry is written in the heroic couplets because, as Pope believed, it attracts attention to itself as a metre and carries an “unpretentious elegance”. He learned his metrical devices from Dryden but he narrowed down its metrical scope considerably. He discarded the triplet and Alexandrine by which Dryden introduced variety in his verse and brought more subtle variations of rhythm within the closed couplet. Tillotson rightly points out that

“Heroic couplets had not always been written in the way Pope wrote them. He may be said to have regarded them as if they were stanzas, self-contained; or, if not quite that, as having a beginning, middle and end even though at the end stood a gate and a gate which on some occasions he opened to allow the sense to drive through. That is, the couplet may belong to the paragraph, even more than to itself: but if so, it is only because Pope deliberately chose to open the gate.”

Pope enunciated in letters to Cromwell and Walsh some of the principles upon which he worked in the heroic couplets such as “of the feet, the quantities and the pauses”. In the collected Works of 1717 he writes:

“..... There are indeed certain Niceties, which, tho’ not much observed even by correct versifiers, I cannot but think, deserve to be better regarded.”

Briefly they are:

1. It is not enough that nothing offends the ear, but a good poet will adapt the very Sounds, as well as Words, to the things he treats of.
2. In any smooth English verse of ten syllables, there is naturally a *Pause* at the fourth, fifth, or sixth syllables
3. Another nicety is in relation to Expletives, whether words or syllables... 'Do' before verbs plural is absolutely such ... which are almost always used for the sake of rhyme...
4. I would also object to the irruption of Alexandrine verses, of twelve syllables ... I am of the same opinion as to Triple Rhimes.
5. I could equally object to the Repetition of the same Rhimes within four or six of each other, as tiresome to the ear thro' their Monotony.
6. Monosyllabic Lines, unless very artfully managed, are stiff, or languishing: but may be beautiful to express Melancholy, slowness, or Labour.
7. To come to Hiatus, or Gap between two words, which is caused by two vowels opening on each other.... I think the rule in this case is either to use Caesura (by which Pope meant the elision of one of the vowels or admit Hiatus, for Caesura sometimes offends the ear more than the Hiatus....

As these rules confirm, Pope's first need is onomatopoeia. There are thousands of examples of Pope's beautiful use of onomatopoeic effects through so many varieties of patterns. For instance, consider how Pope provides an antithesis as well as an echo in the following line:

"So sweetly warble, or so smoothly flow"

Or take an instance of unbalance between two parts:

"More bright than moon, yet fresh as early day."

Or the line:

“ Fresh as the moon, and as the season fair.”

in which there is an inversion of music but not an inversion of meaning. Tillotson’s observation is remarkable when he says: “ Pope’s regard for versification which, to speak approximately, began in the cause of music and continued in the cause of meaning, was the major element in his effect and his effectiveness.”

Pope’s greatest triumph in the couplet lies in his making it dramatic with the help of the mechanics of his art which make them satisfying as complete stanzas and there is no doubt that Pope looked on the couplet as capable of attaining a temporary unity in itself. There are three significant qualities which make them astonishingly unpredictable: (a) He introduces in them a subtler variety of rhythm, and adds to it an incomparable lightness and polish. One of the critics of Pope has summed up the beauty of his couplet thus: “Light, bright, glittering, varied in a manner almost impossible to account for, tipped over with the nearest, sharpest rhyme, volleying on the dazzled, though at times at any rate satiated reader, a sort of salvo of feud artifice, skipping, crackling, scattering colour and sound all round and about him.” (b) There is a quality of the verbal colouring and metre on the large scale. Pope’s meaning is achieved through his metre as much as through his words. “Pope, seeing the value of conciseness, saw also that the heroic couplet- that of all metres- could be patterned and rhythm’d so as to save words, so as to complete the subtlety of a meaning which otherwise would have taken up more space. The metre whispers to the reader the sense, the tone, the nuance which those words have not needed to be used for.”(c) Pope’s couplet are self-sufficient so that they are curiously detachable even when lacking grammatical independence. From the stand-point of sense each

couplet of Pope is complete in itself. He introduces in them “sense pause” and “grammatical pause.” to present a complete thought

To sum up Pope’s art of poetry it can be said that Pope with his concepts of correctness about human nature and society, art and values has risen above the old myth of being a satirical poet and has become “ a conscious Augustan prophet” whose greatness is to voice the ideas and ideals of his age” to use the expression of S.L. Goldberg who further adds:

“ He has created for his age, and in another sense for ours as well, ... But that life and that artistic intelligence of it gleams most brightly as they also reflect the ‘chaos’ and ‘darkness’ that paradoxically sustain them.”

Being a great writer, Pope did not deliver exactly what his audience had ordered. There are codes and secret messages in his work; there is a constant thread of myth, irrationality and fancy but he was sufficiently a man of his time who used the poetic idiom then in fashion, who used the inherited idiom with absolute mastery. He is a ‘social’ poet who knew his people; he is a poet of ‘correctness’, he is a ‘creative’ poet who is conscious of his responsibility and uses his art effectively. In the Preface to his volume of 1717 Pope observed that ‘the life of a Wit is a warfare upon earth;’ and the epigram makes an apt comment on his work, though in a more complex sense than he could have meant when he made it. “The highest life of his Wit is certainly a warfare, not only directed *at* the earth he inhabited, but also an inextricable part of it. At his greatest, he does not simply oppose clear-cut doctrines or principles against an imperfect world, but participates in the endless conflicts that make it imperfect”. As a poet Pope carries more

inclusive, more subtle, more relaxed and more mature sense of life around him.

Assignments

Note: Answer the following questions.

1. What are the characteristic features of the 'Augustan age', which is also known as the Age of Pope?
2. Write an essay on Pope as a Neo-classical poet and a true representative of the eighteenth century.
3. Discuss Pope as a Satirist with special reference to *The Rape of the Lock*.
4. Consider Pope as a writer of Heroic couplets.

5. Discuss *The Rape of the Lock* as a mock-epic poem.
6. Write an essay on the supernatural ‘machinery’ in *The Rape of the Lock*
7. What are the qualities of Belinda’s character? Illustrate your answer.
8. Geoffrey Tillotson calls Pope as a poet of “correctness?” Elucidate the statement.
9. Discuss Pope’s art of versification. Give illustrations to support your answer.
10. What are the structural qualities of *The Rape of the Lock*?
11. Discuss the theme of love in *The Rape of the Lock*.
12. “In *The Rape of the Lock* Pope himself is fascinated by the glitter of his own age.” Discuss the remark.
13. What is the significant moral message of *The Rape of the Lock*?
14. Discuss Pope as a poet. Give a reasoned answer.
15. What are the limitations or demerits of Pope as a poet?

Note: Answer the following questions in about *two hundred* words.

1. What is a heroic couplet?
2. Discuss the opening lines of the first Canto of *The Rape of the Lock*
3. What are the epic qualities in *The Rape of the Lock*? Give two examples to support your answer.
4. Pope has recommended “certain niceties” for poetry. Discuss any three of them briefly.
5. Write a note on Sylphs.
6. What is the difference between the first and the second version of *The Rape of the Lock*?

7. What happens to Belinda's lock at the end of the poem?
8. What was the purpose of writing the poem, *The Rape of the Lock*?
9. Discuss the role of Clarissa.
10. What is the significance of the title of *The Rape of the Lock*?
11. What is a Satire?
12. Discuss the significance of the metre in Pope's poetry.
13. Write a note on Pope's classicism.
14. Point out any two qualities of Pope's craftsmanship.
15. What are the features that make Pope's poetry autobiographical?

BOOKS USEFUL FOR THE STUDENTS

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Complete Editions

The Poems of Alexander Pope: the Twickenham Edition. General Editor, John Butt, 6 vols. Its 7, London, 1939-61. This is the definitive edition.

The poems of Alexander Pope, ed. John Butt, London, 1963, new ed. 1965.

A one-volume edition of the Twickenham Text with selected annotations.

The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope, ed. Herbert Davis, London, 1966.

Oxford Standard Authors Edition.

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Edith Sitwell, Alexander Pope, London, 1930. In spite of its sentimentality this book still has some value for its sympathetic account of Pope.

Joseph Spence, Anecdotes, Observations, and Characters of Books and Men, Collected from the Conversation of Mr. Pope and other Eminent Persons of His Time.

(I) ed. S.W. Singer, 1820. Newly introduced by Bonamy Dobree, London, 1964.

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A.L. Williams, Pope's 'Dunciad': A Study of its Meaning, London, 1955.

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Evan Jones, 'Verse, Prose and Pope: A Form of Sensibility', in *The Melbourne Critical Review*, No. 4, 1961, pp. 30-40.

Geoffrey Tillotson, *On the Poetry of Pope*, London, 1938, rev. ed. 1950. The best book by a distinguished Pope scholar.

Geoffery Tillotson, *Pope and Human Nature*, Oxford, 1958.

Geoffery Tillotson, 'Alexander Pope, I and II', Two essays in *Essays in Criticism and Research*, Cambridge, 1942.

George Sherburn, 'Pope at Work', in *Essays on the Eighteenth Century Presented to David Nichol Smith*, Oxford, 1945, pp. 49-64.

G.Wilson Knight, *The Poetry of Alexander Pope: Laureate of Peace*, London, 1955, Paperback 1965. See Chapter 'The Vital Flame', originally published in *The Burning Oracle*, London, 1939. The rest of the book is not as helpful as this chapter.

Ian Jack *Augustan Satire: intention and Idiom in English Poetry 1660-1750*. Oxford, 1952. Chaps. V-VII.

John Butt, *The Augustan Age*, London, 1950. Has a useful chapter on Pope.

J. Sutherland, *A preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry*, London, 1948. a sound introduction to the period.

J.S. Cunningham, *Pope: The 'Rope of the Lock'*, London, 1961. A detailed analysis of the poem.

Maynard Mack, Ed., *Essential Articles for the Study of Alexander Pope*, London, U.S.A. Printing, 1965. A valuable collection although of uneven quality. See in particular the essays by Auden, Brooks, Cameron, Empson, Griffith, Jack, Knight, Sutherland, Williams, and Wimsatt.

Maynard Mack, 'Wit and Poetry and Pope': Some observations on his Imagery', in *Pope and his Contemporaries: Essays presented to George Sherburn*, ed J. L. Clifford and L. Landa, Oxford, 1949, pp. 320-40. The other essays in this book are also worth reading.

M. Price. *To the Places of Wisdom*, New York, 1964. Includes a good essay on Pope.

Norman Ault, *New Light on Pope*, London, 1949.

Owen Ruffhead, *The Life of Alexander Pope*, London, 1769.

R.A. Brower, *Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion*, Oxford, 1959. On the richness and meaning of classical allusion in Pope.

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SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Kubla Khan

Unit-3: Samuel Taylor Coleridge

A Brief Biographical Sketch of the Poet

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born at Ottery, St. Mary in Devon-shire, England in the year 1772. He was a great poet, a critic, a philosopher and dramatist. He was the youngest of the nine brothers and one sister. His father was the Vicar of the village; he was visionary and unworldly. As a boy Coleridge himself was very imaginative, and a solitary loving person.

Coleridge was educated at Christ's Hospital, London (1781). Matriculated at Jesus College, Cambridge (1791). Coleridge's marvelous gift of eloquence was already evident and his schoolfellows would listen to him with great interest, as the young poet poured out poetry with all his melody.

Coleridge took little interest in games as a boy. He spent most of his time reading books. Once he ran away from home, fearing a whipping of his father and spent the night by the banks of the village stream. He caught cold and suffered from rheumatism, which embittered his future life, and so we lost a great poet at a young age. At the age of sixteen he fell in love with Mary Evans, the sister of a school friend, but was married to Sarah Flicker, the sister of Southey's fiancée. Sarah was neither emotionally nor intellectually a suitable partner for Coleridge. His marriage was a failure because of temperamental and practical difficulties from both sides. Coleridge was idealistic, sensitive, generous and openhearted. Southey was conservative and highly materialistic in his attitude. In 1795, the two spent enough time to realize their mutual incompatibility and bitterly quarreled with each other.

Meeting with Wordsworth

Coleridge met Wordsworth in 1795 and the two had felt attracted to each other by a common interest in political idealism and poetry. In 1797, Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy moved to Alfoxdon to be near the Coleridges. The two poets were temperamentally different but they had great regards for each other's talent and each stimulated the other. Coleridge was brilliant and commanded a vast range of ideas while Wordsworth possessed great emotional stability. Coleridge said that when compared to Wordsworth, he felt himself "a little man". Wordsworth felt that he was no match for Coleridge's profundity. Dorothy has given a very vivid impression of the personality of Coleridge during these days.

"He is a wonderful man. His conversation themes with soul mind and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and like William, interests himself so much about every trifle. At first I thought him thin, has a wide mouth thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half curling rough black hair. But, if you hear him speak for 5 minutes, you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but grey- such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression; but it speaks every motion of his animated mind;

In the short time from June 1797 to September 1798 Coleridge wrote almost all of his best poetry- "The Ancient Mariner", "The Nightingale", "The first part of Christabel", "Love", "Fears in Solitude", "Frost at Midnight", "Kubla Khan" etc

Some change in Coleridge's writing is noticed due to Wordsworth's influence upon him. Coleridge was by nature unsteady, and also rambling in his speculation; it was Wordsworth who checked his rambling tendency and helped and encouraged him to concentrate his poetic energy along a definite channel. And again Wordsworth's philosophy of nature influenced him and coloured to some extent his nature poetry. The later groups of nature poems show a deeper sense. But Coleridge did not fully and unreservedly accept Wordsworth's philosophy of nature. According to Wordsworth, nature lives her own life and heals and soothes man in his

sorrows and suffering. But Coleridge opposes this view where he says in "Ode to DEJECTION":

*O Lady we receive but what we give
And in our life alone does nature live.*

Nature to him is cold and inanimate, and if any glory or joy is to be found in her, it is due to the reflective mind of man and not any quality present in her:

*Ah, from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth...*

Both Coleridge and Wordsworth revolted against the artificial poetic diction of the eighteenth century. But Coleridge did not wholly subscribe to Wordsworth theory. He would not give any importance to rustic speech, nor would he accept the dictum that "there is no essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition".

In September 1798, a few months after the birth of his second son Berkely, Coleridge accompanied Wordsworths to Germany. In their absence Cottle published the first edition of the "Lyrical Ballads", a joint venture of Wordsworth and Coleridge, at Bristol. The book sold very bad and earned a lot of criticism.

Coleridge returned to London to engage himself in political journalism for the "Morning Post" but gave it up in 1800. Since Wordsworth and Coleridge were now not living together, this adversely affected the quality of their poetry. Coleridge resumed "Christabel" and wrote its second part, but it is very much inferior to the first part.

Coleridge's Health

Coleridge was persistently scourged with rheumatism and spasms in the stomach. He started taking opium as a relief giver and soon got addicted to it. To distract himself from his health and domestic problems he took recourse to metaphysics and abstract philosophy. He soon became a nationalist, and in philosophy he began to believe in the supreme importance of mind and spirit. His sorrow and frustration is bewailed in his last green poem "Dejection: An Ode" this was actually written as a verse letter to Sara Hutchinson. The Ode was written in April 1802.

Coleridge spent the next three years of his life in Italy and Malta; His health was becoming very poor day by day. In 1819, he received a severe blow of his life when he got news of his son, Hartley's expulsion from an Oxford fellowship. His health became worse, and he took more of opium. From this day to 25th July 1834 {till his death} he never regained his health.

Coleridge's life was full of vicissitudes and from many points of view, he was a singularly an unfortunate man. He left many of his works incomplete; but whatever he wrote is just brilliant. His talk was always fascinating and persuasive." He was the most wonderful man ever known to me" -said Wordsworth about S.T. Coleridge. Charles Lamb has rightly described him as "an Archangel-slightly damaged". His likeness, nor probably the world can see again" A very recent critic, Allan Grant praises him for his modernity as a poet and thinker.

Coleridge's life may be viewed as a composite of several careers (poet, preacher, lecturer, playwright, journalist, reviewer and a writer). He has been given more numerous and various reputations than perhaps any other English poet. Hazlitt called him an "Eagle dallying with the wind", Shelley referred him as a "Hooded eagle among blinking owls".

Coleridge's works may be categorized under three heads:

1. His poetry
2. His dramas
3. His literary criticism.

1. **His Poetical Works:** The early poems of Coleridge were published in the spring of 1796 in the volume entitled *Poems on various subjects*. The manner is artificial and stiff, under the strong influence of 18th century poetic diction, modified by sentimentalism and melancholy. His political sonnets betray the influence of Godwin but are pompous in style. More promising, however, are the poems dominated by the young poet's love and minute observation of natural scenery-*The Song of the Pixies* (1793); *The Lines on Autumnal Evening*; *Lewti* (1794) and *Religious Musings* (1794-96).

Then came his golden period of intimacy with Wordsworth and Dorothy, which led to the planning of *The Lyrical Ballads* and the flowering of Coleridge's best poetry- the true Wordsworthian pieces like *The Lime Tree Bower*, *Frost at Midnight*, *Fears in Solitude* (1797-98), followed by the master pieces stamped with his own original sensibility- *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*. Then the poetic fount began to dwindle in energy and after a few spurts in *Dejection: An Ode* and *Love and Hope* it became exhausted and the vacuum thus created had to be filled by critical and philosophical activities which yielded richer and more voluminous works, though quite fragmentary and discursive. The creative life of Coleridge is at once a miracle and a melancholy spectacle of waste and sudden collapse of divine imagination.

2. **His Dramas:** His first drama, written in collaboration with Southey was *The Fall of Robes Pierre* (1794). It shows influence of Shakespeare but is marred by rhetorical declamation and poor characterization. His other dramas were *Remorse* (1798), which is a tragedy in blank verse and *Zapolya* (1817) a romantic tragedy.
3. **His Literary Criticism:** Coleridge's chief critical work was *Biographia Literaria* (1817). It is a sort of loose autobiography embracing a variety of subjects like religion, politics, literature and criticism. It contains a valuable criticism of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction.

Coleridge as a Critic

There are many for whom he is the most important critic, chiefly because he raised central questions about criticism itself, its methods and philosophical basis incorporating rites and materials pertaining to any area of life. The function of criticism itself he conceived to be the lifting of all these elements into awareness, not the prescribing or even describing of rule that can neither be adequately formulated by the critic, nor adhered by the writer, but rather the elucidation of what he called "the principles of grammar, logic and psychology. It is, however, in literary criticism that Coleridge's achievement is the most lasting. No one before him in England had brought such mental breadth to the discussion of aesthetic values. His judgments are all great doctrinal preconceptions. The well-known differentiation between imagination and fancy is a way of laying stress upon the creative activity of the mind, as opposed to the passive association of mental pictures, but for Coleridge, it has a mystical significance.

Coleridge As A Romantic Poet

The movement of romantic revival had started much before Coleridge, in the age of Johnson. Poets like Gray, Goldsmith and Blake initiated it. But the official date for the beginning of the romantic age is 1798, the year in which Wordsworth and Coleridge together brought out *The Lyrical Ballads*. Thus in the first generation of romantic poets, Coleridge is as important as Wordsworth himself. In certain respects, his poetry illustrates the romantic temper even better than that of Wordsworth. According to an eminent critic, his poetry is 'the most finished, supreme embodiment of all that is purest and most ethereal in the romantic spirit'.

Coleridge may be called the most romantic of the poets of the Romantic Revival. . His early poems are more or less experimental, but they show his ardent delight in natural beauty and his self-consciousness as an artist. His emotional response to the beauties and glories of nature is poetically expressed in all his poems. Coleridge possessed the most vigorous mind among the English Romantic Poets. Whereas in the other poets of this period, romanticism tends to take a single dominant hue which colors the objects of experience; in Coleridge it attains a fullness of complexity. In his poetry, there is room for the spirit of bold adventure, the joy of

discovery and the romance of action. There is nature in a variety of moods, familiar and comforting, weird and horrifying, tender and soothing, tumultuous and perturbing, gay and jubant, desolate and mournful. There are intensely human emotions, which flow out of supernatural incidents and are lifted into the upper heights of romance. All these elements are linked into a vital unity with a psychological bond that gives them the harmony of a perfect moral impression. Many of his poems may be fragments, but reading them is a wholesome experience. And while the other romantic poets weave the web of wonders of the external world and links them to the subtleties of human psychology. And unlike most of the others writers, he possesses the gift of telling a story rich in dramatic situations with a close grip over psychological truths and a delicate sense of moral fitness.

Coleridge has been called the "high priest of romanticism", and as C.M. Bowra remarks, his three great poems, "The Ancient Mariner", "Kubla Khan" and "Christabel", are his supreme contribution to poetry and "of all English romantic masterpieces, they are the most unusual and the most romantic". This is so because in his poetry all the chief characteristics of romanticism find a rich _expression.

To sum up, Coleridge's whole career was romantic in the sense that his life was full of brilliant promises and broken aims. He found _expression for many an unheard-of mood of his mind in poems like Dejection: An Ode. He was a melancholy man given to brooding over the failure of his life- in fact he had the "romantic melancholy" to the full.

Coleridge's poetry represents the culmination of romanticism in its purest form. The Ancient Mariner and the Christabel mark the triumph of romanticism as fully as Wordsworth's narrative poems mark the triumph of naturalism. It is by virtue of these poems that Saintsbury has called him " the high-priest of romanticism".

There is a certain romantic note present in the best works of Coleridge. "In pictorial power" writes Buchan, ``felicity of phrase and word music he is one of the greatest masters. In his subtly suggestive treatment of the supernatural he stands almost alone." It is not only that he eliminates from his supernaturalism the crude material horror, then popular with the writers of the romantic school; he also gives it a psychological foundation. This is particularly apparent in The Ancient Mariner, the backbone of which is provided, not only by the marvels of the narrative, but also by the spiritual history of the hero. By the power of his imagination Coleridge perceived the unseen forces at work behind the visible world, and through his poetry he tried to convey his perception of the mystery of things to others. He felt that there are more things under heaven and earth than the world of dreams, and it is this feeling, which Coleridge expresses in his poetry. This is the reason why Coleridge's poems are more mysterious and strange than that of any other romantic poet. He creates a sense of strangeness and wonder, and thus makes the words of Pater more truthful about the definition of romanticism as "the addition of strangeness to beauty," or that of Watts Dutton as `` the renaissance of wonder".

Coleridge said that while writing about supernatural characters and events, his main problem was 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'. How he succeeds in his purpose is indeed admirable. He gives his supernatural the solid base of the dramatic truth of human emotions so that howsoever improbable the events might appear, the authenticity of human experience is never violated. Besides, his treatment is very subtle. He does not cumulate horrors; he does not give gruesome details, any blood curdling and spine chilling incidents for him. He just suggests giving his readers a free hand to use their imagination and fill in the necessary details. His descriptions are never a strain on our credulity. Instead of abruptly stepping into the realm of the supernatural, he first wins the faith of his readers with an accurate rendering of the familiar landscape and then slowly proceeds to exploit this faith and introduce the supernatural elements. The presence of the moral principle as a unifying link saves his poems from being a "Phantasmagoria of unconnected events".

The essence of Coleridge's romanticism lies in his artistic treatment of the supernatural. All of his three important poems Kubla Khan, Christabel and The Ancient Mariner are poems of pure supernaturalism. Kubla Khan is less directly concerned with the Supernatural, still the supernatural touch in the "Woman

wailing for her demon-lover", in the ancestral voices prophesying war and in the demoniac energy with which the mighty fountain is momentarily forced from the deep romantic chasm is quite unmistakable. Towards the end of the poem, the poet caught in a spell of creative inspiration, transcends his mundane existence and is transformed into a purely supernatural being. In *Christabel*, the evil spirit that haunts the body of Geraldine and blasts the innocent happiness of the lovely *Christabel* is in the true tradition of vampires, the Coleridge infuses a mysterious dread into her. But it is "*The Ancient Mariner*" that deals with the supernatural machinery on a large and in a generous sense. There is a phantom ship with its ghastly crew "*Death and Life-in-Death*", the polar spirit seeking vengeance for the murder of the Albatross, two supernatural voices representing justice and mercy, and a troop of celestial spirits animating the dead crew. The eve of "*Kubla Khan*" is haunting and weird.

Critical Estimate of Coleridge's Poetry

There are certain limitations of Coleridge's poetry. First, his poetic output is extremely limited. Secondly, the period during which his creative genius was at his best was brief, and, therefore, much that he has written is flat, gross and dull. Thirdly, his poetry is dream-poetry and as such it does not deal with the realities of life. Human passions do not find an adequate expression in it. Fourthly, even the little that he could compose is fragmentary. His *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel* are mere fragments.

In spite of all its limitations, Coleridge's poetry ranks among the rarest treasures of English literature. Romanticism reaches its acme in his poetry.

All the characteristics, for which romanticism stands, are found in Coleridge's poetry. Love of liberty, interest in the supernatural and the mysterious world, the revolutionary zeal, the medieval imaginative faculty, new experiments in verse, simplicity of diction, humanism, love for Nature, and expression of melancholy and similar other traits of romantic poetry are found in Coleridge's poems. Coleridge belonged to the Romantic School. He held a higher ideal of poetry and fought bravely against the artificial style of the previous age. Thus, the variety of meter, simplicity of language, originality of thought, flight of imagination, love of nature, sympathy with all human beings, and democratic and humanitarian outlook are the characteristics possessed by Coleridge.

Coleridge's status as a romantic poet is supreme. His poetry in certain respects illustrates the romantic temper even better than that of Wordsworth. According to a critic, Coleridge's poetry is "The most finished, supreme embodiment of all that is purest and most ethereal in the romantic spirit".

Most of his work in poetry again was of a fragmentary nature. His last pieces *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*, are brilliant fragments. This small and fragmentary amount of Coleridge's poetry is however, of exquisite quality. Stopford Brooke says: "All that he did excellently might be bound in twenty pages but it should be bound in pure gold".

His earlier poetry was like the poet himself, very turgid, rhetorical, diffused and harsh in diction and rhythm. Later, however, he outgrew all his deficiencies. Coleridge shares with other romantic poets a deep love for music; he is one of the most melodious poets in English poetry. The second part of *Kubla Khan* describing a damsel playing on a dulcimer is itself a piece of exquisite music. It supports Coleridge's claim that "with music loud and long' he could build *Kubla Khan's* pleasure dome in the air, for the fact is that the kind of skill claimed by the poet is actually displayed in it. A number of lines in "*The Ancient Mariner*" have a haunting and lilting melody about them. The alliteration and the simplicity of the words employed add to the melodious effect of the poem. The following four lines, almost picked at random from "*The Ancient Mariner*" aptly illustrate the witchery of Coleridge's music:

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

And Christabel is even more musical than these two. The movement of verse in this poem is so free that, bewitched by its fluency, one just reads it on and on. Its musical quality just defies analysis.

Thus, all the features of the Romantic Revival are fully manifested in the poetry of Coleridge. In his poetry, there is bold adventure, joy of discovery, and romance of action. There is the glamour of unraveled regions, elements of mystery and marvel. There is Nature in a variety of moods: familiar, weird, tender, tumultuous, gay, desolate, soothing or horrifying. All these features are linked into a vital unity with a psychological insight. Truly, in Coleridge's poetry, romanticism attained a fullness of complexity.

Poet Of The Unique Supernatural

As a poet of the supernatural, Coleridge's place is supreme and unique "Coleridge made an epoch in the poetry of the supernatural", remarks a critic. In the words of H.D. Trail, "Coleridge's imagination seems to acquire poetic distinction in the region of the fantastic and the supernatural", Coleridge made his poetry not only convincing and exciting but also a positive criticism of life. Coleridge succeeded where the others had failed because he treated the supernatural as subordinate element in the wider scheme of human experience and secondly, unlike the other writers who had cultivated this creed as a fashion but had no belief in it, Coleridge wrote in full conviction. It can be said without any hesitation that he eminently succeeded in his field. In fact, he is known to be the greatest poet of the supernatural in the entire range of English poetry.

The three important poems in which Coleridge has made use of the supernatural are "The Ancient Mariner", "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan". It is significant that in all the three poems, Coleridge takes us to distant times and remote places. "The Ancient Mariner" narrates the experience of an ancient mariner voyaging around polar regions in unknown seas. "Christabel" takes us back to the Middle Ages, to the old moated castles with barons and bards. In "Kubla Khan", the scene is laid in the oriental city of Xanadu, in forests as "Ancient as the Hills", where Alph, the sacred river, ran through "caverns measureless to man down to a sunless sea."

for a willing suspension of disbelief, Coleridge makes the supernatural look natural and convincing. The dream like nature of the supernatural in Coleridge makes the suspension of disbelief easily possible. Besides these devices, he also uses occult forces.

In order to make his supernaturalism realistic and convincing, Coleridge humanizes it. It appears in his work, not in a traditional blood-curdling and hair raising form, but assumes the ordinary human personality. The supernatural incidents convey a moral useful for normal everyday life of humans. The air of reality is also imparted to the supernatural by carefully blending it with the natural. Coleridge's settings are perfectly natural.

The main characteristics of Coleridge's supernaturalism are summarised as follows:

- a) **Refined and Subjective:** The supernaturalism in Coleridge is refined and subjective. It does not have the objective palpability and crudeness of the marvelous, which is found in almost all pre-Coleridgean ghost literature.
- b) **Its Suggestiveness:** Coleridge's supernaturalism is highly suggestive, subtle, intuitive and subjective. It is the reader who has to infer himself what he understands by a supernatural agency or element. It is not sudden but slowly distilled into the air.
- c) **Its Vagueness:** Mystery shrouds and surrounds the supernatural of Coleridge. Everything is dim and vague; nothing is made very apparent and clear. The poet excites curiosity, but does not gratify it. Mystery surrounds everything; the readers are left guessing.
- d) **Its Indefiniteness:** The supernatural in Coleridge does not have any definite or fixed character. It is difficult to say how much of it is real and how much of it is merely a subjective illusion.

Coleridge is careful not to show any abruptness in introducing supernatural elements. He first takes his reader around familiar places and wins his faith in the narrative through vividly portrayed minute details. Then minor hints of the supernatural are gradually dropped. Finally, the entire scene puts on a supernatural look.

Another very important feature of Coleridge's treatment of the supernatural is a very clever and subtle blending of the natural and supernatural. Indeed the two are so indistinguishably fused with each other that it becomes difficult to locate where the one ends and the other begins.

The Ancient Mariner

A Brief Introduction

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' was actually planned by Wordsworth and Coleridge together. It was planned on the afternoon of the 20th of November 1797, while having a walk in the Quantocks. Among all the great works of Coleridge it is the only complete one. It is based on a dream of a friend of Coleridge, Cruikshank, who fancied he saw a skeleton ship, with figures on it Wordworth kill one albatross while entering the South sea and that the tutelary spirit of those regions might take upon them to avenge the crime. He also suggested the idea of navigation of the ship by the dead men. As the poem grew, both Coleridge and Wordsworth thought of creating a volume which would consist of all poems dealing with supernatural elements, and also on subjects taken from common life but which were looked at through an imaginative medium from its composition. Colridge continued his work on it alone and finally finished it on 23rd March, 1798.

The Origin of the poem

Quite a deal is known about the literary sources of 'The Ancient Mariner'. A detailed study has revealed that Coleridge was a voracious reader and the books he read and the men he met left a profound influence on him. He was like a honeybee, roaming from garden to garden to collect the best nectar. He gathered the materials for his great works from strange and little known places. It is enough for the reader to know that an exquisite work of art is presented to him. He need not be bothered about the sources from where the poet has brought the material. It is undesirable that Coleridge draws upon a variety of sources, but it has also to be admitted that he fuses and reshapes them in a unique unity. Colridge himself claims that 'The Ancient Mariner' is a poem of 'Pure imagination', and says keeping in view the way he 'dissolved, diffused and dissipated' his objects of contemplation.

The purpose of writing 'The Ancient Mariner' was to be fulfilling his plan of writing a series of supernatural poems, in which the incidents and characters are to be at least in part supernatural and yet to present them as would impress the readers with a sense of their reality.

In 'The Ancient Mariner', Coleridge with consummate skill welded the story into an artistic skill. For vividness of imagery and descriptive power the poem is unsurpassed. We move in a world of unearthly weirdness whose mystery and charm is unbroken by an inconsistency. Coleridge sees the invisible and almost touches the intangible in this realm, where the things that are too seldom dreamt of in our philosophy loom within our ken. The poem is absolutely simple, both in, metre and language. Coleridge himself stated it as "inimitable".

In chapter XIV of his 'Biographia Literaria', Coleridge tells us that in order to emancipate English poetry from the eighteenth-century artificiality and drabness, he and Wordsworth had agreed to write two different kinds poems. He was to write about 'persons and characters supernatural, or least romantic', but he was to give them "a semblance of truth sufficient to procure that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." Wordsworth was "to give the charm of novelty to things of everyday, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awaking the mind's attention to the lethargies of custom, and correcting it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us." It was according to this mutual decision that Coleridge wrote 'The Ancient Mariner'.

Wordsworth says that 'The Gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time, at least not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous afterthought. We began the composition together on that to me, memorable evening: I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular:

*"And listened like a three years' child:
The Mariner had his will".*

These small contributions may have slipped out of Wordsworth's mind but are scrupulously recorded by Coleridge. "The Ancient Mariner' grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation, which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects, taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium says Wordsworth." Coleridge has tried to touch the intangible in writing this piece of art. The poem may be simple in metre and language, but still it is "inimitable," as said by Coleridge himself.

The book 'Voyages' written by Shelvocke has a reference of a black Albatross, which was taken to be some ill omen. Coleridge has perhaps taken the idea of the Albatross from it. The bird was hovering around the Mariners and was ultimately shot dead by the Mariner. It seems obvious that Coleridge has taken the killing of the Albatross incident from the 'voyages'. But Wordsworth reports that Coleridge had never read the book, so most probably it was merely on Wordsworth's suggestion that Coleridge incorporated the incident in 'The Ancient Mariner'.

Critical Summary of the Poem

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is perhaps the most read poem of Coleridge. The poem Kubla Khan is read merely for pleasure but the poem The Ancient Mariner is read with an eye on criticism. The poem is divided into seven parts. It is the story of crime and punishment.

In the first part the old Mariner stops the wedding guest to listen to his tale. He tells the guest how his ship leaves the harbour and, sails towards the southern horizon. The guest is impatient in the beginning but later on, is hypnotized and

"Listens merely like a three years' child:"

The sun was shining bright at the beginning of the voyage. As the ship sailed the people on the shore gave them a hearty send-off.

"The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,

*Merrily did we drop
Below the Kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top."*

It is like the ending of The Midsummer Night's Dream, as daybreaks and the lovers wonder whether the adventures of the night were a dream. Dreaming without awaking is not dreaming. In the figurative sense of the word 'perspective', to be sure, the Wedding-Guest, in his momentary, palpitating interruptions of the narrative-'Why look'st thou so, '--' I fear the Ancient Mariner'-represents the middle distance, and the marginal comment is the nearer distance, though still from us remote.

They sailed leaving the church, the hill and the lighthouse behind. Everyday the sun went higher and higher till at noon it stood right over the mast. Then came the furious storm. The Mariners can see no life on the sea when suddenly they come across an Albatross flying to the ship and it followed the ship. Thus it also brought good weather along with it. The first section tells of the actual crime. To us the shooting of the bird may seem a matter of little moment, but Coleridge makes it significant in two ways: Firstly, he does not say why the Mariner kills the albatross. We may infer that it is in a mood of annoyance or anger or mere frivolity; but these are mere guesses. What matters is precisely the uncertainty of the Mariner's motives, for this illustrates the essential irrationality of the Mariner's crime, due to a simple perversity of the will. Secondly, the crime is against nature, against the sanctified relations of guest and host. The bird, which has been hailed in God's name 'as if it had been a Christian soul, and is entirely friendly and helpful is wantonly and recklessly killed. What matters is that the Mariner breaks a sacred law of life. In this action we see the essential frivolity of many crimes against humanity and the ordered system of the world, and we must accept the killing of the albatross symbolical of them.

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

The mariner is horror-stricken. The wedding guest also pities him and prays for mercy for the mariner. It is uncertain why the mariner kills the bird. The bird had always been friendly to the sailors, the mariner felt that because of the bird the ice had started to spilt and so he killed the bird. The superstitious belief is perfectly keeping the balance of the supernatural atmosphere of the poem.

The second part of the poem supports the superstitious belief for a little while. The sailors also believed that the mariner had not done a rightful thing to kill the bird, which had brought them problems.

*And I 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!*

The sailors condemned him for his act. Suddenly the wind stops and the ship cannot move anymore.

*"All in a hot 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.*

The sun burned fiercely. The silent sea looked like it had rotted; the slimy creatures crawled all around: the sailors did not get water also. It was like;

*"Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where
Nor any drop to drink.*

Death- fires shone all about them at night. The sea-waters burnt like the oils burnt by a witch emitting multi-colored lights. Some of the sailors also dreamt that a spirit that had been following them from the land of mist and snow was avenging them. The thirst of the sailors was so much that their tongues were dried to their very roots

*We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.*

The sailors looked at the mariner reproachfully. They could not speak but their looks revealed the contempt they felt for him. They removed the cross from his neck and hung the dead Albatross round the mariner's neck. This was sign to show the sailors hatred for the mariner and also it served as a punishment for him.

The third part shows the sailors plight. The sailors have a very awful time, and are almost dead with thirst. Their eyes were had a glossy appearance. Just then the mariner saw a small speck on the water, and thought it to be a ship. The mariner bit his own arm and moistened his lips with the blood so that he could tell the sailors about it. When the ship neared it was a surprise to see that it was a skeleton ship. The next moment he also sees Death and Life-in-Death playing at dice.

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

The woman has been described with great accuracy. She was like a nightmare personified and was capable of curdling any man's blood.

*Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks 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 sank down below the horizon. The stars appeared, immediately it became very dark. The spectre ship also disappeared. The mariner felt very afraid. He felt like a man without life. The moon came out and under its light the Mariner saw his fellow sailors drop one by one dead. They died so quickly that they did not get time to even utter a groan. However, just as they fell dead they cast a painful glance at the mariner and cursed him with their eyes.

*The souls did from their bodies fly, -
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whiz of my cross-bow!*

The mariner saw their souls passing by him, but he was very helpless. The mariner is left alone on the ship to expiate by life-long suffering and penance.

The fourth part of the poem shows the pity of the wedding guest for the mariner. He felt that he was not speaking to the mariner but to his ghost. He was afraid of the mariner's skinny hand and his tall and thin figure. The mariner goes on to say that how he was all-alone on the ship with all his crew dead and a thousand of slimy creatures crawling all around him. He says that:

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

He was unable to say his prayers also because even before he could pray, some wicked whisper influenced his heart and made it as dry as dust. The dead crew lay with their eyes open and full of curse. But they did not rot or smell foul. He faced them and lived with their curse for seven days and seven nights, yet he could not die.

The mariner saw some water snakes in the water, they were of many bright colours and unknowingly the mariner blessed those living creatures.

*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 self- same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.*

He had been able to pray because he blessed the water creatures.

The fifth part continues the process of the 'soul's revival'. The mariner is blessed with sleep for it soothes and refreshes man. The mariner praises Virgin Mary for having sent sleep for him. When he wakes that rain has moistened his parched lips. He felt very light and felt;

*I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.
And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shock the sails,
That were so thin and sere.*

Soon after that he, heard the wind roaring at a distance. The air in the upper regions showed sudden signs of life. Hundreds of fire-flags, shining and moving to and fro could also be seen. In-between them the pale stars seemed to be dancing. All of a sudden the rain came and made the dead men to groan.

*They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose.
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.
The helmsmen 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 the Mariner's nephew stood by his side, knee to knee. They were working at the same rope. Yet he did not speak even a single word to the mariner. The wedding guest shows signs of fear. But the mariner consoles him by saying that they were not the souls of the dead men, but they were a group of blessed souls, which had entered the dead bodies. The mariner falls down into a swoon and hears two voices maybe of the spirits talking to themselves. One of the voice says about the crime done by the mariner in killing the Albatross that had loved the mariner. The second voice, which was softer says:

*"The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do."*

The first voice was that of the spirit, which lived on the land of mist and snow, it loved the bird and also the man, but he had very cruelly killed the bird and so was suffering so hard.

In the sixth section, the process of healing seems to be impeded. The Mariner is haunted by the presence of his dead comrades and feels that it has been planned by some fearful power of vengeance. In this figure of the Mariner, haunted by memories and fears, Coleridge gives his special symbol of remorse. But because remorse brings repentance and humility, the section closes with the vision of angels standing by the dead sailors. The forgiveness of God awaits even the most hardhearted sinner, if he only wants to receive it. The mariner wakes to find the moon shining calmly and the dead bodies still gazing at him. The expression of agony had not left them and the curse with which they had died had not left them. The mariner felt helpless. He could neither take his eyes of them nor could he raise them to pray. And all of a sudden he feels that the spell has been broken.

*I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen-*

It is like the ending of *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, as daybreaks and the lovers wonder whether the adventures of the night were a dream. Dreaming without awaking is not dreaming. In the figurative sense of the word 'perspective', to be sure, the Wedding-Guest, in his momentary, palpitating interruptions of the narrative-'Why look'thou so, '--' I fear the Ancient Mariner'-

He was like a person who was walking all alone on the road but was afraid to turn, for he feared that some friend was following him. Soon there is a sudden change in the scene, when the reader is lost into this frightful world the poet lessens the burden of fright. Soon there was a cold breeze blowing. It did not seem to be blowing on the sea, for it did not create any changes or ripples in the water. The ship moved on:

*Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship
Yet she sailed softly too;
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze-
On me alone it blew.*

The mariner is all of a sudden filled with joy when he sees the lighthouse, the hill and the church; it was all very familiar to him. He could not believe his eyes; he felt it all to be a dream. The current drew the ship to the harbour. The bay was bright and silent and he saw some crimson shapes at some distance. On turning on the deck he was surprised to see that the dead crew was no longer standing, but each body lay on its back with an Angel bathed with light standing beside each body. The Angels did not make any sound; the silence sank into the mariner's soul like music.

Humphrey House has interpreted the poem and while speaking about the poem up to this point that is Part I to IV and the opening stanzas of Part V, he says- taken together it is relatively easy to interpret it as a tale of crime, punishment and reconciliation, with the recovery of love in the blessing of the water snakes as its climax. But the remainder of Part V and the whole of Part VI do not seem at first sight to have quite the same coherence and point. It is here that readers may still find 'unmeaning marvels' and elaborated supernatural machinery, which dissipates concentration. There are wonderful details in the verse, some of the finest descriptions of all; but they still fall apart and have too little bearing on each other and on the whole. Many published accounts of the poem do not adequately face the implications of the detail in these parts. Then as the ghost says: "The Angelic spirits leave the dead bodies. And appear in their own forms of light." This acts as the signal, which brings out the boat from land.

Soon he hears the strokes of oars and he sees the Pilot and the Pilot's boy coming towards him. He was so happy that he even for a while forgot the dead crew. The mariner also saw the Hermit and the mariner wished that the Hermit would listen to his confession. He feels that now he could wash the sin on his soul. In part VII a dreadful rumbling sound comes under the water and the ship sinks.

A quite normally accepted and simple interpretation of Parts V and VI treats them as a further necessary extension of the expiation theme. In the blessing of the water-snakes the Mariner has reconciled himself to the creatures, but it remains for him to reconcile himself also with the Creator: therefore, he has to suffer once more (this time from the curse of the dead men's eyes) and to win the power of recognizing the beauty of the angelic music.

But as the boat approaches, there is heard a loud thundering noise below it and the ship goes down like lead into the ship

*Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it spilt the bay;
The ship went down like lead.*

The mariner was stupefied by this loud sound and when he recovered he found himself on the Pilot's boat. The mariner requested the Hermit to remove the guilt from him. The Hermit made a cross on his forehead, immediately the mariner's body was filled with a painful agony and it subsided after he had told the story of his crime. According to the mariner he always felt this way and so he always was in search of a patient listener.

*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.*

The mariner told the wedding guest that he had been all-alone on the vast sea. He said that he liked to pray in the church more than anything else. The mariner, while bidding the wedding guest farewell said that the best way to pray to God was to love all God's creation. He walked away like one dazed and deprived of his senses.

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

These lines mark the powerful impact produced by the Mariner's tale on the wedding guest.

'The Wedding Guest' in the Ancient Mariner

The wedding-guest has a very important character to play in the dramatic framework of 'The Ancient Mariner' Structurally, he reinforces interpenetration of two different kinds of realities, that of the everyday common existence with the world of uncanny and preternatural experience. The introduction of the wedding-Guest promotes our understanding of the significance of the Mariner's experience.

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' begins abruptly when the Ancient Mariner stops one of the three Wedding guests and begins to tell his story:

*"It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three."*

The Wedding-guest at first is reluctant to hear the story, as he is in a hurry to go and attend the wedding. He even recoils in horror from the ghastly Mariner But the Ancient Mariner holds him by his arresting glittering eye.

He holds him with his skinny hand,

The helpless Wedding Guest collapses on a stone nearby and listens to the story like a three-year child.

*"The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:"*

On occasions he protests but cannot move away. In the end, he becomes so dazed with what he has heard that he does not have the heart or the mind to attend the wedding. He is a 'sadder and a wiser man'. He is sadder for the realization of the human predicament which the 'Ancient Mariner' has so vividly impressed upon him through his story .He is wiser for the profound moral truth that he has learnt, namely the love of all things, great or small.

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

The Mariner and the Wedding-Guest satisfy their mutual needs. Towards the end of the poem, the Mariner says:

*"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 have me:
To him my tale I teach.*

The Mariner thus, has an instinctive recognition of the person who 'must hear' him and to whom he may 'teach' his tale. Narrating the tale, it should be obvious, is a mutually beneficial deed. It relieves the mariner of his periodic spell of agony; at the same time, it teaches the wedding-Guest the much-needed lesson of consideration and compassion. If we recall for a moment how petulantly he reacts to the marine's tale in the beginning, we would immediately feel that he is so pre-occupied with the ordinary convivial pleasures that he is not inclined to show commiseration to the old mariner, though the latter's mental agony must be writ large on his face. We may even venture to suggest that there is in the composition of the wedding-guest something of the mariner who so wantonly and thoughtlessly shot the Albatross. The mariner's experience has a salutary effect on the wedding-guest and teaches him the Christian concept of love and kindness. His sympathies are enlarged when he comes in contact with the mariner's profound experience.

When the Wedding-Guest is initially accosted by the Mariner, he reacts with sharp impatience:

Hold off! Unhand me, greybeard loon!

The Mariner drops his hand but holds him with his glittering eyes:

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

It is clear that if the Wedding-Guest meekly takes his seat on a stone and submits to the Mariner's tale, it is only under a hypnotic effect created on him by the abnormal gleam in the Mariner's eyes. His heart is in the bridal feast and he would fain escape and join; but he 'cannot choose but hear'. The opening of the narrative is rather ordinary and the Guest finds it difficult to conceal his annoyance. As soon as he hears the merry sounds issuing from the bride's place, he immediately gives vent to his fretfulness:

*The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.*

There is a slight change in the attitude of the Wedding-Guest when at the end of Part I, the Mariner comes to the most crucial moment of his tale-the murder of the Albatross. Even the recollection of that heinous crime is so painful to the Mariner that he shudders to mention it and defers its announcement. The Wedding-Guest perceives the acute pain on his face, his initial indifference and hostility melt away in a moment and he exclaims:

*God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus! -
Why look'st thou so?*

At this moment, the Mariner no longer remains an insolent, eccentric old seafarer undesirably imposing himself on a stranger. He becomes one of the millions of unfortunate people suffering untold miseries and deserving everyone's unqualified sympathy. After this, the Wedding-Guest does not interrupt the narrative because of impatience. He vicariously suffers what the Mariner has suffered and interrupts only when the pain generated by the Mariner's excruciating experience becomes a little too unbearable for him. He suffers with the Mariner and learns what the Mariner has learnt at such a terrible cost. The hypnotic spell initially

cast on soon ceases to exert, but he is totally absorbed in the experience. The wedding-bells keep ringing in the background to remind him that he is the 'next of kin' and that 'the feast is set'. But he is utterly oblivious of what goes on around him. It is the Mariner who tries to awaken him from his spiritual reverie:

What loud uproar bursts from that door!

*The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!*

The Mariner's experience proves so overwhelming for the Wedding-Guest that he becomes just insensitive to such calls.

At this point, the Mariner and the Wedding-Guest exhibit a strange reversal of roles. Earlier, the Mariner has been undergoing an experience of alienation while the Wedding-Guest was going to attend a social gathering; but now the Mariner is able to enjoy company. He died with the death of the Albatross, but the gush of love he showed for the water-snakes led to his resurrection into a much larger brotherhood extending to the whole human race.

This brotherhood embraces all living creatures and admits of no distinctions whatsoever between the great and the small, the young and the old, the gay and the serious. The Mariner has attained a complete reconciliation with god and all his creation. He likes going to the church 'in goodly company' to pray to 'his great father'. On the other hand, the Wedding-Guest, who was earlier fond of gay company, now withdraws into the loneliness of his inner self to ponder over the mystery of human existence and its real significance. He responds neither to the wedding-bells nor to the 'little vesper bell'. The profundity of his experience just stuns him. For a while, he is 'forlorn' of his senses. But when he rises the morrow, morn, he is 'a sadder and a wiser man'.

The Structural Importance of the Wedding-guest

The structural importance of the Wedding-Guest is easier to comprehend than his thematic relevance. Structurally, he helps to bring out more clearly and emphatically the spiritual crises undergone by the Mariner after he kills the Albatross. His interruptions pointed by draw the reader's attention to the important stages of the Mariner's fateful voyage and the accompanying emotional states. When the Mariner comes to the first important point in his narrative- the point when he shoots the Albatross - the Wedding-Guest makes a loud exclamation, which helps to elicit from the Mariner the much-evaded reply:

*With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross.*

Towards the end of Part III, the Mariner describes how his companions drop down dead one by one with their souls passing by his ear like the whiz of his cross-bow. It is such a ghastly episode that the Wedding-Guest is seized with terror. He suspects the Mariner himself to be a ghost:

*And the Mariner reassures him:
Fear not, fear not, thou the Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.*

Another horrible situation occurs in the Part V when the dead bodies of the sailors are reanimated and they begin to work on the ropes:

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

The Wedding-Guest again ejaculates: "I fear thee, Ancient Mariner." And the Mariner promptly replies: Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!

*'T was not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:*

After this the Wedding-Guest is completely fascinated and he does not find any occasion to interrupt the narrative.

It has been pointed out that the Wedding-Guest is an ideal for the reader, 'responsive, apprehensive and completely involved in what he hears'. He is used to articulate the reader's own emotional reactions to the narrative. He has a refined and sharpened sensibility. He keenly feels and expresses, what an ordinary reader might overlook. The reader who instinctively identifies himself with the Wedding-Guest takes a cue from him to define his own emotional responses to the Mariner's tale. The Wedding-Guest's suspension of disbelief and the trust with which he accepts the tale helps the reader to suspend his disbelief as well. Besides, he helps to relieve the monotony of what otherwise would have been a monologue.

It is clear from the above discussion that the introduction of the Wedding-Guest has a great significance. The Wedding-Guest is neither unimportant nor redundant. The contrast between the spiritual worlds of the Mariner with its rich moral values with the world of actuality with its mistaken values cannot be effective and perfect without the Wedding-Guest figuring as a link between the two worlds. The Wedding-Guest's suspension of disbelief and trust assists to create suspension of disbelief in the reader.

The Dreamlike Quality of "The Ancient Mariner"

Coleridge was a great dreamer and he had greater admiration for dreams than any of the other romantics. He once even declared that he would like to sleep on the lotus in the sea of milk like the Indian 'Vishnu'. The hours that he spent in dreaming were more important than his waking hours. When he was lost in sleep and it was thought he was lost in his dreams that were the time when actually a new work of art was being created in his mind. Infact, he fed on his dreams and vitalized them in his poetry. His entire poems have a dreamlike quality.

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' also has dream like qualities. Prof. Bowra observes in this connection:

"On the surface it shows many qualities of dream. It moves in abrupt stages each of which has its own single, dominating character. Its visual impressions are remarkably brilliant and absorbing. Their emotional impacts changes rapidly, but always come with an unusual force as if the poet were haunted and obsessed by them. When it is all over, it is difficult at first to disentangle ordinary experience from influences which still survive from sleep."

To begin with the dream like qualities of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', even the inspiration to write it came from a dream. A friend of Coleridge, Mr. Cruikshank, had dreamt about a skeleton ship with figures in it. This dream caught Coleridge's fancy and later he and Wordsworth got together to plan it. Thus Coleridge decided to make it on the basis of the poem.

Wordsworth has criticized the poem in 'Lyrical Ballads' published in 1800, "the events, having no necessary connection, do not produce each other." But this is wrong of Wordsworth. He is not being fair to Coleridge. It is quite certain that no one expects the events of dream to have any kind of necessary connection, which we find in our waking conditions. The subject is very supernatural, and one of the basic problems confronting him was to relate it to something, which his readers knew and understood, of the readers. Exploiting some of the characteristics of a dream did this. C.M. Bowra, in his book 'The Romantic Imagination', observes;

"Dreams can have a curiously vivid quality which is often lacking in waking impressions. In them we have one experience at a time in a very concentrated form, and since the critical self is not at work, the effect is more powerful and more haunting than most effects when we are awake. If we remember remarkable dreams at all, we remember them very clearly; even though by rational standards they are quite absurd and have no direct relation to our waking life."

When we analyse 'The Ancient Mariner' in the light of the characteristics of a dream described above, we find unmistakable signs of a dreamlike quality in it. C.M. Bowra says again, " it moves in abrupt stages, each of which has its own single, dominating character. Its visual impressions are remarkably brilliant and absorbing. Their emotional impact change rapidly, but always comes with an unusual force, as if the poet were haunted and obsessed by them. When it is all over, it clings to the memory with a peculiar tenacity, just as on waking it is difficult at first to disentangle ordinary experience from influences which still survive from sleep."

Things move in a mysterious way in 'The Ancient Mariner' but not without some connection, this may also be termed as casual. The Mariner commits crime when out of irritation and anger he shoots an innocent Albatross. He commits a crime and is punished by the doom of "Life-in-Death." This means that he was haunted by the presence of his dead comrades. His shipmates are also victims to the curse because they supported the Mariner by killing the bird. The Mariner's curse starts to become lesser when love gushes from his heart at the sight of Water snakes. The first horror of his spell is removed and we see the Albatross falls from his neck. It is wrong to kill the Albatross, once this act is accepted; the rest of the action follows with an inexorable fatality.

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is a frightful dream. The Mariner is tormented through quite a nightmarish experience. In part II, we have a picture of the unmoving ship, and slimy creatures crawl through with legs upon the slimy sea. Death-fires dance and water burns like a witch's oils, at night and we also see the picture of the Albatross hanging around the Mariner's neck. All this is very terrifying. In part III of the poem, freezing chills are sent down the Mariner's and also the reader's spines; by the appearances of Life-in-Death with her red lips, yellow locks and skin as white as leprosy. The reader is left stunned to see the sight of two hundreds sailors cursing the Ancient Mariner, with their eyes and dropping dead one by one.

In part IV we see the utter desolation and helplessness of the Mariner:

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

This imaginary world may have some rules, which are not same as ours, but still they touch the familiar chords in us. The events are more convincing and the reader somehow admits that in the world created by Coleridge it is right that things should happen as they are made in his world. Once the reader starts believing that spirits watch over human actions, and then it becomes more convincing to feel that the spirits have the right to interface with men and do all the extraordinary things. The spirits guiding the mariner towards his northward voyage have sufficient reality for the reader to feel that their actions are appropriate. It is also not absurd to see the ship sinking when it reaches home. This so happens because it has undergone so many unearthly adventures that now there is no place for it in the world of common things. Coleridge makes his events so coherent and so close that the reader accepts the things as valid and feels that they are not different from their own world.

Coleridge knows that he must make the supernatural convincing and humane. In the 'Biographia Literaria,' after saying that such poetry interest the emotions and has dramatic truth, Coleridge adds that his aim is to transfer from the reader's 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:

'The Ancient Mariner' has a beautiful moral also. Its entire movement is directed towards teaching love and reverence for all things made and loved by God. If it terrifies, it guides and educates as well. And it brings a sense of assurance to sinners that through earnest penance they can atone for their sins and gains regeneration. Hence it is quite justified to say that Coleridge is a dreamer and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is a beautiful but frightful dream. A critic has rightly observed:

"The Ancient Mariner lives in its own worlds as events in dreams do, and, when we read it, we do not normally ask if its subjects is real or unreal. But this is due to a consummate art. Each action and each situation is presented in a concrete form in which the details are selected for their appeal to common experience. Coleridge exercises an imaginative realism. However unnatural his events may be they are formed from natural elements, and for this reason their constituents are familiar and make a direct, natural appeal. Once we have entered this imaginary world we do not feel that it is beyond our comprehension, but respond to it as we would to actual life."

'The Ancient Mariner' as a myth of guilt and redemption

The Ancient Mariner is a myth of guilt and redemption but of course it is also much more. Its symbolical purpose is but one element in a complex design. Though Coleridge has his own poetry of a guilty soul, it is not comparable in depth or in insight with the poetry of some other men who have given the full powers of their genius to writing about crime and the misery it engenders. Nonetheless Coleridge's introduction of this theme into *The Ancient Mariner* gives to it a new dimension. What might otherwise be no more than an irresponsible fairy-tale is brought closer to life and to its fundamental issues. The myth of crime and punishment provides a structure for the supernatural events, which rise from it but often make their appeal irrespective of it. Much of the magic of *The Ancient Mariner* comes from its blend of dark and serious issues with the delighted play of creative energy. Coleridge had good reasons for fashioning his poem in this way. In the first place, the combination of different themes responded to his own complex vision of existence. For him life had both dark and its bright sides; it's haunting responsibilities and ravishing moments of unsullied delight. He saw that the two were closely interwoven and that, if he were to speak with the full force of his genius, he must introduce both into his poem. In the second place, he saw life not analytically but creatively, and he knew that any work of creation must itself be an extension and the enchantment which he knew in his finest poems, and for him these came alike from the beauty for the visible world and the uncharted corners of the human soul. The shadow cast by the Mariner's crime adds by contrast to the brilliance of the unearthly world in which it is committed, and the degree of his guilt and his remorse serve to stress the power of the angelic beings, which watch over human kind. The result is a poem shot with iridescent lights. It appeals to us now in this way, now in that, and there is no final or single approach to it.

In creating *The Ancient Mariner* in this way, Coleridge obeyed the peculiar and paradoxical were uneasily blended, and the creative spirit, which was capable of such rapturous flights, worked most freely when it was free from metaphysical speculations.

The poem is more than an allegory of guilt and regeneration. In any ordinary sense the Mariner is very little guilty. But he has broken the bond between himself and the life of Nature, and in consequence becomes spiritually dead. What happens to him when he blesses the water-snakes in the Tropical calm is a psychic rebirth - a rebirth that must at times happen to all men and all cultures unless they are to dry up in living death. The whole poem is indeed a vivid presentation of the rebirth myth as it is conceived by Jung - the psychologist who has done most to explain these recurrent forms of imaginative

Literature. But such explanations of poetry are not convincing to everyone and are not easily demonstrable. What we must explain is that universal psychic experience that gives the poem its lasting power. It is as though Coleridge tapped a deeper level of consciousness here than he was ever to reach again. And none of the literary figures concerned with *The Ancient Mariner*, in its composition or in its appearance seems to have detected allegory or symbolism in it. The retribution is greater, simpler, less regardful of natural movement: punishment, repentance, a gush of love for other living things, prayer and relief, yet further penance for, as in ancient legend and somewhat as in life, 'the train of cause and consequence knows no end'. For *The Ancient Mariner* is a structure, a perfectly ordered, a finely 'complex design wrought out through the exquisite adjustment of innumerable details'. It is not an opium dream like *Kubla Khan*; and that is the answer to the symbolists of psychoanalytic and biographic bent.

The gentle spirit who decrees that he shall win his way back to partial release through loving all things ultimately saves the Mariner from his fate worse than death. And so through a role of gentleness and sentimentality does Coleridge pursue his way through life. He plays the role and reaches the gospel of being in love and shooting the Albatross is, significantly an utterly unjustified act and...it is followed by a remorse out of all proportion to the deed. It is clearly a fantasy symbolizing guilt. The Mariner has killed the source of kindness, safety and guidance...the odd omission of any justification, provocation or motivation is best explained as a symbolic device suggesting their sub rational, neurotic source. In view of the bird's mission and pattern of emotional disturbance in Coleridge's childhood, it would seem that this fantasy of killing the Albatross is associated with some deeply buried guilt, either incestuous or Oedipal.

With Coleridge a week or waning moon is pretty clearly a powerful ...symbol for loss of mother love. The figure appears in Christabel:

*The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.*

But the most astonishing moon symbolism occurs in The Ancient mariner. At the most awful moment in that poem, when the nightmare Life-in-Death has won the Mariner's soul, and the night is thick and dark, then comes the Moon. The passage describing her coming has forever astonished and puzzled with its mystifying error in astronomy:

*Till climb above the eastern bar
The horned Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.*

The figure comes at the end of a long stanza that reaches a climax of feeling in these lines. Can this impossible bit off astronomy be a Freudian slip? It seems inexplicable, yet if the moon holds reference here to motherhood, how wonderful that Coleridge should put the star within the nether tip, 'enfolded' so to speak. Is it possible that we have here the unconscious yearning of the narcissist in a magnificent bit of pure expressionism altering the very face of the heavens? Like a mother, the moon holds the little star within her arm. It is not so strange an idea in the mind of a poet dominated by the need of a universe essentially benevolent, essentially loving. Soft, gentle and benevolent presence in the sky, serenely she floats among the stars quietly shedding her light on all below-the lovely complement and partner of the strong mail Sun.

The Ancient Mariner and his ship represent the small but persisting class of mental adventurers who are not content with the appearances surrounding them but who attempt to get behind. Granted that the Mariner and his voyage signify the mental adventure of an unusually inquiring spirit, the outline of that adventure becomes tolerably clear, while it would be senseless of to seek more than an outline. From the social point of view these spiritual adventurers are criminals: they disturb the existing order and they imply a criticism of the accepted round of life: they are self-appointed outcasts. The shooting of the Albatross in the present context was an anti-social act: something that by everyday rules would not be done. And the avenging spirit takes the Mariner into a region and a situation the utter loneliness of which is both the logical consequence and the avengement of his revolt against society. This same region is one more version of that aridity that besets all isolated mental voyagers at one stage of their voyage. Other versions are Donne's conceit of himself in 'A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day' as the quintessence of the primeval nothingness out of which God created the world; the emptiness experienced by the poet in Shelley's Albatross, who, when he awakes from his dreams sees the 'garish hills' and 'vacant woods' while his 'wan eyes'

*Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As oceans moon looks on the moon in heaven*

And the landscape in Browning's 'Child Roland'. The Mariner escapes from his isolation by the enlargement of his sympathies in the manner least expected and he is allowed to return to common life. And he does so as a changed man. He has repented of his isolation; his greatest satisfaction is to worship in company with his

fellows of all ages. But he is still the marked man, the outcast, the Wandering Jew, the victim of his own thoughts. Further, although he has been judged by society, he has the reward of the courage that propels the mental adventurer: that of arresting and disturbing and teaching those who have had no such experiences. And this ambivalent criterion enriches the poem incalculably.

The Treatment of the Supernatural in the Ancient Mariner

In "The Ancient Mariner" the series of supernatural events begins with the appearance of the spectre ship with its crew, Death and Life-in-Death, and ends with the leaving of the corpses by the troop of the angelic spirits. Death and Life-in-Death play at dice. The sailors' fall-dead one by one. The Mariner himself, won over by Life-in-Death, begins a lifelong process of penance. At first, he despises the sea creatures and finds that his heart being as dry as dust, he is unable to pray. But he partly atones his crime by appreciating their beauty, acknowledging their worth, and blessing them. The spell is broken and he is able to pray, and no sooner does he pray than the body of the Albatross that the sailors had hung round his neck instead of the cross drops into the sea. The Mariner, partly absolved, falls into a blessed sleep and is refreshed with rain. The bodies of the crew are animated by a troop of angelic beings and the ship moves on without any apparent wine. It is the Polar Spirit, desiring further vengeance that makes the ship move and carries it as far as the equator. The Mariner falls into a swoon and hears two voices, one telling the other that the Mariner has done enough penance but will do more. When the angelic spirits quit the bodies, the Ancient Mariner nears his home country. His ship is wrecked and it sinks into the sea but the hermit to continue his penance rescues him.

On the surface, "The Ancient Mariner" belonged to a class of poetry, which provoked adverse comment. Even Hazlitt, who regards it as Coleridge's "Most remarkable performance," adds less kindly that "It is high German, however, and in it he seems to 'conceive of poetry but as a drunken dream reckless, careless and needless, of past, present, and to come'". Charles Lamb responded with greater sympathy but he too had his doubts about the use of the supernatural and said: "I dislike all the miraculous part of it, but the feelings of the man under the operation of such scenery dragged me along like Tom piper's Magic Whistle. Coleridge set for himself a difficult task. To succeed in it he must do a great deal more than reproduce the familiar thrills of horrific literature; he must produce poetry of the supernatural, which should in its own way; be as human and as compelling as Wordsworth's poetry of everyday things. Coleridge saw these difficulties and faced them much more than a thrill of horror. He lives up to his own programmed and interests the affections by the dramatic truth of what he tells."

The Scene set in distant times and remote places

First of all, Coleridge transports us to distant times and remote places with vast weird possibilities. "It is an Ancient Mariner", he tells us in the very first line of the poem. The word ancient immediately suggests Middle Ages when an atmosphere of magic and mystery was ripe all around and when supernatural occurrences were not dismissed as the figments of a feverish imagination but were believed to be really true. And the Mariner is not moving about in any familiar place but is voyaging around Polar Regions in unknown seas where anything might happen. Before any supernatural element is introduced, the Mariner does not forget to tell us:

*We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.*

Thus cut off from the everyday life, the Ancient Mariner's story gets free from the rigorous logic governing the world of reality and can follow its own laws without unduly straining our credulity.

In the beginning, the poet gives a very realistic description of the background:

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

We notice that the church, the hill, the lighthouse top are mentioned exactly in the order in which they would disappear from the mariner's sight. It might be a minor detail but it deepens one's faith in the truth of the narrative. The next few lines give another similar detail contributing to the total effect of reality.

*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 everyday,
Till over the mast at noon-"*

Notice how accurate and how vivid the description is. It does not allow any possibility of disbelief. So the reader just pins his faith in the poet. Such realistic descriptions of nature scattered through out help to sustain this faith. The ice mast high, as green as emerald, sending out fitfully a dismal sheen, and occasionally cracking and growing; the fair breeze blowing, the white foam flowing and the furrow following free; the bloody sun, looking no bigger than the moon, standing right above the mast in a hot and copper sky; the ship standing still as a painted ship upon a painted ocean; the pale moonshine glimmering all night; the horn moon with one bright star dogging its heels; all these are examples of vivid imaginative apprehension of the exact details of nature. Here the very essence of nature is distilled and with great vividness and imaginative energy at once stamped on one's memory. These descriptions of nature surely help in the acceptance of the supernatural elements.

*"Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip".*

The poet wants us to grasp the dreadfulness of Life-in-Death through this effect on the Mariner's mind. This method has been repeatedly used in the poem to avoid horrible details. At the end of part III, two hundred sailors drop down dead one by one, cursing the Mariner with their eyes:

*"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".*

Here again the poet does not provide any ugly details and leaves the entire scene to our imagination. It is for us to imagine how the Mariner must have felt when

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

And not only can we imagine the scene fully but even share the Wedding-Guest's fears that the Mariner himself is perhaps a ghost. Again, towards the end of the poem, the poet wants to tell us how horrible the Mariner's face appears at the end of his face; instead, he describes the effect produced by the sight of it upon the minds of the Pilot, the Hermit and the Pilot's boy.

*" 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".*

This method of suggesting supernatural horrors is very different indeed from the practice of the novelists of the school of terror like Horace Walpole and Monk Lewis. It is also worth noting that even when Coleridge has to introduce supernatural beings, he does not introduce ghosts, he animates the bodies of the dead crew with a troop of spirits blest and avoids all gruesome details:

*"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 use of imaginative realism

As suggested earlier, in *The Ancient Mariner*, Coleridge makes use of imaginative realism. He gives natural touches to supernatural beings and weaves a web of mystery and vagueness about simple incidents and common objects. Thus the two aspects get thoroughly fused together. The Mariner himself, with his glittering eye, grey beard and skinny hand seems to have descended from a world haunted by phantoms and specters, where as supernatural happenings, because of the psychological truth inherent in them, look to be quite natural. Moreover the relation between the supernatural happenings and the mind of the Mariner is firmly established. One who does not believe in the supernatural phenomena can easily accept them as taking place on the inner stage of the Mariner's mind. The psychological truth of the incidents will only support such a reading. At the end of the poem, when the ship approaches the harbour, the sight of the familiar landmarks greeting our eyes also assures us of the truth of the whole experience. The horrified shrieks of the Wedding-guest occasionally appearing in the narrative tend to reassert the presence of the world of humanity in a supernatural environment.

The [Rime Of The Ancient Mariner] is a superb narrative, terse, vigorous and inimitable. The perfectly ordered story moves on unchecked through a world of mystery and wonder. The form adapted by Coleridge is an old traditional one- the ballad. By the time of Coleridge the medieval influence was considerably established and it was natural enough for a tale strange adventures to be told in ballad style.

As the narrative proceeds, its dramatic quality is intensified and its hold on the reader's imagination becomes stronger. The total absence of wind causing complete suspension of the ship's movement reflects a state of Mariner's sinfulness, which is also objectified by the hanging of the Dead Albatross round his neck. These events combine in themselves the strangeness of the supernatural with the psychological truth of human experience. They are not allowed to come down to the level of the drab commonness, nor are they made so fantastic that they start straining our belief. The poet also employs some clever devices to make the story more interesting. The Wedding - Guest's interruptions are used to highlight the climatic moments. The dramatic endings given to each part of the poem make the readers move on to the next without even a moment's pause. The pronouncement of the moral at the conclusion gives the poem an air of finality, as if there were nothing more to be said. The various aspects of Nature, still and stagnant, tender and soothing, violent and furious, are presented in harmony with the events. They are used, as music is used in movies and stage representation, to enhance the dramatic effect of the incidents. The metrical organization of the verse that follows the pattern of a ballad adds to the poem's narrative charm.

The Romantic Elements of the Ancient Mariner

Supernaturalism: *The Ancient Mariner* is a romantic poem, impressing us by bold invention, and appealing to that taste for the supernatural, the longing for a shudder, to which the 'romantic' school in Germany, and its derivations in England and France, directly ministered. Fancies of the strange things which may very well happen, even in broad daylight, to men shut up alone in ships far off on the sea, seem to have occurred to the human mind in all ages with a peculiar readiness, and often have about them, the fascination of a certain dreamy grace, which distinguishes them from other kinds of marvelous inventions. This sort of fascination "*The Ancient Mariner*" brings to its highest degree: it is the delicacy, the dreamy grace, in his presentation of the marvelous, which makes Coleridge's work so remarkable.

The sudden and mysterious appearance of the skeleton ship, Death and Life-in-Death who are on board that ship, the coming back to life of the dead crew, the angels of light standing on the corpses, the popular spirits driving the ship- these are all supernatural elements in the poem. This supernaturalism lends to the poem an atmosphere of wonder, enchantment, and mystery, which are romantic qualities.

Medievalism: The poem has a medieval background. Interest in the middle Ages too, is a romantic characteristic. The Middle Ages were a period of superstition, piety, and love and chivalry. In this poem the first two elements of the Middle Ages have been emphasized. The superstition of the period is seen in the supernatural incidents. Its piety is seen in the religious basis of the poem and in the reference to the hermit. The poem thus carries us back to a remote period of time. **Nature:** There are many pictures in the poem showing Coleridge's interest in nature. Love for nature is one of the outstanding qualities of romantic poetry. Every phase of seascape, landscape and cloudscape is touched upon in the poem. The sun shining brightly at the outset, the mist and iceberg surrounding the ship, the moving moon going up the sky, the water burning green, blue and white, the snakes moving in water and leaving tracks of golden fire-these are some of the beautiful and richly-coloured nature-pictures, giving the poem a romantic interest.

Melodious Movement: The poem is also romantic because of its melody and music. Coleridge here appears as a keen lover of sweet and musical sounds. Alliteration, medieval rhymes, onomatopoeia, etc are all employed to produce musical effects. As an example of melody the following stanza may be taken:

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

The simplicity and freshness of diction further enhance the romantic effect.

Conclusion: The Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century was characterized by an upsurge of Imagination. Much of the magic of *The Ancient Mariner* comes from the blend of dark and serious issues with the delighted play of creative energy. The imaginative power of "*The Ancient Mariner*" gives to it its complex appeal-there is no final or single approach to it.

The Significance of Life-in-Death

The two instruments in the hands of God are Death and Life-in-Death. God punishes the people who go against the law of pity. They are not allowed to pray nor can they bless any creature in the world. God loves them best who love others and show kindness:

*He prayth well, which loveth well
Both men and bird and beast.*

Since the Mariner has gone against the rules of God, he has sinned. He is admitted from both God and his creation. He is not pited by the saints. The Mariner regrets that so many beautiful men lie dead on the deck while 'a thousand thousand slimy things' live on. This suggests that he still refuses to acknowledge the worth of his fellow creatures. He tries to pray but he fails.

*A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.*

The bird was hailed with joy when it first came through the fog. With it came the south wing, the ice split and the helmsman began to steer the ship. The Albatross followed the ship for nine days and played with the sailors. Suddenly, it was shot dead by the Mariner. It was a very irresponsible act committed.

The guardian spirit of the Albatross began to avenge. It sent Death and Life-in-Death to punish the sailors. A skeleton ship approached them carrying two figures. One was a grim, looking ghastly skeleton. It was like a Nightmare, the personification of Death. The other was Life-in-Death. It had red lips, golden locks, and leprous skin. She represents the life-long torture that a sinful man endures on account of the- pricks of his conscience. Life-in-Death curdles one's blood by striking terror into the heart of man. The two ghastly crew

were playing at dice to determine who would win the Mariner. Life-in- Death won whereas Death fell upon the sailors. It can be said here that life is not always a blessing and Death is not always a curse. The sailors were infact blessed with death because they were saved from seeing the horrors faced by the Mariner. The Mariner had to penance and repent all his life for the sin he committed.

As the souls of his sailors departed, they passed by the mariner with the whizzing sound of his cross-bow. This was so, to remind him of the crime he had committed. He was left all alone. No saint pitied his soul. The sight of the sea was dreadful and ugly. The timbers of the ship were rotting and heaps of dead men lay sinful on them. The Mariner wanted to pray but his sinful heart would not allow him to do so. Even God accepts the prayers said by hearts that are full of love and kindness. The eyes of the dead sailors seemed to curse the mariner. For seven days he had to go through this torture. He himself confused that he wished to die but could not die.

After seven days of constant torture did his fate take pity on the mariner? In the moonlight he saw the water-snakes and slimy creatures, a fountain of sympathy and tenderness flowed from his heart and he blessed those creatures unswervingly. This love for the snakes was the best of prayers. This illuminated his heart and he became calm. He was then able to pray to God; who ultimately took pity on the mariner.

This recovery does not help to end the mariner's suffering. It however opens the door to the future. The mariner is haunted by the presence of his dead sailors. The mariner becomes a symbol of remorse and he often feels the necessity of repeating his confession.

Thus, we learn that nature has two tools of punishment Death and Life-in-Death. Life-in-Death is much more horrible than Death. Death heals us of pain instantly but Life-in-Death kills by degree.

Kubla Khan – An Introduction

Coleridge himself stated that this poem was part of a gorgeous dream, which he once dreamt while asleep. It was the year 1797. One night at his farmhouse on the border of Somerset with Devon shire, he fell asleep while reading "Purchase's Pilgrimage" written by Samuel Purchas. It was an anthology of travels. In it Coleridge was reading about Kubla Khan and his palace when sleep overcame him." 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 or 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 awakening he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole dream, and taking his pen, ink and paper, instantly wrote down the lines which he saw in his dream. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and thus he had to stop writing .He was detained by him for above an hour, and on returning to his room, he found, to his small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained 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 on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast, but, alas! Without the after restoration of the matter!

According to the poet himself, Kubla Khan is now no more than a psychological curiosity. Humphry House, however, observes that if Coleridge had not told us that the poem is a fragment, it would not have occurred to anyone to regard it as such. He believes it to be a complete poem dealing with the theme of poetic creativity. Wilson Knight regards it as a poem about life. Raymond Wilson feels that just because the poem was "A Vision in a Dream" and not at all the product of conscious composition, it came to be regarded as an example of indisputably authentic inspiration. Its prestige rose when, in the second half of the nineteenth century, a cult of "Arts for Arts sake" prevailed, and twentieth century theories of psychology have also tended to promote attitudes favourable to the poem, which can be dubiously honored as an early example of "Secularism". According to this critic, "To this day, it is for the most readers a fragment of inspired incoherence, a piece of verbal magic, to ask the meaning of which would be impertinent."

Critical Summary Kubla Khan

Kubla Khan, the great oriental king, once ordered that a magnificent pleasure palace be built for him in Xanadu where the sacred river Alph winding its course through immeasurably deep caves ultimately sank into a dark, subterranean sea. So a fertile tract of land, about ten square miles in area was enclosed with walls and towers. This piece of land, with streams meandering their way through bright gardens and ancient forests enclosing the bright gardens and ancient forests enclosing bright green spots presented a spectacle of rich profusion

From this valley, a fountain of water gushed out of the ground every moment. This burst of water threw up stones, which looked like hail or chaff being scattered around.

Next the poet describes the source of river Alph. There was a deep, mysterious- looking, awe-insuring chasm that slanted down a green hill across a screen made by cedar trees. It was a savage, holy and enchanted place, the kind of place frequented by a woman desperately wandering about, in the light of a waning moon, in search of her demon-lover, who, after making love to her deserts her. A mighty fountain issued from this chasm intermittently. As the water gushed out, it flung about huge pieces of rock in the same way in which the hailstones rebound from the earth or the chaffy grain flings about under the thresher's flail.

The river Alph, issuing from this fountain, flowed meanderingly for five miles through woods and valleys, entered the deep caves and finally sank into the sunless sea with a loud, tumultuous sound. In the midst of this tumult, Kubla Khan could hear from far the voices of his ancestors predicting a war in the near future and exhorting him to be prepared for it. The dome presented a great marvel of human skill. It was a 'sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice' and its shadow fell midway on the river. While standing here one could hear the mingled noises from the fountain and the caves.

In the second part of the poem, Coleridge gives us a vivid picture of a poet caught in a spell of poetic inspiration. Once, in a vision, he saw an Abyssinian maid playing on her dulcimer and singing of the wild splendor of Mount Abora. It was a beautiful indeed. The poet says that if he could recreate in his imagination the sweet music of the Abyssinian maid, it would give him such an ecstatic joy and he would feel so inspired that with the music of his poetry he would build Kubla Khan's pleasure dome in the air. In other words, he would give such a vivid description of the pleasure dome that his listeners would actually begin to see his imagination. They would then regard him as a mighty magician, a superhuman being who has fed on honeydew and drunk the milk of paradise. They would mark his flashing eyes and floating hair, weave a circle around him thrice and close their eyes in holy dread. The idea is that a poet caught in a spell of poetic inspiration transcends his mundane existence and becomes a superhuman being.

The Use of the Supernatural in Kubla Khan

Coleridge is pre-eminently a poet of the supernatural. But he does not belong to the School of the late eighteenth century writers of the Gothic romance, whose works are marred by indiscreet accumulation of crude horrors. Today they do not appeal to us because they violate our sense of probability. The incidents described by them do not strike us as true, as capable of having happened. Coleridge also makes use of supernatural agencies and situations but he makes sure that they appear to us as natural. When he started writing, he said that he was aware that his major problem was how to make his presentation of the supernatural elements acceptable, how to get from his readers 'that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith', and it must be acknowledged that he solved this problem in the most convincing manner.

To begin with, the scene of this poem is never laid in a familiar place. He takes us to remote, unknown regions and to distant times—mostly middle ages—where the very unfamiliarity of the scene prompts us to suspend our reasoning faculties. We do not argue, do not dispute, because we do not know. In Kubla Khan, the scene is laid in the oriental city of Xanadu, in forests as "ancient as the hills".

*Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.*

This is something we have not seen. It seems to be improbable, but not utterly impossible. So we accept it for a while. In the meantime the poet cleverly makes use of some other devices to strengthen our sense of belief.

Another very important feature of Coleridge's treatment of the supernatural is a very subtle blending of the natural and the supernatural. The two are so indistinguishably fused with each other that it is very difficult to locate where the one ends and the other begins. The mighty fountain being momentarily forced from the deep romantic chasm is definitely invested with supernatural energy but the similes employed to describe it are so familiar that we accept the fountain as quite natural.

*Amidst 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 momentarily the sacred river.*

Suggestiveness is the keynote of Coleridge's treatment of the supernatural. Coleridge does not describe the supernatural; he simply suggests it. Suggestions stir one's imagination; descriptions make it inert. Suggestions

evoke our sense of mystery and make us more keenly interested; descriptions arouse our sense of improbability and make us protest. In *Kubla Khan*, Coleridge makes use of subtle suggestions in the description of the deep romantic chasm slanting down the green hill across a cedarn cover:

*A savage place! As holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!*

It has been remarked that these three lines contain the seeds of a complete love story comparable to Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci".

The supernatural in *Kubla Khan* does not strain our sense of probability because the dramatic truth of human experience projected in it is nowhere falsified. *Kubla Khan*'s hearing the ancestral voices in the midst of the tumultuous noises heard from the chasm and the measureless caves may be slightly unusual, but once we accept that he can hear these voices (or if we so like, we can say that he interprets the noises as ancestral voices), how appropriate it is that he should hear a 'war' prophecy since he is himself a warrior of great renown! Toward the end of the poem, the poet is presented as a supernatural being:

*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.*

A note of supernatural mystery runs through these lines and yet the whole descriptions is psychologically accurate because when a poet is caught in a spell of poetic inspiration, he transcends his ordinary existence and rises to the level of a supernatural being. Thus we find that Coleridge makes his supernatural acceptable mainly through a faithful adherence to the dramatic truth of human experience. Today we have come a long way from the days of supernatural belief. Supernatural agencies and situations no longer capture our imagination. Still we are able to enjoy the poem because it is relevant to us. Whether we read it as a poem about poetic creativity or a poem about life, it is intensely human and that is why we accept it as a convincing presentation.

The vagueness, however, is the greatest strength of the description. It leaves so much to suggestion that every reader with a little imagination will build a vast scene of his own. The mystery becomes very effective because of the vast vision of imagination, which surrounds the vivid picture of the poem. The poem is raised from the region of everyday realities to that of a supernatural world. The details though may be realistic but however each detail has an actual counterpart somewhere. The total impression however is of an unearthly rather than earthly scene.

The deft touches scattered in the poem help to achieve the creation of a masterpiece. The very mention of "Xanadu", "Kubla Khan", "Alph", "Achora" and "The Abyssinian maid" evoke associations of remoteness, mystery and strangeness. "The woman wailing for the demon-lover", the chasm "seething with ceaseless turmoil", "the earth breathing in thick pants", "the huge fragments" thrown up by the waves, "the caverns measureless to man", "the sunless sea", "the caves of ice" etc are all nothing but touches which make the poem a supernatural one.

Nature of Poetic Vision In *Kubla Khan*

Coleridge's preface to *Kubla Khan* reveals that it was composed during a dream. He adds that it was not really a composition in the ordinary sense. For, the entire images rose up before him as things with a parallel production of the corresponding expressions without any sensation or consciousness of effort.

It has been pointed out by Humphrey House that by writing this preface the poet played out of modesty right into the hands of critics. Humphrey House refers to other critics who talk of the 'vivid incoherence' and 'patchwork brilliance' of the poem and like to read it only as a 'psychological curiosity'. He himself believes

the poem to be complete and intensely meaningful. According to him Kubla Khan is a poem about the act of poetic creation, about the 'ecstasy in imaginative fulfillment'. It is "triumphant positive statement of the potentialities of poetry".

Kubla Khan not merely attracts the readers by giving good poetry; it is also often studied and esteemed for reasons other than poetic. It has been regarded as a forerunner of both symbolism surrealism. The claim is sometimes made that Kubla Khan is an immediate and undistorted _expression of poetic inspiration, as it has been written without a poet's mind functioning at the conscious level.

Humphry House writes, "The precision and clarity of the opening part are the first things to mark even in the order of the 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 chasm, 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 landscape. Nobody need keep this mere geographical consistency of the description prominently in the mind as he reads. Humphry House suggests that if this factual-visual consistency had been absent, and there had been a mere random sequence or collection of items, such as a dream might well have provided items which needed a symbol-system to establish relations at all- then the absence would be observed: The Poem would have been quite different, and a new kind of effort would have been needed to apprehend what unity it might have had. The fertility of the plain is only made possible by the mysterious energy of the source. The dome has come into being by Kubla Khan's decree: the dome is stately; the gardens are girdled round with wall and towers.

Even so, even if the poem is the outcome of an opium dream, it has to be studied as poetry by the critics. In seeking the significance of the poem, there is often a tendency to discover some kind of allegory or symbolic meaning. If we have to read an allegory into the poem, it must be consistent throughout. Most of the details, if not all of them, must have significance in the allegory. Now it will be difficult to find the hidden meaning behind such features of the landscape as the deep romantic chasm, the forest full of cedar trees, the walls, the towers, and the sinuous rills.

Attempts have been made to link the poem with the poet's own life. Graham Hough supposes that Kubla is the inspired poet-magician who, towards the close of the poem, becomes the inspired poet-prophet. The Alph may stand for poetic inspiration. It rises up under awe-inspiring circumstances. For a while, it flows smoothly in sunlight. Then it falls into deep caverns and reaches the sunless sea.

*"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 girded round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree".*

To Hough, this suggests the story of the rise and fall of creative imagination in a poet.

"It is so often said that 'kubla khan' achieves its effects mainly by 'far reaching suggestiveness', or by incantation or by much connotation, with little denotation, that it is worth emphasizing this element of plain clear statement at the outset, statement which does particularize a series of details inter-related to each other, and deriving their relevance from the inter relation and their order. Further more, the use of highly emotive and suggestive proper names is proportionately no large source of the poem's effect; it is only necessary to watch the incidence of them. Xanadu, Kubla Khan and Alph occur once in that form within the poem's opening two-and-a-half lines: and none of them occur again except for the single repetition of kubla in line 29 "And 'mid this tumult kubla heard from far ancestral voices prophesying war!" Abyssian and Mount Abora occur once each, in the three lines 39-41.

*"It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song "*

There are no other proper names in the poem at all, unless we should count the final word Paradise.

*"For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of paradise".*

An even more personal view of the poem is taken by Robert Graves. He finds it dealing in a roundabout way with Coleridge's relation with his wife. According to Graves, the poet identifies himself with the serene and powerful Kubla Khan. The pleasure dome is the state of joy brought by opium. The caves of ice should be taken to mean that passion did not disturb his retreat from the difficulties of life. Graves sums up: "We understand from the poem that Coleridge has determined to shun the mazy complications of life by retreating to a bower of poetry, solitude and opium. Its far-fetched symbolism is admitted; every kind of fanciful meaning can be read into the poem. It may be taken to refer to the poet's own experience or desires, whether expressed or hidden. Such interpretations can neither be proved nor disapproved."

It is best, therefore, to understand the poem without burdening it with any deep symbolic or allegorical purpose. After the entire poem is felt to be a lovely lyric. It is full of evocative phrases and images. The poem shows the distilled essence of all the romance and adventure of travel and discovery. As Prof. Lowes put it: "And over it is cast the glamour enhanced beyond all reckoning in the dream, of the remote in time and space—that visionary presence of vague and gorgeous and mysterious past which brooded, as Coleridge read, above the inscrutable Nile and domed pavilions in Kashmir, and the vanished stateliness of Xanadu. Kubla Khan makes us feel the magic of distance called romance".

Romantic Elements In Kubla Khan

The main theme of Coleridge's romanticism lies in his artistic rendering of the supernatural phenomenon. A major part of his poems are engrossed deep in supernatural mystery. Kubla Khan, it is true, is less directly connected with the supernatural, but still the supernatural elements in the poem appear quite prominent. 'The woman wailing for her demon lover' and the ancestral voices prophesying war' are actually supernatural occurrences. The poetic frenzy of an inspired poet is based on the supernatural. The tumultuous rise of the river Alph from a deep romantic chasm is also given an unmistakable supernatural touch. But what is remarkable about Kubla Khan is the convincing presentation of the supernatural elements. The description of the landscape is so vivid and precise, the similes used for the mighty fountain so homely and familiar that it just does not occur to the reader that anything impossible is described. The psychological truths hidden behind Kubla Khan's hearing ancestral voices prophesying war or the presentation of the poet as a superhuman being make these facts acceptable.

Kubla Khan is full of dream imagery. Now the essence of a dream is its inconsequence and illogicality which we realize only after we wake up from it. While experiencing the dream we are entirely lost in it and find no objections to its details. That is the first thing to remember in estimating the significance or effect of the poem. There is also the disconnected nature of the thing seen or the impressions evoked in our minds by them. We are told of a palace and fortress, but there is no description of the inner decoration except for the mention of a sunny dome and caves of ice. A river tuned to flow in many clever or romantic ways is possible, but this river is said to be a sacred river. This idea is particularly Hindu or Eastern, for only in the East do people Treat Rivers as holy. Where there are rivers and subterranean springs, there are bound to be caverns as well. Rivers do often go underground and then come up again. This is given a supernatural or magical turn, and the associations with magic, wizardry and mystery are emphasized. In fact, and nearly half of the entire poem is taken up with the course of the sacred river.

Reference to distant times and places with a view to evoke a sense of awe and mystery is another romantic characteristic used by Coleridge in Kubla Khan. The very first line transports us to the distant city of Xanadu, the summer capital of the great oriental king Kubla Khan, and the son of the great Chenghiz Khan. These names, unfamiliar and wrought with the spirit of mystery, lend to the poem an enchantment of their own. The same purpose is served by the allusion to the Abyssinian girl singing of Mount Abora in the second part of the poem.

The third feature of the poem is the mixing and blending of the vision of the palace of Kubla Khan with another dream, which the poet is said to have dreamt on another occasion. In that dream, he saw a maiden playing on a dulcimer and singing to the accompaniment of the instrument. The effect of it on the poet was to intoxicate him with the purest fervour of poetic imagination. For, he becomes transfigured with hair disheveled, eyes flashing forth fire, being completely transported from the world of ordinary humdrum existence. He is sustained by the food of the gods and drinks the milk of paradise, such as are earmarked for the children of poetry.

Kubla Khan abounds in suggestive phrases and lines capable of evoking mystery. The description of the romantic chasm, the source of the river Alph in the second part of the poem is romantic in spirit. Perhaps the most appropriate lines in the poem refer to the woman wailing for her demon-lover.

*A savage place! As holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover.*

But almost equally suggestive in Kubla Khan's hearing the war prophecy made by the ancestral voices.

The disjointed entities are each pictures, but together they have no connection with one another. The whole poem is like a series of snatches of music remembered in bits and on different occasions. Such unity as they may possess will derive its meaning or significance from the personality or subjective bias of the reader acting on the suggestions given by the poet.

Sensuous phrases and pictures so generously used in the poem contribute a good deal to its romantic spirit. The bright gardens and sinuous rills, the incense-bearing trees laden with sweet blossoms, the sunny sports of greenery, the half-intermittent burst of the mighty fountain the rocks vaulting like rebounding hail—all these vivid pictures give the poem a sensuous touch so characteristic of romantic poetry.

The very idea of poetic creativity taking place under divine inspiration and of the poet transcending his prosaic existence and rising to the level of superhuman being when caught in his poetic frenzy is based on the romantic concept of poetry and of a poet's identity.

Above all, the dream-like atmosphere of Kubla Khan makes it an exquisite romantic poem. It was not only composed in a dream but even exhibits a dream-like movement.

Development of Thought in Kubla Khan

Kubla Khan is one of the three great poems of Coleridge. It is the shortest but in some ways the most remarkable of the three. In the first part of the poem the poet describes a mighty river and a rare pleasure dome constructed on it by the mighty Kubla Khan. In the later part the poet has described the power of poetry and inspiration as well as a poet in the frenzy world of creation. The poem is not related to a story in any way; it is but a masterpiece of description. The critics also feel that the poem Kubla Khan is "Airy and Unsubstantial". At the first reading there comes the impression that the poem is "airy and unsubstantial". There is a feeling that there is no coherence and that the two parts of the poem do not hang together. In the first part the river Alph and its beauty are depicted where as the second part describes a vision and the poet in frenzy. The first part also does not follow an even Course. There is no connection between the Abyssinian maid and the river Alph. However a close study reveals that the poem does have 'Coherence and substance'. It cannot be explained in a rational terms, but when we follow the course of association and suggestions that run through the poem, it does yield a coherent meaning.

The imagination of the poet is aroused by the river Alph and its subterranean Course. The measureless caverns, the panting earth, the dancing rocks, sunless and lifeless sea, and the tumult of the mighty waves as they rush into the silent ocean, the scene where a woman wails for the demon-lover, all these excite his imagination. A feeling of awe and mystery is upon the poet, and he is lifted into a mood of poetic creation.

The poet glides into this new theme through suggestion; the power of creation in man is suggested through the damsel; who is the symbol of creative power. The poet is aroused by the desire to capture the weird beauty of the entire scene, and reminds him that this can be built in colours, strains and words. The symbol of this creative power is the maiden whom he saw in a vision. Both the parts of the poem are connected by the poet's desire to build a pleasure dome with the help of his imagination.

The whole poem follows the course of a dream. It can be interpreted as a complete poem; but the coherence and the completeness is of a dream seen by the poet and not of waking life. The description of river Alph has dream like qualities. It is not easy to follow the course of the river. It is not clearly suggested whether the entire course of the river is of ten miles or whether this was a part of its entire course. It is difficult to also associate the wild and the fertile parts of the course of the river. The transition from the description of the river to the description of the vision is abrupt, and the second part tenuous. The poem feels to be a dream due to its vividness and lack of smooth transitions

The poem is a master-piece of descriptive art. It is nothing but a series of pictures which following quick succession. First the poet describes the pleasure-dome and immediately after he describes the course of the river Alph. He builds up the picture of romantic chasm-by a scene of vast desolation in the dim light of the moon. The picture of the mighty fountain follows this. The vision of the river is repeated again and is followed by the pictures of the pleasure dome; after this there is the description of the vision and finally we get the picture of the poet in frenzy.

There is a clear combination of vagueness and vividness. The pictures of 'the dome', 'the river', 'the damsel', are at once vivid and get vague. It is just like being in a dream. The details are left vague. The impressions of the dream have clear outline, yet they concentrate only on a few details. The details are imaginative and leave the reader also in a state of imagination. The details are suggestive and not explicit.

The entire description of the poem has the indefiniteness of a dream; because we don't know exactly about the pleasure dome or the river Alph. There are many questions which haunt our minds like-How far was the sunless sea from the pleasure domes? How far was the fountain from the river? We have a vague picture of the pleasure dome-that it was situated on the banks of the river Alph, it had a sunny dome and caves of ice, its shadow floats on the waves and the pleasure dome is haunted by the tumult of the mighty river.

Kubla Khan as the Poem of Description

In view of the absence from the poem of any story or plot or episode intended to be narrated, we have to look out for the significance of it in terms of the descriptions it contains. Major described are the sacred river Alph and its romantic course, the chasm bubbling up with violent upheaval of rocks and boulders alternating with gushing and foaming waters. Next to these we have a damsel with a dulcimer, who though not otherwise described, at once suggests the whole world of romance and mystery. Lastly, we have the picture of the poet roused to creative utterance. The poet is inspired, his hair is loosened and he looks scarcely mortal. All the details mentioned are enough to deepen the sense of either mystery or charm of delight. The reference to the waning moon at once starts a train of associations which end in magic and sorcery; from the ancient times the moon has been associated with all occult manifestations and powers.

The figures of speech employed also promote the same elements of mystery and magic. The demon-lover has a mortal woman in love with him, and this at once thrills us with a creepy feeling. Romance of the exciting and pleasurable type is provided by gods and mortals marrying, as they often do in classical mythology. But men and the demoniac spirits having similar love- bonds are neither so common nor so natural. But such superstitious beliefs are common among ordinary people especially in out-of-the-way rustic areas. The

underground commotion made by the river or by some panting force strikes us as fearful, for it suggests earthquakes. Some idea of the tremendous violence felt by the earth may be formed from the poet's description of rocks and boulders being scattered about like the chaff by the winnower of newly harvested grain.

These are all unforgettable details. And the very fact that they do not fit in with one another in any prosaic or logical manner is a characteristic of the poem underlying the poem.

The Element of Magic in the Poem

Magic is generally associated with the ability to invoke powers or exploit Nature in defiance of what we consider to be natural and universal laws. It appeals to the irrational or mysterious element in all of us, since, there is nothing wonderful in what is known. It is the human tendency to always try to know more about the other world. But when suggestions or details are calculated to stir our feelings and inspire in us vague dread or terror, and then we say that some sort of magic is at work. It is the supreme virtue of Coleridge's poetry that he creates this elusive but powerful feeling more often and more intensely than many others great poets. In the poem Kubla Khan, Coleridge speaks of a place being holy, savage and haunted at once; the readers cannot imagine the combination easily' but we accept it since the poet says so with a matter-of-fact certainty. Only magic can account for the combination of a sunny dome with icy caves. Lest we should disbelieve it, the poet himself says that it was a miracle of rare device.

In order that people may be exempt from being bewitched by the poet when he is under the influence of his poetic inspiration, the poets represent the beholders as crying to themselves:

*"Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,"*

And in these ways let us protect ourselves from his dreaded influence. The reference to the number- three, is wholly magical, for mystic powers are ascribed to numbers in all systems of magic. The most striking indication of this magical influence is found in the last two lines. Honey-dew suggests something sweet as honey, and fresh, cool and sparkling as dew.

It is the blend of these qualities that is entrancing to the mind. To drink the milk of paradise is to be one of the best creatures already enjoying the privileges of blessed spirits. Such is the power conferred by the spirit of poetry on the poet.

Coleridge's style and diction in the poem

The wonderful effect of the poem is to be found compressed for the most part in single words or pregnant epithets, which carry a whole world of meaning and association. The language of the poem is simple and sublime: not a word can be changed for the better and not an image or sentiment jars on the mind or offends the sensibilities. The poem is, as we may say, 'word perfect'. Phrases like pleasure-dome, demon-lover, incense bearing, holy-dread and honey-dew, are compounded of the most ordinary words, but they sound different and convey intensified meanings. The sentence, "Ancestral voices prophesying war", defies analysis. But it conveys some idea of part played by oracles in foretelling the future, of the interpretation of natural phenomena by soothsayers and auger's and of the practice among primitive tribes of inspired priests indicating when a war should be begun. The two words 'damsel' and 'dulcimer' are themselves romantic and help us to visualize a beautiful maiden highly gifted with all artistic accomplishments.

The element of music in the choice of the diction is no less worthy of notice. The word 'Xanadu' at once strikes the note of the remote and mysterious; for few have heard of such a place. Kubla Khan is sonorous and dignified and also suggestive of an eastern emperor and of the pomp and luxury associated with one. A sunless sea sounds smooth and strange and a rarity. By describing the shadow of the dome of pleasure as moving the poet conveys to us the idea of how the waters are disturbed and so the images formed on the surface of the stream are also disturbed. Prosaically we reproduce a song we have heard well or ill. But, poetically, he would 'rebuild that dome in air', that is, describe it in the musical language of inspired poetry.

By making these analysis, however, we come no nearer to the heart of mystery of how great poetry is produced. We recognize the quality of it when we read it, and by the persistence with which these impressions linger our consciousness without our realizing it always or fully.

"Kubla Khan" is steeped in the wonder of all of Coleridge's enchanted voyaging", a critic rightly observes.

Kubla Khan - Fragment or a Complete Poem

A very important question asked by critic's is "Is the poem a fragment?" All critics however don't hold this opinion. George Saintsbury disbelieves Coleridge's statement. He remarks the prose as rigmarole in which Coleridge tells the story of the coming and going of the vision called Kubla Khan. It is "A Characteristic piece of self-description".

Humphrey House, a modern critic also holds that the poem is complete. He regards the poem Kubla Khan as poem about the process of poetic creation, about the ecstasy of imaginative fulfilment.

Coleridge himself feels that the poem Kubla Khan is not complete but a fragment. According to him it is only a part of the poem of two or three hundred lines, which he saw in his dream. He not only saw the picture but he painted the whole scene in the poem as a portrait. He says that the lines and words written are as they came to him in the dream. The poem could not be completed. Coleridge says because a visitor interrupted him and the vision faded.

Kubla Khan when read as a story or even as a piece of connected description, it seems but a fragment. The unwritten parts of the poem are needed to give us a clear idea of the story of the places and things described. But it will be wrong to treat the poem in this way. Actually, when read, it somehow does not make us feel that it is incomplete or inadequate. It creates a vivid and full impression of a mood or an atmosphere. It seems to bring before us the very essence of romance.

Coleridge steeped his poem in romance of distant in space or time. Coleridge says that the poem was composed in a dream after he fell asleep, reading a volume of travels edited by the Elizabethan writer, Purchas.

Professor J.L. Lowes had traced most of the features of the landscape and the persons mentioned or described in the poem to the accounts of travels in Africa and Asia. It is a piece of remarkable detective work in the field of literary origins. The identification of the sources of Coleridge's words and images does not in any way make the poem less original or exciting. For even his opium induced dream, the imagination of the poet was selecting combining and transforming the materials from travellers descriptions. So well has this been done that George Sampson has declared: So far from being the opium dream, Kubla Khan is the product of one expected lucid interval before the fumes closed up once more the _expression of the spirit: moreover, it is complete".

The poem starts with a reference to a city called Xanadu. The name is exotic. To an English reader, it suggests the distant and mysterious East. One to Kubla Khan follows the reference to Xanadu. This is another exotic name. Anyone with some knowledge of world history can recognize in him a notable emperor of China, who was the patron of Marco Polo. Kubla Khan and Xanadu determine the setting of the poem. It is laid in the Far East in the Middle Ages. The impression is strengthened by the mention of a sacred river called Alph.

Africa too is brought into the poem. To do this, the poet has to describe something seen in a vision by him. It WAS AN Abyssinian maid playing on a dulcimer. Her song was about Mount Abora. The poet connects her song with the pleasure-dome of Kubla Khan in a curious way. The song at the time of the vision filled him with joy. If that joy could be revived in him, he could build from mere music the wonderful dome of Kubla Khan.

The pleasure-dome is in the midst of a fertile valley. It is girdled round with walls and towers. Near it are gardens with winding streams. Incense-bearing trees grow there. There are also forests and sunny glades. The most remarkable thing there is a deep romantic chasm. From it a mighty fountain flings up the sacred river, which after meandering for five miles, reaches underground caverns and meets the sea somewhere under the earth.

These features of the landscape suggest some kind of paradise. Prof. Lowes has pointed out that we have here a mixture of Milton's Garden of Eden and Mohammed's paradise as described in an account of one Aladdin in Purchase's *Pilgrims*. The fragrant trees and sacred river may owe their origin to Eden. But the Abyssinian is partly suggested by one of the inferior paradises described by Milton as a foil to Eden and partly from the story of Aladdin.

Prof. Lane Cooper suggested that Coleridge's Mount Abora was really Milton's Mount Amara. The latter is described as the place where Abyssinian kings kept their sons under guard. The poet adds that it is near the origin of the Nile. Now Coleridge is known to have read Bruce's popular book, dealing with travels to discover the source of the Nile. There we find the concept of a sacred river to which the pagan prays everyday as if it were God. We have also the description of two fountains forcing themselves out with great violence at the foot of the mountain. Then the stream meanders five miles through green meadows. All this seems to have got into *Kubla Khan*. Lowes goes further to suggest that Coleridge must have read in Bruce about Abola, a tributary of the Nile. Moreover, Bruce also mentions another river called 'Astaboras'. So it is possible that between Abola and Astaboras, Agora may have been coined in the dream.

Coleridge probably takes the sunny dome with caves of ice from an account of the Cave of Amarnath in Kashmir. The image formed there of ice which attracts pilgrims was known to the poet through the accounts of travellers. The incense-bearing trees may be a reminiscence of the groves in Eden "whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm".

In this way, we find the poem full of fascinating images, suggesting the scene of strange adventures in Africa, India and China. It is pervaded by the magic of travel and exploration. In his imagination, Coleridge traveled with the explorers and is thrilled with their discoveries. His poem allows us to capture the spirit of romance. In this sense, the poem, even though a fragment is complete. The poet presents a mood in all its fullness.

M.A.ENGLISH

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH FROM: 1772-1834

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE`S: THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER AND KUBLA KHAN.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE POET

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born at Ottery, St. Mary in Devon- shire, England in the year 1772. He was a great poet, a critic, a philosopher and dramatist. He was the youngest of the nine brothers and one sister. His father was the Vicar of the village; he was visionary and unworldly. As a boy Coleridge himself was very imaginative, and a solitary loving person.

Coleridge was educated at Christ's Hospital, London (1781). Matriculated at Jesus College, Cambridge (1791). Coleridge's marvelous gift of eloquence was already evident and his schoolfellows would listen to him with great interest, as the young poet poured out poetry with all his melody.

Coleridge took little interest in games as a boy. He spent most of his time reading books. Once he ran away from home, fearing a whipping of his father and spent the night by the banks of the village stream. He caught cold and suffered from rheumatism, which embittered his future life, and so we lost a great poet at a young age.

At the age of sixteen he fell in love with Mary Evans, the sister of a school friend, but was married to Sarah Flicker, the sister of Southey's fiancée. Sarah was neither emotionally nor intellectually a suitable partner for Coleridge. His marriage was a failure because of temperamental and practical difficulties from both sides.

Coleridge was idealistic, sensitive, generous and openhearted. Southey was conservative and highly materialistic in his attitude. In 1795, the two spent enough time to realize their mutual incompatibility and bitterly quarreled with each other.

MEETING WITH WORDSWORTH

Coleridge met Wordsworth in 1795 and the two had felt attracted to each other by a common interest in political idealism and poetry. In 1797, Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy moved to Alfoxdon to be near the Coleridges. The two poets were temperamentally different but they had great regards for each other's talent and each stimulated the other. Coleridge was brilliant and commanded a vast range of ideas while

Wordsworth possessed great emotional stability. Coleridge said that when compared to Wordsworth, he felt himself "a little man". Wordsworth felt that he was no match for Coleridge's profundity. Dorothy has given a very vivid impression of the personality of Coleridge during these days.

"He is a wonderful man. His conversation themes with soul mind and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and like William, interests himself so much about every trifle. At first I thought him thin, has a wide mouth thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half curling rough black hair. But, if you hear him speak for 5 minutes, you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but grey- such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest _expression; but it speaks every motion of his animated mind;

In the short time from June 1797 to September 1798 Coleridge wrote almost all of his best poetry- "*The Ancient Mariner*", "*The Nightingale*", "*The first part of Christabel*", "*Love*", "*Fears in Solitude*", "*Frost at Midnight*", "*Kubla Khan*" etc

Some change in Coleridge's writing is noticed due to Wordsworth's influence upon him. Coleridge was by nature unsteady, and also rambling in his speculation; it was Wordsworth who checked his rambling tendency and helped and encouraged him to concentrate his poetic energy along a definite channel. And again Wordsworth's philosophy of nature influenced him and coloured to some extent his nature poetry. The later groups of nature poems show a deeper sense. But Coleridge did not fully and unreservedly accept Wordsworth's philosophy of nature. According to Wordsworth, nature lives her own life and heals and soothes man in his sorrows and suffering. But Coleridge opposes this view where he says in "*Ode to DEJECTION*":

O Lady we receive but what we give

And in our life alone does nature live.

Nature to him is cold and inanimate, and if any glory or joy is to be found in her, it is due to the reflective mind of man and not any quality present in her:

Ah, from the soul itself must issue forth

A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud

Enveloping the Earth...

Both Coleridge and Wordsworth revolted against the artificial poetic diction of the eighteenth century. But Coleridge did not wholly subscribe to Wordsworth theory. He would not give any importance to rustic speech, nor would he accept the dictum that "there is no essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition".

In September 1798, a few months after the birth of his second son Berkely, Coleridge accompanied Wordsworths to Germany. In their absence Cottle published the first edition of the "Lyrical Ballads", a joint venture of Wordsworth and Coleridge, at Bristol. The book sold very bad and earned a lot of criticism.

Coleridge returned to London to engage himself in political journalism for the "*Morning Post*" but gave it up in 1800. Since Wordsworth and Coleridge were now not living together, this adversely affected the quality of their poetry. Coleridge resumed "*Christabel*" and wrote its second part, but it is very much inferior to the first part.

COLERIDGE'S HEALTH

Coleridge was persistently scourged with rheumatism and spasms in the stomach. He started taking opium as a relief giver and soon got addicted to it. To distract himself from his health and domestic problems he took recourse to metaphysics and abstract philosophy. He soon became a nationalist, and in philosophy he began to believe in the supreme importance of mind and spirit. His sorrow and frustration is bewailed in his last green poem "Dejection: An Ode" this was actually written as a verse letter to Sara Hutchinson. The Ode was written in April 1802.

Coleridge spent the next three years of his life in Italy and Malta; His health was becoming very poor day by day. In 1819, he received a severe blow of his life when he got news of his son, Hartley's expulsion from an Oxford fellowship. His health became worse, and he took more of opium. From this day to 25th July 1834 {till his death} he never regained his health.

Coleridge's life was full of vicissitudes and from many points of view, he was a singularly an unfortunate man. He left many of his works incomplete; but whatever he wrote is just brilliant. His talk was always fascinating and persuasive." He was the most wonderful man ever known to me" -said Wordsworth about S.T. Coleridge. Charles Lamb has rightly described him as "*an Archangel-slightly damaged*". His likeness, nor probably the world can see again" A very recent critic, Allan Grant praises him for his modernity as a poet and thinker.

Coleridge's life may be viewed as a composite of several careers (poet, preacher, lecturer, playwright, journalist, reviewer and a writer). He has been given more numerous and various reputations than perhaps any other English poet. Hazlitt called him an "*Eagle dallying with the wind*", Shelley referred him as a "*Hooded eagle among blinking owls*".

Coleridge's works may be categorized under three heads:

1. His poetry
 2. His dramas
 3. His literary criticism.
1. His Poetical Works: The early poems of Coleridge were published in the spring of 1796 in the volume entitled *Poems on various subjects*. The manner is artificial and stiff, under the strong influence of 18th century poetic diction, modified by sentimentalism and melancholy. His political sonnets betray the influence of Godwin but are pompous in style. More promising, however, are the poems dominated by the young poet's love and minute observation of natural scenery-*The Song of the Pixies* (1793); *The Lines on Autumnal Evening*; *Lewti* (1794) and *Religious Musings* (1794-96).

Then came his golden period of intimacy with Wordsworth and Dorothy, which led to the planning of *The Lyrical Ballads* and the flowering of Coleridge's best poetry- the true Wordsworthian pieces like *The Lime Tree Bower*, *Frost at Midnight*, *Fears in Solitude* (1797-98), followed by the master pieces stamped with his own original sensibility- *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*. Then the poetic fount began to dwindle in energy and after a few spurts in *Dejection: An Ode and Love and Hope* it became exhausted and the vacuum thus created had to be filled by critical and philosophical activities which yielded richer and more voluminous works, though quite fragmentary and discursive. The creative life of Coleridge is at once a miracle and a melancholy spectacle of waste and sudden collapse of divine imagination.

2) His Dramas: His first drama, written in collaboration with Southey was *The Fall of Robes Pierre* (1794). It shows influence of Shakespeare but is marred by rhetorical declamation and poor characterization. His other dramas were *Remorse* (1798), which is a tragedy in blank verse and *Zapolya* (1817) a romantic tragedy.

3) His Literary Criticism: Coleridge's chief critical work was **Biographia Literaria** (1817). It is a sort of loose autobiography embracing a variety of subjects like religion, politics, literature and criticism. It contains a valuable criticism of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction.

Coleridge as a Critic

There are many for whom he is the most important critic, chiefly because he raised central questions about criticism itself, its methods and philosophical basis incorporating rites and materials pertaining to any area of life. The function of criticism itself he conceived to be the lifting of all these elements into awareness, not the prescribing or even describing of rule that can neither be adequately formulated by the critic, nor adhered by the writer, but rather the elucidation of what he called "the principles of grammar, logic and psychology. It is, however, in literary criticism that Coleridge's achievement is the most lasting. No one before him in England had brought such mental breadth to the discussion of aesthetic values. His judgments are all great doctrinal preconceptions. The well-known differentiation between imagination and fancy is a way of laying stress upon the creative activity of the mind, as opposed to the passive association of mental pictures, but for Coleridge, it has a mystical significance.

COLERIDGE AS A ROMANTIC POET

The movement of romantic revival had started much before Coleridge, in the age of Johnson. Poets like Gray, Goldsmith and Blake initiated it. But the official date for the beginning of the romantic age is 1798, the year in which Wordsworth and Coleridge together brought out *The Lyrical Ballads*. Thus in the first generation of romantic poets, Coleridge is as important as Wordsworth himself. In certain respects, his poetry illustrates the romantic temper even better than that of Wordsworth. According to an eminent critic, his poetry is 'the most finished, supreme embodiment of all that is purest and most ethereal in the romantic spirit'.

Coleridge may be called the most romantic of the poets of the Romantic Revival. His early poems are more or less experimental, but they show his ardent delight in natural beauty and his self-consciousness as an artist. His emotional response to the beauties and glories of nature is poetically expressed in all his poems. Coleridge possessed the most vigorous mind among the English Romantic Poets. Whereas in the other poets of this period, romanticism tends to take a single dominant hue which colors the objects of experience; in Coleridge it attains a fullness of complexity. In his poetry, there is room for the spirit of bold adventure, the joy of discovery and the romance of action. There is nature in a variety of moods, familiar and comforting, weird and horrifying, tender and soothing, tumultuous and perturbing, gay and jubant, desolate and mournful. There are intensely human emotions, which flow out of supernatural incidents and are lifted into the upper heights of romance. All these elements are linked into a vital unity with a psychological bond that gives them the harmony of a perfect moral impression. Many of his poems

may be fragments, but reading them is a wholesome experience. And while the other romantic poets weave the web of wonders of the external world and links them to the subtleties of human psychology. And unlike most of the others writers, he possesses the gift of telling a story rich in dramatic situations with a close grip over psychological truths and a delicate sense of moral fitness.

Coleridge has been called the "high priest of romanticism", and as C.M. Bowra remarks, his three great poems, " *The Ancient Mariner*", " *Kubla Khan*" and " *Christabel*", are his supreme contribution to poetry and "of all English romantic masterpieces, they are the most unusual and the most romantic". This is so because in his poetry all the chief characteristics of romanticism find a rich _expression.

To sum up, Coleridge's whole career was romantic in the sense that his life was full of brilliant promises and broken aims. He found _expression for many an unheard-of mood of his mind in poems like *Dejection: An Ode*. He was a melancholy man given to brooding over the failure of his life- in fact he had the "romantic melancholy" to the full.

Coleridge's poetry represents the culmination of romanticism in its purest form. *The Ancient Mariner* and the *Christabel* mark the triumph of romanticism as fully as Wordsworth's narrative poems mark the triumph of naturalism. It is by virtue of these poems that Saintsbury has called him " the high-priest of romanticism".

There is a certain romantic note present in the best works of Coleridge. "In pictorial power" writes Buchan, "felicity of phrase and word music he is one of the greatest masters. In his subtly suggestive treatment of the supernatural he stands almost alone." It is not only that he eliminates from his supernaturalism the crude material horror, then popular with the writers of the romantic school; he also gives it a psychological foundation. This is particularly apparent in *The Ancient Mariner*, the backbone of which is provided, not only by the marvels of the narrative, but also by the spiritual history of the hero. By the power of his imagination Coleridge perceived the unseen forces at work behind the visible world, and through his poetry he tried to convey his perception of the mystery of things to others. He felt that there are more things under heaven and earth than the world of dreams, and it is this feeling, which Coleridge expresses in his poetry. This is the reason why Coleridge's poems are more mysterious and strange than that of any other romantic poet. He creates a sense of strangeness and wonder, and thus makes the words of Pater more truthful about the definition of romanticism as "the addition of strangeness to beauty," or that of Watts Dutton as " the renaissance of wonder".

Coleridge said that while writing about supernatural characters and events, his main problem was 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'. How he succeeds in his purpose is indeed admirable. He gives his supernatural the solid base of the dramatic truth of human emotions so that howsoever improbable the events might appear, the authenticity of human experience is never violated. Besides, his treatment is very subtle. He does not cumulate horrors; he does not give gruesome details, any blood curdling and spine chilling incidents for him. He just suggests giving his readers a free hand to use their imagination and fill in the necessary details. His descriptions are never a strain on our credulity. Instead of abruptly stepping into the realm of the supernatural, he first wins the faith of his readers with an accurate rendering of the familiar landscape and then slowly proceeds to exploit this faith and introduce the supernatural elements. The presence of the moral principle as a unifying link saves his poems from being a "Phantasmagoria of unconnected events".

The essence of Coleridge's romanticism lies in his artistic treatment of the supernatural. All of his three important poems *Kubla Khan*, *Christabel* and *The Ancient Mariner* are poems of pure supernaturalism. *Kubla Khan* is less directly concerned with the Supernatural, still the supernatural touch in the "Woman wailing for her demon-lover", in the ancestral voices prophesying war and in the demoniac energy with which the mighty fountain is momentarily forced from the deep romantic chasm is quite unmistakable. Towards the end of the poem, the poet caught in a spell of creative inspiration, transcends his mundane existence and is transformed into a purely supernatural being. In *Christabel*, the evil spirit that haunts the body of Geraldine and blasts the innocent happiness of the lovely *Christabel* is in the true tradition of vampires, the Coleridge infuses a mysterious dread into her. But it is "*The Ancient Mariner*" that deals with the supernatural machinery on a large and in a generous sense. There is a phantom ship with its ghastly crew "Death and Life-in-Death", the polar spirit seeking vengeance for the murder of the Albatross, two supernatural voices representing justice and mercy, and a troop of celestial spirits animating the dead crew. The eve of "*Kubla Khan*" is haunting and weird.

CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF COLERIDGE'S POETRY

There are certain limitations of Coleridge's poetry. First, his poetic output is extremely limited. Secondly, the period during which his creative genius was at his best was brief, and, therefore, much that he has written is flat, gross and dull. Thirdly, his poetry is dream-poetry and as such it does not deal with the realities of life. Human passions do not find an adequate

_expression in it. Fourthly, even the little that he could compose is fragmentary. His *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel* are mere fragments.

In spite of all its limitations, Coleridge's poetry ranks among the rarest treasures of English literature. Romanticism reaches its acme in his poetry.

All the characteristics, for which romanticism stands, are found in Coleridge's poetry. Love of liberty, interest in the supernatural and the mysterious world, the revolutionary zeal, the medieval imaginative faculty, new experiments in verse, simplicity of diction, humanism, love for Nature, and _expression of melancholy and similar other traits of romantic poetry are found in Coleridge's poems. Coleridge belonged to the Romantic School. He held a higher deal of poetry and fought bravely against the artificial style of the previous age. Thus, the variety of meter, simplicity of language, originality of thought, flight of imagination, love of nature, sympathy with all human beings, and democratic and humanitarian outlook are the characteristics possessed by Coleridge

Coleridge's status as a romantic poet is supreme. His poetry in certain respects illustrates the romantic temper even better than that of Wordsworth. According to a critic, Coleridge's poetry is "The most finished, supreme embodiment of all that is purest and most ethereal in the romantic spirit".

Most of his work in poetry again was of a fragmentary nature. His last pieces *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*, are brilliant fragments. This small and fragmentary amount of Coleridge's poetry is however, of exquisite quality. Stopford Brooke says: "All that he did excellently might be bound in twenty pages but it should be bound in pure gold".

His earlier poetry was like the poet himself, very turgid, rhetorical, diffused and harsh in diction and rhythm. Later, however, he outgrew all his deficiencies. Coleridge shares with other romantic poets a deep love for music; he is one of the most melodious poets in English poetry. The second part of *Kubla Khan* describing a damsel playing on a dulcimer is itself a piece of exquisite music. It supports Coleridge's claim that "with music loud and long' he could build Kubla Khan's pleasure dome in the air, for the fact is that the kind of skill claimed by the poet is actually displayed in it. A number of lines in "*The Ancient Mariner*" have a haunting and lilting melody about them. The alliteration and the simplicity of the words employed add to the melodious effect of the poem. The following four lines, almost picked at random from "The Ancient Mariner" aptly illustrate the witchery of Coleridge's music:

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,

The furrow followed free;

We were the first that ever burst

Into that silent sea.

And Christabel is even more musical than these two. The movement of verse in this poem is so free that, bewitched by its fluency, one just reads it on and on. Its musical quality just defies analysis.

Thus, all the features of the Romantic Revival are fully manifested in the poetry of Coleridge. In his poetry, there is bold adventure, joy of discovery, and romance of action. There is the glamour of unraveled regions, elements of mystery and marvel. There is Nature in a variety of moods: familiar, weird, tender, tumultuous, gay, desolate, soothing or horrifying. All these features are linked into a vital unity with a psychological insight. Truly, in Coleridge's poetry, romanticism attained a fullness of complexity.

POET OF THE UNIQUE SUPERNATURAL

As a poet of the supernatural, Coleridge's place is supreme and unique "Coleridge made an epoch in the poetry of the supernatural", remarks a critic. In the words of H.D. Trail, "Coleridge's imagination seems to acquire poetic distinction in the region of the fantastic and the supernatural", Coleridge made his poetry not only convincing and exciting but also a positive criticism of life. Coleridge succeeded where the others had failed because he treated the supernatural as subordinate element in the wider scheme of human experience and secondly, unlike the other writers who had cultivated this creed as a fashion but had no belief in it, Coleridge wrote in full conviction. It can be said without any hesitation that he eminently succeeded in his field. In fact, he is known to be the greatest poet of the supernatural in the entire range of English poetry.

The three important poems in which Coleridge has made use of the supernatural are "The Ancient Mariner", "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan". It is significant that in all the three poems, Coleridge takes us to distant times and remote places. "The Ancient Mariner" narrates the experience of an ancient mariner voyaging around polar regions in unknown seas. "Christabel" takes us back to the Middle Ages, to the old moated castles with barons and bards. In "Kubla Khan", the scene is laid in the oriental city of Xanadu, in forests as "Ancient as the Hills", where Alph, the sacred river, ran through "caverns measureless to man down to a sunless sea."

for a willing suspension of disbelief, Coleridge makes the supernatural look natural and convincing. The dream like nature of the supernatural in Coleridge makes the suspension of disbelief easily possible. Besides these devices, he also uses occult forces.

In order to make his supernaturalism realistic and convincing, Coleridge humanizes it. It appears in his work, not in a traditional blood-curdling and hair raising form, but assumes the ordinary human personality. The supernatural incidents convey a moral useful for normal everyday life of humans. The air of reality is also imparted to the supernatural by carefully blending it with the natural. Coleridge's settings are perfectly natural

The main characteristics of Coleridge's supernaturalism are summarised as follows:

a) **Refined and Subjective:** The supernaturalism in Coleridge is refined and subjective. It does not have the objective palpability and crudeness of the marvelous, which is found in almost all pre-Coleridgean ghost literature.

b) **Its Suggestiveness:** Coleridge's supernaturalism is highly suggestive, subtle, intuitive and subjective. It is the reader who has to infer himself what he understands by a supernatural agency or element. It is not sudden but slowly distilled into the air.

c) **Its Vagueness:** Mystery shrouds and surrounds the supernatural of Coleridge. Everything is dim and vague; nothing is made very apparent and clear. The poet excites curiosity, but does not gratify it. Mystery surrounds everything; the readers are left guessing.

d) **Its Indefiniteness:** The supernatural in Coleridge does not have any definite or fixed character. It is difficult to say how much of it is real and how much of it is merely a subjective illusion

Coleridge is careful not to show any abruptness in introducing supernatural elements. He first takes his reader around familiar places and wins his faith in the narrative through vividly portrayed minute details. Then minor hints of the supernatural are gradually dropped. Finally, the entire scene puts on a supernatural look

Another very important feature of Coleridge's treatment of the supernatural is a very clever and subtle blending of the natural and supernatural. Indeed the two are so indistinguishably fused with each other that it becomes difficult to locate where the one ends and the other begins.

THE ANCIENT MARINER

A brief Introduction: -

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' was actually planned by Wordsworth and Coleridge together. It was planned on the afternoon of the 20th of November 1797, while having a walk in the Quantocks. Among all the great works of Coleridge it is the only complete one. It is based on a dream of a friend of Coleridge, Cruikshank, who fancied he saw a skeleton ship, with figures on it Wordworth kill one albatross while entering the South sea and that the tutelary spirit of those regions might take upon them to avenge the crime. He also suggested the idea of navigation of the ship by the dead men. As the poem grew, both Coleridge and Wordsworth thought of creating a volume which would consist of all poems dealing with supernatural elements, and also on subjects taken from common life but which were looked at through an imaginative medium from its composition. Colridge continued his work on it alone and finally finished it on 23rd March, 1798.

The Origin of the poem: -

Quite a deal is known about the literary sources of 'The Ancient Mariner'. A detailed study has revealed that Coleridge was a voracious reader and the books he read and the men he met left a profound influence on him. He was like a honeybee, roaming from garden to garden to collect the best nectar. He gathered the materials for his great works from strange and little known places. It is enough for the reader to know that an exquisite work of art is presented to him. He need not be bothered about the sources from where the poet has brought the material. It is undesirable that Coleridge draws upon a variety of sources, but it has also to be admitted that he fuses and reshapes them in a unique unity. Colridge himself claims that 'The Ancient Mariner' is a poem of 'Pure imagination', and says keeping in view the way he 'dissolved, diffused and dissipated' his objects of contemplation.

The purpose of writing 'The Ancient Mariner' was to be fulfilling his plan of writing a series of supernatural poems, in which the incidents and characters are to be at least in part supernatural and yet to present them as would impress the readers with a sense of their reality.

In 'The Ancient Masiver', Coleridge with consummate skill he welded the story into an artistic skill. For vividness of imagery and descriptive power the poem is unsurpassed. We move in a world of unearthly weirdness whose mystery and charm is unbroken by an inconsistency. Coleridge sees the invisible and almost touches the intangible in this realm, where the things that are too seldom dreamt of in our philosophy loom within our

ken. The poem is absolutely simple, both in, metre and language. Coleridge himself stated it as “inimitable”.

In chapter XIV of his *‘Biographia Literaria’*, Coleridge tells us that in order to emancipate English poetry from the eighteenth-century artificiality and drabness, he and Wordsworth had agreed to write two different kinds poems. He was to write about ‘persons and characters supernatural, or least romantic’, but he was to give them “a semblance of truth sufficient to procure that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.” Wordsworth was “to give the charm of novelty to things of everyday, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awaking the mind’s attention to the lethargies of custom, and correcting it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us.” It was according to this mutual decision that Coleridge wrote ‘The Ancient Mariner’.

Wordsworth Account: -

Wordsworth says that ‘The Gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time, at least not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous afterthought. We began the composition together on that to me, memorable evening: I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular-

“And listened like a three years’ child:

The Mariner had his will”.

These small contributions, may have slipped out of Wordsworth’s mind but are scrupulously recorded by Coleridge .As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly on that evening, our respective manners proved so widely different that anything but separate from an undertaking upon by Dulverton to Alfoxender. ‘The Ancient Mariner’ grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation, which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects, taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium.” With a lot of skill Coleridge has welded the story into an artistic whole. Coleridge has tried to touch the intangible in writing this piece of art. The poem may be simple in metre and language, but still it is “inimitable,”as said by Coleridge himself.

The book ‘Voyages’ written by shelvocke has a reference of a black Albatross, which was taken to be some ill omen. Coleridge has perhaps taken the idea of the Albatross from it. The bird was hovering around the

mariners and was ultimately shot dead by the Mariner,. It seems obvious that Coleridge has taken the killing of the Albatross incident from the 'voyages'. But Wordsworth reports that Coleridge had never read the book, so most probably it was merely on Wordsworth's suggestion that Coleridge incorporated the incident in 'The Ancient Mariner'.

CRITICAL SUMMARY OF THE POEM

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is perhaps the most read poem of Coleridge. The poem Kubla Khan is read merely for pleasure but the poem The Ancient Mariner is read with an eye on criticism. The poem is divided into seven parts. It is the story of crime and punishment.

In the first part the old Mariner stops the wedding guest to listen to his tale. He tells the guest how his ship leaves the harbour and, sails towards the southern horizon. The guest is impatient in the beginning but latter on is hypnotized and

“Listens merely like a three years ' child:”

The sun was shinning bright at the beginning of the voyage. As the ship sailed the people on the shore gave them a hearty send –off.

“The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,

Merrily did we drop

Below the Kirk, below the hill,

Below the lighthouse top.”

It is like the ending of *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, as daybreaks and the lovers wonder whether the adventures of the night were a dream. Dreaming without awaking is not dreaming. In the figurative sense of the word 'perspective', to be sure, the Wedding-Guest, in his momentary, palpitating interruptions of the narrative—'Why look'st thou so, '--' 'I fear the Ancient Mariner'—represents the middle distance, and the marginal comment is the nearer distance, though still from us remote.

They sailed leaving the church, the hill and the lighthouse behind. Everyday the sun went higher and higher till at noon it stood right over the mast. Then came the furious storm. The Mariners can see no life on the sea when suddenly they come across an Albatross flying to the ship and it followed the ship. Thus it also brought good weather along with it. The first section tells of the actual crime. To us the shooting of the bird may seem a matter of little moment, but Coleridge makes it significant in two

ways: Firstly, he does not say why the Mariner kills the albatross. We may infer that it is in a mood of annoyance or anger or mere frivolity; but these are mere guesses. What matters is precisely the uncertainty of the Mariner's motives, for this illustrates the essential irrationality of the Mariner's crime, due to a simple perversity of the will. Secondly, the crime is against nature, against the sanctified relations of guest and host. The bird, which has been hailed in God's name 'as if it had been a Christian soul, and is entirely friendly and helpful is wantonly and recklessly killed. What matters is that the Mariner breaks a sacred law of life. In this action we see the essential frivolity of many crimes against humanity and the ordered system of the world, and we must accept the killing of the albatross symbolical of them.

"God save thee, ancient mariner!

From the fiends, that plague thee thus!-

Why look'st thou so?"-"With my cross-bow

I shot the Albatross.

The mariner is horror-stricken. The wedding guest also pities him and prays for mercy for the mariner. It is uncertain why the mariner kills the bird. The bird had always been friendly to the sailors, the mariner felt that because of the bird the ice had started to spilt and so he killed the bird. The superstitious belief is perfectly keeping the balance of the supernatural atmosphere of the poem.

The second part of the poem supports the superstitious belief for a little while. The sailors also believed that the mariner had not done a rightful thing to kill the bird, which had brought them problems.

And I 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!

The sailors condemned him for his act. Suddenly the wind stops and the ship cannot move anymore.

“All in a hot 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.

The sun burned fiercely. The silent sea looked like it had rotted; the slimy creatures crawled all around: the sailors did not get water also. It was like;

“Water, water, every where,

And all the boards did shrink;

Water, water, every where

Nor any drop to drink.

Death – fires shone all about them at night. The sea-waters burnt like the oils burnt by a witch emitting multi-colored lights. Some of the sailors also dreamt that a spirit that had been following them from the land of mist and snow was avenging them. The thirst of the sailors was so much that their tongues were dried to their very roots

We could not speak, no more than if

We had been choked with soot.

The sailors looked at the mariner reproachfully. They could not speak but their looks revealed the contempt they felt for him. They removed the cross from his neck and hung the dead Albatross round the mariner’s neck.

This was sign to show the sailors hatred for the mariner and also it served as a punishment for him.

The third part shows the sailors plight. The sailors have a very awful time, and are almost dead with thirst. Their eyes were had a glossy appearance. Just then the mariner saw a small speck on the water, and thought it to be a ship. The mariner bit his own arm and moistened his lips with the blood so that he could tell the sailors about it. When the ship neared it was a surprise to see that it was a skeleton ship. The next moment he also sees Death and Life-in-Death playing at dice.

Are those her ribs through which the Sun

Did peer, as through a grate?

And is that Woman all her crew?

Is that Death? And are there two?

Is death that woman's mate?

The woman has been described with great accuracy. She was like a nightmare personified and was capable of curdling any man's blood.

Her lips were red, her looks were free,

Her skin was as white as leprosy,

The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,

Who thicks 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 sank down below the horizon. The stars appeared, immediately it became very dark. The spectre ship also disappeared. The mariner felt very afraid. He felt like a man without life. The moon came out and under its light the Mariner saw his fellow sailors drop one by one dead. They died so quickly that they did not get time to even utter a groan. However,

just as they fell dead they cast a painful glance at the mariner and cursed him with their eyes.

The souls did from their bodies fly, -

They fled to bliss or woe!

And every soul, it passed me by,

Like the whiz of my cross-bow!

The mariner saw their souls passing by him, but he was very helpless. The mariner is left alone on the ship to expiate by life –long suffering and penance.

The fourth part of the poem shows the pity of the wedding guest for the mariner. He felt that he was not speaking to the mariner but to his ghost. He was afraid of the mariner's skinny hand and his tall and thin figure. The mariner goes on to say that how he was all-alone on the ship with all his crew dead and a thousand of slimy creatures crawling all around him. He says that:

I looked upon the rotting sea,

And drew my eyes away;

I looked upon the rotting deck,

And there the dead men lay.

He was unable to say his prayers also because even before he could pray, some wicked whisper influenced his heart and made it as dry as dust. The dead crew lay with their eyes open and full of curse. But they did not rot or smell foul. He faced them and lived with their curse for seven days and seven nights, yet he could not die.

The mariner saw some water snakes in the water, they were of many bright colours and unknowingly the mariner blessed those living creatures.

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 self- same moment I could pray;

And from my neck so free

The Albatross fell off, and sank

Like lead into the sea.

He had been able to pray because he blessed the water creatures.

The fifth part continues the process of the 'soul's revival'. The mariner is blessed with sleep for it soothes and refreshes man. The mariner praises Virgin Mary for having sent sleep for him. When he wakes that rain has moistened his parched lips. He felt very light and felt;

I thought that I had died in sleep,

And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:

It did not come anear;

But with its sound it shock the sails,

That were so thin and sere.

Soon after that he, heard the wind roaring at a distance. The air in the upper regions showed sudden signs of life. Hundreds of fire-flags, shining and moving to and fro could also be seen. In-between them the pale stars seemed to be dancing. All of a sudden the rain came and made the dead men to groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose.

Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;

It had been strange, even in a dream,

To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsmen 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 the Mariner's nephew stood by his side, knee to knee. They were working at the same rope. Yet he did not speak even a single word to the mariner. The wedding guest shows signs of fear. But the mariner consoles him by saying that they were not the souls of the dead men, but they were a group of blessed souls, which had entered the dead bodies. The mariner falls down into a swoon and hears two voices maybe of the spirits talking to themselves. One of the voice says about the crime done by the mariner in killing the Albatross that had loved the mariner. The second voice, which was softer says:

“The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.”

The first voice was that of the spirit, which lived on the land of mist and snow, it loved the bird and also the man, but he had very cruelly killed the bird and so was suffering so hard.

In the sixth section, the process of healing seems to be impeded. The Mariner is haunted by the presence of his dead comrades and feels that it has been planned by some fearful power of vengeance. In this figure of the Mariner, haunted by memories and fears, Coleridge gives his special symbol of remorse. But because remorse brings repentance and humility, the section closes with the vision of angels standing by the dead sailors. The forgiveness of God awaits even the most hardhearted sinner, if he only wants to receive it. The mariner wakes to find the moon shining calmly and the dead bodies still gazing at him. The expression of agony had not left them and the curse with which they had died had not left them. The mariner felt helpless. He could neither take his eyes off them nor could he raise them to pray. And all of a sudden he feels that the spell has been broken.

I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw

Of what had else been seen-

It is like the ending of *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, as daybreaks and the lovers wonder whether the adventures of the night were a dream. Dreaming without awaking is not dreaming. In the figurative sense of the word 'perspective', to be sure, the Wedding-Guest, in his momentary, palpitating interruptions of the narrative—'Why look'st thou so, '--' 'I fear the Ancient Mariner'—

He was like a person who was walking all alone on the road but was afraid to turn, for he feared that some fiend was following him. Soon there is a sudden change in the scene, when the reader is lost into this frightful world the poet lessens the burden of fright. Soon there was a cold breeze blowing. It did not seem to be blowing on the sea, for it did not create any changes or ripples in the water. The ship moved on:

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship

Yet she sailed softly too;

Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze-

On me alone it blew.

The mariner is all of a sudden filled with joy when he sees the lighthouse, the hill and the church; it was all very familiar to him. He could not believe his eyes; he felt it all to be a dream. The current drew the ship to the harbour. The bay was bright and silent and he saw some crimson shapes at some distance. On turning on the deck he was surprised to see that the dead crew was no longer standing, but each body lay on its back with an Angel bathed with light standing beside each body. The Angels did not make any sound; the silence sank into the mariner's soul like music.

Humphrey House has interpreted the poem and while speaking about the poem up to this point that is Part I to IV and the opening stanzas of Part V, he says- taken together it is relatively easy to interpret it as a tale of crime, punishment and reconciliation, with the recovery of love in the blessing of the water snakes as its climax. But the remainder of Part V and the whole of Part VI do not seem at first sight to have quite the same coherence and point. It is here that readers may still find 'unmeaning marvels' and elaborated supernatural machinery, which dissipates concentration. There are wonderful details in the verse, some of the finest descriptions of all; but they still fall apart and have too little bearing on each other and on the whole. Many published accounts of the poem do not adequately face the implications of the detail in these parts. Then as the ghost says: "The

Angelic spirits leave the dead bodies. And appear in their own forms of light.” This acts as the signal, which brings out the boat from land.

Soon he hears the strokes of oars and he sees the Pilot and the Pilot’s boy coming towards him. He was so happy that he even for a while forgot the dead crew. The mariner also saw the Hermit and the mariner wished that the Hermit would listen to his confession. He feels that now he could wash the sin on his soul.

In part VII a dreadful rumbling sound comes under the water and the ship sinks.

A quite normally accepted and simple interpretation of Parts V and VI treats them as a further necessary extension of the expiation theme. In the blessing of the water-snakes the Mariner has reconciled himself to the creatures, but it remains for him to reconcile himself also with the Creator: therefore, he has to suffer once more (this time from the curse of the dead men’s eyes) and to win the power of recognizing the beauty of the angelic music.

But as the boat approaches, there is heard a loud thundering noise below it and the ship goes down like lead into the ship

Under the water it rumbled on,

Still louder and more dread:

It reached the ship, it spilt the bay;

The ship went down like lead.

The mariner was stupefied by this loud sound and when he recovered he found himself on the Pilot’s boat. The mariner requested the Hermit to remove the guilt from him. The Hermit made a cross on his forehead, immediately the mariner’s body was filled with a painful agony and it subsided after he had told the story of his crime. According to the mariner he always felt this way and so he always was in search of a patient listener.

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.

The mariner told the wedding guest that he had been all-alone on the vast sea. He said that he liked to pray in the church more than anything else. The mariner, while bidding the wedding guest farewell said that the best way to pray to God was to love all God's creation. He walked away like one dazed and deprived of his senses.

He went like one that hath been stunned,

And is of sense forlorn:

A sadder and a wiser man,

He rose the morrow morn.

These lines mark the powerful impact produced by the Mariner's tale on the wedding guest.

'THE WEDDING GUEST' IN THE ANCIENT MARINER

The wedding-guest has a very important character to play in the dramatic framework of 'The Ancient Mariner'. Structurally, he reinforces interpenetration of two different kinds of realities, that of the everyday common existence with the world of uncanny and preternatural experience. The introduction of the wedding-Guest promotes our understanding of the significance of the Mariner's experience.

'*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*' begins abruptly when the Ancient Mariner stops one of the three Wedding guests and begins to tell his story:

"It is an ancient Mariner,

And he stoppeth one of three."

The Wedding-guest at first is reluctant to hear the story, as he is in a hurry to go and attend the wedding. He even recoils in horror from the ghastly Mariner. But the Ancient Mariner holds him by his arresting glittering eye.

He holds him with his skinny hand,

The helpless Wedding Guest collapses on a stone nearby and listens to the story like a three-year child.

"The Wedding-Guest stood still,

And listens like a three years' child:"

On occasions he protests but cannot move away. In the end, he becomes so dazed with what he has heard that he does not have the heart or the mind to attend the wedding. He is a 'sadder and a wiser man'. He is sadder for the realization of the human predicament which the 'Ancient Mariner' has so vividly impressed upon him through his story. He is wiser for the profound moral truth that he has learnt, namely the love of all things, great or small.

"The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast'

Yet he cannot choose but hear;

And thus spake on that ancient man,

The bright-eyed Mariner."

The Mariner and the Wedding-Guest satisfy their mutual needs. Towards the end of the poem, the Mariner says:

"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 have me:

To him my tale I teach.

The Mariner thus, has an instinctive recognition of the person who 'must hear' him and to whom he may 'teach' his tale. Narrating the tale, it should be obvious, is a mutually beneficial deed. It relieves the mariner of his periodic spell of agony; at the same time, it teaches the wedding-Guest the much-needed lesson of consideration and compassion. If we recall for a moment how petulantly he reacts to the mariner's tale in the beginning, we would immediately feel that he is so pre-occupied with the ordinary convivial pleasures that he is not inclined to show commiseration to the old mariner, though the latter's mental agony must be writ large on his face. We may even venture to suggest that there is in the composition of the wedding-guest something of the mariner who so wantonly and thoughtlessly shot the Albatross. The mariner's experience has a salutary effect on the wedding-guest and teaches him the Christian concept of love and kindness. His sympathies are enlarged when he comes in contact with the mariner's profound experience.

When the Wedding-Guest is initially accosted by the Mariner, he reacts with sharp impatience:

Hold off! Unhand me, greybeard loon!

The Mariner drops his hand but holds him with his glittering eyes:

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:

He cannot choose but hear;

And thus spake on that ancient man,

The bright-eyed Mariner.

It is clear that if the Wedding-Guest meekly takes his seat on a stone and submits to the Mariner's tale, it is only under a hypnotic effect created on him by the abnormal gleam in the Mariner's eyes. His heart is in the bridal feast and he would fain escape and join; but he 'cannot choose but hear'. The opening of the narrative is rather ordinary and the Guest finds it difficult to conceal his annoyance. As soon as he hears the merry sounds issuing from the bride's place, he immediately gives vent to his fretfulness:

The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,

For he heard the loud bassoon.

There is a slight change in the attitude of the Wedding-Guest when at the end of Part I, the Mariner comes to the most crucial moment of his tale—the murder of the Albatross. Even the recollection of that heinous crime is so painful to the Mariner that he shudders to mention it and defers its announcement. The Wedding-Guest perceives the acute pain on his face, his initial indifference and hostility melt away in a moment and he exclaims:

God save thee, ancient Mariner!

From the fiends, that plague thee thus! —

Why look'st thou so?

At this moment, the Mariner no longer remains an insolent, eccentric old seafarer undesirably imposing himself on a stranger. He becomes one of the millions of unfortunate people suffering untold miseries and deserving everyone's unqualified sympathy. After this, the Wedding-Guest does not

interrupt the narrative because of impatience. He vicariously suffers what the Mariner has suffered and interrupts only when the pain generated by the Mariner's excruciating experience becomes a little too unbearable for him. He suffers with the Mariner and learns what the Mariner has learnt at such a terrible cost. The hypnotic spell initially cast on soon ceases to exert, but he is totally absorbed in the experience. The wedding-bells keep ringing in the background to remind him that he is the 'next of kin' and that 'the feast is set'. But he is utterly oblivious of what goes on around him. It is the Mariner who tries to awaken him from his spiritual reverie:

What loud uproar bursts from that door!

The wedding-guests are there:

But in the garden-bower the bride

And hark the little vesper bell,

Which biddeth me to prayer!

The Mariner's experience proves so overwhelming for the Wedding – Guest that he becomes just insensitive to such calls.

At this point, the Mariner and the Wedding-Guest exhibit a strange reversal of roles. Earlier, the Mariner has been undergoing an experience of alienation while the Wedding-Guest was going to attend a social gathering; but now the Mariner is able to enjoy company. He died with the death of the Albatross, but the gush of love he showed for the water-snakes led to his resurrection into a much larger brotherhood extending to the whole human race.

This brotherhood embraces all living creatures and admits of no distinctions whatsoever between the great and the small, the young and the old, the gay and the serious. The Mariner has attained a complete reconciliation with god and all his creation. He likes going to the church 'in goodly company' to pray to 'his great father'. On the other hand, the Wedding-Guest, who was earlier fond of gay company, now withdraws into the loneliness of his inner self to ponder over the mystery of human existence and its real significance. He responds neither to the wedding-bells nor to the 'little vesper bell'. The profundity of his experience just stuns him. For a while, he is 'forlorn' of his senses. But when he rises the morrow, morn, he is 'a sadder and a wiser man'.

THE STRUCTURAL IMPORTANCE OF THE WEDDING-GUEST

The structural importance of the Wedding-Guest is easier to comprehend than his thematic relevance. Structurally, he helps to bring out more clearly and emphatically the spiritual crises undergone by the Mariner after he kills the Albatross. His interruptions pointed by draw the reader's attention to the important stages of the Mariner's fateful voyage and the accompanying emotional states. When the Mariner comes to the first important point in his narrative- the point when he shoots the Albatross – the Wedding-Guest makes a loud exclamation, which helps to elicit from the Mariner the much-evaded reply:

With my cross-bow

I shot the Albatross.

Towards the end of Part III, the Mariner describes how his companions drop down dead one by one with their souls passing by his ear like the whiz of his cross-bow. It is such a ghastly episode that the Wedding-Guest is seized with terror. He suspects the Mariner himself to be a ghost:

And the Mariner reassures him:

Fear not, fear not, thou the Wedding-Guest!

This body dropt not down.

Another horrible situation occurs in the Part V when the dead bodies of the sailors are reanimated and they begin to work on the ropes:

The body of my brother's soon

Stood by me, knee to knee:

The body and I pulled at one rope,

But he said nought to me.

The Wedding-Guest again ejaculates: "I fear thee, Ancient Mariner." And the Mariner promptly replies:

Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!

' T was not those souls that fled in pain,

Which to their courses came again,

But a troop of spirits blest:

After this the Wedding-Guest is completely fascinated and he does not find any occasion to interrupt the narrative.

It has been pointed out that the Wedding-Guest is an ideal for the reader, 'responsive, apprehensive and completely involved in what he hears'. He is used to articulate the reader's own emotional reactions to the narrative. He has a refined and sharpened sensibility. He keenly feels and expresses, what an ordinary reader might overlook. The reader who instinctively identifies himself with the Wedding-Guest takes a cue from him to define his own emotional responses to the Mariner's tale. The Wedding-Guest's suspension of disbelief and the trust with which he accepts the tale helps the reader to suspend his disbelief as well. Besides, he helps to relieve the monotony of what otherwise would have been a monologue.

It is clear from the above discussion that the introduction of the Wedding-Guest has a great significance. The Wedding-Guest is neither unimportant nor redundant. The contrast between the spiritual worlds of the Mariner with its rich moral values with the world of actuality with its mistaken values cannot be effective and perfect without the Wedding-Guest figuring as a link between the two worlds. The Wedding-Guest's suspension of disbelief and trust assists to create suspension of disbelief in the reader.

THE DREAMLIKE QUALITY OF "THE ANCIENT MARINER"

Coleridge was a great dreamer and he had greater admiration for dreams than any of the other romantics. He once even declared that he would like to sleep on the lotus in the sea of milk like the Indian 'Vishnu'. The hours that he spent in dreaming were more important than his waking hours. When he was lost in sleep and it was thought he was lost in his dreams that were the time when actually a new work of art was being created in his mind. Infact, he fed on his dreams and vitalized them in his poetry. His entire poems have a dreamlike quality.

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' also has dream like qualities. Prof. Bowra observes in this connection:

"On the surface it shows many qualities of dream. It moves in abrupt stages each of which has its own single, dominating character. Its visual impressions are remarkably brilliant and absorbing. Their emotional impacts change rapidly, but always come with an unusual force as if the poet were haunted and obsessed by them. When it is all over, it is difficult

at first to disentangle ordinary experience from influences which still survive from sleep.”

To begin with the dream like qualities of ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, even the inspiration to write it came from a dream. A friend of Coleridge, Mr. Cruikshank, had dreamt about a skeleton ship with figures in it. This dream caught Coleridge’s fancy and later he and Wordsworth got together to plan it. Thus Coleridge decided to make it on the basis of the poem.

Wordsworth has criticized the poem in ‘Lyrical Ballads’ published in 1800, “the events, having no necessary connection, do not produce each other.” But this is wrong of Wordsworth. He is not being fair to Coleridge. It is quite certain that no one expects the events of dream to have any kind of necessary connection, which we find in our waking conditions. The subject is very supernatural, and one of the basic problems confronting him was to relate it to something, which his readers knew and understood, of the readers. Exploiting some of the characteristics of a dream did this. C.M. Bowra, in his book ‘The Romantic Imagination’, observes;

“Dreams can have a curiously vivid quality which is often lacking in waking impressions. In them we have one experience at a time in a very concentrated form, and since the critical self is not at work, the effect is more powerful and more haunting than most effects when we are awake. If we remember dreams at all, we remember them very clearly; even though by rational standards they are quite absurd and have no direct relation to our waking life.”

When we analyse ‘The Ancient Mariner’ in the light of the characteristics of a dream described above, we find unmistakable signs of a dreamlike quality in it. C.M. Bowra says again, “ it moves in abrupt stages, each of which has its own single, dominating character. Its visual impressions are remarkably brilliant and absorbing. Their emotional impact change rapidly, but always comes with an unusual force, as if the poet were haunted and obsessed by them. When it is all over, it clings to the memory with a peculiar tenacity, just as on waking it is difficult at first to disentangle ordinary experience from influences which still survive from sleep.”

Things move in a mysterious way in ‘The Ancient Mariner’ but not without some connection, this may also be termed as casual. The Mariner commits crime when out of irritation and anger he shoots an innocent Albatross. He commits a crime and is punished by the doom of “Life-in-Death.” This means that he was haunted by the presence of his dead comrades. His shipmates are also victims to the curse because they supported the Mariner by killing the bird. The Mariner’s curse starts to

become lesser when love gushes from his heart at the sight of Water snakes. The first horror of his spell is removed and we see the Albatross falls from his neck. It is wrong to kill the Albatross, once this act is accepted; the rest of the action follows with an inexorable fatality.

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is a frightful dream. The Mariner is tormented through quite a nightmarish experience. In part II, we have a picture of the unmoving ship, and slimy creatures crawl through with legs upon the slimy sea. Death-fires dance and water burns like a witch's oils, at night and we also see the picture of the Albatross hanging around the Mariner's neck. All this is very terrifying. In part III of the poem, freezing chills are sent down the Mariner's and also the reader's spines; by the appearances of Life-in-Death with her red lips, yellow locks and skin as white as leprosy. The reader is left stunned to see the sight of two hundreds sailors cursing the Ancient Mariner, with their eyes and dropping dead one by one.

In part IV we see the utter desolation and helplessness of the Mariner:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,

Alone on a wide wide sea!

And never a saint took pity on

My soul in agony.

This imaginary world may have some rules, which are not same as ours, but still they touch the familiar chords in us. The events are more convincing and the reader somehow admits that in the world created by Coleridge it is right that things should happen as they are made in his world. Once the reader starts believing that spirits watch over human actions, and then it becomes more convincing to feel that the spirits have the right to interface with men and do all the extraordinary things. The spirits guiding the mariner towards his northward voyage have sufficient reality for the reader to feel that their actions are appropriate. It is also not absurd to see the ship sinking when it reaches home. This so happens because it has undergone so many unearthly adventures that now there is no place for it in the world of common things. Coleridge makes his events so coherent and so close that the reader accepts the things as valid and feels that they are not different from their own world.

Coleridge knows that he must make the supernatural convincing and humane. In the 'Biographia Literaria,' after saying that such poetry interest the emotions and has dramatic truth, Coleridge adds that his aim is to transfer from the reader's 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:

‘The Ancient Mariner’ has a beautiful moral also. Its entire movement is directed towards teaching love and reverence for all things made and loved by God. If it terrifies, it guides and educates as well. And it brings a sense of assurance to sinners that through earnest penance they can atone for their sins and gains regeneration. Hence it is quite justified to say that Coleridge is a dreamer and ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ is a beautiful but frightful dream. A critic has edgily observed:

“The Ancient Mariner lives in its own worlds as events in dreams do, and, when we read it, we do not normally ask if its subjects is real or unreal. But this is due to a consummate art. Each action and each situation is presented in a concrete form in which the details are selected for their appeal to common experience. Coleridge exercises an imaginative realism. However unnatural his events may be they are formed from natural elements, and for this reason their constituents are familiar and make a direct, natural appeal. Once we have entered this imaginary world we do not feel that it is beyond our comprehension, but respond to it as we would to actual life.”

‘The Ancient Mariner’ as a myth of guilt and redemption.

The Ancient Mariner is a myth of guilt and redemption but of course it is also much more. Its symbolical purpose is but one element in a complex design. Though Coleridge has his own poetry of a guilty soul, it is not comparable in depth or in insight with the poetry of some other men who have given the full powers of their genius to writing about crime and the misery it engenders. Nonetheless Coleridge’s introduction of this theme into *The Ancient Mariner* gives to it a new dimension. What might otherwise be no more than an irresponsible fairy-tale is brought closer to life and to its fundamental issues. The myth of crime and punishment provides a structure for the supernatural events, which rise from it but often make their appeal irrespective of it. Much of the magic of *The Ancient Mariner* comes from its blend of dark and serious issues with the delighted play of creative energy. Coleridge had good reasons for fashioning his poem in this way. In the first place, the combination of different themes responded to his own complex vision of existence. For him life had both dark and its bright sides; it’s haunting responsibilities and ravishing moments of unsullied delight. He saw that the two were closely interwoven and that, if he were to speak with the full force of his genius, he must introduce both into his poem. In the second place, he saw life not analytically but creatively, and he knew that any work of creation must itself be an extension and the enchantment which he knew in his

finest poems, and for him these came alike from the beauty for the visible world and the uncharted corners of the human soul. The shadow cast by the Mariner's crime adds by contrast to the brilliance of the unearthly world in which it is committed, and the degree of his guilt and his remorse serve to stress the power of the angelic beings, which watch over human kind. The result is a poem shot with iridescent lights. It appeals to us now is this way, now in that, and there is no final or single approach to it.

In creating *The Ancient Mariner* in this way, Coleridge obeyed the peculiar and paradoxical were uneasily blended, and the creative spirit, witch was capable of such rapturous flights, worked most freely when it was free from metaphysical speculations.

The poem is more than an allegory of guilt and regeneration. In any ordinary sense the Mariner is very little guilty. But he has broken the bond between himself and the life of Nature, and in consequence becomes spiritually dead. What happens to him when he blesses the water-snakes in the Tropical calm is a psychic rebirth – a rebirth that must at times happen to all men and all cultures unless they are to dry up in living death. The whole poem is indeed a vivid presentation of the rebirth myth as it is conceived by Jung-the psychologist who has done most to explain these recurrent forms of imaginative

Literature. But such explanations of poetry are not convincing to everyone and are not easily demonstrable. What we must explain is that universal psychic experience that gives the poem its lasting power. It is as though Coleridge tapped a deeper level of consciousness here than he was ever to reach again. And none of the literary figures concerned with *The Ancient Mariner*, in its composition or in its appearance seems to have detected allegory or symbolism in it. The retribution is greater, simpler, less regardful of natural movement: punishment, repentance, a gush of love for other living things, prayer and relief, yet further penance for, as in ancient legend and somewhat as in life, 'the train of cause and consequence knows no end'. For *The Ancient Mariner* is a structure, a perfectly ordered, a finely 'complex design wrought out through the exquisite adjustment of innumerable details'. It is not an opium dream like *Kubla Khan*; and that is the answer to the symbolists of psychoanalytic and biographic bent.

The gentle spirit who decrees that he shall win his way back to partial release through loving all things ultimately saves the Mariner from his fate worse than death. And so through a role of gentleness and sentimentality does Coleridge pursue his way through life. He plays the role and reaches the gospel of being in love and shooting the Albatross is, significantly an utterly unjustified act and...it is followed by a remorse out of all proportion to the deed. It is clearly a fantasy symbolizing guilt. The Mariner has killed the source of kindness, safety and guidance...the odd

omission of any justification, provocation or motivation is best explained as a symbolic device suggesting their sub rational, neurotic source. In view of the bird's mission and pattern of emotional disturbance in Coleridge's childhood, it would seem that this fantasy of killing the Albatross is associated with some deeply buried guilt, either incestuous or Oedipal.

With Coleridge a week or waning moon is pretty clearly a powerful ...symbol for loss of mother love. The figure appears in *Christabel*:

The moon is behind, and at the full;

And yet she looks both small and dull.

But the most astonishing moon symbolism occurs in *The Ancient mariner*. At the most awful moment in that poem, when the nightmare Life-in-Death has won the Mariner's soul, and the night is thick and dark, then comes the Moon. The passage describing her coming has forever astonished and puzzled with its mystifying error in astronomy:

Till climb above the eastern bar

The horned Moon, with one bright star

Within the nether tip.

The figure comes at the end of a long stanza that reaches a climax of feeling in these lines. Can this impossible bit of astronomy be a Freudian slip? It seems inexplicable, yet if the moon holds reference here to motherhood, how wonderful that Coleridge should put the star within the nether tip, 'enfolded' so to speak. Is it possible that we have here the unconscious yearning of the narcissist in a magnificent bit of pure expressionism altering the very face of the heavens? Like a mother, the moon holds the little star within her arm. It is not so strange an idea in the mind of a poet dominated by the need of a universe essentially benevolent, essentially loving. Soft, gentle and benevolent presence in the sky, serenely she floats among the stars quietly shedding her light on all below—the lovely complement and partner of the strong mail Sun.

The Ancient Mariner and his ship represent the small but persisting class of mental adventurers who are not content with the appearances surrounding them but who attempt to get behind. Granted that the Mariner and his voyage signify the mental adventure of an unusually inquiring spirit, the outline of that adventure becomes tolerably clear, while it would be senseless of to seek more than an outline. From the social point of view these spiritual adventurers are criminals: they disturb the existing order

and they imply a criticism of the accepted round of life: they are self-appointed outcasts. The shooting of the Albatross in the present context was an anti-social act: something that by everyday rules would not be done. And the avenging spirit takes the Mariner into a region and a situation the utter loneliness of which is both the logical consequence and the avengement of his revolt against society. This same region is one more version of that aridity that besets all isolated mental voyagers at one stage of their voyage. Other versions are Donne's conceit of himself in 'A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day' as the quintessence of the primeval nothingness out of which God created the world; the emptiness experienced by the poet in Shelley's *Albatross*, who, when he awakes from his dreams sees the 'garish hills' and 'vacant woods' while his 'wan eyes'

Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly

As oceans moon looks on the moon in heaven

And the landscape in Browning's 'Child Roland'. The Mariner escapes from his isolation by the enlargement of his sympathies in the manner least expected and he is allowed to return to common life. And he does so as a changed man. He has repented of his isolation; his greatest satisfaction is to worship in company with his fellows of all ages. But he is still the marked man, the outcast, the Wandering Jew, the victim of his own thoughts. Further, although he has been judged by society, he has the reward of the courage that propels the mental adventurer: that of arresting and disturbing and teaching those who have had no such experiences. And this ambivalent criterion enriches the poem incalculably.

The Treatment of the Supernatural in the Ancient Mariner

In "The Ancient Mariner" the series of supernatural events begins with the appearance of the spectre ship with its crew, Death and Life-in-Death, and ends with the leaving of the corpses by the troop of the angelic spirits. Death and Life-in-Death play at dice. The sailors' fall-dead one by one. The Mariner himself, won over by Life-in-Death, begins a lifelong process of penance. At first, he despises the sea creatures and finds that his heart being as dry as dust, he is unable to pray. But he partly atones his crime by appreciating their beauty, acknowledging their worth, and blessing them. The spell is broken and he is able to pray, and no sooner does he pray than the body of the Albatross that the sailors had hung round his neck instead of the cross drops into the sea. The Mariner, partly absolved, falls into a blessed sleep and is refreshed with rain. The bodies of the crew are animated by a troop of angelic beings and the ship moves on without any apparent wind. It is the Polar Spirit, desiring further vengeance that makes the ship move and carries it as far as the equator. The Mariner falls into a

swoon and hears two voices, one telling the other that the Mariner has done enough penance but will do more. When the angelic spirits quit the bodies, the Ancient Mariner nears his home country. His ship is wrecked and it sinks into the sea but the hermit to continue his penance rescues him.

On the surface, "The Ancient Mariner" belonged to a class of poetry, which provoked adverse comment. Even Hazlitt, who regards it as Coleridge's "Most remarkable performance," adds less kindly that "It is high German, however, and in it he seems to 'conceive of poetry but as a drunken dream reckless, careless and needless, of past, present, and to come'". Charles Lamb responded with greater sympathy but he too had his doubts about the use of the supernatural and said: "I dislike all the miraculous part of it, but the feelings of the man under the operation of such scenery dragged me along like Tom Piper's Magic Whistle. Coleridge set for himself a difficult task. To succeed in it he must do a great deal more than reproduce the familiar thrills of horrific literature; he must produce poetry of the supernatural, which should in its own way; be as human and as compelling as Wordsworth's poetry of everyday things. Coleridge saw these difficulties and faced them much more than a thrill of horror. He lives up to his own programmed and interests the affections by the dramatic truth of what he tells."

The Scene set in distant times and remote places

First of all, Coleridge transports us to distant times and remote places with vast weird possibilities. "It is an Ancient Mariner", he tells us in the very first line of the poem. The word ancient immediately suggests Middle Ages when an atmosphere of magic and mystery was ripe all around and when supernatural occurrences were not dismissed as the figments of a feverish imagination but were believed to be really true. And the Mariner is not moving about in any familiar place but is voyaging around Polar Regions in unknown seas where anything might happen. Before any supernatural element is introduced, the Mariner does not forget to tell us:

We were the first that ever burst

Into that silent sea.

Thus cut off from the everyday life, the Ancient Mariner's story gets free from the rigorous logic governing the world of reality and can follow its own laws without unduly straining our credulity.

In the beginning, the poet gives a very realistic description of the background:

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,

Merrily did we drop

Below the Kirk, below the hill,

Below the lighthouse top.

We notice that the church, the hill, the lighthouse top are mentioned exactly in the order in which they would disappear from the mariner's sight. It might be a minor detail but it deepens one's faith in the truth of the narrative. The next few lines give another similar detail contributing to the total effect of reality.

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 everyday,

Till over the mast at noon-“

Notice how accurate and how vivid the description is. It does not allow any possibility of disbelief. So the reader just pins his faith in the poet. Such realistic descriptions of nature scattered through out help to sustain this faith. The ice mast high, as green as emerald, sending out fitfully a dismal sheen, and occasionally cracking and growing; the fair breeze blowing, the white foam flowing and the furrow following free; the bloody sun, looking no bigger than the moon, standing right above the mast in a hot and copper sky; the ship standing still as a painted ship upon a painted ocean; the pale moonshine glimmering all night; the horn moon with one bright star dogging its heels; all these are examples of vivid imaginative apprehension of the exact details of nature. Here the very essence of nature is distilled and with great vividness and imaginative energy at once stamped on one's memory. These descriptions of nature surely help in the acceptance of the supernatural elements.

“Fear at my heart, as at a cup,

My life-blood seemed to sip”.

The poet wants us to grasp the dreadfulness of Life-in-Death through this effect on the Mariner's mind. This method has been repeatedly used in the poem to avoid horrible details. At the end of part III, two hundred sailors drop down dead one by one, cursing the Mariner with their eyes:

“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”.

Here again the poet does not provide any ugly details and leaves the entire scene to our imagination. It is for us to imagine how the Mariner must have felt when

“Four times fifty living men,

(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)

With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,

They dropped down one by one”.

And not only can we imagine the scene fully but even share the Wedding-Guest's fears that the Mariner himself is perhaps a ghost. Again, towards the end of the poem, the poet wants to tell us how horrible the Mariner's face appears at the end of his face; instead, he describes the effect produced by the sight of it upon the minds of the Pilot, the Hermit and the Pilot's boy.

“ 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”.

This method of suggesting supernatural horrors is very different indeed from the practice of the novelists of the school of terror like Horace Walpole and Monk Lewis. It is also worth noting that even when Coleridge has to introduce supernatural beings, he does not introduce ghosts, he animates the bodies of the dead crew with a troop of spirits blest and avoids all gruesome details:

“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 use of imaginative realism

As suggested earlier, in *The Ancient Mariner*, Coleridge makes use of imaginative realism. He gives natural touches to supernatural beings and weaves a web of mystery and vagueness about simple incidents and common objects. Thus the two aspects get thoroughly fused together. The Mariner himself, with his glittering eye, grey beard and skinny hand seems to have descended from a world haunted by phantoms and specters, where as supernatural happenings, because of the psychological truth inherent in them, look to be quite natural. Moreover the relation between the supernatural happenings and the mind of the Mariner is firmly established. One who does not believe in the supernatural phenomena can easily accept them as taking place on the inner stage of the Mariner’s mind. The psychological truth of the incidents will only support such a reading. At the end of the poem, when the ship approaches the harbour, the sight of the familiar landmarks greeting our eyes also assures us of the truth of the whole experience. The horrified shrieks of the Wedding-guest occasionally appearing in the narrative tend to reassert the presence of the world of humanity in a supernatural environment.

The [Rime Of The Ancient Mariner is a superb narrative, terse, vigorous and inimitable. The perfectly ordered story moves on unchecked through a world of mystery and wonder. The form adapted by Coleridge is an old traditional one- the ballad. By the time of Coleridge the medieval influence was considerably established and it was natural enough for a tale strange adventures to be told in ballad style.

As the narrative proceeds, its dramatic quality is intensified and its hold on the reader's imagination becomes stronger. The total absence of wind causing complete suspension of the ship's movement reflects a state of Mariner's sinfulness, which is also objectified by the hanging of the Dead Albatross round his neck. These events combine in themselves the strangeness of the supernatural with the psychological truth of human experience. They are not allowed to come down to the level of the drab commonness, nor are they made so fantastic that they start straining our belief. The poet also employs some clever devices to make the story more interesting. The Wedding - Guest's interruptions are used to highlight the climatic moments. The dramatic endings given to each part of the poem make the readers move on to the next without even a moment's pause. The pronouncement of the moral at the conclusion gives the poem an air of finality, as if there were nothing more to be said. The various aspects of Nature, still and stagnant, tender and soothing, violent and furious, are presented in harmony with the events. They are used, as music is used in movies and stage representation, to enhance the dramatic effect of the incidents. The metrical organization of the verse that follows the pattern of a ballad adds to the poem's narrative charm.

The Romantic Elements of the Ancient Mariner

Supernaturalism: The Ancient Mariner is a romantic poem, impressing us by bold invention, and appealing to that taste for the supernatural, the longing for a shudder, to which the 'romantic' school in Germany, and its derivations in England and France, directly ministered. Fancies of the strange things which may very well happen, even in broad daylight, to men shut up alone in ships far off on the sea, seem to have occurred to the human mind in all ages with a peculiar readiness, and often have about them, the fascination of a certain dreamy grace, which distinguishes them from other kinds of marvelous inventions. This sort of fascination "The Ancient Mariner" brings to its highest degree: it is the delicacy, the dreamy grace, in his presentation of the marvelous, which makes Coleridge's work so remarkable.

The sudden and mysterious appearance of the skeleton ship, Death and Life-in-Death who are on board that ship, the coming back to life of the dead crew, the angels of light standing on the corpses, the popular spirits driving the ship- these are all supernatural elements in the poem. This supernaturalism lends to the poem an atmosphere of wonder, enchantment, and mystery, which are romantic qualities.

Medievalism: The poem has a medieval background. Interest in the middle Ages too, is a romantic characteristic. The Middle Ages were a period of superstition, piety, and love and chivalry. In this poem the first two elements of the Middle Ages have been emphasized. The superstition of

the period is seen in the supernatural incidents. Its piety is seen in the religious basis of the poem and in the reference to the hermit. The poem thus carries us back to a remote period of time. Nature: There are many pictures in the poem showing Coleridge's interest in nature. Love for nature is one of the outstanding qualities of romantic poetry. Every phase of seascape, landscape and cloudscape is touched upon in the poem. The sun shining brightly at the outset, the mist and iceberg surrounding the ship, the moving moon going up the sky, the water burning green, blue and white, the snakes moving in water and leaving tracks of golden fire-these are some of the beautiful and richly-coloured nature-pictures, giving the poem a romantic interest.

Melodious Movement: The poem is also romantic because of its melody and music. Coleridge here appears as a keen lover of sweet and musical sounds. Alliteration, medieval rhymes, onomatopoeia, etc are all employed to produce musical effects. As an example of melody the following stanza may be taken:

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew

The furrow followed free;

We were the first that ever burst

Into that silent sea.

The simplicity and freshness of diction further enhance the romantic effect.

Conclusion: The Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century was characterized by an upsurge of Imagination. Much of the magic of The Ancient Mariner comes from the blend of dark and serious issues with the delighted play of creative energy. The imaginative power of "The Ancient Mariner" gives to it its complex appeal-there is no final or single approach to it.

The Significance of Life-in-Death

The two instruments in the hands of God are Death and Life-in-Death. God punishes the people who go against the law of pity. They are not allowed to pray nor can they bless any creature in the world. God loves them best who love others and show kindness:

He prayth well, which loveth well

Both men and bird and beast.

Since the Mariner has gone against the rules of God, he has sinned. He is admitted from both God and his creation. He is not pited by the saints. The Mariner regrets that so many beautiful men lie dead on the deck while ‘a thousand thousand slimy things’ live on. This suggests that he still refuses to acknowledge the worth of his fellow creatures. He tries to pray but he fails.

A wicked whisper came, and made

My heart as dry as dust.

The bird was hailed with joy when it first came through the fog. With it came the south wing, the ice split and the helmsman began to steer the ship. The Albatross followed the ship for nine days and played with the sailors. Suddenly, it was shot dead by the Mariner. It was a very irresponsible at committed.

The guardian spirit of the Albatross began to avenge. It sent Death and Life-in-Death to punish the sailors. A skeleton ship approached them carrying two figures. One was a grim, looking ghastly skeleton. It was like a Nightmare, the personification of Death. The other was Life-in-Death. It had red lips, golden locks, and leprous skin. She represents the life-long torture that a sinful man endures on account of the- pricks of his conscience. Life-in-Death curdles one’s blood by striking terror into the heart of man. The two ghastly crew were playing at dice to determine who would win the Mariner. Life-in- Death won whereas Death fell upon the sailors. It can be said here that life is not always a blessing and Death is not always a curse. The sailors were infact blessed with death because they were saved from seeing the horrors faced by the Mariner. The Mariner had to penance and repent all his life for the sin he committed.

As the souls of his sailors departed, they passed by the mariner with the whizzing sound of his cross-bow. This was so, to remind him of the crime he had committed. He was left all alone. No saint pitied his soul. The sight of the sea was dreadful and ugly. The timbers of the ship were rotting and heaps of dead men lay sinful on them. The Mariner wanted to pray but his sinful heart would not allow him to do so. Even God accepts the prayers said by hearts that are full of love and kindness. The eyes of the dead sailors seemed to curse the mariner. For seven days he had to go through this torture. He himself confused that he wished to die but could not die.

After seven days of constant torture did his fate take pity on the mariner? In the moonlight he saw the water-snakes and slimy creatures, a fountain of sympathy and tenderness flowed from his heart and he blessed those creatures unswervingly. This love for the snakes was the best of prayers.

This illuminated his heart and he became calm. He was then able to pray to God; who ultimately took pity on the mariner.

This recovery does not help to end the mariner's suffering. It however opens the door to the future. The mariner is haunted by the presence of his dead sailors. The mariner becomes a symbol of remorse and he often feels the necessity of repeating his confession.

Thus, we learn that nature has two tools of punishment Death and Life-in-Death. Life-in-Death is much more horrible than Death. Death heals us of pain instantly but Life-in-Death kills by degree

KUBLA KHAN AN INTRODUCTION

Coleridge himself stated that this poem was part of a gorgeous dream, which he once dreamt while asleep. It was the year 1797. One night at his farmhouse on the border of Somerset with Devon shire, he fell asleep while reading "*Purchas's Pilgrimage*" written by Samuel Purchas. It was an anthology of travels. In it Coleridge was reading about Kubla Khan and his palace when sleep overcame him." 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 or 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 awakening he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole dream, and taking his pen, ink and paper, instantly wrote down the lines which he saw in his dream. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and thus he had to stop writing .He was detained by him for above an hour, and on returning to his room, he found, to his small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained 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 on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast, but, alas! Without the after restoration of the matter!

According to the poet himself, *Kubla Khan* is now no more than a psychological curiosity. Humphry House, however, observes that if Coleridge had not told us that the poem is a fragment, it would not have occurred to anyone to regard it as such. He believes it to be a complete poem dealing with the theme of poetic creativity. Wilson Knight regards it as a poem about life. Raymond Wilson feels that just because the poem was "A Vision in a Dream" and not at all the product of conscious composition, it came to be regarded as an example of indisputably authentic inspiration. Its prestige rose when, in the second half of the

nineteenth century, a cult of "Arts for Arts sake" prevailed, and twentieth century theories of psychology have also tended to promote attitudes favourable to the poem, which can be dubiously honored as an early example of Secularism". According to this critic, "To this day, it is for the most readers a fragment of inspired incoherence, a piece of verbal magic, to ask the meaning of which would be impertinent."

CRITICAL SUMMARY

KUBLA KHAN

Kubla Khan, the great oriental king, once ordered that a magnificent pleasure palace be built for him in Xanadu where the sacred river Alph winding its course through immeasurably deep caves ultimately sank into a dark, subterranean sea. So a fertile tract of land, about ten square miles in area was enclosed with walls and towers. This piece of land, with streams meandering their way through bright gardens and ancient forests enclosing the bright gardens and ancient forests enclosing bright green spots presented a spectacle of rich profusion

From this valley, a fountain of water gushed out of the ground every moment. This burst of water threw up stones, which looked like hail or chaff being scattered around.

Next the poet describes the source of river Alph. There was a deep, mysterious- looking, awe-inspiring chasm that slanted down a green hill across a screen made by cedar trees. It was a savage, holy and enchanted place, the kind of place frequented by a woman desperately wandering about, in the light of a waning moon, in search of her demon-lover, who, after making love to her deserts her. A mighty fountain issued from this chasm intermittently. As the water gushed out, it flung about huge pieces of rock in the same way in which the hailstones rebound from the earth or the chaffy grain flings about under the thresher's flail. The river Alph, issuing from this fountain, flowed meanderingly for five miles through woods and valleys, entered the deep caves and finally sank into the sunless sea with a loud, tumultuous sound. In the midst of this tumult, Kubla Khan could hear from far the voices of his ancestors predicting a war in the near future and exhorting him to be prepared for it. The dome presented a great marvel of human skill. It was a 'sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice' and its shadow fell midway on the river. While standing here one could hear the mingled noises from the fountain and the caves.

In the second part of the poem, Coleridge gives us a vivid picture of a poet caught in a spell of poetic inspiration. Once, in a vision, he saw an Abyssinian maid playing on her dulcimer and singing of the wild splendor of Mount Abora. It was a beautiful indeed. The poet says that if he could

recreate in his imagination the sweet music of the Abyssinian maid, it would give him such an ecstatic joy and he would feel so inspired that with the music of his poetry he would build Kubla Khan's pleasure dome in the air. In other words, he would give such a vivid description of the pleasure dome that his listeners would actually begin to see his imagination. They would then regard him as a mighty magician, a superhuman being who has fed on honeydew and drunk the milk of paradise. They would mark his flashing eyes and floating hair, weave a circle around him thrice and close their eyes in holy dread. The idea is that a poet caught in a spell of poetic inspiration transcends his mundane existence and becomes a superhuman being.

The Use of the Supernatural in Kubla Khan

Coleridge is pre-eminently a poet of the supernatural. But he does not belong to the School of the late eighteenth century writers of the Gothic romance, whose works are marred by indiscreet accumulation of crude horrors. Today they do not appeal to us because they violate our sense of probability. The incidents described by them do not strike us as true, as capable of having happened. Coleridge also makes use of supernatural agencies and situations but he makes sure that they appear to us as natural. When he started writing, he said that he was aware that his major problem was how to make his presentation of the supernatural elements acceptable, how to get from his readers 'that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith', and it must be acknowledged that he solved this problem in the most convincing manner.

To begin with, the scene of this poem is never laid in a familiar place. He takes us to remote, unknown regions and to distant times—mostly middle ages—where the very unfamiliarity of the scene prompts us to suspend our reasoning faculties. We do not argue, do not dispute, because we do not know. In *Kubla Khan*, the scene is laid in the oriental city of Xanadu, in forests as "ancient as the hills".

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran

Through caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea.

This is something we have not seen. It seems to be improbable, but not utterly impossible. So we accept it for a while. In the meantime the poet cleverly makes use of some other devices to strengthen our sense of belief.

Another very important feature of Coleridge's treatment of the supernatural is a very subtle blending of the natural and the supernatural.

The two are so indistinguishably fused with each other that it is very difficult to locate where the one ends and the other begins. The mighty fountain being momentarily forced from the deep romantic chasm is definitely invested with supernatural energy but the similes employed to describe it are so familiar that we accept the fountain as quite natural.

Amidst 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 momentarily the sacred river.

Suggestiveness is the keynote of Coleridge's treatment of the supernatural. Coleridge does not describe the supernatural; he simply suggests it. Suggestions stir one's imagination; descriptions make it inert. Suggestions evoke our sense of mystery and make us more keenly interested; descriptions arouse our sense of improbability and make us protest. In *Kubla Khan*, Coleridge makes use of subtle suggestions in the description of the deep romantic chasm slanting down the green hill across a cedarn cover:

A savage place! As holy and enchanted

As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted

By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

It has been remarked that these three lines contain the seeds of a complete love story comparable to Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*.

The supernatural in *Kubla Khan* does not strain our sense of probability because the dramatic truth of human experience projected in it is nowhere falsified. *Kubla Khan*'s hearing the ancestral voices in the midst of the tumultuous noises heard from the chasm and the measureless caves may be slightly unusual, but once we accept that he can hear these voices (or if we so like, we can say that he interprets the noises as ancestral voices), how appropriate it is that he should hear a 'war' prophecy since he is himself a warrior of great renown! Toward the end of the poem, the poet is presented as a supernatural being:

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.

A note of supernatural mystery runs through these lines and yet the whole descriptions is psychologically accurate because when a poet is caught in a spell of poetic inspiration, he transcends his ordinary existence and rises to the level of a supernatural being. Thus we find that Coleridge makes his supernatural acceptable mainly through a faithful adherence to the dramatic truth of human experience. Today we have come a long way from the days of supernatural belief. Supernatural agencies and situations no longer capture our imagination. Still we are able to enjoy the poem because it is relevant to us. Whether we read it as a poem about poetic creativity or a poem about life, it is intensely human and that is why we accept it as a convincing presentation.

The Mystery and the Touch of the Supernatural

The vagueness, however, is the greatest strength of the description. It leaves so much to suggestion that every reader with a little imagination will build a vast scene of his own. The mystery becomes very effective because of the vast vision of imagination, which surrounds the vivid picture of the poem. The poem is raised from the region of everyday realities to that of a supernatural world. The details though may be realistic but however each detail has an actual counterpart somewhere. The total impression however is of an unearthly rather than earthly scene.

The deft touches scattered in the poem help to achieve the creation of a masterpiece. The very mention of “Xanadu”, “Kubla Khan”, “Alph”, “Abora” and “The Abyssinian maid’ evoke associations of remoteness, mystery and strangeness. “The woman wailing for the demon-lover”, the chasm “seething with ceaseless turmoil”, “the earth breathing in thick pants”, “the huge fragments” thrown up by the waves”, “the caverns measureless to man”, “the sunless sea”, “the caves of ice” etc are all nothing but touches which make the poem a supernatural one.

NATURE OF POETIC VISION IN KUBLA KHAN

Coleridge's preface to Kubla Khan reveals that it was composed during a dream. He adds that it was not really a composition in the ordinary sense. For, the entire images rose up before him as things with a parallel production of the corresponding expressions without any sensation or consciousness of effort.

It has been pointed out by Humphrey House that by writing this preface the poet played out of modesty right into the hands of critics. Humphry House refers to other critics who talk of the 'vivid incoherence' and "patchwork brilliance" of the poem and like to read it only as a 'psychological curiosity'. He himself believes the poem to be complete and intensely meaningful. According to him Kubla Khan is a poem about the act of poetic creation, about the 'ecstasy in imaginative fulfillment'. It is "triumphant positive statement of the potentialities of poetry".

Kubla Khan not merely attracts the readers by giving good poetry; it is also often studied and esteemed for reasons other than poetic. It has been regarded as a forerunner of both symbolism surrealism. The claim is sometimes made that Kubla Khan is an immediate and undistorted _expression of poetic inspiration, as it has been written without a poet's mind functioning at the conscious level.

Humphry House writes, "The precision and clarity of the opening part are the first things to mark even in the order of the 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 chasm, 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 landscape. Nobody need keep this mere geographical consistency of the description prominently in the mind as he reads. Humphry House suggests that if this factual-visual consistency had been absent, and there had been a mere random sequence or collection of items, such as a dream might well have provided items which needed a symbol-system to establish relations at all- then the absence would be observed: The Poem would have been quite different, and a new kind of effort would have been needed to apprehend what unity it might have had. The fertility of the plain is only made possible by the mysterious energy of the source. The dome has come into being by Kubla Khan's decree: the dome is stately; the gardens are girdled round with wall and towers.

Even so, even if the poem is the outcome of an opium dream, it has to be studied as poetry by the critics. In seeking the significance of the poem, there is often a tendency to discover some kind of allegory or symbolic meaning. If we have to read an allegory into the poem, it must be consistent throughout. Most of the details, if not all of them, must have significance in the allegory. Now it will be difficult to find the hidden meaning behind such features of the landscape as the deep romantic chasm, the forest full of cedar trees, the walls, the towers, and the sinuous rills.

Attempts have been made to link the poem with the poet's own life. Graham Hough supposes that Kubla is the inspired poet-magician who, towards the close of the poem, becomes the inspired poet-prophet. The Alph may stand for poetic inspiration. It rises up under awe-inspiring circumstances. For a while, it flows smoothly in sunlight. Then it falls into deep caverns and reaches the sunless sea.

“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 girded round:

And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,

Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree”.

To Hough, this suggests the story of the rise and fall of creative imagination in a poet.

“It is so often said that ‘kubla khan’ achieves its effects mainly by ‘far reaching suggestiveness’, or by incantation or by much connotation, with little denotation, that it is worth emphasizing this element of plain clear statement at the outset, statement which does particularize a series of details inter-related to each other, and deriving their relevance from the inter relation and their order. Further more, the use of highly emotive and suggestive proper names is proportionately no large source of the poem’s effect; it is only necessary to watch the incidence of them. Xanadu, Kubla Khan and Alph occur once in that form within the poem’s opening two-and-a-half lines: and none of them occur again except for the single repetition of kubla in line 29 “And ‘mid this tumult kubla heard from far

ancestral voices prophesying war!” Abyssian and Mount Abora occur once each, in the three lines 39-41

“It was an Abyssinian maid,

And on her dulcimer she played,

Singing of Mount Abora.

Could I revive within me

Her symphony and song “.

There are no other proper names in the poem at all, unless we should count the final word Paradise.

“For he on honey-dew hath fed,

And drunk the milk of paradise”.

An even more personal view of the poem is taken by Robert Graves. He finds it dealing in a roundabout way with Coleridge’s relation with his wife. According to Graves, the poet identifies himself with the serene and powerful Kubla Khan. The pleasure dome is the state of joy brought by opium. The caves of ice should be taken to mean that passion did not disturb his retreat from the difficulties of life. Graves sums up: “We understand from the poem that Coleridge has determined to shun the mazy complications of life by retreating to a bower of poetry, solitude and opium. Its far-fetched symbolism is admitted; every kind of fanciful meaning can be read into the poem. It may be taken to refer to the poet’s own experience or desires, whether expressed or hidden. Such interpretations can neither be proved nor disapproved.”

It is best therefore, to understand the poem without burdening it with any deep symbolic or allegorical purpose. After the entire poem is felt to be a lovely lyric. It is full of evocative phrases and images. The poem shows the distilled essence of all the romance and adventure of travel and discovery. As Prof. Lowes put it: “And over it is cast the glamour enhanced beyond all reckoning in the dream, of the remote in time and space—that visionary presence of vague and gorgeous and mysterious past which brooded, as Coleridge read, above the inscrutable Nile and domed pavilions in Kashmir, and the vanished stateliness of Xanadu. Kubla Khan makes us feel the magic of distance called romance”.

ROMANTIC ELEMENS IN KUBLA KHAN

The main theme of Coleridge's romanticism lies in his artistic rendering of the supernatural phenomenon. A major part of his poems are engrossed deep in supernatural mystery. Kubla Khan, it is true, is less directly connected with the supernatural, but still the supernatural elements in the poem appear quite prominent. 'The woman wailing for her demon lover' and the ancestral voices prophesying war' are actually supernatural occurrences. The poetic frenzy of an inspired poet is based on the supernatural. The tumultuous rise of the river Alph from a deep romantic chasm is also given an unmistakable supernatural touch. But what is remarkable about Kubla Khan is the convincing presentation of the supernatural elements. The description of the landscape is so vivid and precise, the similes used for the mighty fountain so homely and familiar that it just does not occur to the reader that anything impossible is described. The psychological truths hidden behind Kubla Khan's hearing ancestral voices prophesying war or the presentation of the poet as a superhuman being make these facts acceptable.

Kubla Khan is full of dream imagery. Now the essence of a dream is its inconsequence and illogicality which we realize only after we wake up from it. While experiencing the dream we are entirely lost in it and find no objections to its details. That is the first thing to remember in estimating the significance or effect of the poem. There is also the disconnected nature of the thing seen or the impressions evoked in our minds by them. We are told of a palace and fortress, but there is no description of the inner decoration except for the mention of a sunny dome and caves of ice. A river tuned to flow in many clever or romantic ways is possible, but this river is said to be a sacred river. This idea is particularly Hindu or Eastern, for only in the East do people Treat Rivers as holy. Where there are rivers and subterranean springs, there are bound to be caverns as well. Rivers do often go underground and then come up again. This is given a supernatural or magical turn, and the associations with magic, wizardry and mystery are emphasized. In fact, and nearly half of the entire poem is taken up with the course of the sacred river.

Reference to distant times and places with a view to evoke a sense of awe and mystery is another romantic characteristic used by Coleridge in Kubla Khan. The very first line transports us to the distant city of Xanadu, the summer capital of the great oriental king Kubla Khan, and the son of the great Chinghiz Khan. These names, unfamiliar and wrought with the spirit of mystery, lend to the poem an enchantment of their own. The same purpose is served by the allusion to the Abyssinian girl singing of Mount Abora in the second part of the poem.

The third feature of the poem is the mixing and blending of the vision of the palace of Kubla Khan with another dream, which the poet is said to have dreamt on another occasion. In that dream, he saw a maiden playing

on a dulcimer and singing to the accompaniment of the instrument. The effect of it on the poet was to intoxicate him with the purest fervour of poetic imagination. For, he becomes transfigured with hair disheveled, eyes flashing forth fire, being completely transported from the world of ordinary humdrum existence. He is sustained by the food of the gods and drinks the milk of paradise, such as are earmarked for the children of poetry.

Kubla Khan abounds in suggestive phrases and lines capable of evoking mystery. The description of the romantic chasm, the source of the river Alph in the second part of the poem is romantic in spirit. Perhaps the most appropriate lines in the poem refer to the woman wailing for her demon-lover.

A savage place! As holy and enchanted

As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted

By woman wailing for her demon-lover.

But almost equally suggestive in Kubla Khan's hearing the war prophecy made by the ancestral voices.

The disjointed entities are each pictures, but together they have no connection with one another. The whole poem is like a series of snatches of music remembered in bits and on different occasions. Such unity as they may possess will derive its meaning or significance from the personality or subjective bias of the reader acting on the suggestions given by the poet.

Sensuous phrases and pictures so generously used in the poem contribute a good deal to its romantic spirit. The bright gardens and sinuous rills, the incense-bearing trees laden with sweet blossoms, the sunny sports of greenery, the half-intermittent burst of the mighty fountain the rocks vaulting like rebounding hail-all these vivid pictures give the poem a sensuous touch so characteristic of romantic poetry.

The very idea of poetic creativity taking place under divine inspiration and of the poet transcending his prosaic existence and rising to the level of superhuman being when caught in his poetic frenzy is based on the romantic concept of poetry and of a poet's identity.

Above all, the dream-like atmosphere of Kubla Khan makes it an exquisite romantic poem. It was not only composed in a dream but even exhibits a dream-like movement.

DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT IN KUBLA KHAN

Kubla Khan is one of the three great poems of Coleridge. It is the shortest but in some ways the most remarkable of the three. In the first part of the poem the poet describes a mighty river and a rare pleasure dome constructed on it by the mighty Kubla Khan. In the later part the poet has described the power of poetry and inspiration as well as a poet in the frenzy world of creation. The poem is not related to a story in any way; it is but a masterpiece of description. The critics also feel that the poem Kubla Khan is "Airy and Unsubstantial". At the first reading there comes the impression that the poem is "airy and unsubstantial". There is a feeling that there is no coherence and that the two parts of the poem do not hang together. In the first part the river Alph and its beauty are depicted where as the second part describes a vision and the poet in frenzy. The first part also does not follow an even Course. There is no connection between the Abyssinian maid and the river Alph. However a close study reveals that the poem does have 'Coherence and substance'. It cannot be explained in a rational terms, but when we follow the course of association and suggestions that run through the poem, it does yield a coherent meaning.

The imagination of the poet is aroused by the river Alph and its subterranean Course. The measureless caverns, the panting earth, the dancing rocks, sunless and lifeless sea, and the tumult of the mighty waves as they rush into the silent ocean, the scene where a woman wails for the demon-lover, all these excite his imagination. A feeling of awe and mystery is upon the poet, and he is lifted into a mood of poetic creation.

The poet glides into this new theme through suggestion; the power of creation in man is suggested through the damsel; who is the symbol of creative power. The poet is aroused by the desire to capture the weird beauty of the entire scene, and reminds him that this can be built in colours, strains and words. The symbol of this creative power is the maiden whom he saw in a vision. Both the parts of the poem are connected by the poet's desire to build a pleasure dome with the help of his imagination.

The whole poem follows the course of a dream. It can be interpreted as a complete poem; but the coherence and the completeness is of a dream seen by the poet and not of waking life. The description of river Alph has dream like qualities. It is not easy to follow the course of the river. It is not clearly suggested whether the entire course of the river is of ten miles or whether this was a part of its entire course. It is difficult to also associate the wild and the fertile parts of the course of the river. The transition from the description of the river to the description of the vision is abrupt, and the second part tenuous. The poem feels to be a dream due to its vividness and lack of smooth transitions

The poem is a master-piece of descriptive art. It is nothing but a series of pictures which following quick succession. First the poet describes the pleasure-dome and immediately after he describes the course of the river Alph. He builds up the picture of romantic chasm-by a scene of vast desolation in the dim light of the moon. The picture of the mighty fountain follows this. The vision of the river is repeated again and is followed by the pictures of the pleasure dome; after this there is the description of the vision and finally we get the picture of the poet in frenzy.

There is a clear combination of vagueness and vividness. The pictures of 'the dome', 'the river', 'the damsel', are at once vivid and get vague. It is just like being in a dream. The details are left vague. The impressions of the dream have clear outline, yet they concentrate only on a few details. The details are imaginative and leave the reader also in a state of imagination. The details are suggestive and not explicit.

The entire description of the poem has the indefiniteness of a dream; because we don't know exactly about the pleasure dome or the river Alph. There are many questions which haunt our minds like-How far was the sunless sea from the pleasure domes? How far was the fountain from the river? We have a vague picture of the pleasure dome-that it was situated on the banks of the river Alph, it had a sunny dome and caves of ice, its shadow floats on the waves and the pleasure dome is haunted by the tumult of the mighty river.

KUBLA KHAN AS THE POEM OF DESCRIPTION

In view of the absence from the poem of any story or plot or episode intended to be narrated, we have to look out for the significance of it in terms of the descriptions it contains. Major described are the sacred river Alph and its romantic course, the chasm bubbling up with violent upheaval of rocks and boulders alternating with gushing and foaming waters. Next to these we have a damsel with a dulcimer, who though not otherwise described, at once suggests the whole world of romance and mystery. Lastly, we have the picture of the poet roused to creative utterance. The poet is inspired, his hair is loosened and he looks scarcely mortal. All the details mentioned are enough to deepen the sense of either mystery or charm of delight. The reference to the waning moon at once starts a train of associations which end in magic and sorcery; from the ancient times the moon has been associated with all occult manifestations and powers.

The figures of speech employed also promote the same elements of mystery and magic. The demon-lover has a mortal woman in love with him, and this at once thrills us with a creepy feeling. Romance of the exciting and pleasurable type is provided by gods and mortals marrying, as

they often do in classical mythology. But men and the demoniac spirits having similar love- bonds are neither so common nor so natural. But such superstitious beliefs are common among ordinary people especially in out-of-the-way rustic areas. The underground commotion made by the river or by some panting force strikes us as fearful, for it suggests earthquakes. Some idea of the tremendous violence felt by the earth may be formed from the poet's description of rocks and boulders being scattered about like the chaff by the winnower of newly harvested grain.

These are all unforgettable details. And the very fact that they do not fit in with one another in any prosaic or logical manner is a characteristic of the poem underlying the poem.

The element of magic in the poem.

Magic is generally associated with the ability to invoke powers or exploit Nature in defiance of what we consider to be natural and universal laws. It appeals to the irrational or mysterious element in all of us, since, there is nothing wonderful in what is known. It is the human tendency to always try to know more about the other world. But when suggestions or details are calculated to stir our feelings and inspire in us vague dread or terror, and then we say that some sort of magic is at work. It is the supreme virtue of Coleridge's poetry that he creates this elusive but powerful feeling more often and more intensely than many others great poets.

In the poem Kubla Khan, Coleridge speaks of a place being holy, savage and haunted at once; the readers cannot imagine the combination easily' but we accept it since the poet says so with a matter-of-fact certainty. Only magic can account for the combination of a sunny dome with icy caves. Lest we should disbelieve it, the poet himself says that it was a miracle of rare device.

In order that people may be exempt from being bewitched by the poet when he is under the influence of his poetic inspiration, the poets represent the beholders as crying to themselves:

“Beware! Beware!

His flashing eyes, his floating hair!

Weave a circle round him thrice,”

And in these ways let us protect ourselves from his dreaded influence. The reference to the number- three, is wholly magical, for mystic powers are ascribed to numbers in all systems of magic. The most striking indication

of this magical influence is found in the last two lines. Honey-dew suggests something sweet as honey, and fresh, cool and sparkling as dew.

It is the blend of these qualities that is entrancing to the mind. To drink the milk of paradise is to be one of the best creatures already enjoying the privileges of blessed spirits. Such is the power conferred by the spirit of poetry on the poet.

Coleridge's style and diction in the poem

The wonderful effect of the poem is to be found compressed for the most part in single words or pregnant epithets, which carry a whole world of meaning and association. The language of the poem is simple and sublime: not a word can be changed for the better and not an image or sentiment jars on the mind or offends the sensibilities. The poem is, as we may say, 'word perfect'. Phrases like pleasure-dome, demon-lover, incense bearing, holy-dread and honey-dew, are compounded of the most ordinary words, but they sound different and convey intensified meanings. The sentence, "Ancestral voices prophesying war", defies analysis. But it conveys some idea of part played by oracles in foretelling the future, of the interpretation of natural phenomena by soothsayers and auger's and of the practice among primitive tribes of inspired priests indicating when a war should be begun. The two words 'damsel' and 'dulcimer' are themselves romantic and help us to visualize a beautiful maiden highly gifted with all artistic accomplishments.

The element of music in the choice of the diction is no less worthy of notice. The word 'Xanadu' at once strikes the note of the remote and mysterious; for few have heard of such a place. Kubla Khan is sonorous and dignified and also suggestive of an eastern emperor and of the pomp and luxury associated with one. A sunless sea sounds smooth and strange and a rarity. By describing the shadow of the dome of pleasure as moving the poet conveys to us the idea of how the waters are disturbed and so the images formed on the surface of the stream are also disturbed. Prosaically we reproduce a song we have heard well or ill. But, poetically, he would 'rebuild that dome in air', that is, describe it in the musical language of inspired poetry.

By making these analyses, however, we come no nearer to the heart of mystery of how great poetry is produced. We recognize the quality of it when we read it, and by the persistence with which these impressions linger our consciousness without our realizing it always or fully.

"Kubla Khan" is steeped in the wonder of all of Coleridge's enchanted voyaging", a critic rightly observes.

Kubla Khan – fragment or a complete poem

A very important question asked by critics is “Is the poem a fragment?” All critics however don’t hold this opinion. George Saintsbury disbelieves Coleridge’s statement. He remarks the prose as rigmorole in which Coleridge tells the story of the coming and going of the vision called Kubla Khan. It is “A Characteristic piece of self-description”.

Humphrey House, a modern critic also holds that the poem is complete. He regards the poem Kubla Khan as poem about the process of poetic creation, about the ecstasy of imaginative fulfilment.

Coleridge himself feels that the poem Kubla Khan is not complete but a fragment. According to him it is only a part of the poem of two or three hundred lines, which he saw in his dream. He not only saw the picture but he painted the whole scene in the poem as a portrait. He says that the lines and words written are as they came to him in the dream. The poem could not be completed. Coleridge says because a visitor interrupted him and the vision faded.

Kubla Khan when read as a story or even as a piece of connected description, it seems but a fragment. The unwritten parts of the poem are needed to give us a clear idea of the story of the places and things described. But it will be wrong to treat the poem in this way. Actually, when read, it somehow does not make us feel that it is incomplete or inadequate. It creates a vivid and full impression of a mood or an atmosphere. It seems to bring before us the very essence of romance.

Coleridge steeped his poem in romance of distant in space or time. Coleridge says that the poem was composed in a dream after he fell asleep, reading a volume of travels edited by the Elizabethan writer, Purchas.

Professor J.L. Lowes had traced most of the features of the landscape and the persons mentioned or described in the poem to the accounts of travels in Africa and Asia. It is a piece of remarkable detective work in the field of literary origins. The identification of the sources of Coleridge’s words and images does not in any way make the poem less original or exciting. For even his opium induced dream, the imagination of the poet was selecting combining and transforming the materials from travellers descriptions. So well has this been done that George Sampson has declared: So far from being the opium dream, Kubla Khan is the product of one expected lucid interval before the fumes closed up once more the _expression of the spirit: moreover, it is complete”.

The poem starts with a reference to a city called Xanadu. The name is exotic. To an English reader, it suggests the distant and mysterious East. One to Kubla Khan follows the reference to Xanadu. This is another exotic name. Anyone with some knowledge of world history can recognize in him a notable emperor of China, who was the patron of Marco Polo. Kubla Khan and Xanadu determine the setting of the poem. It is laid in the Far East in the Middle Ages. The impression is strengthened by the mention of a sacred river called Alph.

Africa too is brought into the poem. To do this, the poet has to describe something seen in a vision by him. It WAS AN Abyssinian maid playing on a dulcimer. Her song was about Mount Abora. The poet connects her song with the pleasure-dome of Kubla Khan in a curious way. The song at the time of the vision filled him with joy. If that joy could be revived in him, he could build from mere music the wonderful dome of Kubla Khan.

The pleasure-dome is in the midst of a fertile valley. It is girdled round with walls and towers. Near it are gardens with winding streams. Incense-bearing trees grow there. There are also forests and sunny glades. The most remarkable thing there is a deep romantic chasm. From it a mighty fountain flings up the sacred river, which after meandering for five miles, reaches underground caverns and meets the sea somewhere under the earth.

These features of the landscape suggest some kind of paradise. Prof. Lowes has pointed out that we have here a mixture of Milton's Garden of Eden and Mohammed's paradise as described in an account of one Aladdin in Purchase's Pilgrims. The fragment trees and sacred river may owe their origin to Eden. But the Abyssinian is partly suggested by one of the inferior paradises described by Milton as a foil to Eden and partly from the story of Aladdin.

Prof. Lane Cooper suggested that Coleridge's Mount Abora was really Milton's Mount Amara. The latter is described as the place where Abyssinian kings kept their sons under guard. The poet adds that it is near the origin of the Nile. Now Coleridge is known to have read Bruce's popular book, dealing with travels to discover the source of the Nile. There we find the concept of a sacred river to which the pagan prays everyday as if it were God. We have also the description of two fountains forcing themselves out with great violence at the foot of the mountain. Then the stream meanders five miles through green meadows. All this seems to have got into Kubla Khan. Lowes goes further to suggest that Coleridge must have read in Bruce about Abola, a tributary of the Nile. Moreover, Bruce also mentions another river called 'Astaboras'. So it is possible that between Abola and Astaboras, Agora may have been coined in the dream.

Coleridge probably takes the sunny dome with caves of ice from an account of the Cave of Amarnath in Kashmir. The image formed there of ice which attracts pilgrims was known to the poet through the accounts of travellers. The incense-bearing trees may be a reminiscence of the groves in Eden “whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm”.

In this way, we find the poem full of fascinating images, suggesting the scene of strange adventures in Africa, India and China. It is pervaded by the magic of travel and exploration. In his imagination, Coleridge traveled with the explorers and is thrilled with their discoveries. His poem allows us to capture the spirit of romance. In this sense, the poem, even though a fragment is complete. The poet presents a mood in all its fullness.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

The Forsaken Merman

Dover Beach

Scholar Gypsy

Memorial Verses to Wordsworth

Unit-4: Matthew Arnold

Life Sketch

Matthew Arnold, writer, critic, poet, thinker, publicist and educationist was born at Leleham, England on December 24, 1882. His father, Thomas Arnold, was the famous Headmaster of Rugby. Matthew was his eldest son but second child. His childhood was spent at the place of his birth, Laleham which is full of natural beauty. Poet Wordsworth who lived nearby was a family friend of the Arnolds. The influence of Nature as well as that of Wordsworth the poet can be traced in Matthew Arnold's work, specially, in his poetry. But the most dominant was the influence of his own father who was a scholar and a disciplinarian. Thomas Arnold taught him Latin when Matthew was still a boy of thirteen years. The Boy Matthew was sent to Winchester School but he could not adjust to the atmosphere prevailing in that school and came back to the care of his father at the Rugby School development as a serious poet and thinker. As a boy he used to be have flippantly. His childhood passion for fishing remained with him through his career at Oxford university with which he had long and lasting association.

At Oxford University, he got admitted to Balliol College, Where he pursued the study of the classics, that is, Latin and Greek. He was not a serious student and during holidays and vacation, he roamed over the Oxford countryside in the company of friends and his brother Tom. Predictably, he got a second class and was disappointed. But he more than made up his handicap by obtaining a fellowship at Oriel College.

- For a while, he worked at the Rugby school. he has developed literary tastes and creative inclination. He met George Sands, the novelist which he had developed a liking. Arnold writer who made a lasting impression on his mind at this time was Etienne Pivert de Senacour who is famous for his work OBERMANN. mattew Arnold had also developed zest for the theatre during this period of his life.
- In 1847, Matthew Arnold got appointed as Private secretary to Lord Lansdown. He, thus hot an opportunity to intermingle with the aristocracy but was not impressed by their aristocratic ways. Those were the times of new ideas and of reforms and many a social and political movement . Those were also the days when England had emerged as the most dominant Imperial Power of the world. Matthew Arnold, somehow, kept his balance. He did not turn a radical, though he had sympathies with the masses who were prone to be exploited and led dismal lives, deprived of their basic human rights. he listened to thinkers and speakers of the Chartist Movement and hoped that men would eventually look toward possibilities of developing a better civilization and develop a humanistic culture. he, apparently, did not like the aristocratic class whom he later on called "barbarians"
- In 1849, Matthew Arnold published his first volume of verse entitled : THE STRAYED REVELLER AND OTHER POEMS which established his reputation as a literary figure. Three years late, he published EMPEDOCLES ON ETNA AND OTHER POEMS.
- Arnold this time a fruitless love affair with Marguerite, whom he had met in Switzerland, left him darkly despaired. The influence of this despairing experience can be found in several of his poems he wrote later by many critics are regarded his best poems. But he recovered from the shock of failed love and returned to England where he married France Lucy Wightman, daughter of a Judge, in 1851. He was also appointed an Inspector of Schools. he led a happily married life and his wife bore him six children. Only two daughter and one son survived. Arnold, much influenced by Greek survived. Arnold, much influenced by Greek classics, faced his grief stoically.
- Arnold found it hard to adjust to the routine demands of his job but slogged on and two years before his retirement he became the Chief Inspector of schools. he however, gained very high reputation as a man

of ideas, a writer, critic and poet. He made his contribution to the cause of Education in England. he in many ways, was ahead of his times and promoted the ideas that Education ought to be the sole responsibility of the State. He made official tours of Europe thrice and studied the school and university educational system in Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy and Austria.

- In 1853, he got published yet another volume of poetry with a preface which became famous like Wordsworth's preface to his Lyrical Ballads, With this Preface he emerged as literary critic of immense influence.
- In 1857, Matthew Arnold was appointed Professor of Poetry at Oxford and remained in that position for ten years. He was the first Professor of Poetry to use English for academic communication instead of Latin. During his Professorship he published ON TRANSLATING HOMER, ESSAYS IN CRITICISM, ON THE STUDY OF CELTIC LITERATURE AND WHICH WAS TO BECOME IN LATER YEARS AND AFTER HIS DEATH, HIS MOST FAMOUS CONTRIBUTION TO HUMANISM, Culture and Anarchy, Later Years saw more publications, such as Friendship's Garland, Mixed Essays and other prose writings and social criticism. He was then much occupied with the problems of Culture and Religion and devoted much thought to the controversies and debates of his time. St Paul and Protestantism, Literature and Dogma, God and the Bible, Last essays on Church and Religion reflect his concerns for man's development as a civilized and cultured being and distinction between fake and real values that sustain the human element in man.
- Arnold became an institutional figure in his lifetime. He is counted among the wise men of Victorian Age and enjoys the sobriquet : THE VICTORIAN SAGE, even as Thomas Carlyle, a more formidable and prophetic writer-thinker too is remembered by the same title. Arnold carried a relentless campaign against hypocrisy and cant as also against boorish behavior. He coined the word Philistinism for this type of behavior. Some of his phrases have lingered on beyond his age to wit, "Sweetness and light" "high seriousness", "to see life steady and see it whole" ,"to see an object as it in itself is". While conferring an honorary degree on him, the Chancellor of Oxford University cited him as the most sweet and most enlightened man. That was in 1870.
- In 1883, Matthew Arnold visited the United States on a lecture tour and his daughter Lucy who accompanied him got married to an American and he visited America again when a child was born to his daughter. Arnold's influence is still felt in American universities and the best book on him is written by Lionel Trilling, an American. He is taught in American universities as a major literary and social critic as much a poet. He was granted a lifetime pension by Gladstone, the then Prime Minister of England.
- Arnold retired from active life in 1886 and died in 1888 in Liverpool where he had gone to receive his grand daughter who was to accompany her mother Lucy from America. He had jumped a fence to catch a tram car but dropped dead on April 15, 1888 leaving behind a formidable reputation and profound influence on the succeeding generations, far beyond the borders of his own country and is immortalized in his highly valued literary works.

Important Dates in Arnold's Life

- 1822** Born 24 December, Laleham on the Thames. Second child and eldest son of Dr. Thomas Arnold and Mary Penrose Arnold.
- 1828** Dr. Thomas Arnold appointed Headmaster at Rugby school.
- 1833** Dr. Thomas Arnold bought a house in the English Lake District, known as Fox How.
- 1836** Arnold admitted to Winchester School, his father had studied there.
- 1837-41** Arnold could not adjust at Winchester and joined Rugby school. Arthur Hugh Clough, senior to him by three years, whom he immortalised in an elegy entitled *Thyrsis*, also studied there.
- 1840** Arnold won the Rugby poetry Prize for *Alaric at Rome*, elected to and open classical Scholarship at Balliol Collage, Oxford under the tutorship of R. Lingen.
- 1841** Arnold went to Oxford in the Michaelmas term. Dr. Thomas Arnold appointed Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford.
- 1842** Dr. Thomas Arnold died at forty-seven of *angina pectorisa* on 12 June.
- 1843** Arnold won the *Newdigate* Prize for his *Cromwell*.
- 1844** Arnold got Second class in *Literae Humaniores*, i.e., Humanities.
- 1845** Arnold taught at Rugby, elected to a Fellowship at Oriel College, Oxford.
- 1846** Arnold travelled in France and Switzerland. In Paris he met George Sand, the female novelist and Rachel, the famous actress.
- 1847** Arnold appointed Private Secretary to Lord Landowne, President of Lord John Russell's Cabinet.
- 1848-49** Arnold travelled in Switzerland, when he met Marguerite.
- 1849** Arnold's first volume of poetry, *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems* published anonymously as by 'A'.
- 1851** Arnold appointed Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools on 14 April; married Frances Lucy Wightman, daughter of Judge Wightman on 10 June.
- 1852** *Arnold's Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems* published anonymously as by 'A'.
- 1853** Arnold's volume of Poems appeared, with a long preface; he expounded his poetic theory and vindicated Classicism in an age of Romanticism.
- 1855** Arnold's Poems, Second Series appeared.
- 1857** Arnold appointed Professor of Poetry at Oxford, delivered Inaugural Lecture on 'The Modern Element in Literature' re-elected to the Professorship for the Second term after five years.
- 1858** Arnold's classical drama, *Merope* published.

- 1859** Arnold appointed Foreign Assistant Commissioner to the Newcastle Commission. In that capacity visited Schools in France, Switzerland and Holland, appeared his *England and the Italian Question*.
- 1861** Published *The Popular Education in France and On Translating Homer*. His friend Arthur Hugh Clough died at Florence of 13 November.
- 1861** Arnold's eldest son, Thomas, and infant son, Basil died. His *Schools and Universities on the Continent* published.
- 1862** Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* and *New Poems* published.
- 1862** Arnold's *Twice-Revised Code and On Translating Homer: Last words* were published.
- 1865** Arnold visited France, Italy, Germany and Switzerland as a member of the Taunton Commission. His *Essays in Criticism, First Series* published.
- 1866** Arnold's elegy *Thyrsis* appeared in Macmillan's Magazine.
- 1867** *New Poems and On the Study of Celtic Literature* published Arnold's Professorship at Oxford ended.
- 1870** The degree of Doctor of Civil Law (D.C.L) conferred of him at Oxford University. His *St. Paul and Protestantism*, published appointed Senior Inspector of Schools.
- 1872** His son William died. *A Bible Reading for Schools: The Great Prophecy of Israels Restoration* Published.
- 1873** Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* published.
- 1875** Arnold's *God and the Bible* appeared.
- 1877** Arnold declined Rectorship of St. Andrew's university. His *Last Essays on Church and Religion* published.
- 1879** Arnold's *Mixed Essays* published.
- 1882** Arnold's *Irish Essays* published.
- 1883** Arnold's granted a Civil of 250 a year by Gladstone, Prime Minister Of England, published visited America on a Lecture tour. His *Isaiah of Jerusalem* appeared.
- 1884** Arnold appointed Chief Inspector of Schools.
- 1885** Arnold did not accept re-nomination Oxford Professorship. His *Discourses in America* published.
- 1886** Arnold resigned the Inspectorship of Schools. His *Report on certain points connected with Elementary Education in Germany, Switzerland, and France*, released, visited America for the second time.
- 1888** Died of angina Pectoris, A hereditary curse on 15 April, buried at Laleham. His *Essays in Criticism, Second Series* appeared posthumously.

The Victorian Age

Times of Arnold

(A) Life of the Novelist

Was Victorian Age an extension of the Romantic Era? The question is interesting for viewing the Literature as well as the history of Arnold's times. Keats and Shelley, who epitomised the spirit of the romantic age died young but Carlyle who also wrote with fire and a searing vision lived long and continued to stride the Victorian times though he was also a contemporary of Shelley and Keats. It also needs to be noted that Wordsworth, prophet and leader of the Romantic Age lived into the Victorian era though when he died he had lost the zeal and vision of his early romantic poetry. In fact, the romantics regarded him as a 'lost leader' and, though he gained Laureateship and respectability of the Establishment, he was reduced to be a hollow ghost of his early poetic achievements; the living man of the Victorian times was hardly a shadow of the prophetic voice of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*: He survived only:

*To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
which blamed the living man.*

But we tend to impose division on the continuity of time, especially for academic purposes, so that we are able to perceive patterns of social or literary trends and tendencies of a certain length of period of time for easier and more logical understanding of literary and social history than a formless, chaotic flow of time would allow. Yet, it is difficult to impose a sharp division between the end of the Romantic era and the beginning of the Victorian age. The high tide of Romantic inspiration disintegrated and got scattered into different channels whose flow was not swift but somewhat dull and limited in comparison. The new developments in the literature of the Victorian Age are represented by Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, the pre-Raphaelites and Meredith. All these writers, in some way or the other, are related to the Romantic Age. Rossetti looks back to Keats; Arnold to Goethe and, surprisingly, to Byron; Browning looks back to Shelley; and Tennyson imbibed the romantic inspiration and made it dulcet and oversweet but with disappearing freshness and fading colours.

New Directions in Victorian Writers: Mair and Ward, in their history, note a distinctive departure from the Romantic tendency of treating men and women as projections of Nature itself. The Victorians started looking at man and women in terms of world life if not entirely existentially. Wordsworthian Characters such as *Michael*, or *The Brothers* appear to be 'natural objects' while Browning's *Last Duchess* or even *Pippa* belong to life. Mair calls it an advance but we beg to differ. It is not very helpful to pass judgements in such matters. It is a question of perceptions. The universe of man has many worlds and they exist all at once rather than being advanced or backward. The romantics cared more for the spirit that soars and looks beyond. The Victorians were more occupied with the *milieu* in which they lived. With the development of industrialism, life was becoming more complex and the Victorians felt the impact of the forces of science and industry more powerfully than the Romantic in whose times life was comparatively simpler. In this context it will be meaningful to understand the rise of the novel in the Victorian age. Even Browning the poet has been described as a novelist in verse. Fiction as a form lends itself more comprehensively to analysing and depicting the world of men and women as individuals interacting with one and another in relationship of changing equations.

'The Victorian Age, then, added, humanity to nature and art, as the subject-matter of Literature'. Arnold's own poems such as *The Forsaken Merman*, *Scholar Gypsy* *Rostum* and *Sohrab* are kind of novels. While

the Romantics were overly conscious of the forces of Nature and Destiny and other larger than life forces, the Victorians were conscious of themselves, increasingly so of their social environment and social fate. The scientific spirit of doubt and discovery too was in the ascendant in this period and Darwin's Theory of Species profoundly affected Man's view of God and Universe. At the same time, the invention of steam engine changed, nay, revolutionised and exploitation of man by man for industrial and commercial work and profit. Doubt started being celebrated as much as faith as Tennyson, the Poet Laureate of the Victorian Age wrote:

*There lives more faith in honest doubt
Believe me, than in half creeds.*

The harsh reality about the evolution of man is his animal existence; and, 'survival of the fittest' is the prevailing rule. It was now a 'time of factories and fact', the immediate Fate of men was no longer metaphysical but in the hands of other men and in the hands of distant gods.

The Span of Victorian Age: In terms of time, the Victorian Age has been assigned a period of sixty-four years: From 1837 to 1901. This period of time is marked with scientific advance, political unrest and dissensions, material progress. The methods and means of increasing prosperity and wealth also underwent revolutionary changes brought increased comfort to some and increased struggle for existence for many. England, a small island nation, became an Empire where the Sun never set. The Great Exhibition of 1851 signified both commercial expansion and national pride. But all was not power and glory. The slums increased with the same rapidity as the brand new urban habitat all over England. The disease and decrepitude and deprivation of humanity in England was as glaring as the rising class of the newly rich or nouveau riche. And this social phenomenon attracted the attention of the writers and poets of the times.

Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, Charles Kingsley, Mrs Gaskell, Dickens, Galsworthy and so many other writers responded with anger and protest in varying degrees. Starved child-workers, sweating seamstresses, hungry ill-paid men of labour wrenched the consciousness and conscience of sensitive minds. Millowners and capitalists were heartless toward their servants and workers. The middle-class gained the right to vote and the Whig and Tory parties got transformed into Liberals and Conservatives respectively. Liberals supported and promoted relentless and limitless individualism. The British Empire was expanding in all directions and the plight of colonies in far flung areas of the world across the seven seas was throwing up new political and economic forces. The British Government, full of imperial arrogance, was also full of complacency. Democracy at home and despotism in colonies of alien soil was the Janus-faced policy of the British Ruling Classes. India too became a part of the British Empire after the 1857 political upheaval and sepoy revolt. This was around this time that Arnold had already published the second volume of his poems.

Other important national and international developments were in the offing. In 1832, slavery was abolished. Anti-corn Law League was formed in 1838. Penny Postage Act was passed in 1840. Ashley's Factory Act got passed in 1844. Free trade was declared to be the national policy in 1846, as Corn Law was repealed. The Jews in England were allowed to hold public offices, marching a step ahead in an atmosphere marked by racial discrimination and hatred. *Chartism and the Chartist Movement Launched in 1836* need special mention and are significant developments in the early part of the Victorian Era. This Movement of the common people is a part of the history of democracy. Chartism was a response to unbridled exploitation under capitalist dispensation and the policy of *laissez-faire* which favoured the factory owners and moneyed upper crust of British society. The severity of the capitalist system had become unbearable and working class and conscious elements within the society gave vent to their discontentment through collective agitational methods. The masses and the mainstream of society lent moral support to the Chartist activists. A People's Charter demands continued until 1918. Some of the Chartist demands were: (i) universal manhood franchise, (ii) annual elections to Parliament (iii) fixed salaries/emoluments for Members of Parliament (iv) voting by secret ballot (v) qualification for seeking membership of Parliament (vi) equal electoral constituencies or districts. The government yielded to these demands not all at once by degrees over a period of time but by

1918 (almost two decades after the ending of the Victorian era in 1901) most of them had been met. The Chartist Movement was a working class movement and on the public mind and it proved to be a historical force that had to be reckoned with. Strikes, protests, demonstrations and riots were reduced to ten; women and children were not forced to work in the mines in the wake of this movement. Robert Owen, a leader and man of vision proposed checks and controls over indiscriminate use of machine for ensuring humane treatment toward who operated or worked on them. In the beginning workers were neither united nor organised but bargaining. By the end of the Victorian era, labour leaders from the United Kingdom of Great Britain were visiting other countries, including India, to organize factory and other workers for agitational action.

Though the Victorian Age was a time of scientific and intellectual development, it was also a time of doubt, self-deception and disillusionment. Matthew Arnold, a foremost thinker and critic of his own times shared with other scholars and scribes, poets and thinkers an ironic view of the material progress and mental advancement recorded by the Victorian era. Lytton Strachey, G.K. Chesterton, Ruskin and Carlyle debunked the claims of wealth and riches and were horrified by the dishonesty and degradation of human beings under the impact of the new forces unleashed by capitalism and greedy pursuit of getting and possessing more and more resulting in the loss of godly values and drying up of the human conscience. G.M. Young wrote *THE PORTRAIT OF AN AGE* which has his assessment of the Victorian era. On re-reading, it does not appear to be an encomium. Anthony Trollope, a novelist and realistic observer in his *Autobiography* has this to say about his times: "Whether the world does or does not become more wicked as years go on is a question which probably has disturbed the minds of thinkers since the world began to think. That men have become less cruel, less violent, less selfish, less brutal, there can be no doubt; – but have they become less honest? If so, can a world retrograding from day today in honesty, be considered to be in a state of progress? We know the opinion on this subject of our philosopher Mr. Carlyle. If he be right, we are all going straight away to darkness and the dogs. But then we do not put much faith in Mr. Carlyle nor in Mr. Ruskin and his followers. The loudness and extravagance of their lamentations, the wailing and gnashing of teeth which comes from them, over a world which is supposed to have gone all together shoddy-wards, are so contrary to the convictions of men who cannot but see how comfort has been increased, how health has been improved, and education extended- that the general effect of their teaching is the opposite of what they have intended. It is regarded simply as Carlylism to say the English-speaking world is growing worse from day to day. And it is Carlylism to opine that the general grand result of increased intelligence is a tendency of deterioration"

Macaulay, who laid the foundation of the English system of education in India, and a historian in the service of the British Raj was excessive in his praise of the Victorian age. More balanced critics while conceding advancement of science and material progress to Victorianism castigated the deteriorating ethos of the times. Arnold, a votary of culture, regarded the achievements of materialism as detrimental to human culture. L.M. Myers was scathing in his observation of the "deep-seated spiritual vulgarity that lie at the heart of our civilization." The rising trends of promotion of self-interest shocked most of the eminent writers and publicists. The scramble for power and pelf which we are witnessing in India today had its beginnings in the Victorian England who ruled over us then. Just as India is seeing and experiencing the phenomenon of expansion of education and intellectual capacities so did England in the Victorian era when Industrial development was creating the new middle-classes who, gaining economically and losing contact with the rural population, were no longer dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, The British society was undergoing structural changes disrupting the old order which was yielding place to the new order as celebrated by Tennyson in his famous poem with the refrain: "Ring in the New".

Revolution in scientific thought and transformation to scientific temper cannot be denied and England shared this change with the rest of Europe. In the medical research Pasteur, Koch, Lister, Paget made truly spectacular contributions that have had a long term impact on the conditions of living. Their discoveries and successful experiments and the spirit of inquiry generated by their practical application to daily life have helped reduce physical pain and suffering. Charles Darwin, T.H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, A.R. Wallace

and John Tyndall are some of the several eminent men of science who through their theories and writing are writings pushed the frontiers of scientific thought with a sudden and final blow of intellectual force. Just as in our own day, computer and internet and electronic media are revolutionizing communication and speedier aeroplanes and trains are restructuring human society everywhere, so also, the beginnings made in the Victorian era in these spheres had a deep and lasting impact on European society. Telephone, Telegraph, wireless, electricity changed the world. Human beings changed not only their ways of thinking but, more significantly, their ways of relating to one another. The institutions of family, marriage, friendship all underwent fundamental changes dramatically and visibly. These changes were grist to the novelist's mill and fiction emerged as a dominant and major form and genre in imaginative writing.

Political and social transformation went hand in hand. From the slums and poor segments of society emerged *DEMOCRACY* as the triumphing form of Government in Europe and England. The English people, the common people, had more freedom than ever enjoyed by them in their history. They now had personal liberty and certain fundamental rights. They also could feel a sense of equality more palpably. The Queen was now merely a symbol of glory bereft of her power, almost totally stripped of political awe and authority. The Divine Rights of Kings was a mythical proposition, or rather, supposition. The kings, queens, princes no longer enjoyed too many privileges at the cost of the public at large. Both the practice and theory of democracy were making revolutionary advance. The solid gainers of these advancements were, however, the middle classes. The lower and poorer classes and sections of society now looked up to the middle classes for shaping their own lives because the aristocracy was disappearing. The new middle-class was the model for the lower classes for promotion and socio-economic status. But there were writers and thinkers who in the rise of middle-classes saw a decline in the social value system and of western culture. The most ardent contemner of Democracy and Industrialism was Thomas Carlyle who searingly wrote about the evils brought about by these twin forces in his famous books and treatises such as *LATTER-DAY PAMPHLETS*, *CHARTISM*, *SHOOTING NIAGRA*.

A special feature of the Victorian era is an unprecedented expansion of colonialism. The British Empire had colonies and subject people on all continents. The whole of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the English-speaking countries came under the British rule. Britain made colonial inroads into the Muslim world also, Egypt and Sudan came under the British sway. E.M. Forster, a novelist and don at Cambridge University who served in India and made India as the setting and subject-matter of his novel, *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*, records a telling account of the expansion of British colonialism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in his book *THE COMMON PEOPLE*: "The closing quarter of the nineteenth century opened symbolically with the proclamation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India and ended with the South African War. Between 1875 and 1990 the total area of the British Empire was increased by not far short of 5,000,000 square miles, containing a population of at least 90,000,000. In other words in space five years the British governing class added to the Empire territories forty times as large as Great Britain, and with a population more than twice as large. In all, by 1900 Great Britain was the centre of an Empire ruling over 1300,000,000 persons of whom nearly 300,000,000 were to be found in India alone". India, of course, has been called the Jewel of the British Crown and a popular TV serial has been made on this theme. Henry James, an American novelist of those times called it "the great grabbed-up British Empire".

We often find distinction between culture and civilization difficult as both terms are in certain contexts used interchangeably. But the imperial Victorian era helps us understand the distinction and even contrast between the two clearly. The Victorian Age, as earlier remarked, saw the advance of civilization and decline of culture. Matthew Arnold in this context wrote: "I am a Liberal". yet I am a liberal tempered by experience, reflection, and renouncement. And, I am, above all a believer in culture." There were other voices who joined this chorus: "The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race", said John Stuart Mill in his famous essay *On Liberty*. He was a zealous supporter and advocate of democracy and freedom for all as he observed: "The only freedom which deserves the name is that of

pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs or impede their effort to obtain it”.

The Victorian era was also the era of philosophers and philosophies, of social and political thinkers. Democracy had brought in new waves of thought. How best the benefits of this new form of politics and government could be made to reach the common people in largest possible numbers was a challenge that remains to this day as creation of wealth does not necessarily implies equal or equitable distribution of wealth. The instinct of greed is over powering and man is reluctant to give others their due. These challenges were more prominently and distinctly felt and experienced by the Victorians because the thought and fact of multiplication of wealth of the society and people were new and lent confidence to theorists to propose philosophic approaches to not only remove inequality but also to ensure greater economic benefits, amenities of life and higher standards of living for the maximum number of people, if not for all. There emerged a school of thought which has been called *UTALITARIANISM* and the propounders of the utalitarian theories or philosophies have been called the *UTILITARIANS*, the more famous among them being Jermy Bentham, James Stuart Mill and John Stuart Mill. They were radical thinkers who suggested basic changes and approaches to social, political and economic problems. Their basic creed was “*THE GREATEST GOOD OF THE GREATEST NUMBER.*” Bentham is regarded as the foremost among Utilitarians’. Bentham was a jurist first and economist after. There are contradictory strains of thought in Bentham. As a jurist he was very conscious of the importance of restraint. As a philosopher of Law, he had reservations on the possibility of Liberty as a universal principal. Liberty, as a concept, is a generalization without scientific precision. Social science is the science of restraints as it is the science of laws. The Liberalist Economic Philosopher on the other hand overemphasizes liberty and suppresses restraint. Bentham, as a Jurist and Liberal Economist both at the same time, has the dexterous task of promoting and advancing the cause of Liberty and Restraint simultaneously.

What about Religion in the Victorian Age?. Religion was facing challenge and revolt in the wake of new scientific discoveries and social philosophies which questioned the existence of God. Ritualistic aspects of religions got jolted. Politics and Religion too had to re-define their relationship. The British church is Anglo-Catholic, a kind of cross between Catholicism and Pretest antism, with the Archbishop of Canterbury as the State-appointed Head of the Church of England. Catholics, like the Jews, had historical disabilities in England and they did not enjoy certain basic rights. Though the denominational discrimination was not completely overcome yet The Catholic Emanicipation Act of 1829 did aim at removing the disabilities of the practioners of Roman Catholicism in Great Britain. The Catholics, however, still remained debarred from some Universities. They could not be appointed as Regents, Keepers of Great Seal, Lord Chancellor. In the context, it will be relevant to remind us of the *OXFORD MOVE MENT*.

The *OXFORD MOVEMENT* IS also known as the *TRACTARIAN MOVEMENT*. This was surely a religious movement. The aim of this movement was to revive the religious beliefs and practices of the Middle Ages when the Roman Catholic Church was supreme. The promoters of this movement perceived that religion was in danger because of the new forces of politics and society. The society and culture, to these revivalists, were exposed to evil influences and could and should be protected by re-introducing the sacramental form of piety that was once advocated and sponsored by Lancelot Andrews and William Laud. Symbolism and ritualism to the Oxford Movement appeared essential. John Keble is regarded as the initiator of the Oxford Movement and his *TRACTS OF THE TIMES* (1833-41), a set of ninety pamphlets, may be regarded this movement’s manifesto. Cardinal Newman emerged as a charismatic leader of this movement. Principal Shairp assesses Cardinal Newman’s role and personality “A mysterious veneration had by degrees gathered round him, till now it was almost as though some Ambrose or Augustine or older ages had reappeared”. As irony of Fate would have it, this charismatic leader later lost fame, got embroiled in religious and theological controversies and had to face ignominy. But, irrespective of the merits and demerits of Oxford Movement and its impact, the fact remains that religion held its own and was not and could not be dethroned by Science and Reforms of the times.

Though Victorian age has earned the disparagement, revulsion and even contempt of the twentieth century and succeeding generations have been pejorative about the Victorians and their morality or lack of it, there are writers who have thought otherwise. G.M. Young thought that 1850's were exciting times and the right time for men "to be young in". Raymond William, writing in the riper part of the twentieth century described it as the age of "the long revolution". There is no doubt the reign of Victoria Queen after whom the era takes its name was full of activity and extending horizons. The Britishers were recognised as the ruling and imperial race. The skeptics like Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin were heard but not much cared for their discounting view of the Victorian norms. These prophets have found greater acceptance in other climes such as America and India. Gandhi venerated John Ruskin and Arnold continues to have audience in America. Traditional religion did not yield entirely its ground to science or utilitarianism. Gladstone, four-times Prime Minister of England wrote in *THE CHURCH IN ITS RELATION WITH THE STATE* : "I cast over that party a prophetic mantle and assigned to it a mission distinctly religious".

The preceding commentary on the Victorian Age will indicate that it was an age of increasing complexity and several new and varied streams of thought and action/reaction, beliefs, theories and ideas had entered the mainstream of the English society. Arnold, the prophet of culture saw anarchy and disorder taking over the life of his nation and society. He was unhappy and morose about the new development in politics and economy of the country. In a letter to his friend Arthur High Clough, he said": These are damned times- everything is against one- the height to which knowledge is come, the spread of luxury our physical enervation, the absence of great natures, the unavoidable contact with millions of small ones, newspapers, cities, light profligate friends, moral desperadoes like Carlyle our own selves, and the sickening consciousness of our difficulties". Arnold remained at odds with his times, he never could compromise with the changing mores of his age and increasing coarseness and vulgarity of taste and loss of refinement in social behaviour. He continues in the same letter " Reflect too, as I cannot but do here more and more, in spite of all the nonsense some people talk, how deeply unpoetical the age and all one's surroundings are. Not unprofound, not ungrand, not unmoving- ,but unpoetical."

Arnold, in his famous essay *Culture And Anarchy* pronounces his preference for Hellenism which for him stands for enrichment and flowering of the mind; and its opposite is Herbraism, the dominant tendency of his own age, which stands for hectic, thoughtless activity. Arnold was a modernist and was not averse to new ideas but it was the degradation of his times that annoyed him. He was not an orthodox christian. In the Bible he saw imaginative poetry as he wrote: "Its real superiority is in its charm for the imagination - its poetry. I persist in thinking that catholicism has, from this superiority, a great future before it; that it will endure while the Protestant sect (in which I do not included the Church of England) dissolve and perish. I persist in thinking that the prevailing form for the Christianity of future will be in the form of catholic Catholicism; but a Catholicism purged, opening it self to the light and air having the consciousness of its own poetry, freed from its sacerdotal despotism and freed from its pseudo-scientific apparatus of supernatural dogma. its forms will be retained as symbolising with the force and charm of poetry: a few cardinal facts and ideas, simple indeed, but indispensable and inexhaustible, and on which our race could lay hold only by materialising them."

The preceding account and analysis of the Victorian Age might leave one with the impression that it was a period of intense conflict and confusion, But in fact, it was not so. The Victorian Era is known for its reconciliation of diverse strands and opposing pulls. The continental model of the French Revolution had made the people of England wary of 'bloody revolution' which degenerates into "inhumanity of man to man". Therefore, in spite of the rising class conflict and discontent among the poorer sections, the respect for authority was maintained. There was both the assertion of liberty and restraint. Doubt and Faith found equal pedestals. Wealth of the few and want of the many only glared at each other and did not come to each other's throats. The imperial supremacy made the English people proud and patriotic. There were divisions but people were not divided in their common goal of achieving England's good which, according to the prevailing wisdom of the times lay in the "golden mean" – and that was the Grand Victorian Compromise.

The golden mean worked in all the spheres of human activity – in religion, politics, industry and even in Literature.

The influence of the continental Europe on the British Isle to was visible. Matthew Arnold himself was much influenced by Europe. He had a failed love affair in the Swiss Alps and retained the memory of this deep experience in his literary inputs. He was also influenced by two French critics, namely, Trine and Sainte Beuve. Taine believed that literature was the product of social forces-race, the moment and the milieu contributed to the shaping of literary forms. These factors are essential to be studied before arriving at an assessment of the literature emerging from their interaction. Sainte-Beuve had similar views and emphasised the study of a poet's personality for a proper understanding of his poetry and other literary creations. But the critic has to be objective in studying the work of a poet keeping his own likes and dislikes at bay. "Disinterestedness", thus became an Arnold criterion in life and literature.

Major Themes in Arnold's Works (Poetry)

Matthew Arnold is regarded highly both as a poet and critic. He is a major writer of the Victorian Age. Here we are mostly concerned with the major themes in his poetry. As already pointed out in previous chapters, Arnold published poetry between 1849 and 1867. His earlier poems written in his youth such as *Cromwell* though won the Newdigate prize, are considered as juvenilia. In the same category is placed his Rugby prize poem *Alaric at Rome*.

What are the major themes in his poetry between 1849 and 1867? LOVE, NATURE, LOSS OF LIFE, DEATH, STOICISM, UNREST OF THE VICTORIAN TIMES, FAITH AND DOUBT are recurrently expressed themes in his poems, including in those poems that have been prescribed for reading.

Arnold was a self-conscious poet. He was conscious of the inevitable comparison the reading public was prone to make with his contemporary poets who were held in higher esteem and were writing on similar themes with attitudes and approaches to life that differed from his own. He also had made "disinterestedness" as a basic criterion to judge poets. That he was capable of an objective appraisal of his own poetry can be gauged from a letter he wrote to his mother: "It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigour than Browning yet, because I have perhaps more of fusion of the two than either of them and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn."

Yes, Matthew Arnold did get his turn, perhaps not in his own times but in the twentieth century when much greater attention began to be paid both to his poetry and criticism. The trends in the twentieth century favoured the intellectual type of poetry that reflected the conflicts, confusion and tensions within and without the human mind and its environment. Therefore, in some ways, Arnold did surpass in his acceptance by the reading public, especially, among the academic world, the poet Laureate Tennyson though it is doubtful if he has surpassed Robert Browning. This is because of Browning's capacity for innovation and understanding of the complex psychology of the human mind which Arnold lacked. Arnold's poetry has a bitter-sweet taste compared to that of Tennyson's which is over sweet. Tennyson, too much taken up with line-alignment aspect of his poems is now seen as a superior type of versifier rather a poet. Arnold had the penetrative quality to his poetry and he deeper depend in the human dilemmas and projected the conflicts and complexities that have continued to linger beyond his time. Large social, political, religious conflicts of his age find verbal equivalence in his poems and engage the modern mind. Like Goethe, the great German poet, whom he admired, Arnold too put his finger on the painfully tingling nerve. What he said about Goethe could also be said about himself.

*"He took the suffering human race
He read each wound, each weakness clear,
And struck his finger on the place,
And said: 'Thou ailest here, and here!'"*

Arnold, thus, has survived the general demotion and devaluation of the many "eminent Victorians", to borrow the title from Lytton Strachey's famous book. Carleton Stanley, a literary commentator opines: "In his poetry there is a mature wisdom appealing to the elemental and universal in man; austere expressed without pomp, ornament, or tinkling music; and sometimes falling into lines as perfect and flawless as anything we know".

Love As Theme in Arnold's Poems

Autobiographical element is sought to be foisted on Arnold's love poems. He had a love affair with Marguerite

in Switzerland which could not mature in marriage. Critics have traced the memory of this failed love in several of his poems. These poems are not his greatest or even more striking. They do not compare well with the love poems of Browning, his own contemporary and with those of Shelley, a romantic lover and poet from the preceding age. He later married Frances Lucy who also is part of a pattern in some of his love-poems, also classed as lyrics. Love, however, is, by no means, a very prominent or persistent theme in his poetry as death and loss of life are. He is today remembered as a poet who wrote elegies rather than love poems. Some critics have traced his lack of strong expression of love in his poems to his Puritanism and his revulsion toward the so-called French "lubricity". Among the most conspicuous example of his love poems are those entitled: *SWITZERLAND* which, according to Smith and Grierson, hint at "a love for one between whom and him lay the gulf of a different ethics, temperament and experience".

He kept revising the titles of some of these poems which were mostly written in 1853. For example the poem entitled *THEY ARE TO MY FRIENDS WHO RIDICULED A TENDER LEAVE TAKING* later on was called *A MEMORY PICTURE*. Other love-poems are *The Like, A Dream, Parting, To Marguerite* and *Absence*. In 1854, he added *A Farewell*. In 1857, he changed the title of *To Marguerite* to *Isolation* and another poem that he called *To Marguerite*. In 1869, some more changes were incorporated. *We WERE Apart* now he called as *Isolation* and most liked of the *Switzerland* series poems *Yes ! in the Sea of Life* was given the title *To Marguerite*. This obsession with the title changes may have something to do with the psychological disturbance the memory of his long-receding love -affair may have been causing as he tried to forget it in his apparently very happy marriage with Frances. But these are speculations that do not either enhance or detract from the value of his love poems but such academic speculations are a part of our studies and need not be ignored in the present context. It is believed that there are about 29(twenty-nine) love poems that can be ascribed to the memory of Arnold's failed love and inspiration from Marguerite.

There is another bunch of love-poems or love-lyrics which form part of the anthology called *Faded Leaves*. The second series of love-lyrics includes: *The River, Too Late, Separation, On the Rhine and Longing*. Was Marguerite an idealized woman like Wordsworth's *Lucy* ? Or a real person. Though such enigmas are hard to resolve the fact is that Marguerite did exist. Also, Frances Lucy also is an inspiration though married love is often discounted as a source of inspiration. Arnold confided in his friends about the secret of blue eyes in a letter from Switzerland: "Tomorrow I repossess the Gemmi and get to Thum : linger one day at Hotel Bellevue for the sake of the blue eyes of one of its own/inmates." Marguerite was the one with blue eyes speculators believe.

The quality of Arnold's love poetry is peculiar to him. It does not have the element of ecstasy as found in Browning and Shelley. There is deep despair in them. Even in such poems as *Dover Beach* he calls on love for help from pain; love to him is a soothing balm for the aches and sorrows of fate and times:

*Ah love, let us be true
To one another.*

Echoed in *The Buried Life* is the same strain :

*When a beloved hand is laid in ours
.....
Abolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.*

The love poems of Matthew Arnold are full of elegiac tones and content. They are a kind of mourning for the death of love. The only exception's *Dover Beach* which places love at the centre of an aching heart for succor and solace. It is "married love" which is a constant companion and fulfilment amidst the failures and despairs of life. Arnold, unlike Keats, was not a "passion's slave". He had no faith or obsession with romantic love. Love was not his ideal either. Peace, calm and resignation of life were his pursuit. Duffin's remarks about his love poetry are apropos here : "There is no lurid passion like that in the Sonnets (of Shakespeare's)".

According to Duffin, Arnold also lacks “any touch of the fine abandon of Burns, the romantic etherealism of Shelley, the angel worship of Browning and Patmore.”

In longer poems of Arnold also the theme of love streaks through. In *The Forsaken Merman*, *The Youth of Nature*, *A Modern Sappho*, *The New Sirens* and *Tristram and Iseult* are such examples. In *The Forsaken Merman*, the Marguerite figure makes its presence felt more than incidentally. This aspect will be taken up in the discussion of the text of this poem later on. *A modern Sappho* bears comparison with Browning and has the appearance of imitation of Browning’s dramatic-lyrics. In *Tristram and Iseult*, Arnold projects two types of women: those who satisfy their lovers and another type of women are those who can be identified with Bernard Shaw’s *Life Force* itself, full of passion, almost abstract in their cravings for creation and creativity who care not for men but for their own passions and pursuits, lovers for them are only encounters not very purposeful or for materializing dreams. Finally, it can be said that Love for Arnold the poet was a territory he feared to tread and in his poems pure love as a passion appears only timorously.

Stoicism

Arnold was a scholar of Greek and Latin. He borrowed heavily from these classical resources. He has a very strong streak of stoicism in his poetry. “Stoics” is the name given to the Greek philosophers such as Zeno of Tarsus, Diogenese, Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysioppos. Later on, Roman scholars and philosophers also donned airs of Stoicism and their works have left a deep imprint of stoicism on the western tradition. The Latin or Roman stoic philosophers include Cato, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and Brutus who were part of the Roman ruling elites and of the Roman establishment.

Stoicism and Cynicism pertain to a certain view of life which is pessimistic and negative. It takes note of human failing to cope with reality as it is. It has at the same time a piercing gaze on men and their activities. As a philosophy, Stoicism, has a higher purpose of teaching virtue as the Art of Right Action and of Right Living. Stoicism stands for capacity to absorb shocks, bear the burden of fate and darkness of despair, fortitude in the face of calamity. It is an ethical posture. Arnold’s stoicism dervies from Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, the former a Greek slave and the latter, an Emperor of Rome. Aurelius wrote *Meditations*, a set of private reflections that show his peculiarities as a public figure. According to Bertrand Russell, Aurelius “felt his public duties burdensome, and the he suffered from a great weariness.”

Epictetus philosophised that human beings are nothing but prisoners in an earthly or physical body. Marcus Aurelius echoed the same sentiment when he wrote: “Thou art a little soul bearing about a corpse”. These two philosophers loved their enemies. They abhorred pleasure, luxuries and material manifestations of man’s wealth. Death being an over present reality, one must organise and arrange ones life and actions keeping this harsh fact in mind. Arnold was excessive in his praise of Epictetus. In his poem *TO A FRIEND*:

Who prop, thou ask’st in these bad days, my mind?
That halting slave, who Nicopolis
Taught Arrianm when Vespesian’s brutal son
Clear’d Rome of what most sham’d him.

In the *Scholar Gipsy*, Arnold’s stoicism comes through most strikingly :

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade
With a free onword impulse brushing through.

In personal life as well as in his writings and poems, Arnold sought inspiration from the Stoics. He tried to be objective and disinterested in his views and ways of life, in the manner of the Stoics.

Nature As A Theme in Arnold’s Poetry

Arnold lived near where Wordsworth lived. They were also friends, though Wordsworth was much senior. In his *Memorial Verses*, Arnold wrote about his proximity to Wordsworth and the tenderness of feeling between the two.

In the *Memorial Verses*, he says about Wordsworth:

*He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke, and loosed our hearts in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth.*

Wordsworth was a lover and worshipper of Nature. But Arnold is not a pantheist as was Wordsworth. According to Stopford Brooke: "Nature to Arnold is frequently the nature the modern science has revealed to us, matter is motion, always acting rigidly, according to certain ways of Nature, which, for want of a wiser term, we call laws. For the first time this view of Nature enters into English poetry with Arnold. He sees the loveliness of her doings but he also sees their terrors and dreadfulness and their relentlessness. But in his poetry he chiefly sees in the peace of Nature's obedience to law, and the ever lasting youth of her unchanging life."

Arnold's Nature, then, is not a divine and benign agency as was perceived by Wordsworth. Nor does his nature import for the poet Dryads and Naiads on the wings of poesy! Smith and Grierson say that Arnold knew "Wordsworth's healing power; his visionary power he did not understand". For Arnold the secret gift of Nature was "peace" rather than joy. In *Quiet Work* and other similar poems, Nature imparts "tranquillity". Toil is the fate of man but Nature can provide relief of "toil, usever'd from tranquillity". Nature too is ceaselessly working but with no weariness or boredom or tension on its face. This is the "quiet work" which men could emulate or imbibe by their "travelling in life's common way in cheerful godliness." Arnold's accuracy as observer of Nature too is a notable feature of his poetry. This quality of his poetry comes through very impressively in poems such as *Resignation* and *The Mermaid* :

*Sand-strewn caverns cool and deep,
.....
Where great whales come sailing by
Sail and sail, with unshut eye. -The Scholar Gipsy*

The entire poem is full of such accurate description. *Dover Beach* and the *Scholar Gipsy* too have accurate descriptions of Nature: Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave, under a dark-red fruited yew-hedges. The *Scholar Gipsy*.

And the famous lines from *Dover Beach*:

*The sea is calm tonight,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits.....the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay*

Arnold's Nature exudes serenity. Lewis correctly points out that he "loved Nature in her quieter and more subdued moods, he preferred her silences to her many voices". The sea, the moon and water are recurring symbols and images in his poetry. In *Southern Night*, serenity is the gift of "shore-locked lakes" that "melt into open, moonlit sea; as "The soft Mediterranean breaks/At my feet free". And in *A Farewell*, " "Sweet the unbroken moon beams lay." In *The River*, "glides the stream, slow drops the boat". Oxford countryside was "dear to Matthew Arnold" and it was a quiet country. In *The Scholar Gipsy*, The Oxford countryside has been described with loving tenderness. Nature is serene and contrasted with the hectic human activity full of "sick hurry" and cross-purpose. Nature, of course, is superior to Man. At some places, we find Arnold cognizant of Nature's indifference to Man and his activity and perceptions. He was after all a product his age. And, a humanist who believed in the perfecting and perfection of man. he wanted Man to live in harmony with Nature which was yet an impossibility. He appears to shift his view-point while regarding Nature:.

*We, O Nature, depart
Thou survivest us! this,
This I know, is the Law - The Youth of Man*

Victorian Unrest as a Major Theme in Arnold's Poetry

Arnold is not regarded as a representative poet of the Victorian Age. That appellation is more appropriately reserved for the Poet Laureate Lord Tennyson of the Victorian Times who wrote for more than sixty years and epitomised the entire era in his poetry; he presented art, philosophy, movements, society, religion in his poems and, in his own day was fondly accepted as their poet by all classes of Englishman. Browning and Arnold, in later times achieved greater recognition for their contribution to poetry (Arnold's reputation is also due to his criticism, literary as well social) but they were not identified with the age in which they wrote. In the beginning of this note on major themes in his poetry, we referred to Arnold's letter to his mother in which he conceded having "less poetical sentiment than Tennyson" but at the same time he asserted that he had a "fusion" of these two elements or gifts possessed by Tennyson and Browning and has "more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn".

Arnold wrote and thought like a crusader with a mission. Because, he thought that this age was "unpoetical" and that he lived in "damned times. He was scared of being rendered" arid" by the dismal surroundings or social milieu which was full of "philistines" and "barbarians". "Only let us pray the time- God keep us both from aridity Arid that is what the times are. "he wrote to Clough, his friend. He also wrote to Clough about his poems:" As for my poems they have weight, I think, but little or no charm..... But woe was upon me if I analysed not my situation and Werter (sic) Rene, and such like, none of them analyse the modern situation in its true blankness, and unpoetrylessness(sic)". Arnold was not satisfied with his times; hailed and extolled by many of his contemporaries as "exciting" and "prosperous". He found the Victorian Age joyless and heading toward spiritual darkness as he sadly reflects in his oft-quoted poem:

*Hath really neither joy nor love nor light
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flights
Where ignorant armies clash by night*

- Dover Beach

To Arnold, the so-called progress of contemporary life was without significance or direction, Religion, Christian religion, had also lost its lustre and shine and had little to offer by way of consolation. He was a poet of doubt and scepticism. He lacked Tennysonian geniality and gentle faith even in the face of scientific fact and doubt, he also lacked the buoyancy and sturdy optimism of Browning's poetry. he could not absorb the shock of conflicts between science and religion, matter and spirit and in his hopelessness harked back to the surer times of antiquity:

*The Sea of faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle fur'd.
But now I only hear
Its long, mealncholy, withdrawing roar.*

- Dover Beach

He was sliding into a hostile, godless, confused world. In his poem *To A Fried*, he says: "Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?".

It is the old masters, Homer, Sophocles and Epictetus who beam light to him to let him see through the encircling gloom of his times. In *The Buried Life* he remonst-rated "I feel a nameless ov'r me roll". At times, his *dramatic personal* are so deep in the abyss of misery that willingly they go to death as in Empedocles on

Etna who escapes from the confusing, despairing world and jumps into the crater of Etna. Arnold felt “lonely” in the existentialist sense of alienation; he felt alienated from his own milieu and social setting. Lionel Trilling observes:...“The loneliness which Arnold represents in the person of Empedocles is no small part of the burden of own age”. He was disturbed, restless; and his spiritual tension represents the “spirit of Victorian unrest”. In his *Scholar Gipsy*, he gives vent to his melancholy and tiredness brought about by the “sick hurry” and “divided aims” of the Victorian Era. In *The Memorial Verses*, the Victorian age is called “the iron age” that symbolized: “Europe’s dying hour,/Of fitful dream and feverish power” and frightening was “The lurid flow/Of terror, and insane distress, Arnold’s spiritual depression is vividly projected in *The Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*. He continued “Wandering between two worlds, one dead,/The other powerless to be born.”

Arnold And Literary Traditions

Classicism And Romanticism

CLASSICISM: has become a part of Western Literary Tradition after the Renaissance or “re-birth” of European Culture after its scholars and learned men rediscovered Greek and Latin Books of Knowledge and traced their origin to the Greek and Roman fountains of knowledge. *Classicism* is a term now used in wider sense to connote qualities of clarity, proportion, balance of form and content, lucidity in expression or presentation and light of reason that should brighten a work of art, including Literature. In one sense, any later work that looks back, seeks inspiration from the Greek and Roman masters in art and literature and other branches of knowledge is also termed as a *Classic*. An important trait of classical poetry is its restrained expression; the emotion and feeling which are the basic elements in a poem are never allowed to overflow but need to be subordinated to the requirements of forms (stanza, metre, sonnet, couplet, quartrian etc). Often, the original inspiration and spontaneity and freshness gets lost in the hands of lesser poets or versifiers and the result is insipidity and tastelessness. Therefore, to fit emotion into an arrangement of words has to be more than a decorative art. Long sustained inspiration to support the diligent effort required is a necessary condition for achieving classical perfection in poetry or else it would appear either fake imitation of some other creation or a failed experiment or exercise. At its highest, classical poetry achieves universality of perceived truth and simplicity of expression which repetition cannot weary. Economy of expression and the guiding principal of “brevity is the soul of wit” lend not only excellence but abiding permanence to a *classsical work of art* which retains its shine and never ages through the passage of time, rather gains the status of everlasting truth and beauty.

Parthenon (epithet applied to Greek goddesses, especially Athena; a Doric temple of Athena, built in 5th century B.C) of ancient Greece is regarded as the ideal of CLASSICISM because it is an example of a perfect proportion between the parts and their whole. Classicism, laid emphasis on Reason and the Knowledge and the Known. Mystery is not denied but it is put in the brackets. The Greeks knew that no creativity was possible without inspiration and imagination whose sources are mysterious yet a work of art has to be seen and placed in the context of a world lived in by mortals and, therefore, should not be beyond their comprehension or grasp. They also knew that Reason cannot explain or capture Reality which imagination can embody mysteriously but still they insisted on Reason because, perhaps it clarified the significance of the imaginatively created wonders. They had the belief that an artist can create only under inspiration of the Muses but these creations had to become a part of the common and ordinary world of men/women and created works have to be “timeless within time.” Limitations are a necessary fact for the Greek Masters and their later followers.

Romanticism, which shall be discussed separately, on the other hand, spurned the very idea of limitation and for The Romantics imagination has to be unbounded and unrestrained in its expression and impose its won form on thought and feeling without outward rules, regulation and control. They believed that Imagination has and knows its own order and harmonizes better, if it is left to itself, and if it is true, it will find its own form. For Wordsworth, the high priest of Romantic poetry, “poetry is an overflow” of “spontaneous feelings”.

The two categories of *Classicism* and *Romanticism* are not hidebound classifications of art and literature and often are present together in the works of the same creator/poet. In English literature, Milton is a most astounding example of Classicism and Romanticism running like an intertwining stream of thought and expression. Matthew Arnold too, in his poetry, combines the two strains of romanticism and classicism. Lewis, in his *The poetic Image* warns the students of Literature to “resist the temptation, as strong now as ever it was, of dividing poets into teams and making them play against each other.”

Arnold was not a believer and practitioner of “unbridled imagination”. He was endowed with too much of a critical spirit for doing so. He relied more on intellect than on “powerful feelings” or strong emotions. He was critical of Shelley and Keats and said: “Keats and Shelley were on false track when they set themselves to reproduce the exuberance of expression, the charm, the richness of images, and felicity of the Elizabethan poets.” He also often protested against subjectivism and Individualism. In his preface to 1853 Poems he recorded the necessity and importance of owning up the legacy and heritage of the Greeks; Watson regards 1853 preface as a “manifesto” of classicism of the Victorian times. Arnold favoured poems that are “particular, precise and firm”, that deal with primary emotions and affection and elementary feelings” which subsist permanently in the race”. The virtue of the Greeks was that “They regarded the whole; we regard the parts”.

Matthew Arnold possessed a Greek temperament. In Advertisement to the second edition of his poems, in the Oxford lecture entitled “The Modern Element in Literature” and in the many letters he wrote to friends and relatives, he pays homage to the Greek Masters; Homer, Sophocles, Epictetus; and his drama *Merope* follows Sophocles. He wanted the example of the Greeks for precision and spartanism to prevail against the excesses of expression and imprecision of observation of his own times. Hugh Walker’s comment is relevant here: “As regards his poetical methods, Arnold is essentially classical not romantic. Not since Milton has there been any English poet more deeply imbued with classical spirit. Arnold was so by native predilection; but his innate tendency was strengthened by the operation of a principle he was never tired of insisting upon – the principle that what we ought to attempt should be determined for us by a consideration of what is needful.....Arnold’s own design was to tone down what was excessive and to supply what was deficiency. It was this, which made him turn to France and insist so much on the value of French Literature to England. “It was this principle which made him seek to Hellenise, to emphasise the importance of seeing the whole instead of seeing only the beauty of parts and cultivate the qualities of “lucidity, restraint and proportion.” He only occasionally opted for an antique theme, nor was he very successful in the implementation of such ancient designs as *Merope* which is frigid or *Empedocles* who is none else but himself, the nineteenth century “modern man”. Empedocles does not speak like the Greek original but he speaks like Matthew Arnold, the man despaired of his own Victorian times. Yet, Arnold was a classicist and not a new-classicist. If he reprimanded Keats and Shelley for excessive overflow of expression, he equally admonished Dryden and Pope for their slavish imitation and superficial glitter of their Greek and Latin original models. In his “Study of Poetry he remarks about these pseudo classicists (Pope and Dryden) “their poetry was conceived and composed in their wits; genuine poetry is conceived and composed in the soul.”

Grand action and grand subject were the main consideration for the Greeks, Arnold said: “This is the Greek understood.... With them, the poetical character of the action in itself..... was the first consideration; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images; which occur in the treatment of and action. They regarded the whole, we regard the parts.... the unapproached masters of the Grand Style”. The Greek expression, he says, “is excellent” because “it is simple and so well subordinated because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys. He always avoided the “grotesqueness - conceit and irrationality” which in others distressed him. He craved and tried, irrespective of his total success in this respect what he called “architectonic”. Sophocles was his favourite model from the Greek example because “whose even balanced soul/From first youth tested up to extreme old age/ Business could not make dull, not passion wild/Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole.” It was his persistent quest for classical values in his poetry that perhaps failed him to win popularity. The Romanticism had not yet exhausted its stream and the Victorians fall for it and fell for the poetry of Tennyson which, though has not the tide of Shelleyan passion, or Keatsian “numbness” of sense under the influence of hemlock, nor has it the gurgling /sound of Wordsworthian cataracts but still it had the doses of sensation, degrees of somnolence and hypnotic sounds that could and did haunt the Victorians in their bourgeois bowers.

Arnold could not fully overcome the influence, tendency and demands of his times and romanticism does creep in his avowedly classical poems and poetic drama such as *Sohrab and Rustum*, *Merope*, *Balder*

Dead, *The Scholar Gipsy*, *Thyrsis*, *The Grand Chartreuse*, which are otherwise examples of highly restrained expression. He practised in these poems the lessons learnt from the Greek masters. *Sohrab and Rostum* display resignation to Fate and diction remains highly restrained throughout. The theme is noble, the legend is noble and grand and rouses the basic and primary human emotions which are freed from the limitation of temporality. The story is about “sublime acquiescence in the course of fate”. Similes are very classical, e.g.; “Like some rich hyacinth which by the scythes/Or and unskilful gardener has been cut/Moving the garden grass-pots near its bed/ and lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom.....*Merope* is a tragedy in the classical mould and in Arnold’s own words “the most complete reproduction in English of the forms and conventions of Sophoclean tragedy.” in which Aristotelian rules were consciously followed. But as a play, it failed. *Balder Dead* is not as epical in its objectivity as *Sohrab*... but its ending is poignant. *The Scholar Gipsy* is a pastoral elegy modelled on the Creskippal model but it also has a heavy doze of modernism in which he wanted not only to “animate” but also to “ennoble” “The complaining millinons of men” who “Darken in labour and pain”. The same is true of *Thyrsis* which too is an Elegy, quietly undertoned, for which Arnold looked to Theocritus and Virgil. *Empedocles On Etna*, classical in theme yet is romantic in treatment. According to Arnold himself “suffering finds no vent in action.... a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done”. He was so convinced of its imperfection that he withdrew it from public circulation. Thus, Arnold remained a committed classicist but poetry has a way of violating norms set by its own creator, the poet and Arnold’s poetry crosses over to Romanticism because poetry is a force of verbal freedom.

ARNOLD’S ROMANTICISM. If classicism prescribes restrained expression, Romanticism calls for supremacy of Imagination to prevail against all odds. In English Literature, Coleridge and Wordsworth are its greatest propagators and practioners. For Wordsworth, it is “inner light” that was “never on sea or land”. It is there to embody the poet’s visions and dreams. Romanticism has many and differing definitions. For some it is a curious mix of “beauty and wonder” or “strangeness added to beauty” or “renaissance of wonder” to others it is “the awakening of the imaginative sensibility”. Romanticism has been called “liberalism in literature”, “liberation often ego”, “revival of medievalism”, “escape from life”, withdrawal from the actualities of life, “passion flower born out of the blood of Christ”, “Romanticism is spirit, classicism is form”, if you like. It is clear that Romanticism does not like any fixed definition. It is a pulsating impulse and always on the wings. *Imagination is its essential* and highest quality or characteristic.

Gothic cathedrals and grotesque medieval castles have been presented or projected as its symbols. Disproportionate parts of building that just out in lonely majesty declaring its independence from the whole of the building may be cited as good an example of the Romantic style and Imagination as any other far fetched example. No predetermined scale or design, no unity, no symmetrical arrangement are necessary for the Romantic imagination to prevail. Yet, at the same time, a work of imagination may have all the attributes of a classical work of art but it has to be spontaneous and not based upon a *priori* dictates of composition or creation. “The medieval mind” worked and lived in the very midst of “the Supernatural”, the unknown and unknowable, mysterious and bewitching and stretching to infinity and nothingness alike. Almost like God the unknowable. And Romantics draw their inspiration from this kind of “medieval mind” away from the rational mind of the ancient Greeks or modern scientific inquiring mind.

Classicists believe Truth is manifested in outer reality; Romanticism believes Truth remains essentially “inner”. A Romantic is an explorer of the unknown and is satisfied returning from his/her explorations without any objective gain but a transformed imagination, a transformed self. For classicists, Truth cannot be individual and it has to appear as common to all and experienced by all. According to Wordsworth “the poet is with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness than are supposed to be common among mankind”. The Greeks proposed *Golden Mean*, the Romantics are for emotions and passions with no holds barred.

Subjectivity and Individualism are also important features of *Romanticism*. Rousseau, an important figure and thinker of the Romantic era highlighted the *perfectibility of man* which is also a *humanist belief*.

Shelley and Swineburne and many other romantic poets sang glories of man. *Individuality*, which is now a basic factor is the concept of *human rights* is an essential item of faith with the Romantics. Classicists did not rely on feelings because they cloud judgement but the Romantics believed without feeling no human development is possible. The classicists made objectivity and reason as the soundest criteria for deciding the issues of life and art but the romantics said it was personal reflection or subjective response and inner voice that ought to be the deciding principles. It is perhaps for this reason that most romantic poets are lyrical and *lyricists*. The source of *Supreme Truth* for the Romantics lies within the human personality and, therefore, expression of that truth has to be unpremeditated and profusely abundant. In spite of commonality and universality of human experience, each human being is also distinctive and even unique and the right subject for artistic and poetic celebration, howsoever paltry and small his status in the world of human affairs, say the Romantics. For the Classicist, there are the heroes and heroines who, when they suffer or feel elevation of thought and feeling, because of their high status in society, affect all the common and lesser beings, especially the hero's or the Great Man's fall holds both example and lesson for the viewer of Tragedy in a theatre. But, the Romantics ideas such debunk of "greatness" and the poorest and most anonymous among human beings is capable of soaring into heights of passion and suffering and of achieving greatness both in life and drama and poetry, and are fit subjects for imaginative art or poetry and drama and fiction.

Romantic poets find *formalism* obstructive for their expression which has to be very spontaneous and without controls. Poetic expression has to be full of power and flow, gusty, intense like the Shelleyan whirlwind or West Wind. Wordsworth asserted that the Poet is a man who has "more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness". The Romantics are full of wonder, supernatural, unfamiliar and Utopian in their thought and imagination and project them freely in their works of art and literature.

Arnold as a Romanticist: Arnold practised and professed classicism yet there is a visible strain of romanticism: Arnold practised and professed classics yet there is a visible strain of romanticism in his poetry. All the Romantic poets exercised great influence on him and he wrote deeply and extensively on Keats, Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth who was almost a neighbour and friend, besides being an influence on him. "There are four people, in especial, from whom I am conscious of having learnt - a very different thing from merely receiving a strong impression... and the four are... Goethe, Wordsworth, Sainte Beuve, and yourself", Arnold, wrote to Henry Newman. Wordsworth has been called Arnold's *spiritual father*. In *Memorial Verses*, Arnold pays a glowing tribute to the departed poet. "Laid us as we lay at birth/On the cool flowery lap of earth". In *The Youth*, he reminds Wordsworth as "a priest to us all/of the wonder and bloom of the world". In his essay on Wordsworth, Arnold reminds us of the romantic poet's "extra-ordinary power" in feeling "the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties." But, more amazing is Arnold's fascination for Byron, the sensualist considering Arnold's strict sense of morality and almost puritanic approach to life.

"And Byron! let us dare admire
If not thy fierce and turbid song
yet that, in anguish doubt, desire
The fiery courage still was strong."

But Byron had no direct influence as did Keats. He appears to have fallen for Keat's diction in *Sohrab and Rustum* and *To a Gipsy Child by the Seashore*. *Tristram and Iseult* have descriptive similarity to *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and important poem by Keats. For Arnold Coleridge and Shelley were no major poets but critics have traced the influence of these poets on him. Coleridge's *Christable* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* cast their shadow on Arnold's *Saint Brandon*, *Tristram and Isuelt* and *The Forsaken Merman*. Even among the continental writers he turned to those who had distinctly romantic imagination: Joubert, Maurice de Guerin, Senancourt and George Sand.

Which Tradition Matthew Arnold belongs to - Romantic or Classic? The answer is not and cannot be straight and absolute. Arnold, in fact, interestingly belongs to both the traditions. And, in equal measure. This duality of tradition ought to be clear from the preceding discussion on Arnold's classicism and romanticism.

Detailed Critical Summary of the Text

The Poems :

1. **The Forsaken Marman**
2. **Memorial Verses**
3. **Dover Beach**
4. **The Scholar Gipsy**

1. **The Forsaken Marman** is one of the six narrative poems written by Matthew Arnold. It is based upon *The Story of My Life* by Hans Christian Anderson and George Borrow's *Romantic Ballads*. The Story is rather simple though somewhat strange. A Merman (Merman is a Fabled Creature of the waters having a man's body and a fish's tail. *Mere* means a sheet of standing waters or a lake, sea or pool. Mermen and Mermaids figure in Romantic fables, stories and poems) marries an ordinary human woman whose name is Margret (reminds of Marguerite, the French woman with whom Arnold fell in love but could not marry). Merman and Margret have five children. One day, Margret feels a longing to go back to her own village for saying prayers in her former Church. Merman, her husband, allows her to go back. Margret never returns. The Merman and the children keep wailing but they and their father, the Merman, have been deserted by Margret. Arnold has recreated the story with pathos and effective imagery. This is one of the early poems of Arnold but it has been hailed as a better poem than *Tennyson's Mermaid* and *Merman*, though Tennyson is an acknowledged craftsman of verse. Elizabeth Barret Browning, wife of Browning the poet had liked this poem and wrote about it to her friend Mary Mitford. Arnold's poetry, as already discussed, is a mixture of romantic and classical styles and traditions. Merman, however, is predominately romantic; it has both strangeness and beauty, two cardinal qualities of romantic poetry. Though it is a narrative poem, poetic flow is sustained over a long sequence making it a long lyrical poem. The poem's atmosphere has haunting music, brooding melancholy and sincerity of feeling which all together and in unison heighten its beauty. The classical elements in the poem too are not lacking. It has lucidity of style which is a special feature and requirement of classicism. It is in fact a curious mixture of diverse strains. For example, the lyrical element harmoniously mixes with the dramatic in this poem. Duffin, a discerning critic points out that *The Forsaken Merman* has three dramatic characters; The Merman, Margret and the Sea. The children too are there but they not serve as the main characters. They only enhance the pathos and melancholy of the drama. But, "the Sea is the most interesting character" as it is the Sea's kingdom, the watery home of the Merman which has been painted by the poet with an intimate and tender touch of art. "The great winds, salt tides, the white horses, the cool and deep caverns with the snakes and great whales, and the Marman's retreat, are wonderfully depicted."

Detailed Analysis/ Critical Comments

Come, dear children, let us away,

Down and away below!

.....

Lines 1-29

The poem opens with the above lines and sets the mood of desperation for the deserted husband and his children. The anguish and agony caused by the unexpected disappearance of Margret, the wife of the Merman and mother to his five children is heart-rending. The Marman appears to have lost all hope; he is on the edge of despair and social shame as is suggested by 'now my brother call from bay'. The

gathering storm “Now the great winds shoreward blow”—enhances the feeling of forsakenness, helplessness and helplessness. The accurate imagery of the sea acquaint us with the consummate skill of the young poet and his controlled manipulation of the action of the story set against the sea and storm. The inner disturbance finds a verbal equivalence in the lines:

*“Now the salt tides seaward flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
champ and chafe and toss in the spray,*

And appear to be the enlarged and elemental version of Merman’s anguished implorations to his innocent and deprived children to “Call her once before you go- / Call once yet !”, as he prepares to go back to the bottom of the sea, his habit at and face his brothers as deprived man forsaken by his woman.

In a last hopeless bid, he calls upon his children to call their mother by her first name “Margret! Marget!” because “dear” is the voice of her children to “a mother’s ear” and if their “voices” are “wild with pain” that should wrench her back to her crying children/ “Mother dear, we cannot stay!” as “wild white horses foam and fret”.

“Margrea! Margret!” and they hope “Surely she will come again” but it was all in vain. And, now there is no hope, no more calling, no more harking, they have lost her forever; “Call no more!”. With a master-stroke of human psychology, the poet let’s the last whimper of hope and the last look on “the white wall’d town” and “And the little grey church on the windy shore”/, “Then come down” to the bed of the sea where a motherless home awaits the children. And, in the very next moment all hope is lost: “She will not come though you call all day”/ “Come away, come away !” There is a kind of *tour de force*, psychological and poetic finality of “forsakenness” in these lines.

Lines 30-63

It seems some time has elapsed. It, is a time to remember the happy past. How soon the time passes! It looks as if it was only “yesterday” that all this happened on the seashore: the parting and desertion on the part of her wife, Margret. And how all this came about? He speaks to his children, perhaps lost in his own thoughts and memories, sweet memories of “yesterday”, of a sweet home, tender time and loving nature of his wife. The memory of yesterday dramatizes the incident on the seashore, the going away forever of his life’s companion; “Children, dear, was it yesterday/ We heard the sweet bell s over the bay?” These are questions of life’s pain. Perhaps the memory will serve and the articulation of the memory of the last scene between him/his children and his wife/their mother will serve to relieve the pain and regain strength to come to terms with the reality of separation and desertion. Next few lines from “In the caverns where lay...”.. to “Where great whales come sailing by/sail and sail, with unshut eye”, have been singled out by critics for the accuracy of observation of the sea-imagery. Arnold seems to have a botanist’s and zoologist’s knowledge of the activities of the sea animals and the setting of the sea. They poetically establish the Robitat of the Merman with any convining sea scenery by the poet and, what is even more impressive, by the bond that the Merman feels with his sea- environment in the same way perhaps as the bold of Margret’s human environment, her natural habitat before she decided to live with The Marman as his wife and where she went back forever, never to return to sea-home.

It was the sweet sounds of the “bell” emanating from the gray church” that did the trick. It was Easter time when good Christians celebrate the suffering, sacrifice and rising again of the Holy Christ. It is the time of good Friday. It is time to repent and rejoice. It is a time of sacrifice and “rejuvenescence”, it is the time of the Spring. The tolling of the church bell reminds Margret of her Christian “soul” which she has “lost” (“I lose my poor soul Marman”) by marrying, the Marman. Now is the occasion to reclaim the lost soul. If she could go to the “gray church” where her own “kinsfolk pray” as it is “Easter-time in the world”. She is full of Christian pangs! “Ah me !”. Merman loves his wife and perhaps cares for her “soul” and let us her go/”go up, dear heart, Through the waves/ Say thy prayer, and come back to the

sea-caves” but she never returns and is no more heard of. There is only the memory of the cosy times the Merman and children spent with her, as if it was only “Yesterday” the “She combed” the hair of her youngest child who “sate on her knee” as she herself “sate” “On the red gold throne in the heart of the sea.” Painful and sweet are the memories of those days!

Lines 64-84. Clear and deeply carved is the memory of that fateful day when Merman’s wife and his children’s mother Margret left them forever to go to the “gray church” to say “prayers”. His children had started to “moan” as they were “long alone” and Margret was taking too much time at the prayers with her kinsfolk in the white-walled town. The Merman had said to Himself “Long prayers.. in the world they say” as the moments of waiting started stretching beyond endurance and the children continued to “moan” He recalls how in her search, he along with his children went “through the surf” .. “up the beach, by the sandy down” “where the sea-stocks bloom” and on “to the white walled town”. They walked through “the narrow paved street” and where the gray church stood “on they windy hill”. They did hear the “murmur” of the town folk’s “prayers” as they stood at some distance in the cold blowing air”. They even had a little glimps of Margret “by the pillar” then they saw her “clear” and called “Margret, hist! come quick, we are here” and he recalls having been “long alone”. They reminded her about the gathering storm at the sea and he pointed out “The sea grows stromy/ the little ones moan” but she had her eyes glued only to the “holy book”, the priest was saying prayers loudly. And, the door of the church was “shut”. So he had said, “Come away, chikdren/call no more” because it was all in vain.

Line 85-107. The Merman. from his abode in the “depths of the sea” let’s his mind and imagination wander into the human world, The world where his wife Margret now lives, leaving him and her children behind. She is no longer a “mermaid” now. On the country, she now is a part of “the humming town” and perhaps, he imagines, is plying her weaving wheel doing it as a part of the household chores. Perhaps, she is “singing Joyfully” and listen, what she is singing. she is singing joyfully about the child with a toy she had seen in the busy “humming street”. Or is she singing about her found again life of a woman of the human world, of her town, of the priest, of the “bell” in the church that had enticed her back to her town, of the “holy well”, in the church where she prayed to rescue her” soul”, of her being back in the “world of familiar faces”, of her return to the world of sunshine from the dark “deaths of the sea”. And so she is singing to her fullest satisfaction on the turn her fate had now taken and on finding herself back in “the blessed light of the sun”! But, then, maybe she also remembers her life in the deep sea, her days with her Merman husband, her children and may be, suddenly the “spindle drops from her hand “as a thought of those times in the sea passes her mind, may be the spinning wheel” stops suddenly and she comes to the window to throw a backward glance “at the sand” and beyond “over the sand at the sea” and perhaps she fixes a stare seaward and as in her mind’s eye she sees her past sea-life and she lets out a sigh at remembrance of things past ! And perhaps, here and there drops tears from her eyes for her children and for her husband, a strange being, half-human, half-fish !And sorrow brims into her saddened eyes for having lost that world of intimacy, love and affection, a very different life in the deep sea than the life now on earth, sunny earth !Merman, has memories, sweet and sad memories of her” golden hair” and “strange eyes” which now are perhaps “cold” with looking too much fixedly to the sea that was once her home.

Lines 108-123. The Merman, consoling his children and himself, lets his fancy roam into the imaginary world where the faithless woman now lives. May be she will some day reawaken to the realization of what suffering she has caused to her husband and children, may be when the “gusts shake the door”, or a storm hits her town and the sun’s shine is gone, she would be reminded of the sea and of those she left behind in the sea. She will “hear the winds howling” and “waves roar” from her life of yesterday and it will also be an occasion for us to see and say, as we see pearls of the sea strewn above us and in the roaring and whining of the waves we shall also have an occasion to say, say that “Here camea mortal/ But faithless was she”. Faithless woman is a recurring theme in romantic poetry. In fact, these lines remind us of Keats lines “O Knight, what can ail thee” when the flowers and leaves are withered from

the “Lake/And no birds sing”, from *The Lady Without Mercy*. The faithless woman from the world of men has forsaken the “kings of the sea”. The Merman too would be singing because from a sad, painful heart flow the feelings into poetic strains. And, now he imagines his lonely future with his lonely children, who will learn to live without Margret, wife and mother of yesterdays, and yet shall not be able to forget her. Winds would go on doing their usual work, moonlight shall come and go at midnight, “spring tides” will be low, “sweet airs come seaward” and the (Lines 124-143) moon will light the gloomy, blanched sand and “glistening beach”, “Up the creeks” and there will be a time in the future, to remember the Faithless Woman and go up to the “sleeping town” or gaze it from the “sand hills” and look at the “hill-side” church and then come back, after perhaps throwing a wistful glance on the scene which was once a witness to the forsaking act of the “faithless” wife and mother and a time to sing: “There dwells a loved one

Lines 128-143

*But cruel is she!
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea”.*

The Forsaken Merman has been called a romantic poem of a classicist. Not only that, it is an example of Arnold’s peculiar genius, not often expressed with such consummate skill where the *lyrical* and *dramatic* elements are so well mixed as *romanticism* and *classicism*. It has modernity, it has the intellectual element, it has the elegiac note, it has tranquillity and disturbance of the mind and, in other words, it has all the elements Arnold’s distinctive style was capable of manifesting. It sings of the death of love, of the incompatibility of the natural and the human. The Merman represents Nature and Margret the “human” and never the twain shall meet. It was a part of Victorianism to think this way. Nature is incomplete while man is perfectible. This is also the humanist creed. Just as the dramatic is expressed in the lyrical, so also the narrative has been lent charm and poetry through the lyrical flow of the Arnoldian lines. And, then, there is also a touch of the autobiographical in this poems. Arnold’s own failed love with Marguerite, a French woman, is a variation on this theme. Perhaps, as his letters indicate, the element of personal and cultural incompatibility was responsible for Arnold’s not being able to seek marriage to Marguerite. The religious element, a major concern in the Victorian age among writers and thinkers also find expression in this poem. Merman’s willingness to let Margret go to the gray church to save her soul by kneeling in prayer at the Easter-time and the resulting faithlessness in return for this very human gesture is a comment on the rigidity of religion and its interference with personal life of the practioner’s of an organised religion. Arnold’s poem is also acclaimed as an example of accurate observations and remarkable descriptions that reach our hearts as much as entice our eye. The magical quality of Coleridge, Keatsian melancholy, both imagery and metrical felicity make this poem stand out among the finest of the Victorian age.

2. **Memorial Verses (Elegy to William Wordsworth)** This poem was composed by Matthew Arnold on the occasion of Wordsworth’s death. Wordsworth died on April 23, 1850 and was buried on April 27, 1850. Arnold was a family friend of William Wordsworth’s and the latter’s son-in-law Edward Quilinan requested Arnold to write an elegy on his father-in-law, a poet respected by other poets including Arnold. Wordsworth was, in fact, the usherer of a new era of Romanticism in the history of English Literature. He inspired many other poets. Arnold, as a poet and thinker and critic was also much influenced by Wordsworth. And, he was glad to respond to this request as he states in a letter to his dearest friend Arthur Clough...“I have at Quilinan’s solicitation dirged W.W. in the grand style”.

An elegy is a conventional poem written in the memory of a departed figure. There are hundreds of examples where a poet of later times celebrates a dead, departed poet and eulogizes him and pays his homage to him, enumerating his contributions and qualities. It is also usual for an elegist to highlight the impact the departed poet has left on the times and life of others, his contemporaries and later generations.

In *Memorial Verses*, Arnold has sung praises of Wordsworth. As the elegiac convention demanded, he has spoken glowingly about the departed elder poet but his tribute pierces through the cover of convention and reveals the sincerity of feeling and genuine respect in which Arnold held Wordsworth.

In order to assign Wordsworth a high place among other great poets and writers of his time, Arnold brings in two other poets who died earlier but had put up a strife against the unwholesome trends of their times.

Lines 1-14

Byron had died in 1824 and Goethe in 1832. Goethe, though a German, had influenced the whole of Europe and the impact of his writings continues to be felt. Though very different personalities who wrote in very different styles, yet all the three had their “struggle” and “strife” and their influence travelled beyond the countries of their birth. Goethe was buried in Weimar, Germany and Byron died in Greece though he belonged to England and Wordsworth wrote about the French revolution “Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive but to be young was very heaven”; but now gone are these revolutionary voices of truth and beauty; and, Arnold and his friends have come to bury Wordsworth “The last poetic voice is dumb/ We stand by Wordsworth’s tomb”. Byron was not a “teacher” or a “priest” like Goethe or Wordsworth and “He taught us little” but he did move our hearts and we “felt him like the thunder’s roll” and strove with “passion” against “eternal law”. That was the daring life of Byron, *enfant terrible* of his age, the “fount of fiery life” which was like that of the Titans, larger than life’s dimensions and Byron took art in the big battles of his times for his beliefs in liberty and human rights. It is interesting to note that Arnold’s own sense of uritanic morality is in sharp contrast to Byron’s unbridled passion for life but perhaps it is the earlier poet’s courage and daring to fight against hypocrisy and cant that has impressed Arnold.

Lines 15-33

As compared to Byron, Goethe was a true teacher, who was “Europe’s sagest head”. In fact, he was a physician of the ailing age in whose soul iron had entered, which had become hardened and cold and this “physician of the iron age” was so accomplished a practitioner of his art that he could minutely diagnose the disease of his time and like a doctor would objectively put “his finger on the place/And said *Thou ailest here and here!*”. The hectic activity, power and self, the tensions of mindless actions and conflicts, “weltering strife” and “turmoil of expiring life”, he knew what would be the end of all this meaningless overreaching of the human self. He knew the cure for the ailments of his ambitious and furious age and revealed the secret: “The end is everywhere./Art still has truth, take refuge there!”. Materialism and scepticism were leading to cultural death in Europe when Goethe was creating his art and inviting the maddened and maddening crowd to take refuge in the tranquil beauty of art, stop for a while and “stay” and “stare”, to borrow Wordsworth’s words from his poem “*The World Is Too Much With Us*”. Goethe knew the causes of things “and he watched and observed “the lurid flow/of terror, and insane distress/ And headling fate”. This is a sarcastic and scathing comment upon Arnold’s own times. It may be relevant here to remind ourselves that Goethe was writing when the French Revolution has lost its earlier promise and Napoleon had come on the scene and was demolishing the ideals of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity. Europe had to go through a period of extreme suffering because of the Napoleonic war. Goethe was appalled by the barbarity and terror of these developments and proposed to the troubled mind of Europe to embrace the ideals of art and beauty so that order and harmony is restored and tranquillity and peace prevail in the world of human affairs.

Lines 34-57

With Byron and Goethe in the background, Arnold now prepares to pay his homage to William Wordsworth, regarded by critics and historians, as the greatest among the romantic poets of his times. He was also a friend of Arnold and a great influence on him. In the next five lines (34-39), Arnold addresses himself to the denizens of the underworld, “pale ghosts”, the spirits of the world of death and asks them to be glad

and full of joy because amidst them has just arrived a musical being, with a “soothing voice” which they have “never” heard since the days of Orpheus, the great Greek musician of antiquity, of myth and son of Apollo. Orpheus has lost his wife Eurydice the Orpheus followed her to Hades, the underworld of the dead where he met Pluto, the god of death. Orpheus so pleased the god of death, Pluto, with his dulcet, sweet and moving tunes that emanated from his lyre (a musical instrument) that he agreed to Orpheus’s prayer and released his wife Eurydice on the condition that while returning to the world of the living Orpheus would not look back. But in this context, the reference to Orpheus is confined to his music and its soothing, pleasing effect which could even move the heart of the god of death, known for his hardest of all hearts. So, now Wordsworth, who once sang and soothed the world of the living shall be singing to and soothing the world of the dead.

Now the sweet and soothing voice of the great Romantic poet Wordsworth belongs to the dead and they can also hear the same Wordsworth who “has gone from us” and “feel his voice as we! did once in our world (“clime”) or region which had been experiencing” “doubts, disputes, distractions, fears” which had turned our age into “iron time”, cold and soulless. “He found us when the age had bound/our souls in benumbing round”. The World which Wordsworth saw was a world that was becoming senseless and insensitive, too much going round in circles of foolish and maddening pursuit of wealth and materialism, having lost all faith and full of doubts and scepticism but he created that kind of poetry which had a restoring effect and soothed our ruffled feelings and “loosed our heart” and moved us to tears of sympathy and pity for fellow beings and the fate of man; through his poems he made us feel like innocent children, even like the babies who can never sin as they are the closest to the divine spirit and made us return to Nature to seek our original innocence back. “He laid us as we lay at birth/on the flowery lap of earth”, he removed our tensions and “we had ease” and “smiles” by responding to his poetry. This was a veritable Return to Nature as was felt once again proximity and closeness to “The hills...round us” and felt the fresh “breeze/..ov’r the sun lit fields again”. We could once again enjoy the fresh touches of Nature and our minds were balmed as “Our foreheads felt the wind and rain”. A new life was breathed into us by Wordsworth’s poetry and “Our youth return’d” as his poetry showered on us “The freshness of the early world”, the serenity and peace and harmony of Nature as was received by the earliest man when he was innocent and free from ugly cravings of greed and vengality for insatiable lust for wealth and material possessions; our long...dead”, “dried up” and closed and “closely furl’d spirits” were re-awakened to a new life and a new world, joyful and heavenly and not worldly and ugly.

Lines 58-70

In these last lines, Arnold keeps to the conventions of Elegy in which the immediate subject or, for whom the Elegy has been written, has to be placed on the highest pedestal. It has to be an eulogy, praise in purest forms. Therefore, Arnold, though he introduced comparisons with Byron and Goethe, must now find ways to elevate Wordsworth the poet to his most distinctive place and pay tribute to his unique qualities and contributions to the world in general. In classicism, individual good and benefits, rendered to friends are not so consequential and meaningful. It is the general and common good done by the doer that is of the highest significance. So, how Wordsworth is greater than Byron and Goethe who too set high examples in their respective public life? “Goethe’s sage mind”, his wisdom and counsel and “Byrons’ force” did a lot to warm and fight against the ignoble tendencies of their times. But, then, out of “dark days” emerges “light”. Out of ignorance is born consciousness and courage; Therefore, it is possible that other Goethe’s and Byrons shall come back (“restored”) to the world sunk in gloom and darkness of ignorance as examples of “prudence” and “fiery might” like Goethe’s sagacity and Byron’s daring but never in Europe, in later times of tensions and ruffled feelings and frayed nerves would Wordsworth with his unique “healing power be found. Arnold attached great importance to his special quality of wordsworths poetry on distribution also. In his essay on wordsworth, he observed that poetry is great of Wordsworth’s poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in

nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it". Like Goethe, we shall possibly find other teachers who will teach us how to fend against the fears and terrors of our times and how to summon up courage for doing so. Like Byron we will likely receive lessons in daring to meet the challenge of times and have the strength to bear the onslaught of the bad times. But hard would it be to find a poet and philosopher and friends like Wordsworth who would be able to impart "feelings" to us. "But who, ah! who, will make us feel? Others shall come and yet again face the troubling clouds of doubt and weaknesses which is the destiny and condition of human living and "fearlessly" shall they confront the odds. But who, like Wordsworth shall keep our feelings alive? Who will give us the gift of feeling? Who will save and store human feelings even in the midst of clutter and corrosion of the hectic, thoughtless and insensitive world of profit and loss and greed to have more, more and yet more.

Therefore, O Rotha (the river along whose bank Wordsworth was buried), keep fresh and green the grass on Wordsworth's grave, as a symbol of nature O: River Rotha, you do this small favour to us who seek to preserve the Great Poet's memory, the source and fountain of human feelings, And you sing to him the best songs you have because only he was capable of hearing the Voice of Nature and he will surely, hear your sweet voice as none are left now to gain feelings from rivers and mountains and springs and cataracts and brooks and vernal woods and the one who could and did it is gone forever and lies with you here, O Rotha along your side.

Arnold defined poetry as "the criticism of life". Memorial Verses fulfil this criterion. He found in Goethe a "physician of iron age" and Byron a poet of "daring" spirit. The verse, according to Swinburne "at once praise and judge the great poet" and place him at a high pedestal in the context of his and later Victorian time (of Arnold). Eliot, somewhat antagonistic to Arnold in his views of the latter's poetry and thinking called this poem "a testimonial of what Wordsworth had done for him", though Arnold himself would say it was Wordsworth's general gift to people, the gift of "feeling" as healing power that he had celebrated in this poem. His epithets "sagehead" and poet of "titanic power" and "healing power" for Goethe, Byron and Wordsworth respectively are just and appropriate, more so in the context of *Memorial Verses* being an international elegy.

3. **Dover Beach:** This is "at once religious and sceptical, philosophical and emotional" says Herbert Paul, (a critic who has made a special study of Arnold's works) about *Dover Beach*. This poem was written in the early part of his poetic career but, for some reason, got published only in 1867 in the first edition of his *New Poems*. It is said that Arnold after his marriage to Frances Lucky Wightman visited Dover Beach in her company. This otherwise romantic occasion resulted into this very melancholy (one of the most melancholy of Arnold's poems) poem. The sight of Dover Beach, in spite of its enchanting and quiet beauty, does not rouse in him any romantic feelings; on the other hand, his mind gets invaded by thoughts about what humanity has lost in his own times, the Victorian times. This feeling of general loss is overwhelming and sets the mood of the poem which is full of lament and sad reflection. The poet observes the sea intimately which he finds on that night "calm" and "The tide is full" as the moon scatters its light on the waters of the British Channel. A slow game of hide and seek between the waters of the sea and gleaming light from the moon is going on as the steep rock on the English side of the Channel watch and witness the scene all bathed in the moonlight and the glimmering shine makes them look bigger or "vast" as reflected "in the tranquil bay".

Lines 1 to 20

He seems to address his wife: "Come to the window" and tells her "sweet is the nightair". There is no noise here excepting the sound of the sea originating from the shore "Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land". There you will hear a peculiar sound of the sea like a "grating roar/of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling" and this sound is generated with a poetic cadence or rhythm of soft music, slow and sad, slow and sad, with a repetition that appear to produce "The eternal note of sadness in".

The poet in other words, instead of finding the sea encouraging the married couple to have a fling of delight and happiness forces upon them a note of sadness carrying memories of a never-ending (“eternal”) Time, of times gone by and of distant lands where the sea meets likewise the land as it does at Dover Beach. Memory from antiquity, from the cultural past, invades Arnold’s mind. This is the memory of Sophocles, a writer of Greek tragedies, who perhaps also stood on a seashore as does Arnold now and heard the same “note” of “sadness” along the Greek “Aegean” sea which brought to his mind “the still and sad music of humanity”, to borrow a phrase from Wordsworth and saw in that Aegean Sea on that moonlit night the rise and fall of men and their being in the clutches of time and fate - “the turbid ebb and flow/of human misery”. Sophocles, Arnold’s favourite poet and tragedian lived in 495-? -406 B.C.) and wrote highly moving tragedies like *Antigone*, *Oedipus*, *Elebra*, in which heroes and heroines of high stature. Stature fall victims to Fate and undergo misery and suffering, at times for no deliberate fault on their part. In these lines some passages of Sophocles dramas are incorporated with appropriate modification. For example “Answer to the roar” is from *Antigone*. Just as Sophocles gathered from the “notes” of the sea “sad” thoughts about life and human misery so also now standing by this “northern sea”, the English channel, we (Arnold and his wife in the immediate context) can hear and gather the same sounds and sad thoughts from the moonlit waters spread before us.

Lines 21-27

In the lines starting with “The Sea of Faith/Was once, too, at the full” there is a poetic transition, from the immediate scene and physical setting of the scene to the distant past, to antiquity, to times when people had Faith and certitude, which with the passage of time has given way to doubt and despair. The faith in the past was a universal phenomenon, shared by men and beings of all climes, in all parts of the world, “round earth’s shore” and it hung like a bright girdle hangs around the figure of a lovely woman (women and men also used to wear girdle around their waists as a piece of ornament. In Indian villages too, not long back this customary wearing of a girdle was common). But the hugging faith is now gone. Now, just as the sea is producing “its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar” so also Faith has withdrawn itself from the lives of human beings and from their world. It is “Retreating” and leaving behind, only “the night-wind” and dreary “edges” and “naked shingles” of the world.

And, now the awful thought of a faithless world, brings the Poet back to the quest for a refuge from such a harsh world. This the poet finds in individual love, the strength and comfort of the body and soul, both “Ah, love, let us be true/To one another! for the world, which seems/To lie before us like a land of dreams/So various, so beautiful, so new/Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light/Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain”. Left abandoned in this sea of confusion and illusion, our fate is no better than of those armies perhaps of the Peloponnesian war, who get caught in battles on a “darkling plain”, in the dusk hurriedly embracing night, raise noisy alarms and helter-skelter run around and try to escape onslaught of one another, knowing not a friend from foe. In the world, men’s fate is like that of these “ignorant armies that” clash by night and perhaps injure and kill their own sides.

The quality of lyrical poetry is not often associated with Arnold but *Dover Beach*, is lyrical, musical, albeit, it is sad, and full of the usually Arnoldian melancholy. He is philosophical and intellectual as is his poetic wont, but in this poem he is also subjective and personal, if you like. This is a short poem but has a ranging thought and depth of meaning. His statements are not bare thoughts, concrete imagery loads his thought with solid ore. The “moon-blanch’d” land and sea provide a very convincing setting for his peculiar handling of the usual Arnoldian themes of loss of faith, of hopelessness of modern or Victorian life, of looking back to antiquity for succor and solace but what he achieves in this poem is somewhat modern goal of establishing personal, individual love between man and woman as an abiding source of shielding against the inflictions of the milieu and the times. In a single, short lyric poem, Arnold has succeeded in expressing not only the “main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century” but answered a larger riddle of the life’s question: where to seek strength and comfort against the pains and

agony of times? There is “comfort” in the “strength of love” said Wordsworth in his *Michael* and a similar sentiment has been expressed and offered here by Arnold, though in a different context. *Dover Beach* has also been called the greatest elegy by Arnold or one of the greatest, at least. Though it does not mourn and pine for a personal loss or grief expressed here is not for the death of a human being. It mourns the death of Faith, an essential source and sustainer of meaningfulness in life.

Says Herbert Paul about *Dover Beach*: “.it expresses the peculiar turn of Arnold’s mind at once religious and sceptical, philosophical and emotional, better than his formal treatises on philosophy and religion and it is full of Arnoldian “melancholy”. The “literary allusion” according to J.D. Jump “serves not only to suggest that we have here to do with an archetype image but also to introduce Arnold’s own commentary”. These remarks of Jump are in reference to Sophocles already discussed in the above detailed analysis of the poem. The following five lines have been especially cited by Jump for Arnold’s success here with balancing and harmonising his *didacticism* with feeling. This has been achieved though a “falling syntactical rhythm” and a series of “open vowels” which invest his verse with an “eerie resonance” that echo and re-echo for line to line, especially in the following five lines:

*“But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world”.*

While most Victorians hailed the rise of material prosperity and democracy in the Victorian age, Arnold was worried about the decline and degradation of cultural taste of his times. These concerns find a subdued but effective expression in *Dover Beach* as discussed above in the detailed analysis of the poem. The theme of the loss of Faith symbolized by the “Retreating” Sea and its “withdrawing roar” and naked shingles” act as nearly perfect “objective correlative” of the poetic feeling or subjective ingredient of the poem. This most famous of his poems contains, in a way, his most representative and central statement about man’s fate and human condition as perceived by him: “we are here as on a darkling plain”. This perception he shares with the modern poets of the twentieth century and speaks of the modern element in his poetry, conscious and critical, descriptive and not merely judgemental about Man who remains alienated and alone amidst crowds. He, as pointed by A.D. Culler, anticipates the Existentialists and Absurdist like Sartre, Camus and Karl Jaspers. For Arnold, Christian Church and Dogma have lost their capacity to offer consolation to modern man who is “alone” and separated from his community.

Imagery used in *Dover Beach* has also attracted notice of the critics. The prevailing mode of imaging in the poem is metaphoric. (The intention behind the device of the image is to convey meaning or significance directly to the imagination through one or more or all of the five senses). The ear and the eye, auditory and visual imagination are the dominant modes in *Dover Beach*. For instance “the Sea is calm”, “the moon shines fair”, “the light on, the French coast” are examples of Visual Imagination; “grating roar of pebbles”, “ignorant armies clash”, “Its melancholy long withdrawing roar” are examples of Auditory Imagination at work.

Dover Beach has also been studied as a part of Arnold’s poetry of Nature. Nature here provides a very impactful setting for his philosophic reflection. It is not the Nature of Byron or Shelley, swift and shaking, forceful westwind but a Nature full of peace and tranquillity. (Read critical comments in the line-by-line descriptive analysis of the poem given above). This poem is full of “choral cadence “and, according to Lord Morely “an exquisite piece of pensive music” that brings “the eternal note of sadness” to our minds “with tremulous cadence slow” and “a land of dreams “as also of its disillusionment. Themes of love, nature, faith and its loss, doubt and disillusionment, aloneness and man’s antique archetypal patterns, are intertwined in this short poem which is also a sober hymn of praise to married love.

4. **The Scholar Gipsy:** This poem appeared in the 1853 edition of Arnold's volume of poetry entitled *Poems* for the first time. Arnold had toyed with the idea of entitling *The Scholar Gipsy* as *The First Mesmerist*. The theme and conceptualization of this poem, now considered as one of the most representative of his poems, have their origin in Glanvil's *Vanity of Dogmatizing* which Arnold had read in 1845. *The Scholar Gipsy* has remained a popular poem since its first appearance, though Arnold himself did not rate it very highly as is evident from his letter to Arthur Clough: "I am glad you like the *Gipsy Scholar* - but what does it do; for you? Homer animates - in its poor way I think *Sohrab and Rustum animates* - the *Gipsy Scholar* at best awakens a pleasing melancholy. But this is not what we want. "The complaining millions of men/Darken in labour and pain". What they want is something to *animate* or *ennoble* them – not merely to add zest to their melancholy or grace to their dreams".

In the above self-assessment of his creation, Matthew Arnold betrays his inclination toward his notion of Greek Classical tragedies or serious literature/poetry, especially as we find practised by Sophocles in his drama. Arnold as a critic assigned a high mission to poetry which ought to embody action and not merely ideas; which ought to offer "healing power" to suffering humanity and not mere stories. But there are other theories of poetry according to which a poem need not do anything except communicating a state of mind or just making the reader a little more aware, that poetry can be expected *to perform no social function*, that its commitment is to *words and not to action*. Therefore, we cannot regard Arnold's own comment that poem is deficient in action as the final word. The poem is sustained by its own beauty and its significance has to be found within its own discourse. Definitely, there are other ways of looking at this poem.

In a letter to his brother Tom, Matthew Arnold gives hints about the circumstances that form a backdrop to the creation of this poem, his days at Oxford and his flippant ways of youth! Writes he to his brother: "You alone of my brothers are associated with that life at Oxford, the freest and most delightful past, perhaps of my life. When with you and Clough and Walrond I shook off all the bonds and formalities of the place, and enjoyed the spring of life and that unforgotten Oxfordshire and Berkshire country. Do you remember a poem of mine called *The Gipsy - Scholar*? It was meant to fix the remembrance of those delightful wonderings of ours in the Cumber Hills?"

Though Arnold borrowed the story and basic materials of *The Scholar Gipsy* from Joseph Glanvill, this poem does not centre upon the "mesmeric powers" of the scholar gipsy which was a central theme of Glanvill's *Vanity of Dogmatizing*. The obvious theme of Arnold's *The Scholar Gipsy* is his debunking of Victorian materialism and scepticism, an age he found "of sick hurry", "divided aims" and full of "doubts", "distractions" and confused and of confusing issues and curiosity. Arnold imparts a veritable character to the *Scholar Gipsy* he borrowed from Glanvill. His wandering scholar is a symbol of "idealism and quest for truth", not mere seeker of the curious art of hypnotism and mesmerism like Glanvill's Oxford scholar who confides to his two friends, former class-mates from Oxford, that he would give up the company of the "wild brotherhood" soon after learning these skills.

Arnold's scholar - gipsy, on other hand, is "alone" in the existentialist sense, and spiritually transformed having no home, no bonds, no job or employment. This gipsy does not behave like a gipsy. In his imagination he is more akin to Empedocles, Obermann and self-conscious characters from existentialist and absurdist plays of modern times. Arnold's scholar - gipsy appears again for a brief moment in this *Thyrsis*, perhaps continuing his spiritual pilgrimage and transformation into another being; in the later poem, he is no more an escapist from the harsh world nor is he full of dark despair. He rather symbolizes new hope and faith, a far cry from Glanvill's scholar - gipsy. Arnold was not being a teller of tales and in his *The Scholar - Gipsy* he offers a criticism of life as lived and perceived by him in the Victorian times whose materialism and doubt had told upon his nerves. His transformation of Glanvill's scholar - gipsy allows him to make moral statement based upon deep reflection on his times. His gipsy - scholar if "tired of knocking at preferment's door" and he "roamed the world with the wild brotherhood" and to an extent he sticks to

the content of Glanvill's story as he read it. But he is very original in its treatment. His quest for the scholar - Gipsy is a *tour de force* of invention, very much his own. Glanvill's gipsy - scholar from the seventeenth century is changed into a dream apparition, beyond the clutches of time, a vision of faith and high principles: "No, no, thou not felt the lapse of hours"; "Thou has not lived, why should thou perish so?"

Lines 1-10

The Scholar Gipsy is a *pastoral elegy*, that is, a poem written in remembrance of things past, recalling and celebrating the memory of a person or some event or some precious thing now lost and which has a rural or natural setting. If the setting in a pastoral elegy is rural, with shepherds, farmers and other simple folks playing significant role, the mood is of pervasive sadness. This elegy, written in the grand style and manner recalling that of the Greek classicist, also dwells on serious general themes, impersonal and objective in their scope, treatment and dimension conveying elevating thoughts on issues of general rather than of personal import.

The first ten lines of the opening stanza set the pastoral scene, with images of shepherd life in the lap of nature profusely projected: "from the hill", "wattled cotes", "wistful flock", "cropped herbage", "moon-blanced green" a recurring image in Arnold's other poems-give us a close-up of the rural life as the poet tells a "shepherd" to do his chores, feed his flock of sheep as his fellow companions are calling him back now and come back after freeing himself from his daily tasks, in the evening when "the fields are still" and "tired men and dogs are all gone to rest" and may be only one or two sheep are straying from the flock. It is a very convincing portrayal of leisurely life of men and animals together interacting with one another, helping one another as a community (to be contrasted with urban, city life) that Arnold presents here as he sets the mood and the scene of the poem. It is important to note right at the beginning that Arnold, the poet does not identify himself with shepherds and the rural folk. He only makes friends with one of the shepherds who he requests to come back in the evening after he is at leisure and all others are gone from the scene. For, the poet seems to have come hither for a purpose. That purpose is to quest for something or some one will be revealed in later lines. For now, "Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest", Some critics say, this shepherd a companion the poet has made in these lines is no other than Arnold's own friend, Arthur Hugh Clough as they were engaged in the same pursuit of "ennobling human life and in *Thyrsis*, Arthur is presented as a shepherd by Arnold, as the subject of another pastoral elegy.

Lines 11-20

In the next lines upto the twentieth, the rural scene is further brought to our larger view as Arnold's poet i.e. eye pans to a spot in a camera-like motion. "Here, where the reaper was at work of late", "this high fields dark corner" where he has left "His coat, basket" and other personal effects" and where he shall return "at noon" It is here the poet will sit and wait for his shepherd companion of the opening stanza; from here he will be hearing "The bleating of the folded flocks" of sheep, and "distant cries of reapers in the corn" and other sounds and "murmurs of a summer's day".

Lines 21-30

The poet continues to build the rural scene with "green roots", "thick corn", "scarlet poppies", "perfumed showers" "Of bloom on the bent grass" and sits himself in a "bower" to find "shade" "from the August sun" What is important is that here a contrast to the serenity and other worldliness of the pastoral scene has been introduced as "the eye travels down to oxford's towers".

Lines 31-40

In these lines there is a transition; the scene is now wrapped up into a memory of the past and gone by times. The poet has brought Glanvill's book with him which has a tale that is often told and "let me read the of tread tale again". Thus a character is revealed; the character is the scholar gipsy from oxford university, a promising scholar "Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain" but who was "tired of

knocking at preferment's door" as his creative talents did not meet the media requirements of those who study in universities for a uniform and competitive world of success and money rather than to use their education for self-discovery and creative exploration. Unable to cope with the worldly demands, and response of the world, this Oxford scholar "One summer morn forsook" his friends and "went to learn the gipsy-lore", the tribal learning, esoteric and mysterious and started roaming "the world of that wild brotherhood" and got lost forever as "to Oxford and his friends" he came back "no more." Desertion and forsaking are also recurring themes in Arnold's poetry (read *Forsaken Merman*). This scholar turned gipsy, naturally spoiled his career.

Lines 41-50

But, as the story goes, two of his class-fellows from the college whom he knew him chanced to meet him in a village street and questioned him about his gipsy ways and life of wandering. "Wher at he answer'd, that the gipsy-crew" knew skills of such powers that they could control the minds of men, or in other words, could hypnotize other people and through this mesmerism they could make ordinary men do anything they wanted. The Scholar Gipsy disclosed to these companions, class-fellows from his college that he wanted to learn "the secret of their art" of reading others' thoughts and "workings of men's brains" and "When fully lean'd, will to the world impart" but this art is not learnt the way students/scholars learn in colleges and universities by putting in so many hours of study and books and writing exams and getting marks from teachers/examiners. It needs heaven's blessings, god-sent moments of illumination, some "heaven sent moments" for grasping and gaining "this skill".

Lines 51-60

After this exchange, the Scholar-Gipsy once again departed from his mates and never came back. Stories keep doing the rounds that the scholar-Gipsy was seen here or there, silent and sad wearing an odd type of hat that used to be worn by people of long gone times; great outer garment of the kind gipsies wear; and he was seen they say over Hurst Hillock under forest cover, in "Berkshire" fields near Oxford; he was some times spotted by country people; peasants and boorish clowns or vagabonds saw him sitting some "warm-ingle bench" or in "loan ale houses".

Lines 61-70

It is in these lines 61-70, that the poet makes his "quest clear to the reader and gives out an imaginative vision of the Scholar Gipsy whom he is searching with the help of shepherds in this Oxford country side. the scholar - gipsy shunned noisy places, and disappeared" mid their drink and clatter" and the poet imagines and recalls scholar gipsy's face or "looks" and have been describing his features to the shepherds so they recognised him when they find him. These shepherds and boys who scare the birds from eating the crops in the fields too fields too the poet sets on a search for the scholar gipsy and the poet at times asks them if the scholar gipsy had passed by the silent places or when the poet lies in a floating boat on the cool banks in "summer heats", "amid grass meadows" nestling in the "sunshine" or when he watches the "warm, green-muffled Cumner hills", the poet wonders if the Scholar Gipsy has been to these quiet "retreats" rarely visited by others. So the poet's quest for scholar gipsy continues.

Lines 71-90

Scholar Gipsy is fond of secluded places; he was once met by the joyful riders of Oxford in a ferry who crossed the narrow river Thames near Bablock-hythe (about eleven miles from Oxford); seen by these Oxford ferry joy-riders when the Scholar Gipsy was dipping his fingers in "the cool stream" as the punt (a small boat plied by a single person) had just passed him by. They saw him in somewhat sadly dreaming with "a heap of flowers" perhaps gathered from the nearby "Wychwood bowers" and his "eyes" gazing the "moonlit steam". And lo! now you are gone! As they landed on the banks, they could see you no more. Then, there were the young married girls, who had come from distant homes to dance in "the Fyfield elm in

May”, the spring time; they too had seen the scholar gipsy as the dusk descended on the fields. He was roaming and crossing over a “stile into a public way.”

Lines 91-100

But none of the maidens could tell if he had spoken and said anything! And during when men are busy cutting “breezy grass in the hot sun with a scythe that flashes in the sunshine like “flames”, when the summer swallows “black-win-gerd” hover over the river Thames. You have been seen there when the labouring men had come to “bathe in the abandon’d lasher pass”. They passed by you when they came over “Godstow Bridge”. They have seen you sitting by the river bank recognizing you by your “outlandish garb”, that is, strange dress; by your lean and weakened body; and they have seen you “dark vague eyes” and withdrawn looks. But when they came back from “bathing”, lo! you were “gone”. Thus, the Scholar Gipsy, roams and haunts the lines 101-130 count tryside near Oxfordshire, has been seen by housewives busy with their chores in their households, “hanging on a gate”; seen by children in “The springing pastures” and even “when the stars come out and shine” in the “dewy grass” or in the autumn, on the outskirts of Bagley Wood where other gipsies visiting the area pitch their tents. Even the birds who are not frightened of the Gipsy Scholar have seen him in all weathers and in all places in this countryside. The poet imagines the at one time Gipsy Scholar was seen with a twig clutch in his hand and waiting for a heavenly divine light to “fall” for self-fulfilment and self-realization, perhaps his aim of learning hypnotism by Heavenly Grace still unrealized. Even in the snowy winter the Scholar Gipsy has been roaming over the Oxford countryside; sometimes on he highway or “the causeway” that is used by travelers to reach their homes through “flooded fields” on foot. The poet is not sure if he too has seen the Scholar Gipsy or perhaps only imagined that he has seen him “Wrapt in thy cloak” and thudding through” the snow “going toward Hinksey”, a village near Oxford along “its wintry ridge” and climbing the hill there reaching the snow-covered top of “Cumner range”, once the Gipsy Scholar was seen moving towards the “Christ-Church” hall, walking in the “thick” snowflakes” to observe the lights on the occasion of feast and festival and, then looking for a bed to straw in the nearby secluded farmhouse- “some sequestered grange”.

Lines 131-160

The next thirty lines (131-160) mark a very definite and significant transition. Till now, the poet was narrating and largely describing the scene of Oxford Scholar Gipsy’s haunts and wanderings in the Oxford-Berkshire countryside. Now he turns to the theme of life and death, of mortality and immortality, of ambitions of this world and quest for self-realization and spiritual discovery of the self and countrasts the Scholar Gipsy with the ordinary mortals of his times, the Victorian times.

Back to the world of reality, the poet suddenly realizes that he was only dreaming. As it was two hundred years ago that Glanvill wrote the story of Scholar Gipsy and a legend was born in Oxford’s halls of Learning, that “you”, the Gipsy Scholar had left the university premises (“studious walls”) and had chosen “to learn strange arts”, instead of the classics and liberal arts at the university, and joined a “gipsy-tribe” and, in fact, not only” you”, (the Gipsy Scholar) has left university but has left the world altogether and are dead and gone, and may be buried in some churchyard, in “Some country-nook” or “unknown” corner “grave” where now tall grass grows and thorny wild flower plants and “dark, red-fruited yew tree”, a tree associated with human death.

But, then, the Scholar Gipsy was no ordinary mortal or human being. He was not bound by the limitations of time. He did not experience the passage of time and “the lapse of hours” like other men who are born, live and act in life for a certain span and then die for ver. “Mortal men” go from one “change” to another change because, everything and everyone in this time-world changes excepting the “law of change”. Time wears the life of mortals, under “repeated shocks” and even the sturdiest among human beings finally give way to decline, lose their energy and “powers” after exhausting them on our “thousand

schemes” that one thinks up and pursues. And, at the end of it all, we have to submit – “remit”- to the directives of the Angel of Life, “the passing Genius” who watches our performance only briefly and nothing remains but our “past” or “what we have been” which does not amount to much, actually.

But the Gipsy Scholar has not lived like an ordinary mortal, therefore, he will not have the fate of an ordinary mortal. He will not die:” Thou has not lived, why shouldst thou perish”. Now the poet explains how Gipsy Scholar’s life was different and why he will not be destroyed by time. And, here, in fact, the poet Arnold finds scope for his favorite and oft-indulged moral comment on his own times, the Victorian times. Compared to ordinary men who go from one scheme of life to another, who keep changing their norms and values and even give up their aims and ideals to lead a cosy and comfortable life of compromise with the worldly reality, the Scholar Gipsy” hadst one aim, one business, one desire”. Had this not been so, “thou long since number’d with the dead” or counted among the dead like the contemporaries of the Scholar Gipsy, and even like us who will also pass into oblivion. But, you are indestructible, “immortal” always living in our imagination, never growing or declining, “exempt from age” as “thou liv’st on Glanvill’s page”, or immortalized in Glanvill’s book and because you had what we do not have. It is interesting to remind here about the meaning of “word” in Sanskrit, *AKSHARA*, that is beyond destruction. Thus, the immortality of the word has been bestowed upon the Scholar Gipsy, by the writer Glanvill and the Scholar Gipsy shall live as long as Times shall last.

Lines 161-200

In these lines, the poet continues with themes stated in lines 131-160, delving deeper in the causes of increasing preponderance of “divided aims”, “doubts” “divisions” and general scepticism and materialism prevailing in Arnold’s own Victorian times and why he considers Scholar Gipsy as freed from these worldly ills. The first reason why he considers Scholar Gipsy has escaped the fate of the ordinary people who live in Victorian times of doubt and faithlessness is that “early did leave the world”, that is, “early” in terms of the time of history as well as time of individual being. The Scholar Gipsy, in the first lace lived in times when the world still was not devoid of Faith, and then, because he gave up the world in early youth when his “powers”, energy, and idealism had not been wasted upon or “diverted” to the world of dulling routine and “not spent on other things”, when he was still “free from the sick “fatigue” and “languid doubt” that baffle and confuse us all. So, it was a “life unlike to ours”, who vacillate aimlessly and “strive” without knowing the object of our striving, and live piecemeal lives, “a hundred different lives”, who also wait like you but without hope. (Hope, Faith and Charity are regarded three guiding directives of Christian life, and hope here has to be understood as an ally of Faith, or the other Face of Faith).

You ‘waitest” for heavenly bliss, godly illumination, “the spark from heaven !”, because of your unshakable faith but we are only “half-believers” and have “casual creeds”, and our consciousness has not been translated into actions, or we say one thing and act quite the opposite or differently, our vague resolutions have remained unfulfilled because we are not clear in our resolves; on every step we falter, in every triumph there is disappointment, full of hesitations as we are, and lose our ground after every gain. So, this is our waiting; so different from yours who is continuing your quest without dithering from steady, single-minded course and direction once chosen and decided. Even the wisest amongst us who have been recognized for their intellectual achievements (reference is perhaps to Tennyson who was made the Poet Laureate, though the reference could also be made to Wordsworth who late in life was made the Poet Laureate of England), and “seated upon the intellectual throne “this wise man is still full of dejection and is pour his heart laying bare his sad and unhappy experience with and of the world, of his “wretched days” of life. From his works all we can gather is the tale of his misery, his loss of inspiration or “the dying spark of hope” and how he blamed and overcame his aches and pains of his life and how and what different medicines or painkillers he had swallow to relieves his pains and stresses of life. (Reference could be to Goethe, Wordsworth and Tennyson).

If this is the story of our wisest man of the times, then what about us, ordinary people? We only ply our lives in sorrow and pain, nourishing “unhappy dreams,” and forfeit our “claim to bliss” and seek “Sad patience” which is only next to being in the grip of “despair”. But none of us, the wisest and, the most simple-minded among us, has “hope like thine”, because real hope is to go on struggling on the strength of faith that striving is its own reward, Faith should be the other name of Hope. So you are still roaming, retaining your youth and you still are the same “truant boy” who ran away from the Oxford studies still “Nursing thy project” in clarity of mind or “unclouded joy” and if you had any doubt it has been “long blown by time away”. (Compare Keat’s *Ode to Nightingale* “Thou was not born for death” and “Ode to Grecian Urn”: “A thing of beauty is joy forever”)

Lines 201-250

In these final verse paragraphs, Arnold or the poet of the poem, warns the Scholar Gipsy to keep away and come not in contact with the contaminated world and time of the Victorian age, lest he should get polluted and lose his Hope or Faith and Immortality and timelessness. Addressing the Scholar Gipsy, the poet reminds us that the Scholar Gipsy was born in happier times, when mind was free from bloated REASON and IRRATIONAL MATERIALISM and life was clean like the Thames whose waters then were also crystal clear, “before this strange disease of modern life” “sick” with “hurry” and “its divided aims”, mental tensions, paralysis of hearts had prevailed. Go, go, go, away, come not near us, the infected denizens of this sick world ! Escape to some natural abode, to some jungle or wild and “plunge deeper in the bowering wood”, and take to a safer refuge there ! Shun us, avoid this our world in the same disdainful manner as did Dido, the betrayed beloved of Aeneas who even when Aeneas chanced to meet her in the Hades, the underworld of the Dead, avoided him, ran away from him. So also you, run away from us. We are like Aeneas, False Friends ! Indeed, not worthy of your contact. Just tell us to keep off and “keep thy solitude”, your solitary life of quest.

The poet wishes the Scholar Gipsy keep to his solitude which will help him keep his hope unextinguished - “nursing the unconquerable hope” – in the company of nature, he will be able to cling to his hope just as he has been seen “clutching the invariable shade” with energy flowing through his being as he negotiates the wild spaces of the forest, on the outer ring of the forest in the open area (glade) where no one follows him. May be, if need be, the poet ask the Gipsy Scholar to come to a sloping fields, on the moonlit fence, just to freshen up his flowrish the dew as did in the former times (when he was alive and roamed in the company of the gipsy) just to freshen up his flowers in the company of the gipsies) or perhaps listen to the nightingale sing in the valleys.

But never cross your path with ours, and never come in contact with our hectic “feverish” world. Because, pollution of our minds is overwhelming; it gives no bliss or joy but it will spoil your peace of mind and serenity and render our being and life like ours, full of tension, “distraction”, devoid of joy overflowing with consciousness or bliss and you will lose your rejoicing self. Your faith and hope will become timid and weak and our powers will be lost and our clear and fixed aim will falter and our eternal joyful youth – “glad perennial youth” would decline and you will then also like us grow old and finally, like us, die.

The poet continues his good counsel to the Scholar Gipsy warning him against coming in contact with the poet’s world, or the Victorians who will ruin his peace of mind and deprive him of his joyful bliss and immortality. Don’t accept our greetings even; don’t be taken in by our “speech and smiles”. Here, in the last stanza, the poet introduces a long simile in the Homeric style. It somewhat distracts the reader from the themes and the mood till now built by the poet but, then, Arnold is too much a classicist. He wraps up the poem with a classical simile of the trading sailors. Once the Tyrian or phoenician traders saw from some distance a Greek ships, loaded with luxury goods, emerging from the high waters as the sun was rising. That was in the Aegaeon sea and the “merry Grecian coaster” was carrying “amber grapes, and Chian wine” and other luxury goods. The phoenician sailors who are respected for their serious trading business, set the sails and took to the sea, deeper and deeper toward the Mediterrarean and then on to

the Atlantic beyond Syrtes and Sicily. The idea was to give the Grecian ship the widest possible berth. And, there entering upon the Spanish waters, the Tyrian traders dropped their anchor and unloaded their boat on the Spanish shore, far away from the Grecian sailors ! The Gipsy Scholar too should give the Victorians and the materialist world same treatment, just keep himself away, far away from them!

From the above *DETAILED ANALYSIS* of *The Scholar Gipsy* it will be clear that this is a representative Arnoldian Elegy in the *pastoral mode*. It has almost all the themes that were close to Arnold's heart. Its melancholy mood and tone are typically Arnoldian. The poem is biographical also since it gives us the Oxford background which Arnold shared with the Scholar Gipsy, though in a later age or time. It reveals Arnold's attitude to Nature and above all, it is, in the Arnoldian mould, "a criticism of life" as, according to him, all good poetry ought to be Critics, such as W.L. Jones have said that "*The Scholar Gipsy* is one of the happiest in conception and execution of all Arnold's poems. Its charm lies partly in the subject, natural congenial to the poet, and partly in the scene, which stimulates one of Oxford's poetic children to lavish all the powers of description upon the landscape which he dearly loved. He was to return to the same natural scenery in *Thyrsis* but, although in the latter poem, there may be one descriptive passage, which surpasses anything to be found in the earlier, *Thyrsis* fails to give the impression of eager freshness and ease which are felt throughout *The Scholar Gipsy*". Arnold has kept this pastoral elegy free from artificial conventions. The vividness and beauty of the pictures of Nature in this poem add charm to the poem. (For elaboration of this point see the line-by-line critical analysis of the poem in the preceding paragraphs). Oxford is not only the backdrop but almost a protagonist in the poem. In one of his essays, he pays his tribute to Oxford, his university, his alma mater : ".....Oxford. Beautiful city ! so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century"

Arnold and Clough, close friends had a good doze of *The Scholar Gipsy in themselves*, in their personality and shared his traits. In his Essay, *Culture And Anarchy*, Arnold wrote : " We in Oxford, brought up amidst the beauty and sweetness of that beautiful place, have not failed to seize one truth - the truth that beauty and sweetness are essential characters of a complete human perfection. When I insists on this, I am in the faith and tradition of Oxford" Arnold, the classicist, turns a romanticist while re-creating Oxford in his *The Scholar Gipsy*.

It will be relevant here to mention about Arnold's classical models for his pastoral elegies. Among them both Greek and Roman or Latin practitioners of this ancient art influenced Matthew Arnold who had studied the Classics at Oxford. Theocritus, Bion, Moschus and Virgial are the major influences on Arnold. These poets wrote pastoral elegies which celebrate the lives of shepherds and rustic folks whose simple joys and sorrows, life and love find exquisite expression in their pastoral elegies which are set in the very heart of Nature. Nature, pastoral life and shepherds and other simple people are idealised in the poetry of these Greek and Latin elegits. Arnold proved to be a true successor to his Greek and Latin predecessors. It must be noted, however, that Arnold's pastoral elegies are neither exact copies nor artificial imitations of the Greek and Latin pastoral elegies. He has his inovations both on the theme and setting. He has renewed the pastoral tradition and not merely incorporated it in his poetry. *In The scholar Gipsy*, for example, the pastoral setting is not remote from urban areas; it is Oxford country side, within a radius of fifteen miles or so from Oxford, the Seat of Learning and Oxford city, the hub of hectic intellectual activity. It is not a purely idyllic atmosphere that he creates in this pastoral elegy. The shepherds he does introduce in the very beginning of the poem but, then, he also makes them disappear at the earliest. The poet, who goes to the Oxford-Berkshire countryside or the pastoral setting is also not a shepherd. He is only an Oxonian who has come there, hearing and reading about the strange story of another Oxonian of two hundred years ago who had escaped from the university and became a legend as he is known to have turned a gipsy and joined a band of gipsies/gipsy-tribe and lived like them and never returned to his studies and friends at Oxford. Thus, though the basic structure of the poem is that of a pastoral elegy but the tone and spirit of the poem is Victorian and Arnoldian.

Arnold also makes a departure from the conventional pastoral elegy by not idealizing the setting and the characters in the poem. For example, the Shepherd who is adopted as a companion for the purpose of searching the legendary scholar gipsy is a real-sounding shepherd like of whom could be seen in the Oxford vicinity. Then, the scenery around Oxford is beautiful as it is and needed no idealization, nor has Arnold made any attempt to do so. He has realistically depicted the Oxford countryside where he himself, with his friends and brother Tom had roamed and perhaps played truant from the classes. All the characters in the poem are, thus, real, not allegorical. The scenes too are re-created from the really existing originals. Nature presented is that and as perceived by an educated English person.

It also differs from the conventional elegies in another aspect. It does not lament or mourn the death of an individual. Not only does Arnold differ in this regard from his Greek and Latin prototypes but also other English poets who also wrote elegies in the pastoral tradition. For example, Milton's *Lycidas*, Shelley's *Adonais* and Tennyson's *In Memoriam* lament the death of individuals on whose passing away these poets felt personal grief. In *The Scholar Gipsy*, the poet has enlarged the scope of his grief and added an impersonal dimension to the feeling of loss because he laments not the death of a person but the demise of an entire era, of religious faith, of the values of life. Remarking on the tone of the poem, Hugh Walker says that "it is the natural tone of an agnostic" who is, however, "regretful of the vanished faith – regretful of its beauty, and regretful of the lost promise". (For more details on this point read closely the line-by-line critical analysis of the text of the poem in the preceding paragraphs.)

Arnold, the classicist, emerges as a romantic when it comes to his responding to nature, in this poem as in many other of his poems. The scholar gipsy is shown offering flowers to the dancing girls who are visiting the Fyfield elm, perfumed morning and similar descriptions of Nature are almost Keatsian in quality. (Read textual analysis for further examples and details). Swinburne, himself a poet, who indulged in oversweet and deliberately sensuous descriptions, observes: "the beauty, the delicacy and affluence of colour, the fragrance, and the freedoms of wide wings of winds in summer over meadow and moor, the freshness and expansion of light and the lucid air, the spring and the stream as of flowing and welling water, enlarge and exalt the pleasure and power of the whole poem. Shakespeare who chooses his field-flowers and hedge-row blossoms with the same sure loving hand, binds them in as simple and sweet order".

The Scholar Gipsy is a *criticism of life*, to borrow Arnold's own phrase (see textual analysis for details). Arnold was influenced by oriental philosophy, including the teachings of *Gita*, His message in this poem seems to be that one cannot hope to acquire or know truth by external accomplishments or materialistic prosperity. It is the "diving spark" as the scholar gipsy is "waiting for the spark from heaven to fall" or God's Grace or *Prasad* that brings real perfection or ultimate bliss of life. T.S. Eliot, the twentieth century poet-critic and arbiter of the taste of his times, has been critical of Arnold's theory of poetry as "a criticism of life". "We cannot fly the company of men. We all have duties to perform, social obligations to discharge. It is impossible to have only one aim, one business, one desire as the poet bids us here. We must all be up and doing toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing". And like the mariners of Ulysses, taking with a frolic welcome, the thunder and the sunshine. "The life pictured in *The Scholar Gipsy*, however pleasing and attractive it may be made to look, in poetry, can hardly be recommended as the ideal of life, for there is nothing in it inspiring and encouraging, nothing heroic". In a similar vein, stopford Brooks says: "He (Arnold) had insight into evils, the dullness, follies, the decay and death of the time which he wrote; but he had little insight into its good, onto the hope and ideas which were arising in its darkness". It is true that this poem presents some difficulties if considered as a criticism of life and if Arnold is looked upon as a moral teacher. But a poem need not perform any moral duty and yet be a beautiful and edifying work of art. It is not in its criticism but in its beauty and truth as a poem that we look for the inspiration and elevating thought and "power of feeling" and not in its philosophy or critique of values. Eliot himself has said that the first commitment of the poet is to poetry itself and not to society. And *The Scholar*

Gipsy does come out as a poem that is a work of art. The scholar who became a gipsy may be an ideal too much to reach for ordinary men of the world and no body would want such a one to be born in one's own family. But, this is true of most men who dared to differ from the mainstream or set high principles of life for themselves or whose devotion was exemplary but not fit for being followed by others. How many fathers would want their sons to become Swami Vivekanand and leave their home, how many fathers would want their daughters to become Meera though they may be the devotees devotees of these divinely inspired figures of Indian Culture. Even Mahatama Gandhi every one admires but wisheshim to be born again in some other family than his/her own. Art and life have a peculiar inter relationship but each one has its own integrity, its own sovereignty and independence from each other. Let us not be confused about it.

Finally, we may pay some attention to technical aspects of Arnold's verse in this poem. *The Scholar Gipsy* is written in stanzas containing ten lines each. And the meter used is iambic pentameter, with the exception of the sixth line which uses trimeter. This is an example of Arnold's craftsmanship. He has also masterfully used compound words "green muffled-hills", "air-swept lindens", "heaven-sent moments", "Light half-believer", a device Keats was also fond of using. We have already discussed his use of Homeric similie at the end of the poem in the detailed critical summary- analysis of the poem in an earlier paragraph, which is an example of his classical proclivities. Altogether, it is a classical -romantic poem, in the pastrol elegiac mode, with modern elements of criticism of prevailing ethos or lack of it.

Major Topics on the Writer and Prescribed Text

“High Seriousness in Arnold's Poetry: As a literary critic, Matthew Arnold introduced certain terms and phrases which have become a part of literary criticism as a discipline, especially as practised and taught in the universities and academic researchers, professors and students. Some of these terms and concepts are: “High Seriousness”, “Sweetness and Light”, “Criticism of life”, “Touchstone Method”, “Disinterestedness”, “To see the object as it in itself is”, “to see life steadily and see it whole”, “Barbarism, Philistinism”, “Hellenism and Hebraism”. These terms appeared innovative to the Victorians though they roused debate and remained controversial in later times. They have been used to evaluate literary works, poetry and other forms by critics and literary historians. But in academic studies they have found the maximum application. Critics like T.S. Eliot who criticised and evaluated Arnold's own poetry and criticism have found fault with his terminology. But, he too was encouraged to invent a few terms and these have also found currency in the academic studies on a wide scale. Some of these Eliot terms are: “Dissociation of sensibility”, “Objective correlative”, “auditory imagination” etc.

In his *Essays in Criticism* the concept of “Truth and high Seriousness” appears in the very first essay which is on Chaucer, the first major poet of English Literature as recognised by literary historians. While evaluating and appraising his work, especially, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Arnold says Chaucer's poetry is marked by Truth but not “High Seriousness” and this is the criterion to judge the poetry of all poets. Those who meet this criterion, are great poets and their poetry elevating to the human mind. “High Seriousness” is a quality of poetry which distinguishes it from mundane poetry which is only ephemeral or limited. High Seriousness and Truth make poetry and, indeed, all works of art, universal and lasting. Chaucer's poetry, because of its truth, is superior to the French models whom he learnt from and even imitated. But his French masters did not have “High Seriousness” and Chaucer himself lacked it. Chaucer meets the criterion of “Truth” *but does not* meet the criterion of “High Seriousness”. “Truth” alone does not make a poet CLASSIC. Therefore, Chaucer the First English Poet, is *not a classic*. He recreated the Medieval Romances and gave rise to a tradition which was followed and maintained by some great English poets after him such as Spenser, Shakespear, Milton and Keats. But a trend- setter is not necessarily a creator of Classics. It is the Greeks who had “High Seriousness” and they have left for posterities CLASSICS in their works. Homer, Dante, Shakespeare who had both Truth and High Seriousness are the Classics of all times and climes.

Arnold believed that Literature has a function to perform; that it should interpret life. It must elevate the human mind. Poetry is, thus, a criticism of life or a profound application of ideas to life. At one place he writes: "There are two offices of poetry—one to add to one's store of thoughts and feelings—another to compose and elevate the mind by a sustained tone, numerous allusion, and a grand style". Garrod, a scholar and critic who studies Arnold closely illustrates the point about High Seriousness: "Literature is a criticism of life exactly in the sense that a good man is a criticism of a bad one". In other words, Literature aspires to the ideal, the good, the beautiful and the powerful. In our own Indian tradition we have the trinity of SATYAM, SHIVAM, SUNDRAM or Truth, Power and Beauty. In life such a composite person or action is hard to find. In literature, where imagination has a free run, it is possible to create such a composite action. Poetry and Literature exist on several levels. For Arnold, only such Literature deserves to be respected that has within it the strength and validity of the values of Truth and High seriousness; which is not merely entertaining nor merely moralizing either. But that lifts up the human heart and transports the being of man on to another planet perhaps removed from our own world of weaknesses and foibles. Literature, in other words creates an "ideal picture of life" that "provides an ideal standard of life" as suggested by Wordsworth, with "which facts of real life can be contrasted". Critics have tried to equate moral profundity with High Seriousness. Perhaps in our own times an amoral approach to life and its diverse spheres has gained greater currency. Therefore, Arnold's "High Seriousness" is not taken that seriously and is even debunked. But, in his own time, religious doubt was a real and frightful issue and Arnold was looking for a substitute for religion which he saw was losing its force. He acquired the belief that Culture – that which results from the cultivation of the human mind—could be a substitute for religion and poetry is assigned a very high place in Arnold's scheme of things because poetry helps cultivate good minds. Therefore, he thought poetry, if it has to play a high and serious role of remaking and reshaping society as once religion did, then it must have these attributes of Truth and High Seriousness as once Religion had.

Arnold was a dedicated educationist. In his job as a School Inspector he had the responsibility for modifying the educational system. And, he believed in education as an instrument of transformation and not merely a system that helps young persons acquire skills for making a living. As a poet and critic, he assumed a larger role to directly address the Society and the intelligentsia and influence them with his ideas for a better tomorrow. He was critical of Shelley who wrote beautiful, even passionate and powerful poems but who lacked moral values in life. Arnold perceived man as "an eternal trifler" and he hated trivialization of art and beauty. Greek Classical writers were his ideal because they, through their works, imparted states of serenity and calm of mind. His own Victorian age was in a state of confused flux and was badly in need of calm and serenity. On the whole, he did not have an optimistic view of life and man's future. In this regard, he was not like Shelley and much less like Browning. If winter, can spring be far behind? "Shelley or "Grow old with me, the best is yet to be" – In fact, Arnold does not look to the future. He sees the present and the world around him and comes to the conclusion that, he and his contemporaries were "Wandering between two worlds, one dead/ The other powerless to be born". As he tells us in his *Stanzas from The Grande Chartreuse*. Those were the times of transition, a headlong hurtling it seemed to sensitive and serious minds then. In our own times, values have further declined and there is both physical and spiritual pollution on a global scale; there is less sensitivity and evil has penetrated the human mind decisively. It has become a dangerous world where man complains about tension yet continues to live and opt for a life of non-stop tension.

What about his own poetry? Does it meet his own criterion of High Seriousness, and "criticism of life". Arnold perhaps does not reach the heights of poetic inspiration as did Keats and Shelley and Byron who, according to Arnold had beauty in their poems but lacked High Seriousness and criticism of life. Arnold does try to come up to the norms set by himself. In his *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Forsaken Merman*, we do have examples of contrast with real life as it was perceived to have been lived by the Victorians. *The Scholar Gipsy* was heavenly inspired and did not give up hope and faith even though he was a failure by the standards of the work-a-day world. (Read the section on *The Scholar Gipsy*, critical summary and analysis to elaborate these points further). He left the university and turned into a Gipsy to seek self-realization and fulfilment and

thus gained immortality. *The Forsaken Merman* also presents a contrast to the mundane world. It is not individual solace that Arnold seeks in his poems. It is general well-being and spiritual upliftment of humanity at large that is his aim. Whether poetry can actually achieve for men and women of this world such a state of mind and level of pure fulfilment is a moot question. Eliot says no one thing is a substitute for another, suggesting that poetry is poetry and religion is religion and the one cannot substitute for the other. Perhaps poetry can only make one aware of oneself and one's environment and of one's possibilities but it cannot perform action that is required for projecting one's self into acts of being and Nothing for realization of self. But to become aware, to become disillusioned, in itself, is the first step toward enlightenment. To that extent Arnold's poetry is definitely a poetry of Truth as well as High Seriousness but we need not be led away that such a poetry can achieve the heights of the Classics and/or can become classic in itself and by itself. What the classics achieve is simplicity and universality of both expression and thought or feeling. A classic has appeal equally for the highest intellectual and the most illiterate among humanity. Take for instance *Ramayana* and *Gita*. *Gita* appeals to the village women of India who have never been to school and *Gita* also appeals to highly intellectual minds like Huxley and T.S. ELIOT and Arnold himself, who borrowed the concept of "disinterestedness" from *Gita* and Eliot found it the second greatest book ever written. *Gita* is a classic of all time and climes. Arnold's poetry is not classic in that sense, though it has loads of High Seriousness.

Doubt and Crisis of Faith in Dover Beach

Criticism of Victorian Age

Matthew Arnold displayed vigorous enthusiasm and prophet-like posture in his relationship with his own times. Though he may have opted for questing after Truth in the manner of his Scholar Gipsy, he remained a product and child of his own Victorian Age to whom release from intellectual conflict and confusion was not easy. He remained embedded in the controversies of his own times. He himself described the World of the Victorian Age as an age of "divided aims", "doubts", "dying spark of Hope" that was in need of tranquillity and soothing of ruffled feelings (See section on The Victorian Age in the earlier part of this book). He, too, like his contemporaries, found himself.

*"Wandering between tworlds, one dead
The other powerless to be born..."*

The rising wave of materialism brought with it sordidness of social and cultural life; expansion of democracy was accompanied by vulgarity and degeneration of taste; increase in creature comforts led to mental tension and fraying of the nerves; progress of science and knowledge resulted into loss of religious Faith and moral values. Decline was general and pervasive. Yet, mainstream of the Victorian society were brash about Industrial Revolution and Advancement of science which, philosophic minds like Carlyle, Ruskin and Arnold thought, were mainly responsible for the disintegration of the Old Order in which Hope, Faith and Charity, the Trinity of Christian bases of Good Life had prevailed for a long time. Arnold, both in life and Literature, dwelled and reflected on the disappointing state of affairs of his times. In a letter to one of his closest friends from his Oxford days, he wrote: "These are damned times -everything is against one - the height to which knowledge is come, the spread of luxury, our physical enervation, the absence of great natures, the unavoidable contact with millions of small ones, high profligate friends, moral desperados like Carlyle, our own selves and sickening consciousness of our difficulties". All these concerns find expression in his short, lyrical but sad and elegiac poem *DOVER BEACH* which basically is a *LOVE POEM*. It is, in fact, a honeymoon poem. But critics have called it an "elegy on the death of love", "at once religious and sceptical, philosophical and emotional" as Herber Paul has described it aptly.

This poem shows that even Arnold's marriage to Frances Lucy Wightman (he lovingly called her Flu!), after a heart-break affair with Marguerite, a French woman, did not help him accept the Victorian ethos which he continued to regard as degenerative and pernicious. Lord Tennyson, who is considered the most representative of the Victorian poets, accepted the dictates of the Victorian Compromise. Tennyson wrote in his poems

enthusiastically about both Science and Religion, Old and New, and with equal ease. But, Arnold who assigned high role and destiny to poetry as a guiding force with regenerative and restorative powers for the spiritually and culturally sick humanity, found the Victorian times “UNPOETICAL”. Writes he: “Reflect too, as I cannot but do here more and more, in spite of all the nonsense some people talk, how-deeply unpoetical the age and all its surroundings are, Not unprofound, not ungrand, not unmoving but unpoetical, In other words, people have lost their sense for beauty and their tastes have been vulgarized under the impact of science and democracy. He could never come to terms with his age. In *Dover Beach* his disappointment with his times, his nostalgic backward, look on the glorious history of mankind and times when the sea of Faith was in full tide and had not dried up as in his own times, infact all his major concerns find a sad and tranquil expression. It is a poem of “still and sad music of humanity”. As Charles Darwin, Thomas Huxley and Wallace, scientists and trail-blazers were being given rousing receptions everywhere in England and abroad Arnold commiserated in his “loneliness” and felt alienated from his own culture and society and wrote poems like *Dover Beach* that tell us of his sad thoughts about the Victorian crisis with “sweetness and light”.

Though the theme highlighted in *Dover Beach* is a recurrent theme and his other poems such as *The Buried Life* and *Grande Chatreuse*, *The Scholar Gispay* also articulate the same theme of restlessness and loss of faith of modern times compared to the fullness of Faith and tranquillity of the earlier times, the presentation of the same receding Faith here is lyrical not narrative, nor dramatic. The metaphor of the quiet and full sea in high tide in a moonlit night had been effectively sustained through a well-controlled expression and remarkably well-manipulated cadence of the verse. The same sea or English channel projects both the image of high and low points of Religious Faith. Advancing tide and waters of the English Channel symbolize the past, a past going back to the Classical times of Greek high noon of Homer, Theocritus and Sophocles; and, the receding tide, making a “grating roar” against the dried shingles on the parched shore on the British side of the English channel, represent doubt and receding Faith of his own times, the crisis of cultural values in the England of Arnold’s day. This poem reminds us of Wordsworth’s picture of England who also decried the decay and decline of an English life:

*“She (England) is a fen
Of stagnant water, altar, sword and pen
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hell and bower”.*

Why was Arnold protesting against the trends of his times?

He was not an orthodox fundamentalist. He was not a narrow-minded follower of the beaten path. Then, why was he disappointed by the diffusion of scientific knowledge? He was not a high-brow aristocrat. Then why was he opposing the expansion of democracy? He was not a primitive fellow. Then why was he frustrated with modern amenities and modern inventions such as the invention of steam engine, telephone, telegraphy, metalled roads, and improved navigation? He was not an ivory tower isolationist, then why did he object to mixing with “millions of small ones”? He was not a boor, then why did he not appreciate better opportunities for education to the people? For a close reader of Arnold’s prose and poetry these questions are, by no means, baffling. Nor do they present a paradox. He was not against these new influences and new forces in the social and economic life of his nation. What upset him was the baneful impact of these new influences and forces, which have had a very poisonous and injurious impact on his mind. Men, Arnold thought, and to a large extent he was correct in his view, was getting too much occupied with pursuit of increasing his creature comforts and material possessions. The wealth of his mind he was losing. His feelings were getting dried up. He was getting materially prosperous but spiritually he was getting deprived and poorer! Arnold advocated the promotion of culture, inner development of the human mind. He stood for the enrichment of the mental and emotional life of the individual so that he, instead of pursuing self interest relentlessly may learn to live in harmony with his community, his society and at peace with himself. Science gives us the spirit of inquiry and increases our curiosity. In limits, this is okay but preponderance of doubt will destroy human values by which man has existed and humanized himself. Lack of Faith, according to him, is

dehumanizing. Man's discovery should not be limited to finding of facts; it should extend to an exploration for and reaching out to Truth. Without feeling, without the poetic touch, with out human values, Man's Mind shall become defunct.

Victorian era was a time of multiplex Thought and Action, and Market Forces. Diverse segments of society had started exercising opposing and differing pulls. This had disturbed the quiet scene of the preceding centuries when time appeared to have stopped. For sensitive minds like that of Matthew Arnold the disturbance of the social scene and advent of new forces of science, of utilitarian thought, of conflicting social segments, each promoting their separate claims to power and pelf, emergence of the ugly instinct of selfishness and greed, the increased speed and tension of daily life proved too much to bear. (See section on Victorian Age and Analysis of the Text in the foregoing discussion for further elaboration and comments). And, Arnold gave vent to his resonse to the hectic change and atrophying mind of his Age. In his poetry, and in his prose more clearly and directly, he atacked the mindless acceptance, on the part of even thinking people, of the new forces and influences without qualification, without objection, without any attempt at modifying their effect on their lives. In his Essay on *Culture and Anarchy*, he divided the English society into three distinct categories; The unfeeling, mindless newly rich were the "Barbarians"; the middle-classes who found the new comforts and limitedly higher economic and social status as an unmixed boon, were the "Philistines", and the larger sections of the poor people who were given greater say-only say, literally, no big benefits, under the new democratic dispensation, were the "Populace". All the three segments of English people had one thing in common: *They were soulless*. They were all insensitive; not receptive to any "ideas". They were all full of self-complacency.

Arnold has been accused of putting on "Olympian airs" but many of his fears about the coming damnation of the "civilized man" are becoming fully real in our own times. Arnold was a well-wisher of the humanity in general. He found his times destroying their culture; becoming "unpoetical," losing all sense of Beauty and Truth; mad after material gains. He came up with remedies against this disease of their minds. He suggested they look for and spread "sweetness and light"; work and act "disinterestedly", "propagate the best that was written and thought in the world" anywhere. In *Dover Beach*, the remedy suggested is "Love", love between man and woman, may be it is married life. That love can offer succur and sustenance against spiritual incertitude, against doubt and confusion of "the darkling plain" or this, our world!

Critical Comment on "Disease of Modern Life" in Arnold referenced The Scholar Giosy

This phrase "The strange disease of modern life" occurs in Arnold's poem *The Scholar Gipsy*. It connotes Matthew Arnold's disapproval of disappointment with certain unsavoury trends and developments in the Victorian age (See the section on the Victorian Age in this book's earlier portion) which were brought about by revolutionary or speedy advancement of Science, its discoveries and inventions, expansion of democracy, industry, trade resulting in increase of material prosperity for a larger number of people. These developments gave rise to man's curiosity for new things and craving for amassing more and more of material possessions and diminishing of his concern for spiritual upliftment and intellectual refinement. Doubt started replacing faith and human values started to be discarded. Greed and selfishness began to guide or misguide human actions. Less sensitivity to human suffering, less feeling for other's misery, less consideration and courtesy for fellow-beings. Such trends, Arnold like many other thinkers of his age thought, were injurious to the Human Mind, unhealthy for Human Society and detrimental to Human Culture. In other words, these modern trends were symptoms of sickness of the collective life of the English society. They represented a kind of social disease of the times, his own times. This was "the strange disease of modern times".

Arnold's somewhat pessimistic view of modernism and progress of civilization in the Victorian era is a recurrent theme in his works – poems, essays and lectures. He often looks back with nostalgia on the ages and times past and gone by. He assumes and believes that those were better times; those were tranquil times;

those were the times when men had good will among them and peace reigned over their minds; those were the times when man lived in harmony with nature and did not tear it apart for satisfying its insatiable appetites. When golden mean was the principle of life and the instinct of greed was kept under control. But now all is changed. Man has lost his estate of innocence. He is thoughtless and wicked in his life and in his ways. He has lost the capacity to reflect and think about what is good and what is bad for him, in the long and short run. He has become prone to grabbing anything and everything that comes his way in order to lead a sensual life without caring for decency and good taste that alone can cultivate his mind and turn him from a brute to a cultured being. In *The Scholar Gipsy*, these themes have been directly and forthrightly stated and contrasted with the earlier times when The Scholar Gipsy as student at Oxford actually lived (in the seventeenth century) and even then played “a truant boy” from his studies at Oxford to seek a more simple and joyful life of wandering and not acquiring and gathering unnecessary possessions or material gains or false values of status and intellectual pride in his scholarly accomplishments at Oxford.

*O born in days when wits were fresh and clear
And Life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames
Before this strange disease of modern life
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its head O'vertaxd, its palsied hearts, was rlife
Fly hence, our contact fear!*

The theme is repeated elsewhere: “This iron-time/of doubts, disputes/distrain, fears.” In his letters to Clough and poems, especially written in his memory (*Thyrsis*), he reminds him of “the disease of modern life” : “Resolve to be thyself, and know that he,/Who finds himself, loses his misery”. Therefore, the cure against this modern disease of sick hurry and divided aims is to look within and discover the world of the self and gain spiritual insights for peace and serenity of life.

While composing *The Scholar Gipsy*, he wanted to project the legend of the scholar Gipsy as narrated by Glanvill in a new light as a corrective to the life of an average Oxford scholar who was driven by false ambition and crazed by modern trends to seek worldly status and material possessions which was not a true aim of educated and intellectual life. He wanted to “animate” and rouse the drooping spirits of the educated people who were willy-nilly getting strayed from the right spiritual course of life to the Victorian ways of materialism. He wanted to act like Goethe, the German writer and philosopher whom he describes as the “Physician of an iron-age”. He perhaps thought that a poet was like a prophet who must send a message, a divine and edifying message to the world of men for their spiritual regeneration. The Victorians needed such a prophetic and spiritual message because they had become “Barbarians, Philistines” and “Populace” without taste or decency in their lives. They were “the complaining millions of men” who “Darken in labor and pain”, to borrow his own words. His Scholar Gipsy is no mere hypnotist like that of Glanvill but an idealist, a spiritual seeker of illuminated moments, “Heaven -sent moments” of self-realization. He got alienated and separated himself by making a conscious, existentialist choice for a different life than the life of material prosperity and social recognition his class-mates were left behind to pursue. He wanted to offer a contrasted life from that of those who live the worldly life of his times carrying “the disease of modern life” all the time on their body and soul. He got rid of this diseased modern life by imposing a kind of Quarantine on himself; by opting for a change of milieu, from the organised modern society to tribal “willd-brotherhood”, free from the constricting demands and “anodynes” to kill the pain of modern life.

The method and technique of contrast of older times with the new times, of examples of good life with bad life, of spiritual pursuit with the pursuit of materialism has been identified by the critics and commentators on Matthew Arnold as “criticism of life”. Arnold insisted that poetry or literature ought to offer “criticism of life” so that it performs a social function. This social function is not limited only to awakening or reawakening of the reading public to the need of ideal and high principles. It should result into measurable impact and improvement in the condition of man after exposure to great works of art and literature. It has been pointed out by some

critics who have studied Arnold's works more closely that he shares this view with the Classical writers of Greece and Rome. It may also be relevant in this context to observe that European and British Gypsies whose life the Oxford scholar had chosen to adopt are of oriental origin. These Gypsies, researchers have found, have a good deal common with their Indian counterparts. Thus, in *The Scholar Gipsy*, the view of life that has been contrasted and offered as "criticism of life" is a variation on Indian life. Even in his more serious criticism and lectures, Arnold has cited "detachment" as an "Indian virtue". G. Wilson Knight observes: "Arnold's poem confronts our western tradition with suggestion of a wisdom, or magic of oriental affinities or origin". Arnold was ever eager to remove the mask of hypocrisy and illusion from the face of the Victorians. His age was ignorant of the impact their new-found riches of materialism, sciences and democratic dispensation on the soul and psyche. They were full of confusion and mental chaos. Some of them were full of disappointments and despair, having lots a world of serenity and peace in exchange for perplexities and complexities of modern life. Yet, Arnold was not scathing or biting as Carlyle was in his incendiary criticism of own times. He preferred *Stoicism*, a Greek creed which prescribes forbearance and patience in the face of the onslaughts of Fate. It is true that Victorians faced a different kind of Fate than the metaphysical Fate the philosophers and poets portrayed in their works depicting human beings as victims of this inscrutable Fate. The Victorians were faced with, what Galsworthy called "Social Fate", a Fate of their own collective making but beyond an individual's control and perhaps beyond collective social control too, because it is irreversible.

According to Arnold "Poetry is always referring the actual life to the ideal and illustrating the one by the other". Like the Greeks, especially his adopted mentor, Sophocles, he sought to "see life steadily and sea it whole". He also wanted that his own contemporaries lead a life of refinement and spiritual glory. Moralistic element in Arnold's poetry is not much appreciated in our own times because modern thought shuns moralizing. But with this exception, Arnold's concerns are genuine. We can't take everything given by science and everything described as progressive as essentially good for human beings. Science and technology are neutral. Man is free to put them to whatever use. But once they are brought into play, it may not be possible to control the forces and influences generated by them. This is where the modern man faces dilemma. He cannot turn away from Science and Technology which are capable of getting him rid of disease, poverty and ignorance. But by not being cautious and selective in their use he runs the risk of being destroyed by them. Arnold, with a prophetic vision foresaw these dilemmas and in poem after poem and essay after essay and lecture after lecture issued warnings to his age about the possible pernicious effect of the so-called progressive forces and influences of his time and beware of this "disease of modern life".

Arnold's immediate gurus or masters or role models such as Senancour also held similar views and outlook on life. Senancour believed that "life was a vale of tears" and similar thoughts have been articulated by Indian sants and spiritual teachers. Didn't Guru Nanak say "Full of grief is the whole world" ("Nanak, dukhiya sab sansar")? Arnold traced the self-inflicted woes of his time to the loss of faith. "We, / Light half-believers" / "never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd" / "Whose insight never has born fruit in deeds" / and therefore never got "the spark from heaven!". As he observes in *The Scholar Gipsy* in order to diagnose this "disease of modern life". The result is, as he continues to elaborate in *The Scholar Gipsy*, "The sick fatigue" and "Languid doubt" that "bafflement brings". Lost is our heavenly legacy. Lost is our soul. As a cure, he suggests "one aim, one business, one desire" for seeking and not necessarily finding spiritual fulfillment because Faith, true Faith is that which ensures fulfillment in the seeking itself and not necessarily in finding it. For, finding too would be only by God's Grace and not necessarily the result or fruit of our effort or action. External glitter lasts only in time while spiritual life is timeless. It is a life of increasing and expanding consciousness. It is a life of harmony with Nature and the world around, not grabbing and striving to gain power, possessions and pelf and keep them greedily.

Elegiac Element in Arnold's *Dover Beach* and *The Scholar Gipsy*

Matthew Arnold has been described as the "poet of elegies". Compared to other poets of his age, especially, Tennyson and Browning, Arnold does appear to be a poet of sorrows who vents his grief and sense of loss in

his poetry. True, it is not personal loss that he cries about. Even when the subjects of his poems are personally related to him, like his own father Thomas Arnold of Rugby Chapel or Arthur High Clough, his friend in Thyrasis, or elder poet Wordsworth of Memorial Verses, personal loss is lifted to a larger plane and it is general sense of grief and loss that is mourned and lamented. Tennyson made a compromise with his age and he accepted old and new as a part of his times which were in a great flux. He expressed his feelings and ideas about Faith and Doubt, Science and Religion, Democracy and royalty and other divergent and contradictory strains with equal ease. Browning was a stubborn optimist. He did not care where he lived, patriotically at home or as a part or even a relic of the Renaissance in Italy amidst imaginary Bishops and Duchess who sought to satisfy their worldly vanities by building beautiful memorial tombs or getting portrayed by painters of renown. Even old age and its debilities did not bother him: "Grow old with me, the best is yet to be".

Arnold was much involved with his country's life. He was employed as Inspector of Schools and was thus responsible for monitoring the state of school education in the country. He got appointed as the Professor of Poetry at Oxford, a position he retained for ten years. In this highly valued academic position he had the occasion and scope for critically examining the value system of his own society, prevailing ethos and its equation with the English morality of the past ages of English history. He was a keen student of the classics which were rated highly as the basis of not only academic education but accomplishment in social and political life; it was often a passport to higher echelons of aristocracy and diplomacy. A person with classical education, though of humbler social class had access to and acceptance in what used to be called polite society in those days. Both by his professional career, educational qualification and his involvement with the social and public affairs of his society, he was well set to comment upon contemporary issues and problems being faced by the Victorian society. Besides, he had a natural aptitude for a role as the wise man who would give good counsel for the general well-being of his people. But as a critic and observer of his times, he had a pessimistic view of the life of his countrymen.

He regarded the people of his age as unfortunate people who had lost a great heritage; who had gained the world and worldly riches but had lost their soul and who had failed to realise how great a treasure they had lost. But he did not hate human beings. He only pitied them and always thought of raising their cultural level. Because, by raising the cultural level he could hope to restore them to health and sanity. He was also not an isolationist or an ivory tower academic who liked to live away or far part from the average, intelligent people. He counted among his friends not only the classicist like Arthur Clough but also scientists such as T.H. Huxley, J.C. Shairp, Duke Coleridge to name only a few of them. But he could not come to terms with the times. As a poet more so. In his poems, Elegy is the dominant form. In most of his poems, elegiac or the sad note is the highest and loudest.

Dover Beach and *The Scholar Gipsy*, two poems very different from each other, the first lyrical and the second narrative yet have the mood of sadness and sense of loss of Faith as common elements between them. In a letter to Clough, he complained of the "damned times", "spread of luxury", "physical enervation", "the absence of great natures," "newspapers, cities, light profligate friends" (see Analysis of the Text in this book for the complete quotation in the critical summary of *The Scholar Gipsy*). Both these poems remember the vanished past as a loss. Both of them lament the demise of Faith which once was full and alive. Of course, these two poems have different designs, different stanza structures, different conception, different modes of narrative and lyrical expression but in mood and theme both are identical. In poetic elaboration of the theme and creation of the melancholy mood *Dover Beach* used the landscape and the Sea symbols. Some critics have found difficulties in the use of Sea as symbol of both the fullness of faith in times past and its drying up in modern times. But the high tide of the sea and the receding of the sea both at the same time symbolizing two opposite phenomenon in no way detract from the efficacy of Sea as a paradoxical symbol. We are not considering here some thing neat and clear like a logical argument which must avoid all contradictions. A symbol is a complex poetic device in which two opposite phenomenon, meanings and opposite images can

be present simultaneously and yet effectively. More complex a symbol, greater its significant value. Therefore, if the Sea at its full tide reminds us of the high noon of Faith in ancient and earlier historical times and its receding “grating roar” calls to our mind the disappearance of Faith like the dry “shingles” on the shore of English channel, it should enhance the hidden meaning and significance behind the complex symbol of the Sea. If man has continuity of history, his rise and fall is like that of the sea which, at full moon swells to fullness, but recedes with a sad and melancholy sound leaving behind shingles and pebbles like the ruins of man's own past. But the dominant note emanating from this simultaneous symbol of the past glory of faith and the present decline of faith is that of sadness as the Sea brings “eternal note of sadness in”. Sophocles, the Great master of Tragedy had also heard the same “note of sadness” on the Aegean Sea. The ebb and flow of the sea is eternal which is symbolic of the “ebb and flow of human misery”. But for Arnold, unfortunately, it was only the “ebb” of Faith to see and observe and experience. Materialism had dried up the soul of his times.

But there is some healing, some comfort and consoling possible amidst this great loss and sorrow and the succor and solace is available to the whole humanity. This solace is possible through love between a man and woman; Arnold pays his tribute to married love in the lines “Ah, love, let us be true/To one another” in *Dover Beach*. The sadness and elegiac mood of the poem are set off by this assurance of love, individual love against general gloom. Love is real while the world is only an illusion.

In *The Scholar Gipsy*, the description of Victorian life and its loss of Faith is not in terms of complex symbols. It is more forthright and direct: “Mere triflers” with “Languid doubts” suffering from “the sick fatigue” are the epithets used for the Victorians while, in contrast, the *Scholar Gipsy* has “one aim, one business, one desire”. Instead of complex symbolism, it is a clear “contrast” that has been used to reflect and project the present loss of faith and the past fullness of faith. It will also be noted that in *Scholar Gipsy*, Arnold, the poet emerges as an agnostic rather than as an orthodox believer in Christianity. The elegiac note in *The Scholar Gipsy* is unrelieved by any antidote for the pain of loss of Hope and Faith. A morose, existentialist alienation and despair are the dominant mood. For, the poet does not want the Scholar Gipsy to return to this rotten world afflicted with this “diseases of modern life”. (See also Critical Summary and Analysis of the Scholar Gipsy in this book in earlier sections).

Arnold's Message (As A Poet)

Arnold was a poet of social commitment. In his poems, as he asserted in a letter to his mother, is encapsulated “the main movement of the mind of the last quarter of a century”. He was conscious of the fact that his “poems represent, on the whole, the main movement of the mind of the last quarter of a century, and thus they will probably have their day as people become conscious to themselves of what the movement of mind is, and interested in the literary production which reflect it” (1869 letter to his mother). He was also aware that in his day his poetry was not regarded as representative of the spirit of his own times, that Tennyson, the Poet Laureate and his contemporary, had been readily accepted as the Representative Poet of the Victorian Age. The meaning and message of Arnold's poetry, as is clear from the letter just cited, depended upon a responsive audience and how conscious that audience was of the “main movement of the mind” of his times. We may note here that Arnold has been paid greater attention in the twentieth century than in his own nineteenth century. But he is regarded as a serious thinker and poet who did not write poetry only to please the ear. That he was a “sage” and a “seer”. He assigned high mission to Poetry and the Poet. The poet was not only a creator of verses but also a prophet who proclaimed a message of high significance to the humanity at large, almost a divine message of spiritual and temporal importance. From the message perspective, his *Memorial Verses* written as an elegy and eulogy on Wordsworth's death assumes significance. Like the German poet and philosopher, Goethe, Arnold wanted to feel the pulse of his times like a doctor or a physician so that he is able to tell his contemporary audience about the ailment that they are suffering from (“disease of modern life” as he said in another poem). Goethe knew how to diagnose the disease and identify the symptoms of the disease of his times:

*He read each wound, each,
Weakness clear -
And struck his finger on the place
And said-Thou ailest here, and here.*

With a deep, penetrating poetic insight Arnold found that his Age was a confused world, full of tension and unable to decide which way to go, to look back to its own past, its history for assurance and confidence or to the flux of the present moment which held no clear meaning. Victorian age was an age of transition. Arnold has described his own-milieu and times in memorable lines from the Grande Chartreuse.

*“Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With no where yet to rest my head,
like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride--
In come to shed them at their side.”*

Some commentators on Arnold have found that Arnold in his poetry, dwells too much on that which is already dead but in his prose he does not appear to be so sad and melancholy and can see the birth and emergence of a brave new world. Basil Wiley remarks: “If in his verse he is often the elegist of the dead world (and of something dead or dying within himself), in his prose he assists the birth of the new with cheerful alacrity”. This, like all generalisations, may be partly true As a critic, Arnold attaches very high importance and role to poetry. He even believed that poetry, in fullness of time, could replace philosophy, religion and science. And poetry shall be the main promoter and protector of Culture. In *The Study of Poetry*, he states: “The future of poetry is immense, because poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is also the fact. The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry.”

In our own times, Form in poetry has received greater importance. “Medium is the Message”, says McLuhan, this writer’s Guru and the Philosopher of the Electronic Age. Eliot also emphatically says that Poetry is made of word and not of ideas. But Arnold had a different frame of reference. And, in the context of that reference he emphasized the “content” of poetry rather than its “form”, though the two cannot be separated but it has become a habit with the analytic mind of our times to reduce an object to its separate elements and then, if need and capability to do so allow, recombine the separate elements or parts back into the whole in order to comprehend and understand reality of the object under consideration. Arnold, it must be said here, did not subscribe to the theory of “Art for Art’s sake”. Poetry for him was for humanity’s sake. It definitely had a social function to perform. It had not only to awaken Man to his suffering and misery but also to heal him. For this reason, “Modern Poetry can only subsist by its contents: by becoming a complete magister vitae as the poetry of the ancients did by including as theirs did, religion with poetry, instead of existing as poetry only and leaving religious want to be supplied by the Christian religion”.

Arnold’s poetry presents a pattern of contrast to actual life. This becomes a part of the high function of poetry itself. Just as a good person is a criticism of a bad person or a good act is a criticism of bad act, just as mercy and its manifestations are criticism of cruelty and its manifestations, so also good poetry projecting values and ideals of Truth and High seriousness is a criticism of life which is delusive, illusory, mundane and depressive. This function of poetry was conceived by Arnold in response to the peculiar circumstances of his times in which Faith and serenity of life had disappeared and unbridled pursuit of ambition, greed, power and pelf had become a commonplace. Therefore, he arrived at another conclusion that Literature, Art or Poetry “is a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic

beauty”. He explicated upon “criticism” in this context and defined it as “the noble and profound application of ideas to life”. While modern writers and critics make a distinction between life and art and even are inclined to keep them apart excepting to the extent that life provides art with materials to build itself on, Arnold saw a vigorous connection between life and poetry. The two-life and art can and do act upon each other and can be bettered by a more meaningful interaction between them. Greek Masters were his models, especially, Sophocles who saw “life steadily and saw it whole”. Moderns have lost the capacity and patience for such steady and whole grasping of life’s meaning. There is superficiality and outward tinsel and colour rather than gaining of deep insight from the experience of life as it has been lived by man on a multidimensional canvas. His own age presented a contrast to life as depicted in the classical (Greek) literature and also as it was lived in the past centuries. This may be a romantic view as distance lends strangeness and charm. While viewing the past, a good deal is left to the imagination which likes to paint beautiful colours and even ruins look grand and majestic though hardly liveable. But, Arnold’s arguments are not easy of rebuttal. The knowledge unleashed by Science and Technology has brought greater comforts of life but at the same time turned this world of man into a dangerous place to live devoid of human sympathy and fellow-feeling. Arnold’s message or messages have a context and to understand him and the import of his message, we must understand his times and Arnold’s response to those times. “These are damned times”, he protested, full of “sick hurry”, “languid doubts”, “fatigue”. He could find no place to rest his head on for relief. He went back to the Greeks—Homer, Sophocles, Epictetus as guides, philosophers and friends, and to poetry:

The poetry that in a grand style deals with man and his destiny inspired him and he looked to it as the source and fountain of all that is good in man. The best that has been thought and written holds the secret of man’s rejuvenation, of his being born again and again out of its own ashes. Because, when his bad act and mundane instincts have done their work and come to a sorrowful end, there will be poetry to which he can go and open the page from its depository of great ideas, passions and feeling and regain hope from the preserved memory of his race. That modern man is capable of “seeing life steadily and see it whole”. Because, there were men who had done so before him; so he can do so also. Poetry interprets by expressing with inspired conviction, the ideas and laws of the inward world of man’s moral and spiritual nature”, he said and sent other messages in the same vein. He speaks of the “healing power” of Wordsworth’s poetry and “interpretive powers of poetry” in general. For his taste, Poetry should hold the charm of “natural magic” as also “moral profundity”. While considering his message as a poet, we have to understand his terminology and phraseology: “criticism of life”, “interpretation” and “moral profundity”, “Truth” “Beauty” and their “Laws; “High Seriousness”, “Disinterestedness” and the like. Arnold also thought that Nature too has healing powers for the frayed nerves of man in turmoil as is clear from the message in the following lines from his *Self Dependence*

*“Ye who from my childhood up have calmed me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end”.*

He did not see a divine agency in Nature as Wordsworth did but consolation and soothing it could surely give to the harried man of the world; it could also restore the self to the selfish persons who in the pursuit of greed and materialist gains lose their soul. In *Dover Beach*, it is Love between man and woman that performs a similar function of imparting tranquility to a disturbed mind. In *The Scholar Gipsy*, it is the extinction of duality between the “ideal” and its “pursuer”, determined and everlasting in his Faith and hope, that is articulated as the message of the poet. Arnold’s poetry seeks to send the same message as the Classicists like Sophocles left for the posterity.

Modern and Existentialist Elements in Arnold

If questing and questioning spirit are the marks of modernity, Arnold certainly is a modernist and a modern poet, critic and writer. He was a self-conscious writer and endowed with *critical objectivity* who could view his own work dispassionately. He knew that among his contemporaries there were poets and thinkers who were acclaimed as the representative of his times and/or for their intellectual acumen. He did not hesitate to compare his own contribution to Literature with that of his peers, two of whom deserve special mention here.

Browning and Tennyson. Quite often we have quoted from his well-known letter to his mother written in 1867 in which he compares himself with these two eminent poets and fellow Victorians. The relevant portion of the said letter bears repetition in the present context : ... "It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning; yet, because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to my turn, as they had theirs". These are insightful self observations of a poet and critic who could not only see but also foresee time future. He proved right. Arnold's poems and criticism have evinced a remarkable degree of survival and staying power through the passage of time. Tennyson today looks good-goody stuff; Browning's poetry outshines Arnold's but through its parts and not as a whole. Arnold's modernity is not merely innovative or experimental as that of Browning but because of his concern with values and principles of life and literature and because of themes in his poems that are of lasting relevance to human beings. In his poems, namely, *Dover Beach*, *The Scholar Gipsy*, *Memorial Verses*, *The Forsaken Merman* he raises and deals with human issues that shake us out of the habit of taking things for granted and state of self-complacency. They moot questions of self, being, choice and projection of that choice in acts of being. Maybe, he is not so strong when it comes to going against one's grain for an existentialist form of self-realization but he points to the movements of our own times such as existentialism, absurdism and even structuralism and deconstructionism. The discourse that emerges from his works is not only a part of "the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century" in which he lived but as a forerunner of the intellectual movements of the later part of the twentieth century.

It has been aptly observed that "no poet of modern times, perhaps no English poet of any time, appeals so directly and exclusively to the cultivated taste of the educated classes" as does Arnold. He was neither excessive in his expression nor populist in his posture as a poet and man of culture. His pursuit of Truth, general fate of man, verities of life as themes of his poetry was persistent and vigorous. He reflected on these themes as well as embodied them in his poems: "The end aim of all literature, if one considers it attentively, is truth, nothing but that. But the criticism which the men of genius pass on human life is permanently acceptable to mankind; the criticism which the men of ability pass upon human life is transitorily acceptable," he said. He attached importance to "criticism", not because it was a superior or higher activity of the human mind but because it created a ferment and a climate for creativity. Even poetry has to be a criticism of life so that it may give rise to more poetry. In his "Essay on Wordsworth" he states: "It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life." Criticism, not with a view to gaining or scoring a point over others, not with a view to pleasing some one or condemning a thing and person on the basis of personal bias or for the sake of practical gains or considerations; criticism has to be "disinterested" and not for "ulterior, political, practical considerations."

Arnold reflects these tendencies of "disinterested" criticism both in his theory and practice of the literary art. He is not an ivory tower, academic critic. He is very much a man of the world, fully involved in the daily chores of his life and also the movements of his time and in affairs of public and social importance. He had a broad, and cosmopolitan outlook who could look beyond his own English or racist traditions and cultures in his quest for answers to basic questions of life. For example he cites with approval the "Indian Virtue" of "Disinterestedness" which he interprets, perhaps erroneously with "objectivity" borrowing the term "detachment" from *Gita*. According to Arnold "The critic of poetry should have the finest tact, the nicest moderation, the most free, flexible, and elastic spirit imaginable; he should be, indeed, the 'ondoyant divers', the undulating and diverse being of Montaigne". He tried to develop within him what, to borrow T.S. Eliot's phrase, maybe described as the "Mind of Europe" and allowed himself to be freely influenced by French writers such as Senancour and George Sands and German Heine, and Goethe.

Arnold's modernism could be attributed to his criticism. He assigned a new function to criticism and widened its scope. He made the practising critic aware of not only his responsibilities to art, literature or poetry only

but also to society. But this Arnoldian posture should not be confused with the communist theory of “Art for Community or Society”. Arnold drove attention and capacities of the critic to a close relationship that exists between life and literature. The problems and issues of the society and community are relevant to the critic and the poet because he seeks inspiration, materials and even methods and attitudes from his society and culture at large. In his Essay “*The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*” he defends criticism, though keeping it lower than Creation and credits it with germinating ideas that further pollinate poetry, literature, arts and, in fact, the entire culture. He ascribes the dissipation of the poetic urge in the times of Pope and Dryden and Gray to the lack of a climate of ideas and criticism. Even the Romantic writers did not have a *milieu* that could be described as infused with ideas and “this makes Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, Wordsworth even, profound as he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety”, observes Arnold. All these poets failed to “see life steadily and see it whole”.

Criticism, understood within the Arnoldian reference is, a “disinterested” pursuit and attempt at knowing the best that is known and thought in the world and which, by making diffused and widespread, generates currents of new thoughts, provokes new and deep ideas, offers new insights and this process is what ought to continually lead to renewal and refreshment of Tradition. Poets like Sophocles had that capacity and genius for applying thought to life and embody interaction between life and poetry in the creative act:

*Sophocles long ago
 Heard it on the Aegean,..... we

 Find also in the sound a thought
 Hearing it by this distant northern sea.*

– **Dover Beach**

This is how Arnold helped create a climate of ideas - a climate conducive to greater creativity. Instead of accepting the “turbid ebb and flow”, “soullessness”, “Vulgarity”, “Plebianism”, “haphazard provincialism” and “blundering” of his age, he questioned the assumptions behind the smugness and complacency of his times. He acted somewhat in the manner of Goethe's Faust who, unlike Marlowe's damned Faustus, saves himself from damnation because he was able to overcome the inertia or sense of self-complacency. He not only saved himself but also tried to save and uplift the “barbarians, Philistines and the Populace” of his age and propel them toward creativity. His vision discarded the immediately available sensual experience and rewards for the more abiding, more edifying, more human, spiritual fulfillment which “disinterested” endeavour ensures. He was not tied to the materialistic and machine culture of his age but sought comfort and satisfaction in the timeless soul of man. In *Culture and Anarchy and Friendship's Garland* he urged upon his countrymen to wake up and come back to life from the stupor of Victorianism, stupor of ignorance, stupor of materialism. In his *Essay on Byron* he writes: “As the inevitable break up of the old order comes, as the English middle-class slowly awakens from its intellectual sleep of two centuries, as our actual present world, to which the sleep has condemned us, shows itself more clearly -our world of an aristocracy materialised and dull, a middle-class purblind and hideous, a lower class rude and brutal--we shall turn our eyes again and to more purpose, upon this passionate and dauntless soldier of a forlorn hope, who, ignorant of future and unconsolated by its promises, nevertheless this conservation of the old impossible world so fiery battle, waged it till he fell--waged it with such splendid and imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength.”

It is because of this openness of mind to unravel the beauty and excellence of even those like Byron with whose sense of morality or conduct of life he openly differed that Arnold today has a place among the modernists. He overcame the general sense of insularity and closedness in which the self-complacent Victorians suffocated and wallowed themselves. He allowed the winds and airs from all directions, alien and far lands, to knock at his intellect's door and he imbibed them with religious unction. RH. Hutton has analysed the contribution of Matthew Arnold to modern Thought, thus: “When I come to ask what Mr Arnold's poetry has done for the generation, the answer must be that no one has expressed more powerfully and poetically its

spiritual weaknesses, its craving for a passion that it cannot feel, its admiration for a self-mastery that it cannot achieve, its desire for a creed that it fails to accept, its sympathy with a faith that it will not share, its aspiration for a peace that it does not know. But Mr Arnold does all this from the intellectual side, -sincerely and delicately, but from the surface, and never from the centre. It is the same with his criticism. They are fine, they are keen, they are often true, but they are always too much limited to their superficial layer of moral nature of their subjects, and seem to take comparative interest in the deepest individuality beneath."

There are certain aspects of Arnold's modernism which only developments in the twentieth century can reveal. In the limited context here they can only be cursorily mentioned but they deserve full length and closer study. These relate to the sense of "loneliness" and "alienation" and "separation" in his poems. These are distinctly distinguishing features of certain modern philosophies developed in Europe toward the end and in between the two Great World wars. The basic inspiration and development of these philosophies lies in the works of Brentano, Husserl, Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Jung, Kierkegaard, Merlau-Ponty, Sartre and Albert Camus and several others in whose poetry, philosophical works, novels and plays these philosophies known as *Existentialism Absurdism, Structuralism, Deconstructionism* have been projected and propounded. Certain anthropologists such as Levi-Straus have also contributed to their diffusion and application to diverse fields and academic disciplines.

Loneliness, alienation and separation or forsakenness or becoming a stranger from one's own people, milieu or culture is a recurrent and repeated pattern of themes in his poems. In *Dover Beach, The Forsaken Merman, The Scholar Gipsy, Memorial Verses*, this theme of alienation and becoming part or exile of another world occurs. The theme of alienation is related to weariness and fatigue in one's own environment and this theme too occurs in these poems. Sudden break with life till now lived without making a conscious choice is also a feature of existentialist living as depicted in modern plays and novels and short stories of Sartre and Camus and such moments and occasions too find expression in Arnold's above poems and several other poems and his poetic drama. Consider the following lines from Memorial Verses:

*And Wordsworth! --Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!
For never has such a soothing voice
Been to your shadowy world convey'd...
Wordsworth has gone from us- and ye,
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we!*

If Wordsworth's going to the world of "pale ghosts" appears somewhat existentialistically far-fetched because, after all, this going away is not a matter of choice and act of living or made in the living moments of life, then, consider:

*"The story of the Oxford scholar poor
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at perferment's door,
One summer-morn forsook
His friends and went to learn the gipsy-lore
And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,
but came to Oxford and his friends no more. - The Scholar Gipsy*

Here is a complete write-up on an Oxford scholar who leaving the alienated world of middle-class learning and values consciously and by choice gave it up and went to an alien society, the "wild brotherhood", never to return to the life and environment he had left bored ("tired") with. The scholar gipsy of Arnold's poem is an existentialist character *in toto*. He is a Victorian or seventeenth century version, if you like, of a modern Hippy.

Consider also the character of Margret in *The Forsaken Mmermaid*, a mother and wife, who on a sudden, makes a very conscious choice to give up her home, abode, husband and children. She is a Kierkegaardian

character. The Christian existentialists tell us that “you are free to make an existentialist choice, to become a Christian, to surrender to Christ”. Margret goes to the Church for a prayer. This is the time of Easter, the time of Christ’s sacrifice. The time to repent for her suffering and the time to rejoice for his rising again. Margret is an existentialist. She has the daring to give up all for just one moment of self-realization on the basis of conscious choice of her own making, and, own up “responsibility” for that choice, another important condition for existentialist living.

The general mood of weariness on the occasion of honeymoon smacks of existentialist despair resulting in alienation from the society. “Shipwreck” is a metaphor used by Sartre, the philosopher and practitioner and a representation of Existentialism of intellectual and literary Existentialism. Arnold’s condition here in “Dover Beach” is that of a “Shipwrecked” existentialist being. Full of despair, wearied and bored with Victorianism, He goes deeper in his soul and finds this world “a land of dreams”, of delusions and illusions. He does find solace instead of plunging into the sea for a renewed self and being. He is a conscious person “on the edge of being”.

Thus, Arnold may be called a predecessor of the existentialist movement of later times, thinkers and poet with a futuristic vision.; And, like the existentialists a man of “commitment”.

A.D. Culler’s observation may serve as a befitting close to the present note on Arnold’s modernism: “It is only the modern poet who has followed Arnold in his vision of the tragic and alienated condition of man. In this sense Arnold may be called a modern poet, and it is certain that he would have accepted this designation. He considered that his poem, more than those of his contemporaries, represented “the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century”.

Arnold’s Theory of Poetry

In a letter to Jane, Matthew Arnold wrote: “At Oxford particularly many complain that the subjects treated (in *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*) do not interest them. But as I feel rather as a reformer in poetical matters, I am glad of this opposition. If I have health and opportunity to go on, I will shake the present methods until they go down, see if I don’t. More and more I bent against the modern English habit (too much encouraged by Wordsworth) of using poetry as a channel for thinking aloud, instead of making anything.”

Arnold reacted rather sharply to the Romantic movement initiated by Wordsworth in English poetry. He had great respect for Wordsworth and “healing power” of his poetry but thought the Romantics had tendency of looking at life not “steadily” and not as a “whole” but partially. They were subjective and individual in their expression. Arnold found these tendencies neither healthy nor great nor of lasting value or worth. Greek masters were his inspiration because *they saw life steadily and saw it whole*. And they grasped and captured general truth about the fate and condition of Man in their poetry rather than individual and subjective experience of life. This contrast between the Romantics, his immediate predecessors and the Greek ancient masters such as Homer, Sophocles and Epictetus provides a well-considered basis for Arnold’s Theory of Poetry.

In his famous *Preface* to 1853 *Poems*, which may not have become as famous as Wordsworth’s Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), Arnold came to certain conclusions on Poetry and basic issues related to the Poet’s art and role. In a way, 1853 *Preface* is a manifesto of classical Poetry as perceived and practised by Arnold even as 1798 Preface of Wordsworth’s was the manifesto of Romantic Poetry. Arnold could not initiate a Classical Movement in English Poetry. Perhaps because he was too close in time to the Romantics and their influences could not be rebutted or repelled. But “reforms” introduced by him in English Poetry have flourished better in the twentieth century when eminent poets like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot began to write poetry that expressed the experience of not one generation only but of many generations, and not of one culture only but of many cultures. Arnold’s Classicism has to be understood in terms to the “human experience” which provides materials to poets and poetry, and not in terms of the “form” or “forms” of

poetry which is a matter of choice for the poet himself. But the main inspiration for his theory of poetry came to Arnold from his realization that the English Poetry of his day was in need of radical reform. Melody or lyricism alone was not a measure of poetry; Arnold became clear about this fact early in his career as a poet and critic. Shelley and Keats may have given us sweet and sad songs but the vision of life presented in their poetry is like a flash in a shining pan which disappears momentarily and does not move or stir our spiritual self for deeper and renewed meaning as we read their poems again and again. Truth of life does not yield meaning, though it might provide invaluable insights in a momentary flash. Byron, Keats, Shelley offer us flashes of light and glimpses of Truth, but not its understanding. Beautiful thoughts and feelings, thus, need to be kept in subordination to the total impression because the “part” cannot be allowed to overwhelm or overpower or prevail upon the “whole”.

A poet to be a theorist has to be endowed with critical and philosophical faculty. Arnold had those gifts. He withdrew from public circulation his poetic drama “*Empedocles On Etna*” because, in his self-assessment, this poem didn't meet the classical ideal he was advocating to the poets of his age. It is a poem, he thought “in which a continuous state of mental distress in prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done”. In such situations, he said “there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something monotonous”. Hence, such poems or works are not fit for public reading. It was a measure of intellectual honesty on his part to have withdrawn his own poem from publication as it was composed of elements that were contrary to the dictates of his own convictions.

He dwells on his literary and poetic principles and convictions time and again. In a letter to Arthur Clough, comparing the Romantics with the Elizabethans he says: “Those d-d Elizabethan poets were the trouble-shooters. Keats was a mere “style and form-seeker”. Keats and Shelly had “exuberance of expression, the charm, the richness of images, and felicity of the Elizabethan poets”. And, with all these qualities the Romantics like Keats and Shelley had done disservice to the cause of English Poetry because true poetry does not consist of “exquisite bits and images”. Poetry “can only subsist by its *contents*, by becoming complete *Magister vitae* as the poetry of the ancients did”. As for his own Victorian Age, he thought it was “unpoetical”, it sprawled all over “in its true blankness and barrenness and unpoetrylessness (Sic)”. He also condemned the so-called Spasmodic school of Poetry among whose followers may be counted Dobell, Bailey, Marston, Ebenezer Jones, Bigger and Alexander Amith. Writing about them Buckley notes: “Inflamed by brewed passions and their own ranting emotion.. yield to a Titanic egotism... they neglected over-all theme and action to magnify isolated emotions....”

Arnold assigned a very high mission and function to Poetry in his theory. “The time is not far off when poetry would replace even science and religion”. As “its function is not mere diversion or entertainment. It will interpret life for us. “Poetry” is, therefore, “criticism of life”. It creates a kind of anti-environment to our own mundane world and thus makes us conscious of the alternatives available to us to our own environment. To put it a little differently, Poetry is criticism of life in the same way as a good person is a criticism of a bad person; or a good life is a criticism of a bad life; poetry presents “ideals” - characters, actions, and moods that serve as contrasts or alternatives or other possibilities to what is available in life actually. He has an elaborate theory about these possibilities of poetry. Poetry is a criticism of life under certain conditions and under certain laws, as he calls them, these are the “laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty”. In other words, the poet does not create life; he/she recreates it in another medium. Therefore, the laws of poetry have to be different since the situations and persons of poetry cannot be the same or identical to the persons and situations of life itself. They cannot be photographic reproductions either. So, it creates or should create ideal contrasts to life that one can seek to realize in life. Poet has to organise his/her matter under the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. That is the form of expression has to be aligned with the content of poetry. Truth and high Seriousness must emanate from the poet's expression and creation. Poetry should have “healing power” for the pains, sorrows and imperfections of life.

The Arnoldian dictum “Criticism of life” has been matter of continuous debate in academic circles. Arnold himself explained it as “the noble and profound application of ideas to life”. It is a kind of moral injunction. He also insisted that poetry ought to be written in a “grand style”. He explained it in his *On Translating-Homer*: “The Grand style arises in poetry, when a noble nature, poetically gifted treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject”.

Arnold’s Theory is only a theory and poetry cannot be bound within the limits of any theoretical framework. Therefore, we need not rely too much on it either while applying his assumptions or dictates to evaluate or appraise other poets or his own poetry or poems but his theory serves the purpose of agitating our minds and examining the thoughts and principles behind his theory for studying the function and role of Poetry and of Poets in relation to the Society. His theory, like any theory, cannot be expected to be valid universally and in all conditions, though it is general enough to be called so.

Nature and Wordsworth’s Influence

Matthew Arnold had close association with Wordsworth, and in spite of Wordsworth, being a Romantic poet, not fulfilling the entire gamut of criteria set by Arnold, he admired Wordsworth and his poetry. Arnold’s masters were classical Greek poets and dramatists and in his theory of poetry Arnold draws inspiration from the Greek as has been discussed elaborately elsewhere in this book. Wordsworth was carried away by human passions and defined poetry as an “overflow of powerful feelings”. Arnold believe that passions have to be restrained and controlled and contained as was the practice with the Greek classicists such as Homer and Euripedes and Scophocles. Wordsworth was subjective and celebrated individual freedom and liberty and ideas of the French Revolution in its fancy, though he was completely disillusioned by its butchery and bloodiness in its later phases. So much was he adversely affected by this unexpected development that he lost poetic inspiration and became insipid in his poems. But, though Wordsworth failed to “see life steadily and see it whole”, his poetry had a great deal of “healing power” and it was this element and quality of his poetry that made Arnold set aside his classical ideals and fall for Wordsworth’s poetry. Largely, Wordsworth’s inspiration came from Nature. He saw in Nature a divine agency at work, This divine agency was capable of influencing and ennobling human beings. Nature was capable of enabling man through her benign contact to regain his innocence he daily loses to the work-a-day world of profit and loss. Arnold, on the other hand, product of his own age, (Victorian age as he was, much influenced by new discoveries of science according to which Nature was imperfect and Man has to exploit it for his own use) did not regard Nature as endowed with divine attributes. But, he certainly believed that Nature could, in its serene moods, calm the agitated, disturbed and doubt-ridden mind of man. Wordsworth was a family friend of the Arnolds and also lived in the vicinity in the Lake District where Arnold also resided. In his *Memorial Verses*, written on the death of Wordsworth at the request of Wordsworth’s son-in-law(see discussion of *Memorial Verses* under Critical Summary and Commentary in the earlier section of this book), pays his homage to Wordsworth’s memory, thus: (He)

*Laid us as lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth.*

And, in another poem, *THE YOUTH OF NATURE*, he says about Wordsworth:

*But he was a priest to us all
Of the wonder and bloom of the world.*

But, Arnold never became a Pantheist like Wordsworth. He did not personify or deify Nature. Nature for Arnold was not animate as it was for Wordsworth. According to Stopford Brooke, Arnold’s is frequently the nature the modern science has revealed to us, matter in motion, always acting rigidly, according to certain ways of Nature, which for want of wiser term, we call laws. For the first time this view of nature enters into English poetry with Arnold. He sees the loveliness of her doings, but he also sees their terrors and dreadfulness and their relentlessness. But what in his poetry he chiefly sees is the peace of Nature’s obedience to law.,

and the everlasting youth of her unchanging life. "Nor is his Nature poetry like that of Keats who is fond of painting Dryads and Naiads and fairy-like personifications of Nature. If there are somewhat Romantic echoes of Nature in his poetry they are Wordsworthian. While examining Wordsworth's influence on Arnold as a poet of Nature we have to understand the very distinctive aspects of Wordsworth as a poet of Nature: Wordsworth the healer and Wordsworth the visionary. Arnold was able to comprehend Wordsworth as a "healer" but he never understood him as a "visionary", though he was devoted to Wordsworth as an elder poet. He could never hear or receive "intimations from immortality." Nor could share with the elder poet his moments of ecstasy in the company of Nature. Not rejoicing but tranquility, not elevating passion but serenity, not joy but peace were the gifts of Nature for Arnold.

This peace was also a kind of forbearance, a kind of resignation. Or a satisfaction that comes from performing a duty—like Nature does its work without complaining, day in and out. Stars shine, the moon shines, the tide ebbs and flows, clouds rain and they have their joy in their doing so! Or as Grierson and Smith observe about Arnold's response to Nature: "It was the steadfast self-sufficiency of Nature as she went about the business of her seasons that calmed and strengthened him". Such images of Nature are scattered all over his poetry, especially, in *Quiet Work, Self-Dependence* and *Resignation*: "toil, unsever'd from tranquillity", "glorious tasks" or Nature's "quiet work" and this quietly working Nature can teach him to do likewise "travelling in life's common way in cheerful godliness". And in his *Resignation*, he states forthrightly:

*That general life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace.*

Critics have noted Arnold's very accurate descriptions of nature and its doing. Some of them think this accuracy of detail as his unique speciality. Remarks Hugh Walker, a historian of Victorian Era. "In their wonderful accuracy, Arnold's references to nature illustrate the consciousness of this intellect which is one of his most honourable distinction." He could be described a "botanist" poet for his highly impressive accurate description of mountains, lakes, rivers and other phenomena. He was very precise in noting the facts of Nature, as would be graphically clear from a few passages from his verse:

*Sand-strewn caverns cool and deep
Where the winds are all asleep
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine
Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail, with unshut eye.*

– The Forsaken Mermaid

*Long since and in some quiet churchyard laid--
Some country-nook where Ov'r the unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
Under a dark-red fruited yew-tree's shade.*

– The Scholar Gypsy

*The Sea is calm tonight,
The tide is full, this moon lies fair
Upon the straights, – on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.*

– Dover Beach

Silent, quiet, serene, tranquil is Arnold's Nature as Lewish Jones remarks: "He loved Nature in her quieter and more subdued moods; he preferred her silences to her many voices, moonlight to sunlight, the sea retreating from the 'moon-blanch'd land with 'Its mechanically long withdrawing roar' to the sea in tumult and storm. The sea was, from him, the one element in which he discovered the deepest reflection of his own melancholy and sense of isolation."

The sea, the moon and water are the recurring symbols of the poetry. In *Dover Beach* these symbols appear with tour de force with a peculiar Arnoldesque impact:

*Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land
Listen! You hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling
At their return, up the high strand.*

At times, Arnold's Nature appears within the world of men to add a larger than life dimension to human personality as in *Shakespeare*. Shakespeare the towering master of words, has been depicted as a colossus "planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea." as the lesser mortals are "in the sea of life enlisted". The Oxford countryside which had made him play truant from the classes has been portrayed with love and tenderness, memory adding charm and wonder to his descriptions. Frank Watts says: "The country dear to Matthew Arnold was a very quiet country. Hinksey and Cumner the haunts of his youth to which he always returned on his visits to Oxford, were not what are called beauty spots. They were merely uplands of ancient pasture, down some of which, by the time of *Thyrsis*, the plough boy's team had already gone; with a bit of woodland, a wide outlook over Oxford itself, and the surrounding valleys, the little footpaths running from farm to farm beneath high hedges."

In *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis* Nature as depicted by Arnold is serene and tranquil and bears a sharp contrast to the hectic life and "sick hurry" and "divided aims" of the materialistic world and help Arnold turn his poetry into a "criticism of life". Nature's changing scenes are recorded with care. Flowers have caught his fancy and exhale an unearthly perfume: As in *The Scholar Gipsy*

*Of thou has given them store,
Of flowers—the frail leafed white anemone,
Dark blue—bells drenched with dews of summer eves
And purple orchises with spotted leaves –*

In some of his poems, Arnold expresses his belief in the indifference of Nature to man. Far from being a divine and benign agency penetrating through the wall of separation between itself and man's world as in Wordsworth, Arnold's Nature appears to be indifferent, unconcerned and non-challant. Nature outcasts Man. That is a fact. And Arnold is wistfully aware of it. In the *Youth of Nature*, he says:

*We, O Nature, depart
Thou survivest us! this,
This I know is the law.*

In *Literature and Dogma*, he forthrightly states: "Ah! what pitfalls are in that word Nature". Arnold does not accept the proposition that Man can exist in harmony with Nature. On the contrary, he believes that Nature is incomplete and if Man forsakes Society in order to live with Nature, he will lose his humanity. It will be a life of naked instincts and of not cultivated minds. If for Wordsworth and Coleridge, Nature had "oneness" with Man, for Arnold, Man and Nature have been made to dwell apart from each other. Man can seek calmness of mind and soothing of his nerves amidst Nature in selective places like Dover Beach or Oxford countryside. Thus, Arnold the Wordsworthian is also Arnold the Darwinian very conscious of Man's tenuous relationship with Nature.

A Note on Arnold's Intellectualism

Arnold's Theory of Poetry as discussed in the foregoing sections of this book clearly indicates that he was not a passionate or emotional poet. He preferred serious element of thought in his poetry and almost all his poems display his intellectualist proclivity. He did not believe in singing idle songs nor did he believe that poetry was a form of entertainment. He thought Poetry had high destiny and could even replace science and religion as a formative influence on man's culture. In his essay on Joubert he defined Literature as the criticism of life and in his Essays on Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Chaucer he applied the test of the Laws of poetic Truth and High Seriousness in appraising their poetry. A conscious poet and cogitative thinker and essayist could not but be an intellectual writer of Verse. He strove all through his career as a poet and thinker to propagate this belief that a poet's greatness depended upon the degree to which he applies the noble and profound ideas to life, and it is this quality of a poet's work that distinguishes him from transitory writers who may write powerfully on one aspect of life or the other but who never are able to make us see life steadily and see it whole as did the Greek poets of ancient times such as Homer and Sophocles.

He agreed with Wordsworth that poetry is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge" and that poetry is "the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science". And he himself sought to keep the highest norms of poetic composition in mind while publishing his own poetry. He even withdrew from publication his poetic drama *Emjpedocles On Etna* because by his own standards it did not meet the high criteria he had set for poetry.

Arnold's intellectualism can be traced and studied as a part of his classicism. They both intertwine in the design and style of his poetry. In his insistence that a poet cannot afford to expend all his talent and genius on projecting the beauty of the separate parts instead of subordinating them to his sense of the whole, he was propagating Hellenism or the Greek practice of seeing life steadily and seeing it whole. And, this philosophy is a part of his intellectualism. He always quested for "simple and pure" style. But this simplicity was loaded with meaning and significance. Just as a crystal is the purest element of a substance and carries within it all its essence so also simple and pure style must communicate Truth in its essence. Arnold came immediately after the Romantics in terms of time and history. He found the poetry of the Romantics and that of their imitators more overcloved with emotion and feeling. Instead of purifying the Truth of life, it, through its overwhelming passionate expression, flooded or drowned the Truth of life. Instead to helping us penetrate reality and have clear vision, it confused our minds and coloured, if not blurred our "vision" of Truth or Reality. Unthinking endorsement of all that was going on in the name of material and scientific progress and democracy also came under his scrutinizing gaze. He debunked these ideas of progress and prosperity and largest good for the largest numbers as illusions. He, thus, went against the grain of his own age. And, this Herculean effort required intellectual stamina and acumen. We find the evidence of this intellectual quality in his poems as much as in his prose works.

Goethe, the German sage and writer once remarked about Byron that "whenever he thinks, he becomes a child" or in other words, he loses his maturity. Byron was not a great thinker though he was a powerful poet. But in the case of Arnold, it is the other way around. "He is not one of those who sing because they must. Often he is more like one who has thought out his thoughts first and then set himself deliberately to give them a practical form, than one to whom verse is the most natural vehicle of expression". He was philosophic in his outlook and he dwelt on the problems and challenges of life, mostly of the community or those of his society and of his times in his poetry. His revival in the later part of the twentieth century is entirely due to his intellectual element which has gained currency and respectability in our own times. Larger number of universities and colleges and large numbers of students and readers have also contributed to Arnold's survival beyond his own age, compared to Tennyson who was overwhelmingly popular in the Victorian age but is no longer read with that avidity any more. H. W. Paul correctly observes:

“No poet of modern times, perhaps no English poet of any time, appeals so directly and so exclusively to the cultivated taste of the educated classes. To say that a classical education was necessary for understanding him would be to go too far. But a capacity for appreciating form and style, the charm of rhythm and the beauty of words, is undoubtedly essential. It may be said of Arnold with truth, and it is his chief praise, that the more widely mental culture spreads, the higher his fame will be. He was not indeed a profound thinker. He did not illuminate, like Wordsworth, with a single flash the abyss of man’s nature and the inmost recesses of the human soul. He was not, as Plato was, a spectator of all time and all existence. His aim was, as he said of Sophocles, to see life steadily and see it whole, But he saw it as a scholar and a man of letters”.

Arnold was not a profound philosopher but he had a philosophic bent of mind. He was an interpreter of man’s life. And he was also an interpreter of other minds, greater than his own. He lived up to his own ideals. He tried to know the best that was ever written or said in the western world and even beyond. Some critics have opined that after Milton he is the greatest English scholar who was also a poet. Education was his profession as he was a School Inspector. He was also a professor at Oxford. He understood Education in the broadest sense of the word. He was not a narrow-minded orthodox person. In his writing we do not find a trace of orthodoxy, pedantry, assumed manner or mannerisms, nor was he overly and obstructively technical. His work is academic-full of mental labour and consciously communicative. It is imbued with culture. It is work written by a learned person and meant for other learned or learned persons. He had his intellectual biases. The one most distinguishing of them all was his total acceptance of the Greek as ideal and perfect masters of the creative art. And he used their performance as the touchstone to judge and measure other poets and their works. As a man, writer critic and poet, his creed was Hellenism. He looked upon Europe as unity for expanding intellectual and spiritual life of the western world at that time. European was the common Tradition to which he wanted to belong; he was not of insular inclination preferring the self-complacent life of an islander belonging only British Isles.

Arnold’s Language and Style

It is helpful to know the distinction Arnold made between that which is rhetorical and what he called poetical sense. For him mere beauty of a poetic passage or lines or verbal manipulations for poetic use of words or heightened pitch of expression were not the essence of poetry. In his letter to Clough, a friend and like-minded person and writer, he says: “a growing sense of deficiency of the beautiful in your poems, and of this alone being properly poetical as distinguished from rhetorical, educational or metaphysical; made me speak as I did..... I will die protesting against the world that the other (the rhetorical) is false and jarring”. His major complaint against the Elizabethan poet, and more vociferously, against the Romantic poets. was that they had no verbal discipline or control over their diction or use of language. And, they cared little to together the strings of relationship between the content and form of their poetry, or compositions. He believed that Shelly and Keats were highly irresponsible in this regard and by their examples had damaged English poetry. These two Romantic greats, according to Arnold, had only “exuberance of expression”, the charm, the richness of images, and the felicity of the Elizabethan poets.

Keats especially was only a ‘style and form seeker’. Arnold had his own criteria to judge and appraise the greatness of a true poet: “there are two offices of poetry – one to add to one’s store of thoughts and feelings – another to compose and elevate the mind by a sustained tone, numerous allusions, and a grand style”. In fact, he asserted that “Poetry can only subsist by its contents” and not by “exquisite bits and images. A poet, therefore, should not get lost in “parts, and episodes and ornamental work but must press forward to the whole”.

This brief backdrop will serve as a necessary curtain raiser for a fuller understanding of Arnold’s “grand style”, a phrase he appears to have borrowed from Sir Joshua Reynolds in his *Discourses on Art*. But he seems to use it in a somewhat different way. As stated earlier elsewhere in the present book, his 1853 Preface to his *Poems* is a significant contribution to the history of criticism. And, it is in that Preface Arnold

makes his point on Grand Style clear with reference to the works of the Greek poets: They (the Greeks) regarded the whole; we regard the parts; with them, the action predominated over the expression of it: with us, the expression predominates over the action. Not that they failed in expression, or were inattentive to it; on the contrary, they are the highest models of expression, and unsurpassed masters of the *Grand Style*." In his reply to a reviewer who questioned him as to what he meant by *Grand Style*, Arnold wrote: "The Grand Style arises in poetry, when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject". Arnold found Milton observing severity of treatment; in Homer's *Illiad* he found an example of simplicity. He felt that neither simplicity nor severity is the hall-mark of Cowper, Alexander Pope, Chapman, Francis Henry Newman. Historian of English Literature Compton Rickett says that Arnold "was a fine artist, more limited than Tennyson in his music, less virile than Browning in his grasp of life; but unequalled in depicting within wistful moods of the spirit."

Arnold did imbibed lucidity, brevity and clarity from the classical Greek masters as he had studied them at Oxford as a student. He does not strive after an effect as did Keats. According to Duffin, "Arnold's verse shows feeling under control, emotion singing though bridled - the poet's emotion must be roused by beauty, and those other high essences amid which he is privileged to dwell, and control must be that of artistic sensibility. In this latter aspect Arnold never fails: it is this that makes his irregular verse (not generally a medium to be commended) so completely satisfying". His style has grace and elegance. He does not allow levity of expression or crudeness even to make an exception to prove the rule of elegance. Nobility of thought as well as expression are consistently and rigorously pursued in his compositions, whether of prose or in verse. Some lines, of course, stand out as shining examples of his nobility of thought and expression as do the following lines from *The Scholar Gipsy*:

*Still nursing the unconquerable hope
Still clutching the inviolable shade.*

Whatever he wrote he wrote at a sustained level of expression. W.L.Jones says, "Few poets at any time have produced so much which is so uniformly excellent in style". A few examples will serve as illustration for the above remarks.

*"Eyes too expressive to be blue,
Too lovely to be grey"*

This is how he draws a contrast between Marguerite and Lucy. The entire Grand Style of Sophocles has been summed up in half a line: "He saw life steadily and saw it whole", so also the essence and spirit of Shakespeare's Tragedies is summed up in a short sentence: "All pains the immortal spirit must endure". His observation on the much touted industrial civilization are terse as follows:

*"Strange disease of modern life
With its sick hurry, its divided aims".*

The sea of poignancy that characterizes the scene of separation of *The Forsaken Merman* and the pain and agony of alienated affections between Husband and wife, and between children and their mother Margaret are succinctly uttered as:

"Children dear, was it yesterday?"

The Victorian doubt and confusion of the times and blind pursuit of materialism and general feeling of boredom and aimlessness are captured in a few poetic words with astonishing brevity that go on reflecting the context of times: "Ignorant armies clash by night". The whole of *Dover Beach*, in fact, is resonant with Miltonic Movement of verse as we find in Lycidas, Arnold's poetry does not have the melodious tones of Tennyson's poetry.

Again, Arnold cannot be called a symbolist like Yeats but certain symbols recur in his poems hauntingly suggestive of both personal and subjective melancholy as well as of myth and history. The Sea is a complex

symbol in *Dover Beach* that echoes and signifies the Victorian doubt and confusion and classical assuredness and faith of former ages through its ebb and flow. The sea in this poem is also a symbol of the poet's own melancholy self. In *The Forsaken Merman*, the sea is symbolic of a separate world, of alienation of human world and the natural world at one level and of estrangement between human and cultural entities on the other. Margret leaves the "Kings of the seas" but she also leaves a "husband", a part of the failed institutions of man's world, that is marriage.

Symbolism apart, critics have also noted a peculiar "verbal quality" of Arnold's verse. Again, as Duffin points out most cogently, we have to refer to the music, sweet and sad of *Dover Beach*, especially of the ebb and flow of the sea:

*"But now I only hear/Its melancholy long/withdrawing roar
Retreating, to the breath/Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear/
And naked shingles of the world."*

Arnold's contribution to free verse has been a matter of divergent opinions among critics. Saintsbury was not much appreciative of the internal rhythms of Arnold's poetry. However, there are other critics who have not missed to analyse Arnold's experiments with free verse. Robert Buchanan, quite early in 1872 dwelled on this aspect of Arnold's style in an essay in *Paul's Magazine*. Writes he : "Just at this present moment we want a poet, if we want anything, and we particularly want a great poet, with the courage to "loosen" the conventional poetic speech-among living men, one poet, at least, is to be applauded for having, inspired by Goethe, 'kicked' at the traces of rhyme, and written such poems as "the Strayed Reveller", "Rugby chapel" and 'Heine's Grave". These poems are written almost in prose but have plausibly skillful rhythms. He treats rhythms as "jingling of like endings". Regular metre is not a feature of his verse. Like his observations of nature, his sense of rhythm too is accurate. His poems are interspersed with dactylic and trochaic measures. His stanzas are often varied. The variety of his verse-form is consonant with the variety of moods in his poetry. Though, he was not so successful in handling blank verse. Similarly, Arnold is not very fond of metaphor considered by Aristotle as the very life of poetry. The poet, in the Greek tradition, is regarded as a creator. The poet creates the language in which he writes; he does not merely use it. Therefore, metaphor, which in a way is a device for extending the meaning and recharging it with new possibilities is a potent instrument in the hands of a poet. Arnold, however, lacks in metaphoric use of language.

On the other hand, he is fond of using homeric epithets, comparisons or similes. These Greek similes are quite extended and elaborate. At times, if the reader is not clear about their mythical context, he/she might find himself/herself lost. For example, in *The Scholar Gipsy* at the end of the poem, Arnold introduces the Greek simile of Dido and Aeneas who betrayed her and this merges with the comparison with Tyrian Trader who shunned and avoided the Greek ship. The reader is sequenced to be equipped with classical learning to understand the ending of the poem while the rest of the poem is not so demanding as it revolves around the living legend of the Oxford scholar who became a gipsy and led a wild life in the hope of learning hypnotism. Though the ending is not illogical and, in a way, enhances the poignancy as well as the strength of the message of the poem which is to exhort the reader not to yield to the temptation of compromise in life and, instead continue to be indifferent and willing to avoid any compromise in order to continue the life's journey along a difficult and tortuous path with unshaken faith and unassailable will. Similar examples can be quoted from his other poems, most striking of them being from *Sohrab and Rustum*. (for detailed discussion of this point in the *Scholar Gipsy*, please read the section on Critical Summary /commentary on the text of *The Scholar Gipsy*, please read the earlier part of this book).

Saintsbury, historian of English Criticism, believes that Arnold's Preface to his 1853 Poems was his manifesto of classicism wherein he set the criterion for his own poetic style. He tried to revive classicism both in form and content.

Short Question Answers

(200 Word approximately)

Q. 1. What is a pastoral elegy? Which of the following poems can be described as a pastoral elegy?
(a) *Dover Beach* (b) *The Scholar Gipsy* (c) *The Forsaken Merman*.

Ans.: The word postoral has its root in the Latin word ‘pastor’ which means a shepherd or one who looks after the sheep. Pastoral poetry is a special genre or type of poetry which deals with the life of shepherds who dwelt in rural areas or rustic countryside, also described as bucolic life. Theocritus, Virgil, Bion and Moschus, in earlier times, wrote pastoral poetry and followed certion conventions. for example, a deceased person whom the poet wishes to pay his homage is shown in his pastoral poem as a shepherd, who lives amidst nature which is personified, and mourns the death of the poet’s subject like a human person. The poem usually began with an invocation to the Muse (Goddess of Poetry). The poem contained many classical reference or allusions, and rich descriptions of flora and fauna in a rural setting. The poet then heightens his themes of life, justice scarce on earth, the deceased (main)character’s struggles and suffering and finally merging with the Divine in death and attainment of peace.

“Elegy” is from the Greek word “elegos” which signifies a mournful poem, sad and sombre in mood, a reflective lament. Arnold is regarded as the most elegiac of English poets, who wrote pastoral elegies, combining the above two forms-pastoral and elegiac.

Q. 2. What do you understand by the term ‘nostalgia’? What Rind of nostalgia do you sense and feel in Arnold’s *The Scholar Gipsy* (b) What poetic function does ‘nostralgia’ perform in *The Scholar Gipsy* ?

Dictionary meaning of *nostalgia* is “homesickness” from the Greek *notos* or returning home. but as a literary term often used in book reviews and critical essays, nostalgia suggests craving or pinning for the past life of gone by days in a person's life or history. The past usually appears more pleasant and for poets and writers this psychological fact becomes a *tour de force* of their art. It is a tendency more generally found inromantic poets but classical poets equally go back in time and highlight the virtues of life as it prevailed then. The emphasis, while remembering the past, may be on the subjective or personal or it may be common and general. Arnold's poetry combines both these elements.

In The scholar Gipsy, for example, Arnold recalls the Oxford days of his own as well as that of the legendary Scholar Gipsy of the poem. He also dwells upon the lost values which were once practised by men of olden and golden times. This is the most important function fnostalgia plays in this poem. It is offered as a “criticism of life”. Things past were good and Things present are “unpoetic”; past ages were glorious, the present times are nasty; full of “half believers” and “divided aims” while The scholar Gipsy had “one aim, one business, one desire”.

Nostalgia sustains and holds together the diverse elements and moods of the poem.

Q. 3. “Between two worlds one dead,/the other powerless to be born”.

Are these lines from *Dover Beach* ? (b) Apply them to a discussion of the theme of *Dover Beach*.

Ans. (a) No, these lines are from Arnold’s *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*

(b) But these lines aptly sum up the theme as well as the mood of the poem *Dover Beach* and are oft quoted lines of the poet to describe the Victorian Age and also other times of transition.

The situations of the two poems named above were similar. In both the cases, Arnold and his wife Lucy visit the scene which later became famous because of these two poems. Both the Monastery in *Grande Chartruese* and *Dover Beach* offer criticism of life, a creed with the poet Arnold. The ascetic and sparse life and living of the inmates of the life, the monastery are in sharp and contrast to the crazy materialism and luxury of the Victorians as perceived commented upon by Arnold. Also, the firmness of their faith and “divided aims” and half-beliefs of Victorians are contrasted in the same vein.

Dover Beach was written after his marriage to Lucy. They visit the English channel on a honeymoon night but the mood is sombre and melancholy. In this solitude on the sea, the poet's thoughts remain embedded in the question of his own times, the Victorian age. The rise of materialism and doubt, loss of faith and good values of life trouble his mind which sees symbolized in the ebb and flow of the waters spread out before him in the moonlit night. This poem is shorter but deeper in thought and melancholy. Many other poets have expressed their resentment and despair with their own times. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* through the image of “unreal city” and “London bridge is falling down,”.. and Wordsworth in his famous lines “The world is too much with us” also offer criticism of life and hollowness of the worldly existence where lost souls flit about like bits of paper against a stormy wind.

Q. 4. Study *The Scholar Gipsy* as a comment on “the disease of modern life” ?

Ans. The expression “disease of modern life” has a direct reference to the context of *The Scholar Gipsy*. But, his criticism of modern, Victorian life, is not confined to this poem alone. In fact, it is a consistently recurring theme, not only of his poems but also of his prose works, especially, the essays. The decline of culture lowering of values, worsening of taste of people amidst rise of materialism, increased knowledge, rising of expectations of ordinary people with the expansion of democracy in England made the Victorian scene a confusing spectacle to sensitive minds like that of Matthew Arnold. In his letters to Clough and his elegy *Thyrsis* he is more direct in his debunking of his own times and its so called progress in all walks of life, especially in science, economy and democracy; and, he makes it clear that the miserable and confused mind of the average Victorian is “the strange disease called modern life”. He himself remained in its grip all through life. Though he was not driven out of this modern life and, unlike Robert Browning who lived a good part of his life in Italy, Arnold continued to live in England yet his prophetic voice never ceased to lash out the sick mind of his age, all classes of his society.

Q. 5. Is the speaker in *Dover Beach* alienated? How do you interpret alienation? what is his answer to this alienation and lack of faith in the world around?

Ans. Yes, the speaker often identified with the poet himself feels alienated from his society, the Victorian society. “Lonely in a crowd” is a modern phenomenon, much commented upon by social critics, literary commentators and psychic consultants in our own time. Arnold himself, elsewhere says: “we mortal millions live alone”

Alienation has to be interpreted in existentialist terms. In fact, modern Existentialist philosophers, poets, dramatists find it an aspect of man's life in the time-world. The more a person becomes conscious of his situation in life, more he feels estranged from his society and milieu. This phenomenon is more peculiar to urban living. In the machine age, the living element in the human soul has lesser scope for self-expression. In a world where every one is crazily running after the same amenities and comforts of life, the scope of individuality and uniqueness becomes limited. Thus prosperity accompanied by rising self-consciousness disturbs the mind. If he chooses not to listen to his inner voice, he is likely to be reduced to a mere object and if he seeks self-

realization with in the bounds of society, he finds himself at conflict with his social surroundings. This is a dilemma not easy of solution and estrangement between man and his environment grows.

Individual love is the poet's answer to this estrangement : "Ah ; love, let's be true to one another/ for this world which seems/ To lie before us like a land of dreams/ So various, so beautiful, so new/ Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light/ nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain"

Q. 6. Write a short note on the past that has vanished with reference to *The scholar Gipsy* and *Dover Beach*.

Ans. The elegiac strain is strong in Arnold's poetry. For him the whole world was nothing but a "darkling plain" and modern aristocracy, Middle classes, and the lower classes were the "Barbarians", "philistines" and "the populace", all with degenerative tastes and values. He turned to the past for succor and sustenance and relief from mental pain. His grief was not personal. He was a man of culture and cultural leader of his times. It the general decline of culture and disappearance of order that disturbed his mind and he sought solace in the past and gone by ages of Greek and classical time. Whether it was an imaginary world or not, for the poet's imagination it provided a rich resource for recharging his mental batteries.

Dover Beach and *The scholar Gipsy* are interesting mixture of Romanticism and classicism. Romantics always look to the past as distance in time lends charm to the things past. A ruin has a grandeur of its own and tickles our memory to see through time and re-live the past and imagine the building that this ruin once was. In these impersonal elegies, Arnold mourns the death of Faith which once was like the sea spread out in the moonlit night and girdled the whole earth but now it is only dry pebbles or shingles on the shore! In the *Scholar Gipsy* too loss of Faith theme is repeated again and again in the later part of the poem.

Q. 7. Explain briefly the context of the following lines poetry

(i) "He read each wound, each weakness clear,
And stuck his finger on the place
And said: "Thou ailest here, and here I"

(ii) O Rotha, with thy living wave!
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

(i) These lines occur in the poem *Memorial Verses*, Arnold wrote on the occasion of William Wordsworth's death on April 23, 1850. But the poet also recalls Byron and Goethe in his memorial to wordsworth as they all represented an age to which they made contributions as reformers or fighters against the wrong tendencies of time. These line refer to Goethe, a German Philosopher, writer, poet dramatist and novelist. Goethe died in 1832 but his work is immortal. He made very correct diagnosis of the disease of modern times and of his contemporay society even as he very accurately pin pointed the flaws and foibles of his society even as a doctor or physician examines a patient and feels his ailing body. And by digging his fingers can feel and find the exact places where the pain arises so that he can administer the right medicines or provide the right medical aid (ii) These lines are also taken from Arnold's *Memorial Verses*. Rotha is the name of the river along whose banks Wordsworth the poet was buried on his death. The poet exhorts the river to sing his best songs through liltng of his waves because the river has the right listener. Wordsworth himself was a poet of powerful, overflow of feelings. So he knows and can appreciate the rhythm

and poetry of Nature represented by Rotha. Though WW is gone from the world of men, he has come to Rotha, the lap of nature.

Q. 8. Explain with reference to the context the following:

(i) *Come away, away children;
Come children, come down !*

(ii) *When the sweet airs come seaward.....
We will gaze, from the sand-hills
Singing: "There dwells a loved one / But cruel is she
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea.*

(i) These lines have been taken from *The Forsaken Merman*, a narrative, sad poem of separation by Matthew Arnold. Here the Merman is calling his children who like him feel deserted by Margret. Margret was a woman from the human world but she married the merman of the poem who was half-human and half-sea creature. After years of happy living and raising a family of five children, Margret one day comes for a visit to the surface of the Sea. On the shore, she listens to the clanging of Churchbells. It is Easter time. She seeks permission of her husband to go back to her village church so she can pray and save her "soul". The Merman lets her go but asks her to come back soon. Margret never returns. The lines occur when some time has passed and the merman goes out again toward the village. He is very aggrieved at his being deserted by his wife and mother to his children. "Come children" is a kind of refrain in the poem which enhances the poignancy and pathos of the poem. The Merman imagines that Margret must have been disturbed by the stormy wind; may be she came to the window of her house in the village, may be she looked seaward; may be she was reminded of the life of the sea of his children and of her husband. But finally it dawns upon him at they have been finally deserted by Margret and there is no use of imaging such things.

(ii) Continuing in the same vein, the Merman makes his final comments in the poem about his wife. That Margret was a cruel woman who betrayed her husband's trust and never returned home, leaving behind her growing children, the youngest of them being very small. Now Merman and his children can only sing their songs theme of which is the cruelty of the woman who deserted them, forsook them after years of tender love. These kings of the sea will forever lament the moment when Margret left them, leaving them forever deprived and aggrieved.

Q. 9. Write a two hundred-word comment on *The Forsaken Merman*

This poem has been described as a romantic poem written by a classicist. The poem lilts with almost with Keatsian cadence. Though it must be admitted that this poem too is elegiac like most other poems by Arnold. It is a plaintive song of separation, though it is narrative in mode. It is not a "story but a chant", as a critic has remarked. The tone is intense, feeling personal and pathos overwhelming in this poem. This is an example of mixture of romanticism and classicism for which Arnold has special aptitude. It is lucid, clear and limpid in its flow reminiscent of the Greek classicists. The poem has also been singled out for its autobiographical element. Margret of the poem some commentators say is none but Marguerite whom Arnold fell in love with but could not marry because of perhaps cultural incompatibilities. Marguerite was French and Arnold English; in the poem, Margret is from the human world and The Merman is from the Sea Kingdom. The sea is regarded by some scholars and academic critics as the most important "character" in the poem. It creates the atmosphere as well as the tragic situation in the poem. It is modeled on the Westmoorland lake with which Arnold was familiar since his youthful days. Then there is the

typical Arnoldian nostalgia. Going back in memory of things past. Toward the end, poignancy of this dramatic story lyrically told becomes a flowing emotion of journey through Merman's own past life. The sea imagery enhances the contrast between the denizens of the human world and the creatures of the perhaps freed from the pains and sorrows that come from human consciousness. In this poem, sea Arnold makes a departure from his usual depiction of nature as quiet and serene. Here Nature is calm as well as stormy, furious as well as serene.

Q. 10. Write a brief note on "LITERATURE AS THE CRITICISM OF LIFE"

Ans. This is a most important dictum Arnold's practice as poet and critic. Arnold assigned a very high destiny to poetry and believed that it had a function to perform, nay, a mission to carry out on behalf Society. It will be instructive to understand this dictum in Arnold's own words. In his *Study of Poetry*, Arnold says:

"In poetry, as a criticism of life, under the conditions fixed for such a criticism, by the law of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find, we have said, as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay. But the consolation and stay will be of power in proportion to the power of the criticism of life. And the criticism of life will be of power and proportion as the poetry conveying it is excellent rather than inferior, sound rather than unsound or half sound true rather than untrue and half true." For Arnold poetry was superior to science, religion and other agents of humanist culture. By "criticism of life Arnold appears to suggest "interpretation" of life. Poetry is a criticism of life in the same way as a good person is a criticism of a bad person. Poetry has to be excellent so that it bears a contrast to the mundane realities of the work-a-day world.

Since Arnold, other views have been expressed in our own time. T.S. Eliot, for instance, thought that the poet has no commitment to society ; He/she has a commitment to poetry only. And, that poetry is not composed of ideas as Arnold said but of words, Arnold's dictum on Literature was perhaps a reaction to the decline of culture and deteriorating taste of the English society. Thus, it has contextual validity rather than a universal application.

Q. 11. What do you understand by Arnold's "High Seriousness?" Explain clearly.

Ans. Arnold the critic and poet was also a sage figure with a missionary zeal. He wanted to communicate impactful messages to the declining culture of his time. He coined a number of pithy phrases for this purpose which were loaded with meaning and cultural significance. "High Seriousness" is a part of Arnoldian "terminology which includes similar other phrases such as criticism of life "Hellenism and Hebraism", "Sweetness and light, "Touchstone Method," Poetic Truth and Poetic Beauty. These terms have become a part of the academic vocabulary and are frequently used by students and teachers. "High Seriousness" can be traced back to Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, and is equivalent to his phrase "*philosophoterion kai spoudaoterion*" which has been variously translated as "remarkable" "serious" or "high" or philosophical with deeper meanings etc. In his "study of poetry" Arnold compares poetry with history says that "the superiority of poetry over history consists in its possessing a higher truth and higher seriousness". though Arnold as a classicist advocated the supremacy of the whole over its "parts in a work of art for practical purpose and somewhat diverging from this emphasis on "wholeness" he uses the "touchstone method" of judging the element of "high seriousness" and "poetic truth" in some great poets like Homer, Dante and Shakespeare by quoting passages from *Illiad*, *Divine comedy*, *Hamlet* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He ignored the claims of Chaucer to be a serious poet because of his comicality and vulgarity. Arnold's "seriousness" cannot be taken as a reliable and serious criterion for estimating the worth, quality and greatness of a poem or poet, as has been shown by theory and practice of poet-critics such as Eliot in later times.

Q. 12. Briefly define Romanticism and comment on Arnold as a Romanticist.

Ans. Romanticism has been defined variously as “triumph of imagination over convention “or” liberalism in literature, or “liberation and assertion of the ego” or “curious mixture of wonder and beauty” or “revival of medievalism”, “nostalgic backward look on time”, “passionate overflow of feeling” “escape from life” and many more things. Romanticism may be all these things yet it may be much more. It is “awakening of the imaginative sensibility” or wonder added to common experiences or naturalisation of the supernatural.

Arnold does not fall in any of the above definitions. He was a mixture of classicism and romanticism because, inspired by the Greek masters he wanted to “see life steadily and see it whole” as a poet, critic and man of culture. A romanticist does seek for truth within himself and his approach as poet is subjective, yet transcendental. We do meet quite a few examples of inner projection in Arnold’s poetry. *Dover Beach*, *The Scholar Gipsy*, *Memorial Verses* and *The Forsaken Merman*, all have elements of romanticism in them. *Dover Beach* is almost Keatsian in its melancholy and lilting cadence; *Scholar Gipsy*’s escape from Oxford to seek the company “the wild brother hood” and lore of hypnotism is romantic even in conceptualization and characterization; equally so is landscaping and depiction of the Oxford countryside. In *Memorial Verses*, his tributes to not only Wordsworth, the father of English romantic poetry but to the terrible child of English romanticism, Byron is a proof of Arnold’s romantic inclinations irrespective of his avowals on behalf classicism. And, to surpass them all, we have *The Forsaken Merman* which is romantic both in conceptualization and execution.

Q. 13. Discuss Arnold as a “poet of love” in the context of poems prescribed in your course of study.

Ans. Robert Bridges, poet critic, thinks that a poem is a reflection of the subjective experience of a poet or an intimate echo of the poet’s life. This may be partly true and to that extent applies to Arnold’s poetry also. His personal experiences relevant in this context are his abortive love affair with the French Marguerite whom he is known to have met in Switzerland but they could not get married perhaps because of their cultural incompatibilities. Related to this failed love is his successful marriage to Frances Lucy Wightman. Both these experiences appear to have inspired quite a few of Arnold’s poems. But, in other poems also the theme of love does occur and the indirect incidents portrayed in these poems even more effectively comment on the frustration of the failed love or the promise of the married love. *Dover Beach* is a tribute to “married love” because here in his lines “Ah! Love let’s be true to one another,” he finds solace and relief from the doubts and illusions of life and the world which is spread out before him like a charming landscape of “dreams” but which has neither “joy” nor “help from pain.” Only true love, married love is the mainstay of life. In *The Forsaken Merman* failed love, betrayed love finds a poignant and bitter expression. The Margret of this poem appears to be none else than Marguerite of real life. Margret’s desertion of her husband and children and the Merman’s description of her as a “cruel” woman are an echo of the intimate life of Arnold himself more particularly of his failed love with the French woman Marguerite. Even in *Scholar Gipsy* toward the end of the poem, there is a reference to Dido who was betrayed by Aeneas. Though the situation here is reversed and it is the male partner who betrays the female partner yet indirectly this reference points to Arnold’s personal experience.

Q. 14. What do you know about STOICISM? How will you relate it to Arnold’s poems that you have read in your courses of study?

Ans. There was in Athens, the Greek city of ancient fame, a Hall or colonnade also known as the Stoa Poikila. Some philosophers lectured there in the Greek times. Some of them were Zeno, Diogenes, Cleanthes. These philosophers were known as the STOICS. Later on, Greek philosophers and

men of action also followed their philosophy, famous among them are Cato, Brutus, Seneca, Epictetus, Cicero and Marcus Aurelius.

Stoicism actually branched out from CYNICISM. The Stoics taught how to practise the right virtue in life's conduct and living. Epictetus, though a Greek, became a Minister in Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor's court. Both practised more or less the same philosophy which Epictetus had propounded. His view of Man's fate was rather dim. "Thou art a little soul bearing about a corpse". Since life is uncertain and death can come any time, it is important that man must be doing the right things all the time lest he dies while doing a wrong thing. In Arnold's poems, we find stoicism scattered everywhere. But, in *The Scholar Gipsy*, it comes through very directly. Endurance is the test a stoicist must pass for good conduct in life. The Scholar Gipsy retains "one aim, one business, one..." and still nursing the unconquerable hope he is brushing through life. In the last lines of *The Forsaken Merman* also, the sea-creature's continuing to live with his children hoping against hope, we find an illustration of Arnold's Stoicism. *Dover Beach*, ends on a note of affirmation. Life's agonies must be endured, may be by coming together and being true to one another in married love.

Q. 15. "Goeth in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease"....

- (i) Explain with reference to the context the above lines.
 - (ii) Compare, Goethe, Byron and Wordsworth, briefly pointing out why Arnold refers to them together?
 - (iii) Where does he refer these poets together? (One line answer only) Full answer (200 words)
- (i) & (ii) Ans. Goethe, Byron and Wordsworth lived in what has come to be called the Romantic Age just preceding the Victorian Age in which Matthew Arnold lived. All these men were poets and eminent literary figures, almost culture heroes of their times. They also had varying influence on Arnold's Mind as a poet, critic and thinker. Arnold was the closest to Wordsworth who lived in close proximity in the Lake District of England. Arnold was much influenced by him because he thought that Wordsworth's poetry had the "healing power" for frayed nerves and hardened tempers, much needed aid in Arnold's own times when confused Victorians were sick with "hurry" and "the disease of modern times" as the English culture and society were fast declining in spite of the general apathy and complacency of the public at large.

On April 23, 1850 Wordsworth died. Arnold wrote a poem or "dirge", as he called it in his letter to Clough, in "the granstyle". Though this poem later called as *Memorial Verses* was written as a memorial to Wordsworth or an eulogy to the elder poet whom Arnold had great respect for, he thought it fit to include his homage to Goethe and Byron who had died earlier in 1832 in Weimar, Germany and in 1824 in Greece, respectively. Wordsworth, Goethe, Byron were three different personalities but, for Arnold, they had something in common. In his memorial verses he recalls them together because all of them stood up against their times. Byron was "the fount of fiery power" which he used "for that Titanic strife". Goethe's "eye plunged down the weltering strife" too as he looked at Europe's dying and he advised his contemporaries: The end is everywhere/ Art still has truth take refuge there! Wordsworth too lived and struggled against "iron time/ of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears" but "He laid us as we lay at birth/ on the cool flowery lap of earth." In the final stanza of the poem Arnold distinguishes these three personalities: "Goethe's age mind and Byron's force" time may restore or bring again but where will Europe's latter hour/ "Again find Wordsworth healing power?"

- (iii) As already explained these three poets have been referred to together in Arnold's Memorial Verses.

Q. 16. Discuss *Dover Beach* briefly as a comment on Victorian crises of Faith.

Arnold's letter to his close friend Arthur Clough will be relevant and will throw light on moot points of the discussion here. "These are damned times-everything is against one-the height to which knowledge is come, the spread of luxury, our physical enervation, the absence of great natures, the unavoidable contact with millions of small ones, high profligate friends, moral desperados like Carlyle, our own selves and the sickening consciousness of our difficulties."

He, like many others of his times, was then wandering "between two worlds, one dead another to powerless to be born."

The Victorian Age saw a sudden spurt of activity and times began to move faster as if the world were asleep for ages. Science, materialism, democracy all recorded immense growth and expansion. At the same time, morals and religions and culture declined steeply. Science Materialism, Democracy together appeared to have made a big assault on the steady values and verities of life. Doubt and devaluation of authority and disbelief in a divine dispensation eroded the sources of succor and consolation to man who for centuries had relied upon God and Faith for leading a life of forbearance and good conduct. Social cohesion and community life likewise received jolts. In *Dover Beach*, which basically is a love poem and has been discussed as such earlier in this book, also dwells on the theme of the crisis of Faith. In the poem the sea becomes the symbol of lack of the faith of his own times as well as of the faith that gloriously ruled over the hearts of men in ages gone by. The "greeting roar" of withdrawing sea across the English channel reminds him of his own times and his contemporary Victorians from whose hearts and minds faith is receding like the receding of sea at Dover Beach, leaving behind only shingles and pebbles on the dried up shore! But it was not like this always and Arnold is full of the nostalgia for the past ages when the sea of faith was at full tide like the tide he had observed a while ago on this very Dover Beach. It is a short poem but it has wide ranging thought and deepening significance and much philosophical meaning. Though Arnold is apparently on a honeymoon trip, the crises of Victorian times caused by the loss of Faith does not allow him to rest his mind or get lost in romantic embraces of love. Instead, the overwhelming mood of the poem remains melancholy and reflective of the mind lost in worries and vicissitudes of life, a state of mind resulting from Arnold's preoccupation, almost an obsession with the Victorian Crisis of Faith.

17. Q. Paraphrase the first ten lines of *The Scholar Gipsy*. Also give meanings of the following (i) wattled cotes (ii) wistful (iii) Bawling fellows (iv) Rack (v) shoot... (vi) Gross and recross (vii) Strips (viii) Moon-blanced grass (viii) Begin the quest.

Ans. In this opening pastoral scene, the poet urges the shepherd to leave his company for now because his fellow companions grazing the sheep in the hills yonder are calling him. Go back to your work, loosen the sheep from their fold; do not neglect your flock of sheep; they wish to be fed, so delay not. Nor should you let your shepherd companions angrily strain their throats to call you with hoarse throats. Go, right now, delay not and do not let grass blades already nibbled by the sheep grow into shoots (meaning make haste and go). But when the fields become quiet, that is when the working shepherds have ceased their activity and left the field; and the shepherds and their watch dogs have become tired and gone from the scene; may be only a few white straying sheep are lagging behind their flock and seen crossing recrossing the narrow plots and when the grass has become colourless (blanced) in the moonlight, then Shepherd, then at that quiet evening hour, you come again and be my companion in the quest (for the long lost legendary scholar gipsy of Oxford university whose story is written in Glanvill's book) Poetic language, it will be seen, is not easy to be rendered in prose. The poet is a creator of the language in which writes; he has what is called the "poetic license", that he is allowed to take liberties with the grammar and

dictionary meanings of words and use them to convey contextual and universal significance through poetic use of language.

Word meanings:

(i) Sheep-fold made of wooden sticks (ii) wistful., desiring, craving, feeling eager etc (iii) Bawling fellows... angrily shouting sheperds, his co-workers in the fields. (iv) rack.. to strain to be hard upon one's (throat here) (v) Shoot.. sprouting or growing of new, sharp blades of grass (vi) Cross.. recross.. wandering, stray, straying sheep; sheep turning white in moonlight. (vii) Strips.. narrow grassy plots (viii) Moon-blanchsed grass.. the grass that has lost its colour in the light of the moon. (ix) Start the search for the legendary scholar gipsy known to be visiting these verry fields of the Oxford countryside.

Q. 18 Explain lines 34-39 of the poem *Memoria Verses* by Arnold.

And. *ah, pale ghosts, rejoice.....mournful gloom.*

The poem was written on the occasion of William Wordsworth's death in April 1850. In these lines Arnold eulogizes Wordsworth and pays his homage to him. The foremost among Romantic poets and leader of the Romantic movement in English poetry, Wordsworth, who lived close to Arnold's place in the Lakes Districts, exercised very deep influence on Arnold's mind. Here Arnold is addressing the spirits of the underworld where Wordsworth, according to the old myths, now onward will be residing. Now they ought to rejoice, be joyful because now Wordsworth's spirit has joined their company. And, Wordsworth's spirit is a musical and singing spirit the like of which the Hades, or underworld of the dead spirits, has not seen since the days of the Greek mythic hero of immemorial times. The reference to Orpheus is interesting because Orpheus, a legendary musician, the son of Apollo himself, had visited the Hades or underworld of the dead in order to plead with Pluto, the God of Death, to release Orpheus' wife Eurydice who had died. Orpheus entered the underworld, the kingdom of Pluto, playing his lyre and singing. His music had so moved Proserpine and her husband, Pluto, the god of death that they agreed to release Eurydice, wife of Pluto but on one condition. The condition was that Orpheus will not look back while on his journey back as Eurydice would follow him out of the underworld. But Orpheus could keep his promise, he could not control himself and burning his eyes fallen and looked at his wife Eurydice who was following him. Since he broke his promise with Pluto, Orpheus lost his wife once again, never to return to the world of the living. Now that Wordsworth with his sweet poems and musical verses has entered the underworld, he will be the first singer after Orpheus to charm and hypnotize and influence its denizens, with his earthly music. It should, hence, be a time of rejoicing and celebrating of the ghostly spirits just as it is a time of lamenting and mourning with the living spirits like Arnold.

Q. 19. Clearly explain lines 21-28 of the poem *Dover Beach* by "Matthew Arnold.

The Sea of Faith.....of the world.

These lines from *Dover Beach* should not be understood in literal sense because they have deep symbolic meanings. Arnold invests the Sea with Historical and cultural significance. He and his wife, on a honeymoon trip to Dover Beach, a sea resort on the English channel which divides England (an island) with the rest of Europe and France which is across the English Channel appear to be watching the scene of the ebb and flow of the sea in the moonlit night. The sea here is in full tide. The sight reminds Arnold, the poet, of Faith. Faith that once its earlier times was also full like the present Sea in the moonlit night. This North Sea in the poem loses its physical dimension and becomes a symbol of Faith pulsated in the hearts and minds of men like this North Sea in full tide. In other words. once in ancient times, people had Faith, Hope and

Charity or the verities of life that governed their lives. They had fervour and spiritual grace and fulfilment. But the scene is now changing to the present times when people have lost that kind of Faith and are driven by forces of time, forces of science, forces of materialism and industrialism. The people now are full of doubt, depression and distractions and they are not calm and serene. They have become skeptics, or doubting Thomases, or agnostics or godless. Just as the tide of the Sea ebbs away or recedes, leaving the shore dry so also the Sea of Faith has now receded leaving the hearts of men dried. Now only the naked pebbles are strewn on the shore. Arnold who did not have much faith in the claims of material prosperity, democratic expansion and scientific progress here is in a sombre mood to be contrasted with the occasion of honeymoon that is usually joyful.

- Q. 20. Explain lines 48-58 of *The Forsaken Merman* "Children dear, once she sate with you and me/ ... She said:"I must go, for my kinsfolk pray/In the little grey church on the shore to-day / 'T will be Easter-time....Ah, me.

In these lines the forsaken Merman who has been deserted by his wife Margret recalls wistfully the happier times and days spent by them together with their children in the kingdom of the sea, or at its bottom. She then was a loving wife and caring mother. She looked after their children with tenderness and loving care; but now that part of life has come to a sorry and sad end. She heard the sound of the bells clanging in the country church from the human world. It was Easter time when the Christian people pray together in the Church remembering the suffering and sacrifice of Christ, the son of God in the belief that this act of prayer shall save their soul. Margret used to comb the hair of the littlest of their children and those were happy days but now it looks to be a distant dream or perhaps the time that never was! The call of the Church bells was overpowering; Margret thought she had failed hopelessly in her religious duties and was in danger of losing her soul. She wanted to go back to the Church to pray together with her people in the village. She was scared of damnation; her conscience was in trouble. She asked her husband permission to go back to her people to say prayers. The Merman, who loved his wife dearly could not say "No". But he told her to come back soon, at the earliest. Margret had smiled at that time. Merman thought it was the smile of agreement but it was actually a smile of betrayal. She never returned home to the bottom of the sea, to her children and to her husband, the Merman!

- Q. 21. Paraphrase lines 85-107 of the poem *The Forsaken Merman*.

Ans. The Merman is still hoping against hope about his wife Margret's return. He asks his children not to cry and call for their mother any more. It would be more proper to withdraw from the earth and go back to the depths of the sea, their home. He is imagining about the present life of Margret in the human world after she had left the Merman and her children behind. Maybe she now sits and works on her spinning wheel in her village. Maybe, as she spins she also sings some song or hums on some tune as the rest of the town is full of hustle and bustle and she is happy about the busy life of the town. Maybe she is watching some child playing with his toy in the street. And the church is lit with the sunlight and the church bell and the clergyman can be seen in that light. And, maybe, she sings with full throated voice. Maybe, spindle has dropped from her hand as she got too much taken up with her own song. And, now the spinning wheel has stopped. Suddenly, the Merman feels a kick of joy as the thought crosses his mind that Margret is thinking and remembering her children, their children! And, maybe, she has come over to the window to look seaward or in the direction of the sea where once she lived with the Merman as his wife and mother to his children. Softly, silently she looks to the shore along the sea. At times, the memory of her children must become too much to bear and she must utter sighs and weeping cries. She may be silent, she may be saying nothing about her past life but her tears and wails will

tell it all. May be she feels an intense desire within herself to see her young daughter, and the gleaming hair of the “little mermaid”, her daughter disturb her heart! These are the empty thoughts of a romantic imagination perhaps, because the hard reality is that Margret has returned to the human world never to return to the life in the Sea!

Q. 22. Explain clearly the lines 31-40 of the poem *The Scholar Gipsy*

“And near me on the grass lies Glanvil’ book.....

But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

The original story of the Scholar Gipsy is to be found in Glanvil’s book entitled *THE VANITY OF DOGMATIZING*, written in the seventeenth century while the poet Arnold is writing his poem “*The Scholar Gipsy*” in the latter part of the nineteenth century or the Victorian Age. This book is lying close to the poet right now. The poet had read the story earlier with great interest and he feels is like reading the story once again. The story deals with the event of the life of a scholar who was studying at Oxford university. He had talent; he had a good inventive or curious brain or mind and creative imagination. But for his special kind of interests and skills and talents he could find not much scope within the framework of the university education and system of studies. Perhaps driven out by his sense of incompatibility with the Oxford environment, this scholar simply left the Oxford premises and his Oxford friends on a summer morning. He now joined the company of gipsies and from them he sought to learn the art of hypnotism, or thought-reading. He was spotted in the company of these gipsies or “*wild brotherhood*” and they thought that this young scholar had ruined his career at Oxford and life in general, even though he had remarkable abilities. Whatever be the pejorative view of the world, the fact remains that the Scholar Gipsy never returned to Oxford nor to his friends.

Q. 23. Explain lines 201-210 of *The Scholar Gipsy*: “Oh born in days...they solitude

In these lines Arnold, addressing the legendary scholar gipsy of the poem says that it was good that he was born in an age different from Arnold’s own age, that is the Victorian Age. In the earlier times when Scholar Gipsy was alive and left Oxford by choice people were not assailed by doubts and were not in the grip of despair. Science, materialism, democracy and reasoning which have weakened and debilitated the culture of the Victorians were not powerful forces as they are in Arnold’s times. Life was carefree, free from doubt and skepticism, free from too much hurry and tension of life. It flowed like the sweet and soft Thames flows with its limpid waters. People then did not have “divided aims” and too many schemes and pursuits to “get ahead” in life or amass wealth and creature comforts. Their sensibilities were not dysfunctional like ours, The scholar gipsy was not miserable as he lived in an age of Faith and Hope and Charity. Arnold urges the scholar gipsy most vehemently that he should keep away from the Victorians and Victorian times infected as they are with this “disease of modern times”. He should fly away from the corrupt and sick society of Arnold’s times.

List of Questions

- Q 1. Write an estimate of Arnold as a poet.
- Q. 2. Write a brief note on the life of Matthew Arnold.
- Q. 3. What are the main characteristics of Arnold as a Poet?
4. Q. Which of the prescribed poems is an example of Arnold's narrative art?
- Q. 5. Discuss Arnold's poetry as a mixture of Classicism and Romanticism; illustrate your arguments with examples from your reading of prescribed texts.
- Q.6. Select *one* poem from those prescribed for your course of study which can be described as a love poem. Discuss the poem so selected as a love poem and difficulties you experience in giving it the description of a "love poem".
- Q. 7. Arnold as a poet is not interested in expressing his subjective experience. He is more concerned with the general movements of his times. Discuss this statement showing clearly your agreements and disagreements citing passages from prescribed poems.
- Q. 8. Write a detailed note on the Victorian Age.
- Q. 9. Why Arnold cannot be called as the representative poet of the Victorian Age?
- Q. 10. Specify passages from the prescribed poems that would help you identify Arnold as a Classicist.
- Q. 11. Specify passages from the prescribed poems that would help you identify Arnold as a Romanticist.
- Q. 12. How do you define modernity? In what respects Arnold is modern as a poet?
- Q. 13. What do you understand by "ALIENATION"? With which movement in modern philosophy and Literature you will associate "ALIENATION"? Point out a few examples from Arnold's poetry limiting your choice to the poems prescribed to illustrate your understanding of "Alienation".
- Q. 14. Would you describe Arnold as an "intellectual" poet or an "emotional" poet? Illustrate your answer with lines quoted from his poems.
- Q. 15. Discuss Arnold as a poet of Victorian Unrest. Quote lines from prescribed poems to illustrate the various points raised in your discussion.
- Q. 16. Which one of the poems prescribed answers the Arnoldian injunction that poetry ought to be a "criticism of life"?
- Q. 17. Critically examine any one poem you appreciate most from your prescribed texts of Arnold's poems.
- Q. 18. Arnold is a poet of Nature but his attitude toward Nature is not the same as that of the Romantics (Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Byron etc.), Discuss.
- Q. 20. Discuss Arnold as a (i) Lyric Poet (ii) Narrative Poet (iii) Elegiac Poet giving examples from your prescribed reading (b) Name the poems from your prescribed reading that could be classified as (i) Lyric (ii) Elegy (iii) Narrative.
- Q. 21. What is the Nature of Arnold's Melancholy? Does it reflect his personal frustrations and despair in life?

- Q. 22. Write critical appreciation of (a) *The Scholar Gipsy* (b) *Memorial Verses* (c) *Dover Beach* (d) *The Forsaken Merman*?
- Q. 23. Recall five or six lines from each of the prescribed poems and explain why you find these lines memorable?

Critics on Arnold : Selected Comments

- (1) Arnold's much condemned criticism of life is at least true of his own poetry. Even in the literary sense there is a surprising quantity of wise criticism in his verse, Goethe, Byron and Wordsworth are all examined with wonderful insight. *Memorial Verses* and in *The Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoon* we have a discussion of the principles of the arts of music, painting and poetry. But Arnold's verse is critical in a far deeper sense than this. It is in accordance with his own definition, *Criticism of Life*. In all his deepest poems, in *Thyrsis* and *The Scholar Gipsy*, in *Resignation*, in the *Obermann* poems in *A Southern Night* Arnold is passing judgment on life and his age, the life of his country; the lives of individual men in his last-named poem, the fate of his brother, dying in exile in the attempt to return to the country of his birth, becomes the text for a sermon on the restless energy of the English and on the strange irony of fate which preserves for the numbers of such a race graves so peaceful on theirs by those hoary Indian hills, 'This gracious of Midland Sea'.

– *Hugh Walker-*

- (2) If I had to define Arnold's place in poetry. I should be disposed to say of him, quite simply, that he [Arnold] is the greatest elegiac poet in our language; – not in virtue merely of *Thyrsis* – if anyone likes to think Adonais a greater elegy. I am not overmuch disposed to quarrel with him – but in virtue of his Muse. His genius was essentially elegiac character. Out of what experience came, we are to explain this dominant quality, it is not easy to know His poetry, profoundly melancholy, runs from the world, runs from it as I think, hurt, hurt in some vital part.

– *H.W. Garrod*

- (3) *Thyrsis* is a very quiet poem, but I think solid and sincere. It will not be popular, however. It had long been in my head to connect Clough with that Cumnor Country, and when I began I was carried irresistibly into this form: you say, truly, however, that there is much in Clough (the whole prophet side, in fact) which one cannot deal with in this way, and one has the feeling if one reads the poem as a memorial poem, that not enough is said about Clough in it; I feel this so much that I do not send the poem to Mrs. Clough. Still had this idyllic side too; to deal with that suited my desire to deal again with the Cumnor Country, any way, only so could I treat the matter this time.

– *M. Arnold*

- (4) Integration – this is the obsessive theme of Arnold's youthful letters to Clough, the integration of the individual, the integration of the work of art, the integration, finally, of the social order. Paradoxically, Arnold sought the way to his own personal integration through an Elizabethan eccentricity of conduct. In the end, however, the fate he feared and fought overtook him; the poetic power passed away. It passed with youth and the ability to maintain the youthful dandyism. He was always to retain a reasoned admiration of gaiety and high spirits, and a light insouciance to use against the pointless sobriety of English culture; he was everlastingly elegant and perhaps not annoyed at being called a Jeremiah in kid gloves. But the youthful quality which had sustained his poetry disappears.

He seems always, in the Romantic fashion, to have been awaiting its inevitable end. Few poets can have been more conscious of their youth. 'But be bustling about it; we are growing old, and advancing towards the deviceless darkness: it would be well not to reach it till we have at least tried some of the things men consider desirable'. The theme recurs so often. 'How life rushes away, and youth. One has

dawdled and scrupled and fiddle fiddled – and it is all over.’ ‘What a difference there is between reading in poetry the morals of the loss of youth, and experiencing it !

– *Lionel Trilling*

- (5) Arnold does not make total war upon the Romantics: he is caught up in a love-hate relationship with them. We have seen how, in his poetry, he struggled to vanquish the Romantic in himself: intense subjectivity, a sense of alienation, a brooding melancholy are what the temperamental Romantics had offered repeatedly, but they had not been ‘what we want’. We have seen how, in the 1853 Preface, he sought to bring poetry (not least his own) to heel by invoking the Aristotelian virtues of disciplined form and the noble simplicity of the ‘grand style’, at the same time taking Keats and, behind him, Shakespeare to task, for self-indulgent Romanticism and for his enervating effect upon his imitators – among whom Tennyson is implied. *Neither Sohrab and Rustum nor Balder Dead* nor *Merope* could turn the current in practice, for *The Scholar-Gipsy* and *Dover Beach* born down more strongly in the contrary direction. On the theoretical front, however, Arnold could, on the surface at least, give a more single-minded impression. In order to discipline Romanticism he takes up a ‘classical’ stance; feeling and intellect must for the maximum effect cooperate.

– *Michael Thorpe*

- (6) Arnold’s love-poetry is possibly the least important part of his writing; it is certainly the least regarded. ‘Marguerite’, the ‘dark lady’ of the poems, has received an almost embarrassing amount of attention, but the poems themselves have not been thought worthy of critical study. For myself, his love-poetry was what first attracted me to Arnold, perhaps because it was so different from Browning’s, to me the ideal. It has a personal intimacy hardly found elsewhere; it is informed by an astringent emotion that touches the heart more poignantly than the sultrier passions of the greater love-poets. It is everywhere unhappy, like the complicated loves of the sonnets, and indulges a brooding meditateness only paralleled in Donne. And – partly, I suppose, because of the injunction on a biography – an atmosphere of mystery attaches to the situation. We do not know who was the object of the poems, what were Arnold’s relations with her, or indeed if she existed at all. And yet this is genuine love-poetry.

– *H.C. Duffin*

- (7) He cannot paint the restlessness of the soul – though he paints it vividly and well – without painting also the attitude of resistance to it, without giving the impression of a head held high above it, a nature that fixes the limits beyond which the corrosion of distrust and doubt shall not go, a deep speculative melancholy kept at bay, not by faith, but by a kind of domineering temperance of nature. This is the refrain of almost all his poems. He yields much to this melancholy – intellectually, we should say, almost everything – but morally, he bids it keep its distance, and forbids it to engulf him.

It is this singular equipoise between the doubts that devour, and the intrepid sobriety that excites him to resistance, which gives the peculiar tone to Mr. Arnold’s poems. He has not the impulse or abandon of nature for a pure lyric melancholy, such as Shelley could pour forth in words that almost make the heart weep, as, for instance, in the *Lines Written in Dejection in Naples*. Again, Mr. Arnold has nothing of the proud faith that conquers melancholy and that gives to the poems of Wordsworth their tone of rapture. Yet he hits a wonderful middle note between the two. The lyrical cry’, as he himself has finely designated the voice in which the true poetic exaltation of feeling expresses itself, is to be found in a multitude of places in his poems; but in him it neither utters the dejection of the wounded spirit nor the joy of the Victorious spirit, but rather the calm of a steadfast equanimity in conflict with an unconquerable and yet also unconquering destiny – a firm mind without either deep shadows of despair or high lights of faith, only the lucid dusk of an intellectual twilight.

– *R.H. Hutton*

- (8) If nature is just a collection of things, it is hopeless to seek any spiritual presence there which might be a support for man. Imitating nature or seeking harmony with nature no longer means trying to plunge our roots, like nature's, in the ground of the absolute, or trying, through atonement with nature, to each that ground. Each man must imitate nature in her mute acceptance of separation from God, and be like a stone, rounded in upon himself, with a tone's independence and persistence in being itself. Joy comes not from participation in the general life, but from a blind perseverance in performing he acts appropriate to our own natures. The stars and the sea are 'Bounded by themselves, and unregardful/in what state God's other works may be' and they 'demand not that the things without them/Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.' Yet they perform their appointed tasks with joy. Each man must also learn to be a law unto himself: 'To its own impulse every creature stirs;/ Live by thy light, and earth will live by hers !'

This lesson of nature is really a lesson of despair, for though nature is to be admired for her ability to endure isolation, this calm self-enclosure, the satisfied peace of a rock merely being a rock, is impossible for man. Man's trouble is that he finds in himself no given law to direct his, being. He desperately needs help from outside, someone or something to tell him what to do and who to be. Can nature do no more than bid man attempt something impossible ?

– *J.Hillis Miller*

- (9) What affirmation there in Arnold's poetry seems unimportant because it lacks the flow and thrill of the Romantic assertion; it provides a sad substitute for the vision of love in a 'struggling task'd morality', with its ideal of self-control, self-dependence, and release from passion. This is imaged in calm moonlight, the independent stillness of the stars, the calm motion of the sea: whatever token utterances he made occasionally to the contrary, his desire not for involvement with the one life in and around us, but for withdrawal, from that involvement in life which he felt to be necessary, and yet unavailing in his 'iron age':

*We, in some unknown Power's employ,
Move on a rigorous line;
Can neither when we will, enjoy,
Nor, when we will, resign.*

'Fate drives me', he says, back from Obermann's world to his own course of life, where he is caught:

*Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head.*

The world of faith, of the invasion of unity, of joy, is dead, and nothing has replaced it; all that remains is the desire to resign, to escape from the 'hot prison', the restlessness, the pain of life, into stillness like that of the stars or the sea, 'self-poised.'

It is not surprising then that his language proves often inadequate, especially in the rhetoric of assertion and the rhetoric of love. The vocabulary has become hollow, and is not supported by the imagery or the general tone of poetry.

– *R.A.Foakes*

- (10) When in *The Scholar-Gipsy* the Scholar is 'tired of knocking at preferment's door,' why is Arnold not merely living off Swift ('They crowd about Preferment's gate') or off Johnson ('Unnumber'd suppliants crowd Preferment's gate') ? On the face of it, Arnold's wording is full of cliches; perhaps they are cliches newly used and renovated, but that would need to be argued for. Not to mention such things at all is to be in collusion with one's poet. Take the well-known praise of Wordsworth in *Memorial Verses*

– *Christopher Ricks*

- (11) It used to be frequently said – in fact, it is the tradition of Arnold’s own family – that the two series of love poems which Arnold called “Switzerland” and “Faded Leaves” were not inspired by an actual love affair. However, the evidence of several sentences in the letters of Arnold to Clough seems to refute this belief that the Marguerite of the poems was only a poetical figment. Yet even without the refutation of external evidence, it is almost impossible to read the poems themselves without being convinced that here is the attempt of a man to tell the truth about an important experience. Arnold is a very intimate poet; he is an occasional poet who writes of the hour as it passes; he is a literal poet who tries to say what he means at the moment even if what he says contradicts what he said the moment before. It is quite true that if we accept the evidence of the poems completely and literally, we accept what seems a tangle of contradictions: the girl rejects the lover, he rejects her; she is unworthy of him, he is unworthy of her; her love is his dearest need, or again, it is a deviation from his true path. It is very confusing but so much the better; these very contradictions attest to the actuality of the affair and certainly the whole point of the story lies in them.

– *Lionel Trilling*

- (12) He had tried many resolutions of the weariness that comes with an acceptance of the Empedoclean universe and with the frustrations of the promise of Christianity. None had really succeeded. In *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse* published in 1855, Arnold stands in the ancient monastery, surrounded by the remembrance of the disproved promises, seeming to hear the surprised voices of the teachers who had “seized” his youth:

*And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,
Show' d me the high white star of Truth,
There bade me gaze, and there aspire.*

These teachers are the men of the enlightenment and their heirs who had destroyed in him the faith among whose monuments he meditates. They are asking, “What dost thou in this living tomb ?” He answers that he knows their world to be true, knows the past world to be past – yet quite reconcile himself to the new, or quite forget the yearning for the old. And somehow among the sepulchres of the dead Carthusians he finds an apter place for his melancholy than in modern life.

– *Lionel Trilling*

- (13) Professor Garrod, always a discerning critic and distinguished for the care with which he uses biography to illuminate poetical meaning, accepts the reality of Marguerite on the evidence of the poems alone: “I used at one time to pooh-pooh Marguerite. In part, I was fearful of vulgarising a great poet. In part, I did not sufficiently believe that poets mean what they say: but they do – even when they do not say what they mean; from our failure to recognise that proceed nearly all the faults of our criticism.....but I think now that it is a mistake to disparage Marguerite. The volume of 1852 has a somewhat surprising unity, the unity, I feel, of a single and intense experience. When you have added to it the poems which should never have been taken away (Mr. Garrod means *The Forsaken Merman* and *The Voice*’, with these he might have included “*To my Friends, who Ridiculed a Tender Leave-Taking*” – with its interesting change of the phrase of the first edition, “ere the parting kiss be dry,” to “ere the parting hour go by” – and also “*The New Sirens*”, it is difficult not to assign to Marguerite an important place in that experience.”

– *Lionel Trilling*

- (14) The one difficulty of the poem it seems to me is in the famous third strophe wherein the actual sea is compared to the Sea of Faith. If Arnold means that the Sea of Faith was formerly at high tide, and he hears now only the sound of the tide going out, one cannot help thinking also of the cyclic nature of

tides, and the consequent coming of another high tide only a few hours after the present ebb. In other words, the figure of speech appears valid only on one level of comparison; the symbolic half fails to sustain itself. Despite the magnificence of the writing of this section, I cannot help believing that it is the weakest part of the poem when it should be the strongest; the explicitness of the comparison seems too ready-made. Yet I have the poem as it is so deeply in memory that I cannot imagine it changed, and would not have it changed even if I knew it would be a better poem thereby.

– *James Dickey*

- (15) Critics acquainted with the extant manuscript of *Dover Beach* sometimes complain that the last paragraph does not really belong with the remainder of the poem. In this draft, the last line is ‘and naked shingles of the world. Ah! love & c’, which certainly suggest that the paragraph beginning. ‘Ah, love, let us be true’ had already been written. But no amount of knowledge of its author’s methods of composition can prove that a finished work is or is not a unified whole. With greater critical relevance, it may be argued that in this final paragraph Arnold has forgotten about the sea. But the sea has by this time served its purpose as a symbol; and that which it symbolized is still powerfully present in these last lines. Moreover, the darkness remains. Precisely because it is no longer possible to believe that the universe is in some degree adjusted to human needs, that it is informed by a divinity which sympathizes with men in their joys and sorrows and in their hopes and fears, the poet must seek in human love for those values which are undiscoverable elsewhere. Moreover – and this is the primary meaning of the paragraph – the lovers must support each other if they are to live in the modern world without disaster.

– *J.D.Jump*

- (16) *The Scholar-Gipsy* involves a dream of being from the world of becoming and leaves undetermined whether the dream was a delusion. *Thyrsis* devotes itself to recovering a vision of being from the world of becoming and insists that it is true. Both dream and vision derive from a response to the features of the landscape.

The Cumner poems exemplify the frequently discussed move in Arnold from what may be called uncertainty whether his dreams pass through the gate of horn or of ivory to a conviction that his dreams are all of horn. Severely qualified though it was, the greater optimism of Arnold’s later work is unquestionable: the two Obermann poems provide another clear example. The twentieth century has found, with Tennysonian authority, the expression of doubt more satisfyingly honest than the expression of assurance, however, tentatively it may be offered. In itself this is a quite invalid criterion. We must allow a poet his faith or his doubt, and ask only that it be properly realized in his poem. Proper realization means in this context the due rendering of the Cumner countryside so that it really seems, at least for the duration of the poem, to contain the truths it is said to contain.

The problem is the signal tree, not, certainly, whether it was oak or elm, truly solitary or near a clump of pines, on Cumner Hurst or just above Chilswell Farm, visible or not visible on the path from South or North Hinksey. The problem is whether the tree can do the work the poem asks it to do. It is important to pay careful attention to what is first said of the tree, for on that saying the poem will depend. The main details are given in the third stanza after a brief mention of the tree in the second:

*That single elm-tree bright
Against the west – I miss it ! is it gone ?
We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,
Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not dead;
While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.*

– *A. Roper*

- (17) “Arnold felt – no man more deeply – the majesty of the poet’s function: he solemnly attired himself to perform it; but the singing robe was not his daily wear. Arnold – let it be repeated – was not a bard; not a Muse-intoxicated man. He had the bardic, the architectonic gift. ‘Something of the worldling’ in him forbade any such fervour, yet he brought to literature and in a happy hour, insisting by the example of his verse as well as by the percepts of his criticism that before anything becomes literature it must observe two conditions – it must be worth saying, and it must be worthily written.”

– *Sir Arthur Quiller Couch*

- (18) “Matthew Arnold is undoubtedly in poetry, and I believe also in some of his prose a classic: that is to say he has succeeded in addressing himself to all times’. And yet, if ever an author, in poetry and prose, addressed himself to his own day and generation, on the surrounding scene, it was he.....In his poetry there is a mature wisdom appealing to the elemental and universal in man; austere expressed, without pomp, ornament, or tinkling music; and sometimes falling into lines as perfect and lawless as anything we know.”

– *Cariton Stanley*

- (19) “Matthew Arnold is not a popular poet; his style is too severely classical; he is too reticent in the expression of emotion and too seriously reflective to attract any but the thoughtful reader. He is his own best critic, and has fewer faults and redundancies of style than any of the contemporary poets. His productions are polished gems, and he never loses the sense of proportion, of the self-restraint which belongs to the artist. At the same time, his poems are full of his own personality and of the various forms which he adopted, the lyric and the elegiac were the best suited to him.”

– *G.C. Macaulay*

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