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POETRY-I

MA English
Semester-I Paper-II

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FOREWORD

Since its establishment in 1976, Acharya Nagarjuna University has been forging ahead in the path of progress and dynamism, offering a variety of courses and research contributions. I am extremely happy that by gaining 'A' grade from the NAAC in the year 2016, Acharya Nagarjuna University is offering educational opportunities at the UG, PG levels apart from research degrees to students from over 443 affiliated colleges spread over the two districts of Guntur and Prakasam.

The University has also started the Centre for Distance Education in2003-04 with the aim of taking higher education to the door step of all the sectors of the society. The centre will be a great help to those who cannot join in colleges, those who cannot afford the exorbitant fees as regular students, and even to housewives desirous of pursuing higher studies. Acharya Nagarjuna University has started offering B.A., and B.Com courses at the Degree level and M.A., M.Com., M.Sc., M.B.A., and L.L.M., courses at the PG level from the academic year 2003-2004 onwards.

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

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

Prof. P. Raja Sekhar
Vice-Chancellor
Acharya Nagarjuna University

102EG21: POETRY- I

UNIT – I
Background Study:

Middle English Period, Renaissance Humanism and Empiricism, Puritanism, Metaphysical conceits, Neoclassicism, Romantic Revival, Influence of French Revolution and Platonic Idealism,

Poetic forms: Epic, Mock-epic, Augustan Satire, Elegy, Lyric, Ode, Dramatic Monologue.

UNIT II

John Milton : Paradise Lost, Book I

UNIT III

John Keats : Ode on Grecian Urn, Ode to a Nightingale, Ode to Autumn. P.B Shelley : Ode To Skylark, Ode To West Wind.

UNIT IV

John Donne : The Sun Rising, The Ecstasy. Alexander Pope : The Rape of The Lock

Unit V

William Wordsworth : Prelude, Book 1 Robert Browning : The Last Ride Together, My Last Duchess

SUGGESTED READINGS:

1. Daiches, David. (1979). A Critical History of English Literature. Bombay: Allied Publishers.
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4. Eagleton, Terry. (2007). How to Read a Poem. Oxford: Blackwell.
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6. Vendler, Helen. (1983). The Odes of John Keats. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

POETRY-I

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LESSON 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY OF ENGLISH POETRY

1.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will

- Develop an overview of the definition of literature
- Will come to know about the different ages
- Understand the nature of 'poetry' and
- The kinds and forms of poetry

Structure of the lesson

1.0 Objectives

1.1What is literature?

1.2 What is poetry?

1.3 Poetry – Its Kinds

1.4. How can we approach a poet?

1.5 How to appreciate poetry?

1.6 Different Ages in the History of English Literature

1.7 Summing Up

1.8 Comprehension Check Questions

1.9 References

Expansion of the structure

1.1 What is Literature?

William Henry Hudson observes that "literature is an expression of life through the medium of language." Unlike other treatises on specialized subjects, literature appeals to all "men and women as men and women" and not as subject-specific individuals. If a treatise imparts only knowledge about a specific issue, literature offers great aesthetic satisfaction apart from knowledge – the knowledge of life with its "deep and everlasting human significance."

Man is a social animal and due to the influence of various elements, like intellectual, emotional and element of imagination, he/she wants to share his observations of nature, his relationships with other people and his experiences as a human being with others. In this process, he chooses various genres to express his feelings, emotions and observations. It can be prose, poetry, drama or novel or short story – fiction.

Taine observes that every work of art is influenced by the race, the *milieu* and the moment. When we read a work of art, we come to know about the various factors that worked on his/her mind to produce that particular work – like the " physical environment, political institutions, social conditions and the like" (Hudson,49).

1.2 What is Poetry?

As the present block is about English Poetry, let us try to focus on the development of poetry as a genre. You should have read a lot many poems before arriving at this point. Read the following two texts and understand the qualities of a poem.

A	B
A journal is an incondite miscellany, written from day to day, recording the writer's life and addressed either to some particular person, as in Swift's Journal to Stella or as in Eugenie de Guerin's Journal inscribed if not directly addressed to her beloved brother Maurice, or else implicitly or explicitly dedicated to some ab- straction or ideal confidant — in Fanny Burney's diary explicitly to " Nobody," in Maurice de Guerin's Journal to " Mon Cahier," in others to the " Reader," to " Pos- terity," " Kind Friend," and so forth. (ON JOURNAL-WRITERS- W. N. P. Barbellion: Enjoying Life, and other Literary Remains)	My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk, Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk: 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot, But being too happy in thine happiness,— That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees In some melodious plot Of beechen green, and shadows numberless, Singest of summer in full-throated ease. (Ode to a Nightingale - John Keats)

Text 'A' is very plain like our conversation in day to day life. Text 'B' is different in form, expression and style. It calls for the use of imagination. It appeals to our emotions. Poetry as a genre is different from prose in many ways. The language, rhythm and the style of expression make it a different one. Several writers defined poetry in different ways.

Dr. Johnson defines poetry as "a metrical composition" and "it is the art of uniting pleasure with truth by calling imagination to the help of reason and its essence is invention."

Thomas Carlyle defines poetry as "a musical thought."

Coleridge says, "poetry is the antithesis of science, having for its immediate object pleasure, not truth."

Wordsworth defines that "it is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge and the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science."

1.3 Poetry – Its Kinds

It is both **Subjective** and **Objective**. As long as the poet restricts himself/herself to personal experiences, feelings and emotions, it remains subjective. Objective poetry deals with the lives, feelings and experiences of other people in society. Objective poetry reveals the social consciousness of the poet.

The following are the different forms:

Lyric Poetry is the poetry sung with accompaniment of a musical instrument called 'lyre'. It can be 'personal' or 'impersonal'. Lyrics of love, lyrics of patriotism or religious emotions belong to this kind. Every lyric should create a worthy feeling. Though the essence of lyrical poetry is the depiction of a 'personality', it should be typically human. The reader must be able to experience it personally.

As observed by Hudson (98), "personal poetry, from the simpler forms of lyric, passes into **meditative** and **philosophic** poetry, in which the element of thought becomes important."

An **Ode** is a 'lyric', which is often in the form of an address. It is dignified or exalted in subject, feeling and style. It is of two kinds: Pindaric Ode and Horatian Ode. The English Ode has pursued a course of its own regarding subject-matter, style and treatment and thus is not bound strictly by classical traditions. Spenser's *Epithalamion*, Collins's *Ode to Evening,* Shelley's *West Wind*, Keats's Odes*To a Nightingale,* and *On a Grecian Urn,* Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* are some examples. The odes of Shelley and Keats are regular in nature and certain odes of Wordsworth, like the Immortality Ode and also some odes of Tennyson are irregular in nature.

The other most important division of personal poetry is the **Elegy**. It's a brief lyric of mourning, or a "direct utterance of personal bereavement or sorrow." As Hudson observes, "in the evolution of literature, the elegy has undergone great elaboration and has expanded in many directions"(100). Spenser's *Astrophel,* Milton's *Lycidas,* Shelley's *Adonais,* Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard,* Arnold's *Rugby Chapel* and *Thyrsis* are some great examples.

Under the head of subjective poetry, we can include the **Epistle** and the **Satire.**

Objective Poetry, on the other hand, deals with the outer world of passion and action. The poet deals with these external issues without bringing in his individuality. This **Objective** or **Impersonal Poetry** falls into two groups – the **narrative** and the **dramatic. The Ballad, the Epic** and **the Metrical Romance** come under the **narrative** group, whereas **Dramatic Lyric, Dramatic Story** and **Dramatic Monologue** fall under the latter group. You will come to know about these genres in the next coming lessons in a more detailed way.

1.4. How can we approach a poet?

When we try to approach a poet, we need to analyse 'the content of his writing' first; then we need to study 'the salient qualities' of his 'art'; then we must examine 'his/her literary ancestry and affiliation', study the 'thought' and 'style' processes and consider his

'relation with the spirit and movements of his time.' Apart from criticism, the primary job of the reader is 'appreciation and enjoyment.'

1.5 How to appreciate poetry?

As poetry is "musical speech", it appeals to the ears, and the heart of the listener/reader. It stirs our 'emotions and poetic imagination with its verbal felicity, metre, rhythm and rime. While writing a poem, the poet appeals to the poet in us, and we need to seize the "secret and virtue" of a poem. The 'strength and vitality' of a poem lies in the appreciation of its soul. Whatever may be the aesthetic capability of the reader, it can be cultivated through regular exposure and practice. Hence our chief purpose of reading poetry is for its enjoyment – for its own sake.

1.6 Different Ages in the History of English Literature

To understand the different genres of English Literature, we need to understand the political, social and literary conditions of different ages starting from 11th century AD. The following table will provide you a bird's eye-view of the history of English Literature.

Sl.No	Name of the Age	Period
1	**The Britons and the Anglo-Saxon Period**	**1066AD**
2	**The Norman French Period**	**1066 - 1350**
3	**The End of Middle Ages**	**1350 - 1500**
4	**The Renaissance and the Elizabethan Period**	**1500 - 1603**
5	**The Seventeenth Century**	**1603 - 1660**
6	**The Restoration Period**	**1660 - 1700**
7	**The Eighteenth Century**	**1702 – 1830**
8	**The Romantic Age**	**1798 - 1830**
9	**The Victorian Period**	**1830 - 1901**
10	**The Twentieth Century(Modern Age)**	**1901 - 1945**
11	**Post – Modern Period**	**1945 - Present**

1.7 Summing Up

In this unit, you came to know about the nature of literature and its scope. An outline of different ages that occurred in the history of English literature will rouse your interest and a detailed study of these ages will strengthen your knowledge. You also came to know about poetry as a genre, its kinds and its different forms. You will come to know about the development of poetry, the contribution of various poets during different ages in the coming lessons.

1.8 Comprehension Check Questions

Answer the following questions:

1. What does Taine observe about a work of art?

2. What is 'subjective' poetry?

3. What is an 'ode' and give some examples?

4. What is 'lyric poetry'?

5. What are the different forms of 'objective poetry'?

6. How can we appreciate a poem?

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LESSON-2

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

(Source: http://etc.usf.edu/clipart/49800/49805/49805_g_chaucer.htm)

2.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will understand

- the Age of Chaucer
- Chaucer's Contribution to the English Language
- Chaucer as a Poet and his Works
- Characteristics of Chaucer's Poetry

Structure of the Lesson

2.0 Objectives
2.1 The Age of Chaucer
2.2 Chaucer's Life
2.3 Chaucer as the first Poet
2.4 Characteristics of Chaucer's Poetry
2.5 Chaucer's Contribution to the English Language
2.6 Works of Chaucer
2.7 Summing Up
2.8 Comprehension Check Questions
2.9 References
2.10 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

2.1 The Age of Chaucer

The period from 1340 – 1400 is considered as the Age of Chaucer.

Social unrest and the beginnings of a new religious movement became the active forces in the England of the later fourteenth century. The moral ideas of Greece and Rome and the new awakening which started in Italy became major influences on intellectual thinking.

Chaucer's life witnessed the reign of three kings – Edward III, Richard II and Henry IV. Chaucer was born in the reign of Edward III, lived through the period of Richard II and died the year after Henry IV ascended the throne. Thus his life covers "a period of glorious social contrasts and a rapid political change."

The rule of Kind Edward was chivalrous and romantic. The successive wars (The Hundred Years' War) with France, the famous victories of the Battles of Crecy and Poitiers and the national ambition and pride created courage and filled the court with a sense of romantic idealism. The wealth of the commercial classes increased and the masses sank into a condition of deplorable misery.

Between 1348-9, there was Black Death, a devastating epidemic, which swept away more than one third of the population. The same plague reappeared in 1362, 67 and 70. Plague was followed by famine; vagrants and thieves got multiplied and the laws which were passed tyrannously worsened things. The victorious wars left disastrous conditions for

Edward's successor. Under the despotic and unwise rule of Richard, political troubles grew up. There were conflicts between the king and his subjects. Thus the closing years of Chaucer's life missed the glamour of its earlier part.

One of the evils of Chaucer's Age was the condition of the church. Spiritual zeal was absent and the priests amassed wealth and lived in a world of pleasure without faith and fear in God. Chaucer's *Prologue* portrays all such friars and pleasure-loving monks.

Though Chaucer was not a social reformer, he was a critical observer.

2.2 Chaucer's Life

Geoffrey Chaucer, the first poet and the greatest figure in the English Literature was born in about 1340 (1343?) in London. His father was a merchant vintner with a flourishing business. Chaucer should have read widely and at the age of seventeen, he received a court appointment as a page to the wife of the Duke of Clarence, the third son of Edward III. Later, after some wars and his return to England, he married Philippa and later became the valet of the King's chamber. He was often entrusted with diplomatic missions and thus he came into contact with Italian culture during the days of the early Renaissance. It was felt that he should have met the great Italian poets – Petrarch and Boccaccio. He received several honours and with the banishment of his special patron, John of Gaunt, he fell on evil days. He suffered due to his old age and poverty. He died in 1400 and was buried in Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

2.3 Chaucer as the First Poet

Before Chaucer, the only form of versification known to the English people was 'alliteration'. Chaucer made substantial improvements and additions to English versification. The two important poems of the 14th century, *Piers the Plowman* and *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight* were written in alliterative verse. Rhyme was also employed. The poets before Chaucer showed the greatest ingenuity in devising the complex stanza forms. They fashioned their rhymes down in the most complicated pattern in stanza forms. Chaucer had no liking for rhymes. He had no love for alliterative verse. He also made a travesty of the 'doggerel rhymes' in the rhyme of Sir Thopas.

Chaucer abandoned the irregular lines and alliteration of the Old English. He adopted the French method of regular metre and 'end rhyme'. Under his influence, rhyme gradually

displaced alliteration in English poetry. But the secret of Chaucer's poetry was lost when the changes in pronunciation, in the 16th century, came into light (especially the loss of a final 'e' from thousands of words and grammatical forms). He shaped English as a true instrument of poetry. Dryden remarked that "Chaucer was a barbarous writer, ignorant of prosody, and with no ear for the melody of verse." But this was a wrong approach to the poet's metrical skill and melodious verse. Chaucer was a writer with metrical accuracy, fluency and variety.

Chaucer is the first land mark of English Poetry. His verse is more for the ear than for the eye. His tale and verse go together like voice and music. As observed by one of his critics, "To read them is like listening to a clear stream rippling on a bed of pebbles in a green meadow full of sun shine".

2.4 Characteristics of Chaucer's Poetry

Chaucer's poetic genius was twofold – partly it was due to literature and partly it was due to life. He was a man of the world like Shakespeare and Milton. He had travelled much, tasted life in different positions and had intimate relations with different people. He was a keen observer with a poetic heart and dramatic vision. He also had a novelist within him. His descriptions were very picturesque and elaborate and he would never miss the minutest detail.

Chaucer employed three principal metres – the octosyllabic couplet, the eight syllable line, rhyming in couplets as in *The Book of the Duchess.* The decasyllabic line was an old measure but he knew the secret of ten syllable line also rhyming in couplets and used it the '*Prologue'* and in *Troilus*. His range is limited and he employs the 'iambic' rhythm. His measure is always the 'tetra metre' and the 'Pentametre'. He developed his versification, on the basis of stress, with a large measure of freedom in rhythmical movement. He introduced the 'heroic couplet' which became the standard form of narrative poetry. He used the 'Rhyme Royal' which belonged to the Italian poetry. He also made several metrical experiments in his shorter poems.

Chaucer 'speaks in verse':

The diction and style of Chaucer's versification is simple, graceful and effortless. His words are the words of everyday life. His sentences are short and simple in structure. They are free from awkward inversions. His style is easy, graceful and lucid. There are no strained conceits and far-fetched metaphors. Chaucer illustrates at his best, Coleridge's definition of

poetry "the best words in the best order". His poetic diction also matches with Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction. He found the English metre, halting and stiff, and he left it formal, graceful and supple. His verse has all the qualities of a living speech. Chaucer's English is not bookish; it is rather the language of good society. His poetry is the very model of simplicity and naturalness. His chooses the right word at the right place. Mathew Arnold says about his poetry as "the golden dew drops of speech". But his followers lacked his technical brilliance and his breadth of vision. Until Shakespeare, after Chaucer, there is no great English poet who observed and followed the technical skill of Chaucerian Verse. As David Daiches observes, "No other English narrative poet is his equal" .

2.5. Chaucer's Contribution to the English Language

The English Language was passing through a critical period, when Chaucer was still a boy. French was the chief language of the nobility and of the court. After 1315, French began to lose its influence upon English. The complete victory of the English language was signaled by the implementation of English, instead of French, in law courts. The **Battles of Crecy** and **Poitiers** fanned the flame of patriotism and national pride leading to the neglect of French by the common English men. But there was no standard form of English to occupy the place of the disappearing French. The English language was in a deplorable state as it was split up into four dialects, namely - Southern, Midland, Northumbrian and Kentish, differing from each other and hampering inter-communication.

The Midland or the East Midland was the most single and the easiest form in its grammatical structure. It was free from the inflections of the other three. The leading writers and poets also composed their works in this dialect. Wycliffe also had translated the Bible in the same dialect. Gower, after making experiments in French and Latin languages came round to this East Midland dialect in his English work, *Confessio Amantis*.

Chaucer followed the lead of Gower and popularized the East Midland dialect. He gave it a new turn, a new form and shape till it became the suitable medium of expression both in courts and universities. He shaped the English language by making it an instrument of social, political and literary thought. He harmonised, regulated and made popular the discordant elements of the national speech. He made the dialect of London a standard one for future writers and the parent of current modern English. Thus his contribution was vital to the English language.

Chaucer's contribution is not only restricted to the English language but also extended to English poetry. *The Canterbury Tales* is a landmark in the English poetry as well as in the English language. Before Chaucer, the English language was too difficult to understand without the aid of grammar and glossary. In these matters, Aubrey de Selincourt's opinion about Chaucer's language is worth considering. "His language, compared with (say) Shakespeare is simplicity itself, and any determined reader with his wits about him and a glossary at his elbow can very quickly determine himself to turn a phrase which is strange only with the strangers of a bygone fashion in his deed".

He was influenced and inspired by the French poets but he wrote in his own, native tongue. He presented vigour, grace and freedom of expression to his native tongue. Chaucer's English is not bookish but it is the language of good society. His words are the words of everyday life. "To read Chaucer, is to listen to the charming, gracious conversation of a cultured gentleman with a poetic heart". His style is marked by naturalness and simplicity. Chaucer Europeanized the English language and brought it into the current of culture.

2.6 Works of Chaucer

The following are the works of Chaucer:

- *The Boke of the Duchese*
- *The Hall of Fame*
- *Troyles and Creseyde*
- *Legende of Good Women*
- *Canterbury Tales*

2.7 Summing Up

In this unit, you learnt about the historical background of Geoffrey Chaucer's age. More information can be had from some other books and websites. The reigns of different kings and the social conditions got reflected in the works of Chaucer. Chaucer is the first English poet and his contribution to the English language is vital. As you read some of the works, you will come to know the music of his poetry. This unit offered you a detailed and clear background to his study.

2.8 Comprehension Check Questions

Answer the following questions:

1. Mention some contemporary poets of Chaucer.
2. Who translated the Bible?
3. What were the four dialects mentioned?
4. Describe the reign of Edward III.
5. Whys was Richard's reign devastating?
6. Name the wars/battles mentioned in this unit.
7. Portray the condition of church during Chaucer's age.
8. What is Chaucer's contribution to the English verse?

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Lesson- 3

CHAUCER'S PROLOGUE TO CANTERBURY TALES

3.0 Objectives

After reading this lesson you will

(http://www.newrepublic.com/book/review/selected-canterbury-tales-chaucer)

- Understand the context of the poem
- Know about different kinds of characters in the poem
- The social and religious conditions of Chaucer's society and
- Realize the differences between medieval and modern English

Structure of the Lesson

3.1 *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Prologue*

3.2 An Outline of the *Prologue* and the Description of Important Characters

3.3.1. The Knight (43 – 78)

3.3.2 The Squire (79 – 100)

3.3.3 The Yeoman (101 – 117)

3.3.4 The Prioress (118 – 162)

3.3.5. The Monk (165 – 207)

3.3.6 The Friar (208 – 269)

3.3.7 The Merchant, The Clerk and The Man of Law. (270 - 284, 285 - 308, 309 - 330)

3.3.8 The Franklin (lines 331 – 360)

3.3.9 The Five Members of the Guild (Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer and an Upholsterer) (361 - 379)

3.4 Their Cook (379 - 387)

3.4.1 The Shipman (388 – 410)

3.4.2 The Doctor of Physic (411 – 444)

3.4.3 The Wife of Bath (445 – 476)

3.4.4 The Parson (477 – 528)

3.4.5 The Ploughman (528 – 541)

3.4.6 The Miller (542 – 566)

3.4.7 The Manciple (567- 586)

3.4.9 The Reeve (587 – 622)

3.5 The Summoner (623 – 668)

3.5.1The Pardoner (669 – 714)

3.5.2 Conclusion

3.5.3 Summing Up

3.5.4 Comrephension check Questions

3.5.5 References

3.5.6 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

3.1 *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Prologue*

In the previous lesson you came to know about the age of Chaucer and his contribution to the English Language as a poet. *The Canterbury Tales* is the greatest work of Chaucer's Period. It is a realistic document of the 14th century England. Chaucer's work is not only a poem but a guide that helps us understand the social conditions of his contemporary England with its varied professions. To be brief, it is a cross section of his contemporary society. Chaucer describes the journey of a group of pilgrims from London to Canterbury, the holy shrine of St. Thomas Beckett. It is a group of different people from all walks of life. Chaucer, like a painter - novelist, presents the portraits of his characters in beautiful poetical terms and at the same time, like a dramatist, analyses their psychology.

The Prologue forms the preface to the main work, *The Canterbury Tales.* While introducing several characters, Chaucer provides certain 'links' which help us understand the portraits closely. The 'tales' vary in their nature based on the temperament and nature of the individuals. As Legouis comments, "the tales were for Chaucer a means of completing the portraits of his pilgrims ... . He chose for each one the tale which best suited his class and his temperament."

Though a poem, *The Prologue* introduces the characters as a drama introduces its *dramatis personae.* Apart from the narrator, who is none but the poet, the following are the main pilgrims:

1. The Knight
2. The Squire
3. The Yeoman
4. The Prioress
5. Associates of the Prioress.
6. The Monk
7. The Friar
8. The Merchant
9. The Clerk
10. The Sergeant of Law
11. The Franklin
12. The Haberdasher
13. The Dyer
14. The Carpenter
15. The Weaver
16. The Carpet Maker
17. The Cook
18. The Shipman
19. The Doctor of Physique
20. The Wife of Bath
21. The Parson
22. The Plowman
23. The Miller
24. The Manciple
25. The Reeve
26. The Summoner
27. The Pardoner
28. The Host

Harry Bailey, the main host, was a merry man who liked good company and merry stories. He was a social person and was liked by all. Having arranged a huge dinner for the pilgrims at his Tabard Inn, he suggested to the pilgrims that each member of the party should tell the group two interesting stories to avoid monotony during the journey to Canterbury. He also explained that the best story teller would be offered a sumptuous dinner by the other members of the party. He also said that he would accompany the group to judge the group members. All the members accepted this proposal. The poet, Chaucer was also one of the members.

The Canterbury Tales deals with these stories and *The Prologue* gives a description of these characters in detail.

Boccaccio's *Decameron* also deals with similar tales but it lacks Chaucer's depth of analytical observation. Chaucer took his contemporary theme of pilgrims' going to the shrine - but through this he analyses human nature.

3.2 An Outline of the *Prologue* and the Description of Important Characters

The following is the outline of *Prologue* and the line numbers are also indicated before each part. The original text is in Medieval English and the following link will lead you to a Modern English version.

http://www.librarius.com/canttran/genpro/genpro001-042.htm

The division of *The Prologue* :

The first forty-two lines form the 'introduction'. He describes the season first.

" Whan that April with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote ... (Lines 1-42)

The poet describes the beauty of the Spring season with its sweet showers and its flora and fauna. All the pilgrims go to Canterbury from all corners of England to seek the holy blessings of St.Thomas Beckett, who helped them when they were sick.

The poet was resting at the Tabard Inn at Southwark and was getting ready to leave for Canterbury with a devout heart. Twenty nine pilgrims, who were on their way to Canterbury came to the same inn in a group. The poet also became a part of the group and they all planned to start the next day. As the group consisted of different sorts of people, the poet wanted to describe them.

3.3.1. The Knight (43 – 78)

The poet describes the knight first. He was a brave person. He loved knight hood, faithfulness, honour and courtesy. He was valiant in his Lord's war, had campaigned both in Christendom and in heathen lands. He was always honoured for his bravery. The poet describes thus:

He was at Alexandria when it was war; several times he had headed the board in Prussia. He had joined expeditions in Lithuania and Russia. He had been at Granada at the siege of Algeriras and had ridden out in Benmarin. He was at Lyes and Attalia when they were won and was at the arrival of troops in the Lavant. The knight was at many places but had never been discourteous to anyone. He was valiant, humble and wise. His dress was not very showy. He was on his pilgrimage soon after his travels.

3.3.2 The Squire (79 – 100)

There was a young squire with the knight. He was a jubilant lover. He was a young bachelor with curled locks. He was twenty and had a great strength though he appeared nimble. He had also been at various places like his father. He was wearing embroidered clothes in red and white colour. He had a short coat with long, wide sleeves. He was an ardent lover and was always singing during night time. He was courteous, modest and helpful and behaved well at the table.

3.3.3 The Yeoman (101 – 117)

The squire had a yeoman with him. He was clad in coat and carried a mighty bow and a sheaf of bright and sharp peacock arrows. He also carried a sword, a buckler, a horn and a fine dagger. He wore a St. Christopher on his breast. The poet says that he also believes that the yeoman is a woodman.

3.3.4 The Prioress (118 – 162)

There was a quiet and simple smiling nun, a prioress. She was named as Madame Eglantine. She spoke well and had excellent etiquette and table manners. She also tried to follow court-manners. She had a nasal voice and would sing devotional songs well. She was very kind and would cry easily. She had a nice dress sense and she always carried a rosary of beads with a brooch of gold on which was engraved ' *Amor vincit omnia'* , which means 'love conquers all things'.

3.3.5. The Monk (165 – 207)

There was also a monk who loved hunting. He had great horses in his stable. He gave up all traditional things and followed the things of the new world.

The poet then describes his attire and his dogs. The monk had a great passion for hunting and his greyhounds were 'swift as fowls in flight.' His sleeves had the finest fur at the wrists. The monk was fat with a bald head; his eyes were red like 'fire under a cauldron'. His boots were soft and his horse was in fine condition. He loved roasted meat and a fat swan. We must observe how Chaucer contrasts the description of the monk with that of the knight and the squire. Those who were valiant were simple, honest and humble and on the other hand, those who must be pious and humble were vain and jolly.

3.3.6 The Friar (208 – 269)

There was a jolly and wanton Friar. He was permitted to beg within the city limits. He knew much gossip and had arranged several marriages of young women at his own cost. He was liked and was familiar among franklins and women of the town. He had great authority to hear confessions. He had a pleasant voice and he could sing and play on a stringed instrument. He was familiar with the taverns and knew every inn keeper and bar maid. He was the best beggar and could make even the poorest to give him alms. His proceeds were greater than his regular income. He was very helpful during the days of arbitration. He was called Hubert.

3.3.7 The Merchant, The Clerk and The Man of Law. (270 - 284, 285 - 308, 309 - 330)

There was also a merchant with a forked beard. He wore a Flanders beaver hat and rode on a horse. He fastened his shoes neatly. He was very intelligent. He managed his business well. He was worthy.

There was also a Clerk of Oxford who attended lectures of logic. He looked thin and also grave. He had a lean horse. He wore a threadbare coat. He was a great lover of Aristotle and his philosophy and he would have thick,bound books at his head near the bed. He did not have enough money. He took great care of his studies. He would always speak about moral virtues and he was always glad to learn and teach.

There was a Sergeant of Law. He was very cautious and wise. He was dignified and had a thorough Knowledge of law. He had a great reputation and made money. He possessed several lands. He was a busy man but would seem busier than he was. He knew every statute fully by heart.

3.3.8 The Franklin (lines 331 – 360)

There was a Franklin, with a beard as white as a daisy. He was of sanguine temperament, and liked to have wine with pieces of bread or cake. His always loved to live in pleasure. He was a true son of Epicurus. He held the opinion that great pleasure was in fact perfect happiness. He was a great householder. His house was never without pies of fish and meat. He varied his food or supper according to the seasons of the year. He had very many fat partridges in a coop and great numbers of beams and pikes in his fish pond. At county meetings,he was a representative and Chairman, and on many occasions, he had been the Knight of the Shire. He always had a dagger and a hawking pouch at his girdle, which was as white as morning milk. He had been a Sheriff and a legal auditor apart from being a distinguished landowner.

3.3.9 The Five Members of the Guild (Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer and an Upholsterer) (361 - 379)

There were also a Haberdasher, a Carpenter, a cloth weaver, a Dyer and an upholsterer. They were all dressed in the common uniforms of the guilds. Their apparel was fresh and newly trimmed.Their knives were not fashioned from brass but had sheaths with silver caps. Their belts and purses were beautifully wrought out in the same manner. Each one of them seemed prosperous to sit on the dais in a guild hall. Their knowledge, wealth, and income would have justified their position to be aldermen. Their wives would have surely been at fault not to have consented to do this – for it is pleasant to be called 'Madam' and good to lead this procession into church and have one's mantle carried in royal fashion.

3.4 Their Cook (379 - 387)

They had brought a cook with them, to boil chickens with marrow-bones. He could recognize the flavour of London ale, and could roast, steam, boil and fry, make stew and bake a pie well. But the poet felt that it was a great pity that he had gangrenous wound on his skin.

3.4.1 The Shipman (388 – 410)

There was a shipman who came from Dartmouth. He lived in the far west. He rode upon a farm – nag. He wore a gown of course woolen cloth to the knee. He had a dagger hanging on a cord around his neck which passed down under his arm. The hot summer sun had made his complexion quite brown, and undoubtedly he was not trust worthy. He had stolen many mouthfuls of wine on the journey home from Bordeaux while the merchant was

asleep. He was not troubled by a scrupulous conscience. If he fought and gained the upper hand, he threw his prisoners into the sea. There was no one from Hull to Carthagena as good as him at calculating the tides, the currents and the dangers. He was bold and prudent in his undertaking and he had seen many a tempest. He knew the harbours well as they lay from Gottland to Cape Finistere. His ship was called the Maudelayne.

3.4.2 The Doctor of Physic (411 – 444)

With the group there was a doctor of medicine. There was no one like him in all the world in the sphere of medicine and surgery. He was also well versed in astrology. He took great care of his patients at all critical hours by means of astrology. He could use the influence of the planets for the benefit of patients. He knew the cause for every disease; whether it came from excess of hot, cold, moist or dry and how and where they had originated and from what 'humour'. He was a very perfect practitioner.

Once he knew the cause and origin of the malady, he would at once give the sick man his remedy. He had his chemists always prepared to send him drugs and medicinal powders, as each of them brought profit to the other. Their friendship was not a new thing. He was familiar with the old Aesculapius, with Dioscorides, and also Rufus. Old Hippocrates, Hali and Galen, Serapion, Rhazes and Avicenna, Avenoes, John of Damascus, Constantine, Bernard, Gaddesden and Gilbertine.

In his diet he was moderate, and always referred very nourishing and easily digestible food and avoided excesses. He very seldom studied the Bible. He was dressed in red and blue-grey lined with taffeta, and thin silk and yet his expenditure was moderate; he saved what he earned during the times of plague. Since Gold is the heart stimulant in medicine, he loved it more.

3.4.3 The Wife of Bath (445 – 476)

There was a good wife from near Bath, but unfortunately,she was somewhat deaf. She was so skilful at cloth-making that she surpassed those of Ypres and Ghent. Of all the parish wives she would be the first to go to the offertory.i.e. bread and wine offered at the altar for consecration. If someone did before her, she would be so angry that she showed no charity. Her kerchiefs were very finely woven and the poet swears that the ones she wore on Sunday weighed ten pounds. Her stockings were of the finest scarlet and very tightly laced, while her shoes were very soft and new. She had a bold fair face, with red complexion. She had been a

wealthy woman all her life and had been married legally on five occasions besides having other lovers in her youth, but the poet says that there is no need to speak about that.

She had thrice been to Jerusalem and had crossed many a foreign river. She had been to Rome, Boulogne, Cologne, and to the shrine of St. James in Galicia. She knew a great deal about traveling along the roads. To tell the truth she was gap-toothed. She sat easily upon her ambling horse, with a wimple and with a hat as large as a small shield. She had a large foot-cloth about her hips and a pair of sharp spurs on her feet. She knew well how to laugh and chatter in company. She also perhaps knew (Ovid's) *Remedia Amoris,* for she was well versed in all the approved devices of love-making.

3.4.4 The Parson (477 – 528)

There was a good religious man, a poor parson, but who was rich in pious thoughts and deeds. He was also an educated man, a scholar, who genuinely preached Christ's Gospel and devoutly taught his parishioners. He was gentle, kind and extremely hard working. Many a time he had proved himself to be very patient in adversity. He was extremely reluctant to demand his 'tithes', and undoubtedly would give his poor parishioners in the neighborhood, his Easter money and also his own property. He was not greedy and his material needs were easily satisfied. He visited those who were in sickness or in adversity in all weathers and at all times. This shepherd set a noble example to his flock, which he had learnt from the Gospel.

He first practised good things and then taught them. He always keeps the adage in mind, 'if gold itself rusts, what about the iron'! But it is an even greater shame to have a sinful shepherd and pure sheep. By his clean living, a priest should set an example to his parishioners. The Parson did not hire out his services leaving his congregants without leadership, nor did he run to St. Paul's in London for selfish ends. He stayed at home to guard his flock from mischief; he was a true parson, not a mercenary. Though he was a virtuous and holy person, he did not despise sinful men. His task was to save souls by setting a good example. The poet says that a better priest cannot be found anywhere else. He did not seek honour or respect. He always preached the gospel of Christ and his twelve apostles.

3.4.5 The Ploughman (528 – 541)

With the Parson was his brother, a Plowman. He had pulled many a cart-load of manure, for he was a good and honest worker. He lived peacefully and was charitable to all. Whether it caused him pleasure or pain, he loved God with his whole heart at all times and

(next to God) he loved his neighbours as himself. To please God, he was prepared to thresh, dig ditches, and lay water channels for all poor folk without demanding any charge. He paid the tithes derived from his own labour and those derived from the profits on his stock fully and regularly. He wore a plough man's frock and rode a mare.

3.4.6 The Miller (542 – 566)

The Miller was an exceedingly stout fellow with very big muscles and bones; Wherever he went he always won the wrestling contests. He was a short-shouldered, broad and a thick set fellow and there was no door that he could not heave off its hinge, or break open by running at it with his head. He had a broad, spade-like beard, which was as red as a sow or a fox. He had a wart on the tip of his nose, which was surmounted by a tuft of red hair, which resembled the bristles in a sow's ear. He had flaring black nostrils. A sword and a small round shield hung at his side; his mouth was as wide as a great furnace. He was an idle talker and a teller of indecent stories of sin and harlotries. He well knew how to steal corn and take his toll three times, and yet, by God, he had a thumb of gold as goes the old proverb. He wore a white coat and a blue hood. He could blow and play a bagpipe well, and with it he led the group out of the town.

3.4.7 The Manciple (567- 586)

There was a noble Manciple of an Inn of Court. Buyers of victuals can take an example from him regarding purchases – for, whether he bought for cash or on credit he always came out well and ahead of everyone else. He is always watchful in business. He had more than thirty masters who were expert and skilled lawyers but he surpassed all of them with his wit. The poet says that it is really the grace of the Lord.

3.4.9 The Reeve (587 – 622)

The Reeve was a slightly-built and bad tempered man. His beard was shaven closely to the skin. His hair was cut around his ears and tonsured shortly at the front of his head in a priestly fashion. His legs were as long and thin as walking sticks, and his calves could not be seen. He knew well how to keep a granary and a bin and no auditor could detect mistake in his accounts. When it comes to observing the dry and rainy seasons of the year, he knew exactly when to sow and when to reap. This Reeve was in complete charge of his lord's sheep, cattle, dairy, swine, horses, stock and poultry. Ever since his lord was twenty years old he had been under contract to render the estate accounts and no one could ever discover him

to be in arrears. There was no bailiff, herdsman or farm laborer who was in any way cunning or deceitful that he did not know about and they were as fearful of him as of the plague.

His home upon the heath was pleasant and was shaded with green trees. He could make purchases more advantageously than his lord. He could secretly enrich his own barns through crafty pleasing of his lord. He could even give and lend him even from his own property and even for this he was rewarded with the lord's thanks and gifts of a gown and hood. In his youth he had learnt a useful trade and could work competently as a carpenter. This Reeve sat upon a low-bred, undersized horse of dapple grey which was called Scot. He wore a long, over bluish grey overcoat and carried a rusty sword by his side. This Reeve came from Norfolk and lived near a town called Baldewelle. His long coat was tucked into his girdle in friar-like fashion and he always rode at the rear of the company.

3.5 The Summoner (623 – 668)

With the group in that place was a Summoner who had a fiery red cherubic face covered with pimples. His eyes were small but he was as lustful and lecherous as a sparrow. His eye brows were scabby and black and he had a scanty beard – children were afraid of his appearance. There was no quicksilver,lead-ointment,sulphur, borax, white lead, cream of tartar, or any other ointment which could cleanse and cauterize his skin, rid him of his white pimples and cure the boils, which disfigured his cheeks.

He was passionately fond of garlic, onions and leeks and loved strong blood red wine, and, under its influence, he would shout and cry out as if he had forgotten his senses. When intoxicated with wine he would only speak Latin. He would parrot two or three legal phrases which he had learnt from some document. He well knew how to cheat a foolish fellow. He was a great liar. In his own way, he deceived all the young people of the diocese using his power. He knew all their secrets and had falsely acted as their adviser. He wore on his forehead a garland which was large enough to have served as an inn-sign, and he had made a small shield for himself out of a loaf of bread.

3.5.1The Pardoner (669 – 714)

Along with the Summoner there was a noble Pardoner from the 'Priory of Rouncivale' He was his friend and his companion, who had recently come from the (Papal) Court of Rome, and who loudly sage the song 'Come hither, love, me! " This Pardoner had hair as yellow as wax which hung smoothly like a bundle of flax'. His locks hung in narrow

strands and covered his shoulders. Out of jolliness he wore no hood. It was packed in his bag, and he thought he was riding all in new fashion. He had hare-like, staring eyes, a voice as thin as a goat and wore no beard-nor was he likely to have one, as his chin was as smooth as if it were recently shaven. His bag lay on his lap brimful of pardons, hot from Rome, and with regard to his profession, there was never such a pardoner from Berwick down to Ware.

In his bag he had a pillow case which was claimed as 'our Lady's Veil'. He said he had a piece of the sail belonging to St. Peter when the latter walked upon the sea until Jesus Christ saved him. He had a cross of brass studded with stones, and the bones of a pig in a glass. With these relics he made more money than a poor county parson can make in two months. And thus with feigned flattery and tricks he made gullible persons, fools. But in conclusion he was a noble preacher in the church. He could read a lesson or a story well, but best of all he sang the 'Mass anthem' well. He knew well that, when that song was sung, he might preach and polish his tongue to gain silver. To achieve this, he sang even more cheerfully and loudly.

3.5.2 Conclusion

Then as suggested by the host they draw lots and the knight gets his chance to start the tale. The group leaves for Canterbury in a jolly mood.

3.5.3 Summing Up

This lesson has presented the different characters of *Prologue* who narrate their stories during their journey. You should have observed how Chaucer has selected his characters from all ranks of society and how conscious he is in talking about their tastes, appearances and conversations. Your reading of the original text as indicated in the links mentioned above will improve your understanding of the medieval times. Chaucer's poetry is more for the ears and you can understand it if you listen to some of the recordings of the text. In the next lesson you will study the different aspects related to *The Prologue.*

3.5.4 Comrephension Check Questions

1. How many religious persons are presented?
2. Describe the 'knight' in your own words.
3. What does Chaucer say about the Miller?
4. What do you understand about the social conditions of Chaucer's times?
5. Write about the nature of the woman described in the Prologue:

3.5.5 References

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LESSON 4

A CRITICAL STUDY OF 'PROLOGUE'

4.0 Objectives

After going through this lesson, you will

- Understand that Chaucer's *Prologue* shines as a picture gallery of 14th century England
- Analyse how Chaucer represented all the people of his contemporary society
- Understand the nature of medieval characters
- Understand Chaucer's humour and treatment of women

Structure of the Lesson

4.1 'Prologue'as a Picture-Gallery
4.2 Chaucer's Characters and their Social Order
4.3 Chaucer and Medieval Characters
4.4 Art of Characterisation in *The Prologue*
4.5 Chaucer's Treatment of Medieval Figures
4.6 Chaucer's Attitude towards Women
4.7 Chaucer's Humour
4.8 Summing Up
4.9 Comprehension Check Questions
4.9.1 References
4.9.2 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

Your reading of earlier lessons should have made you understand the times of Chaucer and his contribution to the English language as a poet. This lesson will help you to understand *The Prologue* from a critical perspective. Chaucer's 'Prologue' is approached by various critics for its 'realism, sharp individuality, adroit psychology, and vividness of felt life' (A.Hoffman, 1954:1).

4.1 'Prologue'as a Picture-Gallery

The Prologue shines like a portrait gallery and Chaucer is unique in his art of characterization. The characters in the 'Prologue' are the pictures of the people of the different classes of the 14th century. Chaucer has tried to paint the body and soul of the 14th century life so faithfully. His characters do not only simply represent his age; they are also universal in their nature. His characters are both 'individuals' and 'types'.

In the pilgrims' company we see various characters like the Knight, the Squire, the Yeoman, the Prioress, the Friar, the Monk, the Clerk etc. All these characters are sketched by Chaucer in clear terms. Chaucer achieved his aim and transcended both the Italian and the English poets of his age.

We must note that Chaucer has given no chance or representation for the feudal society of aristocracy. Prof. R.K. Root expressed his views on the *Prologue* that "it is a representative assembly, a parliament of social and Industrial England." As a keen observer,

Chaucer, in this aspect ,is not influenced by any. He has adopted no definite pattern in the description of the portraits.

4.2 Chaucer's Characters and their Social Order

Chaucer presents common people with the stories of their life. They are blissfully unaware of the political events of their age. As Legouis observes, Chaucer's pilgrims talk about their "purse, their love affairs or their private feuds... They are interested in their next door neighbour, than in the king." He represents people from the higher as well as the lower strata of his society. If the Knight belongs to the highest social order, the Plowman belongs to the lowest in society.

The war representatives were the Knight, the Squire, and the Yeoman. The liberal classes were represented by the Doctor, the Man if Law, the Oxford Clerk and Chaucer himself. More people were from the agricultural classes, like The Plowman, the Miller, the Reeve and the Franklin.

There was a representation from the commercial classes also. The Merchant and the Sailor belonged to them. The industrial classes were represented by the cloth-merchant, the Woman of Bath, a Carpenter, a Weaver, a Dyer and an Upholsterer. The provision and grocery trade is represented by a Manciple, a Cook and the Host of the Tabard Inn. The secular clergy is represented by the Parson and the Summoner. The monastic order is represented by the Benedictine Monk, a Prioress, a Priest and a Pardoner.

4.3 Chaucer and Medieval Characters

His characters are drawn from medieval society, “the ecclesiastical and the guild organisations”. From the former side, he portrayed the Prioress, Second Nun’s priest, the Monk, the Friar, Summoner and the Pardoner. The more learned professions were represented by the Physician, the Man of law and the Clerk of Oxford. The Knight represented the chivalric order. The Sergeant of Law was a typical medieval character. His clients give him fees as well as robes. As a part of the barter system payment was also made in terms of robes. The contemporaries of Chaucer, like Wycliff, Langland and Gower also criticised the greed of such lawyers.

Other characters like the Cook and the Doctor of Physique reflect some similar traits. The Cook does not follow hygiene and serves stale food. The Doctor is dedicated and does not know anything about the Bible. The Wife of Bath with her peculiar habits represented the typical medieval women. She was rich and had married many a time. The Miller and Reeve are realistic figures. The Miller was notorious for his dishonest tactics. Though they were not pious, they were on a holy pilgrimage.

Chaucer's satirical wit is subtle. It evokes humour. His wit is not pungent and biting like that of Alexander Pope.

Chaucer’s descriptions are also interesting. Sometimes he describes the dress of the persons and then the physical features. Sometimes, he begins with the personal aspects of the characters and adds the touches of dress afterwards. They are natural in their dialogues and in their moods. Chaucer gives their original tongue to some characters that belong to the alien countries. The language of the characters also is varied according to their social status.

4.4 Art of Characterisation in *The Prologue*

The old Knight is a chivalrous character of all ages. He is a great warrior and conqueror. He stands for the 'guardian of man' against the oppressor. He is gentle in manner, gallant in tournaments and dignified and simple in behaviour. But the Knight has been individualized by his horse, dress and by his gentle and meek behaviour.

The young Squire represents the types of warriors, who not only live in the dream of warfare but also who are skilled in music. His dress is very peculiar. He has been individualized by his curly locks, embroidered clothes and with his short-coat with long, wide sleeves.

"Well coude he sitte on hors, and faire ryde,
He coude songes make and well endyte".

The Yeoman represents the warriors of archery. He is individualized by his cropped head and his brown visage. The Prioress represents the women who try to imitate courtly manners. She came from an upper class family. She's well bred. She has been individualised by her nasal voice, tenderness of heart and by her physical manners. Chaucer describes her beauty, dress and table manners.

"Her nose trety; hir eyen greye as glas;
Hir mouthful small, and there to softs and need;
butsikerly she had a fair for heed".

The poet also could read meanings into aspects of physiognomy and talk of manners. He explains about the Reeve with his pole like legs and without calf-muscles. The Reeve was a "slender, Choleric man. He deceived his master for amassing wealth.

Chaucer's monk, Daun Piers, belongs to the group of monks who found their monastic rule, 'strict and irksome'.

"Leet Olde thynges Pace,
And heeld after the newe world space".

He is fond of riding horses and keeping greyhounds for hunting. Chaucerian monk is individualized by his bald head and his rolling eyes which resemble glowing balls of fire. Chaucer's friar belongs to the type of friars who were wanton and jolly and were interested in gay and flattering talk. His friar is individualized by his melodious voice, and by his skill in singing songs and also by his knowledge of taverns and bar-maids.

The Oxford Clerk in the *Prologue* represents good scholars who devote their time in the acquisition of knowledge. He is also an individual person with his volumes of Aristotle, his hollow cheeks, grave looks and his thread bare cloak.

The Man of Law is a typical figure, like the doctor of Physique. They are also individualized by their physical traits and features.

The Miller's nose was surmounted by a 'tuft of hair'. Chaucer's personal comments on the characters add a new glow to his characters. Chaucer combines the typical and individual traits with a deft hand. The characters are suitably portrayed according to their personal traits. A drunken man insists on telling his tale out of turn. The shipman flatly

refuses to hear a sermon from the parson. A clerk drinks too much corny ale and he is not able to even speak . Chaucer observed each and every man to portray them in his picture-gallery. There is an immense variety in his characters, and in his art of characterization. They are the epitome of his age. He applies a dramatic method.

Chaucer's art of characterization is free from "personal bias". He portrays his characters so objectively and impartially. In this respect, he is equal to Shakespeare and Fielding. He is broadly human and he has copious sympathy for all his characters. His characters are the embodiment of the romantic spirit. Hence his work shines as a portrait gallery.

4.5 Chaucer's Treatment of Medieval Figures

During Chaucer's time there appeared a moral laxity in the religious world and characters belonging to the Church symbolized the decay of the religious faith. Apart from the chivalrous warriors, the other characters belonging to religion came under Chaucer's criticism. Chaucer was the last of the medievals and the first of the moderns. Hence Matthew Arnold observed, "With him, is born our real poetry." Dryden describes him as "the father of English Poetry."

The pictures of the Knight and the Squire bring to our mind the age of chivalry and romance. In the Knight the poet embodies the noblest virtues like valour, charity, honesty and modesty as were found in those days. The Oxford Clerk also is an ideal figure. He is not interested in material pursuits. He is an ardent lover of knowledge. The Parson is another medieval figure who practices what he preaches. The Plowman is a real son of the soil.

Chaucer, on the other hand, presents also the medieval priestly class, who went against the Christian idealism. The priestly class is represented by the Monk, the Friar, the Summoner, the Pardoner etc., The Monk spends the greater part of his time in riding and hunting hares. The Summoner is also such an officer who makes money through foul means. Similarly the Wife of Bath is a medieval woman of peculiar tastes and loose morals.

4.6 Chaucer's Attitude towards Women

Chaucer was always balanced in his treatment of women. Though he was not blind to their vices, he never condemned them. In addition to this, he would extol their virtues greatly. The debate about the relationship between men and women makes an interesting study in *The Canterbury Tales.* He advocates a harmonious one.

4.7 Chaucer's Humour

Apart from his realism Chaucer's poetry is known for its humour. It is born out of a strong common sense of observation and a generous sympathy. He deals with common people and their everyday life. Like a painter he portrays their oddities and it evokes pity and humour. His descriptions, like the nose of the Miller with its tuft of hair, the heavy hat of the Wife of Bath, the lanky legs of Reeve, the loud voices and greedy manners of different people have a touch of humour. However, his humour is always sympathetic and never pungent. As Legouis observes, Chaucer neither 'disdains the foolishness' of, nor 'turns away in disgust' from the fools and rascals he talks about. As observed by Prof.Rutherford, Chaucer 'was able to think in a modern way' even seven centuries ago.

4.8 Summing Up

This lesson has provided you with necessary information and an insight into issues like Chaucer's treatment of the middle ages, his art of characterization and his humour in delineating the characters. A study of other critical sources will help you expand the horizon of your knowledge.

4.9 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Comment on Chaucer's humour.
2. Which characters represented the priestly class?
3. How did Chaucer represent his society?
4. What are the different characters presented by Chaucer?
5. Analyse the structure of *The Prologue.*
6. Comment on the nature of the medieval characters of Chaucer.
7. Bring out the social order of Chaucer's characters.
8. How can you say that 'Prologue' is a picture-gallery?
9. What is the remark of Prof R.K.Root about 'Prologue'?
10. What does Dryden say about Chaucer?

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LESSON 5

INTRODUCTION TO PARADISE LOST

In the previous lessons you studied about the work of the first poet of English literature, i.e., Geoffrey Chaucer. Now you are going to study about one of the other greatest poets, who is known for his grandiloquent language, i.e., John Milton.

5.0 Objectives

After reading this lesson, you will be able to

- Understand the aspects of the Age of Milton
- Understand his life and
- Know about the theme of the epic *Paradise Lost*

Structure of the Lesson

5.0 objectives
5.1 Age of Milton
5.2 What is Puritanism?
5.3 Literary Aspects of the Age
5.4 Life of John Milton
5.5 Critical opinions on *Paradise Lost.*
5.6 An Overview of the theme of *Paradise Lost*
***5*.6.1 Book I**
5.6.2 Book II
5.6.3 Book III
5.6.4 Book IV
5.6.5 Book V
5.6.6 Book VI
5.6.7 Book VII
5.6.8 Book VIII
5.6.9 Book IX
5.7.0 Book X
5.7.1 Book XI
5.7.2 Book XII
5.8 Summing Up
5.9 Comprehension Check Questions
5.9.1 References
5.9.2 Additional Sources

5.1 Age Of Milton

Mrs. Una-Fermor refers to the age of Milton as an age of uncertainty, misgiving, despondency, anxiety, frustration, pessimism and inner gloom, and in all these respects it is in sharp contrast to the glorious and exuberant age of Elizabeth, when the nation marched from achievement to achievement with zest and confidence. There was a clash of ideals and philosophies of the old world and the medieval world, with its scholastic learning and metaphysics breaking down under the impact of new philosophy.

Milton is the connecting link between the glorious age of Queen Elizabeth, the Puritan age which followed, and the Restoration Age. It was an age of disillusionment, of increasing gloom, frustration and loss of faith.

5.2 What is Puritanism?

Puritanism may be regarded as the renaissance of the moral sense of man. The Greco-Roman Renaissance of 15th and 16th centuries was largely pagan and sensuous. It did not touch the moral nature of man; it did nothing for his religious, political and social emancipation. The Puritan movement, on the other hand, was the greatest movement for moral and political reforms. Its aims were (i) religious liberty, *i.e.,* that men should be free to worship according to their conscience, and (ii) they should enjoy full civil liberty. The Puritans wanted to make men honest and to make them free. They insisted on the purity of life. The Puritans thus stood for (i) Church reform, (ii) for the reform of social life according to their austere ideals and (iii) for the ideal of liberty both religious and political –man should be free to worship according to his own conscience unhampered by the state.

5.3 Literary Aspects of the Age

The decline from the high Elizabethan standards is clear in several ways.

- The out-put, especially of poetry, is much smaller, and the trend is toward shorter poems, especially the lyric. The poetry of the period is largely lyrical, and Donne and Ben Jonson are the two most outstanding and original lyricists of the age. *Milton who links up the Puritan age with the Restoration is a class by himself.*
- There is a marked decay in the exalted poetical fervor of the previous age. In the new poetry, there is more of intellectual play than of passion and profundity. And especially in prose, there is a matured melancholy that one is apt to associate with advancing years.
- There is a marked increase in prose activity, and prose is an almost invariable accompaniment of a decline in poetry.
- The ambition to write an epic persisted, but it was Milton alone, who could achieve success.

5.4 Life of John Milton

John Milton, the poet, was born on December 9, 1608 in London. The poet's father was settled in London, following the profession of a notary. He married in about 1600, and had six children of whom several died young. The third child was the poet, John Milton. The elder Milton was evidently a man of considerable culture, in particular as an accomplished musician. To him, the poet owed his love of music of which we see frequent indications in the poems.

John Milton was sent to St. Paul's School about the year 1620. The headmaster was a good English scholar; and he had much to do with the encouragement and guidance of Milton's early taste for English poetry. In 1625 he left St. Paul's, and his early training was important in many respects; it had laid the foundation of the far-ranging knowledge which makes *Paradise Lost* unique for diversity of suggestion and interest. Milton went to Christ's

College, Cambridge, in 1625, took his B.A. degree in 1629, and joined M.A. in 1632, but he left Cambridge shortly after. Milton's father settled at Horton in Buckinghamshire. There the son joined him in July, 1632. He had gone to Cambridge with the intention of qualifying for the Church. This purpose was soon given up and when Milton returned to his father's house he seemed to have made up his mind that there was only one profession which he cared to enter. It seems as if he already decided that he would devote himself to studying and preparing by rigorous self-discipline and application, for the calling of a poet.

During his five years'stay at Horton (1632-38), Milton completed his self-education.

Milton's life falls into three well-marked divisions (i) the period of his education and apprenticeship to the art of poetry, (ii) the period of active participation in political and religious controversy in England and (iii) the last and glorious period of great poetical achievement.

Milton's works fall naturally into four periods: (1) *the College period,* closing with the end of his Cambridge career in 1632; (2) *the Horton period,* closing with his departure for the Continent in 1638; (3) the period of political and religious controversies, *the period of his prose-writings*, from 1640 to 1660: and (4) *the later poetic period* or the period of the great epics.

To this early Horton period belong a number of great poems. The dates of the early pieces-*L'Allegro, II Penseroso, Arcades, Comus and Lycidas*- are not all certain, but probably each was composed at Horton before 1638. Four of them reflect the great crisis through which English life and thought were passing. In *L'Allegro* the poet holds the balance almost equal between the two opposing tendencies.

In 1638, Milton set out to make the customary Grand Tour of Europe, which was part of the education of the young English gentleman. He travelled widely in Italy, absorbing as he went, something of the intellectual culture of that land, and developing close and fruitful contacts with scholars and scientists and in particular with 'the great Tuscan artist', Galileo. He wrote, during this period, some verse in Latin and some in Italian. But news of far-reaching developments in the political and religious spheres, back home in England, made him end his stay in Italy and return to England at the end of the summer of 1639.

Milton's first treatise upon the government of the Church (*Of Reformation in England)* appeared in 1641. Others followed in quick succession. He had married Mary Powell in the May, 1643. The marriage proved unfortunate. Its immediate outcome was the 'pamphlets on divorce'. Clearly he had little leisure for literature proper. The finest of Milton's prose works, *Areopaegetica,* a plea for the free expression of opinion, was published in 1644. In 1645 appeared the first collection of his poems. In 1649 his advocacy of the anti-royalist cause was recognized by the offer of a post under the newly appointed Council of State. His bold vindication of the trial of Charles I, *The Tenure of Kings,* had appeared earlier in the same year. Between 1649 and 1660, Milton produced no less than eleven pamphlets.

Dryden complained that Milton saw nature through the spectacle of books; we might have had to complain that he saw men through the same medium. Fortunately it is not so; and it is not so because at the age of thirty-two he threw in his fortunes with those of his country. The last part of Milton's life 1660-74, passed quietly.

At the age of fifty-two he was thrown back upon poetry, and could at length write the epic of his dreams. The early poems he had never regarded as a fulfillment of the debt due to his Creator. Even when the fire of political strife burned at its hottest, Milton did not forget the purpose,which he had conceived in his boyhood. Of that purpose *Paradise Lost* was the attainment. Begun about 1658, it was finished in 1663, the year of Milton's third marriage; revised from 1663 to 1665; and at last published in 1667. Before its publication Milton had commenced work (in the autumn of 1665) on *Paradise Regained*, which in turn was followed by *Samson Agonistes*. The completion of *Paradise Regained* may be assigned to 1666-that of *Samson Agonistes* to 1667. Some time was spent in their revision; and in January, 1671, they were published together, in a single volume.

His third marriage had proved happy, and he enjoyed something of the renown which he rightly deserved. Various well-known men used to visit him - Dryden, being one of them. In one of his visits he asked and received permission to dramatise *Paradise Lost*. Milton died in 1674, on the 8th of November. He was buried in St. Giles Church, Cripplegate.

5.5 Critical Opinions on *Paradise Lost*

Professor Oliver Elton thought that the central myth of *Paradise Lost* did not embody, as handled by Milton, some enduring truth that speaks to the imagination. Mr. T.S. Eliot was claimed to have 'destroyed Milton in a parenthesis', though this much admired pontiff of twentieth century letters would seem to have noted only two weaknesses in him, an auditory rather than a visual imagination and a crucial role in a damnable 'dissociation of sensibility'.

T.S. Eliot went through the process of a public recantation and apology, before the most distinguished academic audience of the British Academy, by making Milton the theme of the Master Mind Lecture of the Academy under the Henry Hertz Endowment.

Matthew Arnold hailed Milton as the greatest English master of the grand style in literature. Wordsworth, deeply troubled by the discontents of his time said 'Milton, thou shouldn't be living at this hour'.

The poem is wrought out of the Bible –as few other poems have been. Echoes of Homer and Virgil, of Spenser and Shakespeare, of Dante, Petrarch and Tasso ring through the poem. "Milton's vast and voracious reading makes the task of tracing the measureless allusions in the poem, a stimulating challenge, not easily and not always successfully faced. Its central theme, the Fall of Man, is awe-inspiring in its huge, imponderable vastness-not of scale alone but of significance. Of a trifle, seemingly as light as air, such as the eating of a fruit by Adam and Eve, it may be easy to work out a mock-heroic poem of a few lines. But what Milton has wrought out of it is truly awesome in its superb grandeur, its sheer, towering majesty." Compassing all life and all time, Heaven and Hell, war, love and religion, *Paradise Lost* is unique in its intrinsic greatness and in the reverent homage it has evoked among all true lovers of poetry.

The central action of the poem, for all its seeming simplicity, is charged with the universal and cosmic significance. "Adam's heroism may not be of the kind that resounds through the pages of history alongside Hector, Achilles and Ulysses and other 'active'heroes of life and letters. Adam and Eve through Eden 'took their solitary way'and the poem is invested with a heroic dimension which only those, who have known tragedy in their lives and endured it, can assess right."

Milton had considered writing on the Arthurian theme- and he had also drawn up, about the year 1646, the plan of a play to be called *Adam Unparadised*, on the lines of aGreek tragic drama. But Milton abandoned the idea of a play and set to work to give this theme the shape of an epic poem.

5.6 An Overview of the theme of *Paradise Lost*

5.6.1 Book I (General introduction, invocation of the poet, Description of the pandemonium and Satan recovers from fall)

Milton invokes the muse to inspire him for his tale to "justify the ways of God to men". Satan, the Arch Fiend has been cast down into an abyss, a place of utter darkness because of his revolt against God. He is hurled down into a burning lake. He recovers from his confusion and finds Beelzebub and millions of fallen angels. He addresses them and encourages them for a fight. Milton describes all the fallen angels like Molach, Chemos, Astoreth, Thammuz, Dagon, Rimmon, Osiris, Isis, Orus, Belial, Azazel and Mammon. All these gods build a palace for Satan, a pandemonium, and begin a secret meeting.

5.6.2 Book II (Satan begins his journey through Chaos to the world)

After the secret meeting, Molach advises an open war. Mammon asks them to accept their plight. Beelzebub advises that they should find out man and his weaknesses and try to seduce him to their cause. Satan decides to go alone to explore the newly created world, hoping thereby to maintain his grip or power. The fallen angels disperse and begin to explore hell. Satan puts on wings and soars to the adamantine gates of hell. There he encounters and fights Sin, and her incestuous son by Satan, Death. Satan offers a life of ease in the new world if they open the gates and let him pass. Sin accepts it. As the gates open, fire and smoke pours out into chaos from hell. Satan crosses the abyss and encounters Chaos and Night. He asks for directions. He then finds Nature at the edge of chaos and approaches the new world.

5.6.3 Book III (Satan arrives on the earth; God prophesies man's disobedience!)

God sees Satan traveling to the earth. The Son of God and God discuss how the fallen angels elected their rebellion through their own free will. Son of God is concerned for man and they discuss man's future. God prophesies that man will also disobey Him and must die unless the death of a sacrificial victim is offered.

Son of God wants to let God's anger over man's disobedience fall on him instead, and he says that he will die for him. God praises Son of God and says he will not be tainted by assuming human trappings. They speak of the Last Judgement to come. The angels dutifully and subserviently rejoice.

Satan is at the edge of the universe. Satan continues down, assisted by the stairs from heaven, and encounters the angel Uriel at a sunspot on the sun. Concealing his evil intentions and disguised as a young cherub, he inquires where man is to be found. Uriel describes the creation and directs him to Paradise on the earth. Satan descends and lands on the mountain Niphates, north of Eden.

5.6.4 Book IV (Satan finds Adam and Eve and tempts Eve in a dream)

Satan arrives at Eden and sits on the Tree of Life, pondering his next move. He finds the innocent couple Adam and Eve and is envious of their beauty and unearned pleasures. Adam praises God and Eve returns his praise; Adam warns Eve of their one commandment. Satan despises them, and overhears that the Tree of Knowledge is forbidden to man.

Eve recounts her first awakening, seeing her beautiful image in the lake.She thinks that she is more beautiful than the more rational Adam. The couple exhibit innocent sexual desire, which inspires Satan's hatred, and he works on his malignant plan.

The guardian angels Uriel and Gabriel converse as the night approaches, and Uriel warns that an evil Spirit has arrived. Adam and Eve exchange love and praise and retire after prayers, to their blissful bower and connubial love. Satan, squatting like a toad next to the sleeping Eve's ear, tempts her in her dreams. He is confronted by the angels Zephon and Ithuriel and is brought to Gabriel -- they question the haughty and boastful Satan. He flies from Paradise after perceiving a warning sign from heaven.

5.6.5 Book V (Eve's Dream; Raphael warns them and tells them of the war in heaven)

The next morning, Eve appears blushing and excited and tells Adam of her dream. She says that an angel like figure tempted her to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge and that it would make her godlike.

Adam is afraid and troubled by her ominous dream of temptation. Adam argues that other lesser faculties of the soul must be subservient to reason. They pray and begin their morning's work, which involves pruning the exuberant plant growth.

God sends Raphael to visit Adam to warn him of the consequences of his freedom and disobedience, and to remove any excuse that might occur out of ignorance. He dines with them while warning them--but Eve is away gathering fruit.Raphael tells them that man will gradually become more godlike if he remains obedient. He describes heaven: God, the Son, Satan's pride and envy of the Son of God's promotion over him to the second in preeminence, Satan's refusal to submit to God, his gathering of 1/3 of the angels in a rebellion, the history of the fallen angels and Satan, God's requirement for the angels'voluntary obedience, Abdiel's opposition to Satan, Satan's clever arguments and defiance and Abdiel's prophecy of Satan's downfall.

5.6.6 Book VI (Raphael completes the war story and tells of victory by the Son)

Abdiel returns and God praises Abdiel's loyalty. Gabriel and Michael are sent into battle against the rebellious angels--trumpets call the angels to battle. Satan disparages Abdiel's subservience to God, but Abdiel defends himself, fights and wounds Satan. Satan seeks out Michael, and they fight in single combat--Michael wounds Satan, and Satan is borne away. Gabriel wounds Moloch, and the rebels are routed.

After a night of re-grouping (during which the rebels make gunpowder and devilish engines), the rebels take the offensive on the second day. God calls the Son to help so that he may have the final victory. On the third day of battle, the irresistible warrior Son conquers them with overwhelming force and drives them from heaven through a gap exposing chaos. The Son returns to God victorious and all the heavens rejoice victoriously. Eve seems to be absent, so Raphael warns Adam to warn Eve.

5.6.7 Book VII (Raphael tells of the creation of the world and man)

Milton invokes his muse Urania, like the Holy Spirit. He recalls his personal danger from hostile political forces. At Adam's request Raphael tells them of the creation of the world and of man. Adam wants to know of their own origins. Raphael is willing to tell some, but warns of the limits to their knowledge. God has left some things unrevealed and incomprehensible to them and too much knowledge can be dangerous.

Raphael explains about the seven days of creation. The Universe is created with golden compasses, then light, night and day, the firmament, the waters are divided by the heavens, dry land (earth) appears in the lower waters (surrounded by the seas), the grass, plants, and trees, the sun and the moon, the stars and planets, reptiles, whales and fish, fowl, cattle and other animals, and finally man appears. Angels in heaven praise the creation. Man is made in God's own image to rule over other beasts. Eve is created as his companion.

5.6.8 Book VIII (Adam tells his own story; Raphael again warns him)

Adam is grateful and asks about celestial motions. Eve departs when this complex subject comes up. She leaves to visit her fruits and flowers. She prefers to learn from her husband rather than from the angel. Raphael again warns of the set limits to knowledge and says that God has concealed the secrets of planetary motion and man should not know all.

Raphael, who was spying on hell when Adam was created, asks about Adam's own recollection of the time immediately after his creation. Adam relates his own story, what happened after he awoke from his creation. He was led by God to Paradise, warned to avoid the Tree of Knowledge or face death, but told that man will reign over the earth. Adam gave names to the species of animals. After Adam expressed his loneliness through a lack of an intellectual equal, Eve was created.

Raphael praises higher love but cautions Adam about excessive interest in carnal passion and again warns Adam. Thus warning, he departs for heaven.

5.6.9 Book IX (Satan succeeds in tempting Eve, and she corrupts Adam)

Milton again invokes his Muse. Satan returns, after seven days of hiding behind the other side of the earth, he arrives concealed as mist. He admires the beautiful earth but is tormented by this beauty. He boasts about the destruction he will create. He enters the hapless serpent.

Eve proposes to Adam to divide their labors; she wants to work away from Adam. Adam argues she should stay by his side and do her role of promoting her husband--he fears for her safety. She interprets this as unkind, and responds with "sweet austere composure", saying he should not distrust her or her ability to fend for herself.

He reminds her of the danger from the foe they have been warned about. But she is confident of her ability to resist temptation. She argues that their happiness in Paradise is illusory if they must live in such constant fear and confinement.

Adam fears her free will and faulty reasoning. But finally he is worn down, and she overcomes his hesitation and concern. He consents to her leaving. Eve is pleased to leave with his permission, and says, in parting, the pride of their foe would prevent him from coming after the weaker of the two humans. But, she is wrong.

When she is alone, Satan seeks her out, shunning her husband's higher intellect. He again notes her angelic beauty and is temporarily awed by her. He appears to her as a lovely serpent, and addresses her with flattery, saying that she is like a goddess. She marvels that the serpent can talk. He attributes this ability to the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and leads her to it. She offers resistance, saying it is forbidden, but he is cleverer, and says she will become goddess-like. She sees how he has benefited and desires the same for herself, and eats her fill of the uniquely delicious fruit. Nature immediately gives off ominous rumblings and portents. She makes an idolatrous soliloquy to the tree and then debates whether to tell or involve Adam. But if she is to die, she does not want Adam to have a new Eve. She wants him to die with her and so decides to force him to eat it too.

Adam becomesworried,seeks her out and finds her near the Tree. She tells Adam that the fruit is not harmful. She appears flushed and intoxicated. Adam is stunned, drops the garland he has made for her as heknows thathe cannot live without her nor undo her deed. He is tightly bound to her by love, and while expressing his deep regret at her action, tries to find a reason for the act due to his love for her. He doubts if God would destroy his prize creation, mankind, or let Satan triumph. Finally he is resigned to his fate with her as one flesh, and she views his compliance as a kind of test or trial of his love. At last he eats his fill, and she has more as well.

As if intoxicated, they are overwhelmed with carnal lust for each other and take their fill of love's disport on a bank of flowers in the afternoon (obviously sinful). They awaken the next morning ,from troubled sleep, their innocence lost, overcome with remorse and shame at their nakedness, filled with turmoil. Adam and Eve want to hide and to cover their sexual parts. They sew fig/banyan leaves together to cover themselves. They blame each other and argue, exhibiting increasing discord and distrust. Their appetites have dominated reason. Eve claims the serpent would have as easily deluded Adam, and demands to know why he did not simply command her not to go to work alone. Adam resents the lack of gratitude she shows at the supreme sacrifice he has made for her. They each blame the other but do not accept self-responsibility.

5.7.0 Book X (Divine retribution; Adam and Eve's remorse and reconciliation)

God has seen Satan in the form of the snake. The angelic guards of Paradise ascend to heaven and are exonerated by God--he foresaw this outcome. He plans to rule on the death sentence, and decides to send the Son of God to earth to judge the sinners.

The Son of God finds them hiding their nakedness and feeling shameful, lacking love and showing guilt. They explain their actions, he blaming her and she in turn blaming the serpent. The Son condemns the serpent to enmity by women.The Son judges them: Women will bear children in pain and be ruled over by the husband; men will live and eat in sorrow, die and return to dust and eat bread earned by the sweat on their face. Their lives will be harsh. The Son returns to heaven.

Satan returns to hell. At the gates he again encounters Death and Sin. He sends them to earth along the wide paththey build from hell to earth, to rule as his substitutes until he returns to share in the rule. Satan recounts his deeds in Pandemonium but finds that the devils all have become serpents under God's influence, and are tormented by God with a fruit that becomes ashes. After this, God permits them to resume their normal shapes.

Adam laments his fate, believes the punishment is too severe, and wishes to die, but fears extinguishing the human race. He wonders if God's wrath is infinite and curses his creation. He scolds Eve, calling her a serpent and a fair defect of nature. She wretchedly begs him, falling at his knees to forgive her and not to forsake her. She hopes eventually to regain his love and confidence. She wonders about abstaining from sexual pleasures and not having children, and even about suicide. He is resigned to hard work, which will help to keep him warm. They pray together for forgiveness with penitence and reverence.

5.7.1 Book XI (The Son's intercession, God's decision, Michael's prophecies)

The Son and God hear their prayers and the Son intercedes on their behalf. God accepts Son's saving role but insists that they are to be ejected from Paradise. God calls a synod (acouncil). God charges Michael with this expulsion, but beforehand he is to reveal to Adam what good as well as evil shall come in the future, so they will be less disconsolate.

Adam tells Eve that he believes their prayers have been favorably received and hails her as the mother of mankind. Eve is ready for her labors and vows to stay by Adam's side and to obey him. Bird signs direct them to the eastern gate.

Michael puts Eve to sleep, then takes Adam to a mountain and shows him the visions of the future: of exotic cities and civilizations; the effects of their sin: the murder by Cain of Abel, sickness and suffering, aging, and death. Michael counsels temperance in life, living life well, and acceptance of the many forms of death.

5.7.2 Book XII (Michael's prophecies continued, and the final expulsion)

Michael continues his prophecies: Noah's descendants , the prophecy of the birth of Christ the Messiah from David's royal stock; the crucifixion and Resurrection, the disciples, his Second Coming, Last Judgement, Millennium etc.,

Adam is consoled and feels greatly instructed to know all this fore knowledge, and vows to obey and love with fear the only God. Michael tells him that he has attained sufficient wisdom and should hope no higher.

They descend from the mountain and wake up Eve, who is ready and accepting. Having heard God's intentions through propitious dreams in her sleep and having been consoled that by her the Promised Seed shall restore and bring deliverance, she becomes meek. Michael takes each by the hand, and leads them out of the eastern gate of Paradise to the plains of Eden, past the Cherubim who will guard Paradise--Michael then disappears. The flaming sword begins to parch the land like Libya, and waves behind them guard the eastern side of Paradise against any attempt to reenter.

5.8 Summing Up

In this lesson you learned about the age of Milton, its literary aspects, the life of Milton and how he chose to take up the writing of a grand epic. You also came to know about the summary of the whole epic Paradise Lost in its twelve books. In the next lesson, you will know about the first book in a detailed way.

5.9 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Who is Michael?
2. What is the name of the Arch Angel?
3. What is the proposal made by the Son of God?
4. How did Satan tempt Eve?
5. What is the curse given by God to man?
6. What is the one commandment?
7. Why did God create Eve?
8. Who is Urania?
9. What are the works of Milton?
10. Write about the theme of Paradise Lost.

5.9.1 References

1. Achinstein, Sharon. *Literature and Dissent in Milton's England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
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2.http://www.mckendree.edu/academics/scholars/issue17/bierman.htm

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LESSON 6

A CLOSE STUDY OF THE TEXT PARADISE LOST BOOK I

6.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will

- Know about the different divisions of the First Book of *Paradise Lost*
- Understand the theme of the poem
- Know about the reasons for the fall of Man and of Satan
- Appreciate the poetic style of John Milton as an epic poet

Structure of the Lesson

6.0 Objectives

6.1 Guidelines for a better understanding of the text.

6.1.1 Section 1: Invocation and Introduction of Theme of the Poem: Lines 1 to 26

6.2 Section 2: The Account of Satan's Revolt and his Expulsion from Heaven: Lines 27 to 83

6.3 Section 3: Satan's Speech to Beelzebub:Lines 84 to 127

6.4 Section 4: Beelzebub's Reply and Satan's Second Speech :Lines 128 to 191

6.5 Summing Up

6.7 References

6.8 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

6.1 Guidelines for a better understanding of the text.

In this lesson we will deal with the first four sections**.**

You might have developed a basic idea about the age of Milton, his life and works after going through the fifth lesson. This lesson will provide you the scope for understanding the text in a detailed way. This lesson will provide you section wise summary which helps you for better reading and for attempting annotations in your examination. We advise you to read the original poem before reading this lesson. The following link will take you to the poem:

http://www.paradiselost.org/lmg/Book-1.html

For your convenience we divided the text into the following sections:

1. Invocation and Introduction of the Theme of the Poem: Lines 1 to 26

2. The Account of Satan's Revolt and his Expulsion from Heaven: Lines 27 to 83

3. Satan's Speech to Beelzebub:Lines 84 to 127

4. Beelzebub's Reply and Satan's Second Speech:Lines 128 to 191

5. Satan and Beelzebub leave the lake of fire: Lines from 192 to 282

6. Satan Rallies his Subjects: Lines 283 to 621

7. Satan's Speech to the Devils:Lines 622 to 669

8. The Building of Pandemonium: Lines 670 to 798

6.1.1Section: 1. Invocation and Introduction of theTheme of the Poem: Lines 1 to 26

In the opening section, like all epic poets, Milton invokes the muse and seeks for divine assistance. Milton states that his purpose is to "justify the ways of God to men".

Milton prays to the Heavenly Muse to inspire him to write of Man's first act of disobedience to God, which was committed by eating the fruit of the forbidden 'tree of knowledge'. This act of disobedience made man mortal and introduced death into the world. This act also led to many other miseries including expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Man will continue to suffer till Jesus Christ, by his sacrifice on the cross, would regain for him God's favour and his old blessed abode, the Garden of Eden. Milton writes about the theme of the poem like this:

"Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the World, all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heavens and Earth
Rose out of Chaos."

More particularly, the poet invokes the Holy spirt, who prefers to dwell in the heart of a righteous and pure man rather than in any Temple of God, to guide him in his bold attempt, because she knows everything. She was present when the universe was created and with her mighty angelic wings outspread, she sat on the vast vacant space, as a dove sits over its eggs to hatch them. She should throw light on whatever is unknown to the poet and elevate whatever is low in him, so that he may be able to do justice to his lofty theme, and prove the wisdom of God, and justify His ways to men.

"Thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,

And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That, to the highth of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men."

It was the wicked Satan (in the form of a serpent), who, moved by the feelings of envy and revenge, deceived Eve (the mother of mankind). He did so after he had been thrown out of Heaven for his pride. Filled with pride he had incited many other angels to revolt against God, for he wanted not only to become the chief of those angels, but also to rise above them and become the equal of God. He had the courage to set himself against God and his monarchy in Heaven. Filled with unholy ambition, he took up arms against the Almighty and fought an impious war on the plains of Heaven, but without any success. As punishment, he (along with his companions) was bound in unbreakable chains and thrown headlong into hell. He came down flaming through the vast chaos and finally landed in hell, a place always in flames, created for the punishment of those who dare challenge the Omnipotent to arms.

"Him the Almighty power
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms."

6.2 Section II: The Account of Satan's Revolt and his Expulsion from Heaven: Lines 27 to 83

Milton describes the fall of Satan and the reasons that led to the fall of man. Satan was hurled into the lake of fire along with his "horrid crew" for revolting against God and for trying to spoil his creation. He tried to deceive 'the mother of mankind'.

"He trusted to have equalled the Most High,
stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
The mother of mankind, what time his pride
Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host
Of rebel Angels..."

This place (hell) was entirely different from Heaven from which the rebel angels had fallen. Here all the companions of the defeated Satan were overwhelmed by floods and storms of fire which made them confused and unconscious. Satan sadly observed his companions in all their misery. He also noticed waiting near him, his next in command, one who was second to him both in glory and evil, and who was later called Beelzebub by the people of Palestine. Satan, the greatest adversary of God, then, addressed Beelzebub in bold words. In this way, he broke the frightful silence of hell.

6.3 Section III: Satan's Speech to Beelzebub:Lines 84 to 127

Satan addresses Beelzebub and assesses their conditions but explains that they are still united in their fall. He recognizes the superior strength of God. He explains that he is still unchanged in his attitude to the Son of God. He does not want to submit himself to God's

authority. His pain and profound despair and his courage are seen from his words. He feels happy that, though they could not defeat Him, they could give a jolt to His authority.

He continues to say: "It does not matter much if we have lost the battle. All is not lost. We still have with us our unshakable determination to carry on the fight, our persistent desire for revenge and planning for it, our undying hatred of our enemy, and our courageous resolve never to surrender. If this is not invincibility, what else is? Neither His anger nor His force can ever take away this glorious virtue (of firmness and constancy) from me."

What though the field be lost

All is not lost –the unconquerable will,

And study of revenge, immortal hate,

And courage never to submit or yield

And what is else not to be overcome?

"We have also seen that our physical strength is in no way lesser than that of God. With all these advantages, we can now decide with greater hope to launch another war against God, whether openly or secretly- a new unending war which would keep our grand enemy always disturbed. He is now triumphant and over- joyous at His present victory, and is ruling as the undisputed monarch of Heaven"

We may with more successful hope resolve

To wage by force or guile eternal war,

Irreconcilable to our grand Foe,

Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy

Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven".

Rebellious Satan spoke these words in severe pain. He boasted loudly, although, at the same time, he was tortured by deep despair.

"Our mind and spirit are still invincible,

and our strength will soon return,

though the past glory is no more,

and our happy state is here changed into endless misery."

6.4 Section IV: Beelzebub's Reply and Satan's Second Speech :Lines 128 to 191

Beelzebub mourns about the loss of heaven and about the punishment faced by the fallen angels. Satan replies that devils should not do anything good but should always turn God's good actions to evil.

Satan, the chief enemy of God, quickly replies to Beelzebub with the following words:"O fallen angel, weakness in any form causes misery, whether it is in doing something actively or suffering some punishment passively. But be sure of this that it will never be our task to do any good. On the contrary, we shall ever find delight in doing evil, because this is against the will of our enemy whom we are fighting."

Whereto with speedy words the Arch-Fiend continues:

"Fallen Cherub, to be weak is miserable,

Doing or suffering: but of this be sure

To do aught good never will be our task,

But ever to do ill our sole delight,

As being the contrary to His high will

Whom we resist."

Satan chalks out a plan: "Let us go there, away from the fiery waves of the lake on which we are being tossed about at this time. We would rest there, if any rest is possible in these regions.. After that we would reorganize our battered forces, and consult and discuss as to how we can inflict greatest possible injury on our foe and how we can repair the loss we have suffered and end our dreadful misfortune. There we can also consult as to how we can gain strength and courage from hopes of future victory, or if there is no hope for us, how we can resolve to fight our enemy and derive that courage which results from frustration".

Satan is very resolute and he is supported by Beelzebub. Satan leaves the lake of fire and all the devils try to reassemble their forces.

6.5 Summing Up

In this section you learnt how Milton takes up his epic theme through invocation. His attempt of dealing with the religious theme in a grandiloquent style can be observed. Also you should have observed the treatment of the subject on a larger canvass. Like a great artist with a lot of patience, Milton deals with even the minutest things in a detailed way. You should have observed the reasons for the fall of Man and for the fall of Satan. Milton deals with this theme in twelve books and in this lesson you understood how Satan was hurled and how Satan, the Arch Angel, gathers his army of fallen angels for a revolt against God.

6.6 Comprehension Check Questions

1. What is the theme of the poem?
2. Explain the two terms 'Oreb' or 'Sinai'
3. Why is this an 'adventurous song'?
4. Who is invoked and why?
5. Who is Beelzebub?
6. Why is Satan hurled? And to where?

7. Do you think Satan is heroic? If 'yes' or ‘no’, why?
8. What does Milton say about the 'ways of God"?
9. What is the suggestion of Beelzebub?
10. Is the theme suitable to modern times? Justify your answer.

6.7 References

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3. Alastair Fowler, ,*Paradise Lost,* Orient Longman

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2. http://www.paradiselost.org/lmg/Book-1.html
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LESSON 7

A CLOSE STUDY OF THE TEXT PARADISE LOST BOOK I (PART-2)

7.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson,you will

- Know about the different divisions of the First Book of *Paradise Lost*
- Understand the theme of the poem
- Know about the inspiring speeches of Satan
- the order of Fallen Angels and the Construction of Pandemonium and
- Appreciate the poetic style of John Milton as an epic poet

Structure of the Lesson

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Guidelines for a better understanding

7.1.1 Section 5: Satan and Beelzebub leave the lake of fire : Lines from 192 to 282

7.2 Section 6: Satan Rallies his Subjects : Lines 283 to 621

7.3 Section 7: Satan's Speech to Devils :Lines 622 to 669

7.4 Section 8: The Building of Pandemonium: Lines 670 to 798

7.5 Summing Up

7.6 Comprehension Check Questions

7.7 References

7.8 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

7.1 Guidelines for a better understanding

This lesson will provide you the scope for understanding the text in a detailed way. The first part, i.e., the sixth lesson(1-4) should have enlightened you by providing the necessary background.This second part of the text will provide you section wise summary (5-8), which helps you for better reading and for attempting annotations in your examination. We advise you to read the original poem before reading this lesson. The following link will take you to the poem:

http://www.paradiselost.org/lmg/Book-1.html

For your convenience we divided the text into the following sections in the second part:

5. Satan and Beelzebub leave the lake of fire : Lines from 192 to 282

6. Satan Rallies his Subjects : Lines 283 to 621

7. Satan's Speech to Devils :Lines 622 to 669

8.The Building of Pandemonium: Lines 670 to 798

In this lesson we will deal with the last four sections.

7.1.1 Section 5: Satan and Beelzebub leave the lake of fire: Lines from 192 to 282

Satan and Beelzebub leave the lake of fire and fly to land. Milton compares Satan with the Sea monster Leviathan. Satan acknowledges the horrible nature of hell but says that it is better to rule the hell than to serve in the Heaven. Beelzebub supports Satan and advises him to call the other fallen angels.

It was in this way that Satan spoke to his nearest companion. His head was raised up above the waves of the lake and his eyes were shining brightly. The other parts of Satan's body lay prostrate on the lake of fire in all their length and bigness, covering up the lake up to a long distance. The bulk of Satan's body was as huge as that of the monsters mentioned in ancient legends, of the Titans and Giants who warred against Jove, or of Briaros who helped Jove in this war, or of Typhon who also fought against Jove and who lived in a den in Tarsus, or of the whale whom God made the largest of all those creatures that swim in the sea. It often happens, as sailors report, that the captain of a ship, that has lost its way in the night, mistakes a whale, by chance sleeping on the foamy Norwegian sea, for an island and, fixing the anchor of his ship in its scaly skin, stays on that side of it which is sheltered from the wind while darkness covers the sea and the longed morning delays its appearance. It was exactly like a huge whale that Satan, the arch-enemy of God, lay afloat on the burning lake, as if he were chained to it. He could never have raised or heaved his head, had not the will and high permission of the Almighty left him free to carry out his wicked plans so that with repeated crimes he might heap upon himself total damnation.

Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate,
With head uplift above the wave, and eyes
That sparking blazed ; his other parts besides
Prone on the flood, extended long and large,
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the fables name of monstrous size
Titanian of Earth-born, that warred on Jove,
Briareos or Typhon, whom the den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim the ocean-stream.
Him, haply slumbering on the Norway foam,
The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind,
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea, and wished morn delays.

At once Satan lifted his huge body from the surface of the lake. As he rose, the flames surrounding him on either side were pushed backward. Their peak-like tops now no longer stood straight but gradually spread out and rolled in the form of waves. At the place where Satan's body lay, a frightful void was created, which was soon filled up by the rushing fluid of the lake. After this he spread his wings and started flying high, suspended on the dark air of Hell, which felt the pressure of his unusual weight, till he landed on a dry piece of land. Although the place where Satan now stood was land, yet it was land only in name for it continuously burned with solid fire, as the lake burned with liquid fire. In colour it was like the torn surface of the Pelorusmountain when a hill is cut away from it by the force of a subterranean wind. Or it could be compared to the torn side of the volcano Etna whose explosive interior, catching fire from the subterranean wind and turned into steam by its heated minerals, helps the wind to shatter the hill and leaves a burnt surface, all enveloped in foul gas and smoke.

Satan's unholy feet now found such a place of rest. He was followed by Beelzebub, both of them felt proud that they had escaped the fury of the deadly lake of fire by virtue of their strength as gods, and they did not realize that it was God who had permitted them to come out of the lake, and had granted them the necessary power for the purpose.

And such appeared in hue as when the force
Of subterranean wind transports a hill
Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side
Of thundering Etna, whose combustible
And fuelled entrails, thence conceiving fire,
Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,
And leave a singed bottom all involved
With stench and smoke.

Now Satan, the defeated Archangel, spoke as follows:"Is this the region, the soil or the place that we have to change for heaven; and is this the darkness we have to change for the heavenly light? Let's accept our miserable position, because now we shall have to endure whatever our conqueror wishes, whether it is right or wrong. He is now all powerful and we must accept our lot. It is better to be away from Him who is our equal, if the matter is considered in a reasonable manner, but whom force has now made superior to us."

"Is this the region, this the soil, the clime".
Said the lost Archangel, "this the seat
That we must change for Heaven?-this mournful gloom
For that celestial light?

He continues :

"Farewell, happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells. Hail, horrors !hail,
Infernal world !and thou, profoundest Hell,
Receive thy new possessor-one who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less than he
Whom thunder hath made greater?"

"The Almighty has not constructed Hell in such a way as is likely to make Him envy us for possessing it. (There are no joys in Hell and so He would not care to deprive us of it). Here in hell we can rule secretly, and in my opinion it is better to rule even if it is in hell than serve in the heaven. Then why should I and you let our fellows and co-partners in this defeat (which has deprived us of Heaven) remain lying confused and dazed on the dreadful lake? We should call them to the shore to share this wretched place with us, and once again try with reinforced arms what we may yet regain in Heaven or what more lose in Hell".

Here we may reign secure ; and, in my choice,
To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell :
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,

He walked with his spear to support his uneasy steps over the burning soil. His walk was quite different from his walk on the blue vault of Heaven. The heat of the country, which was all enveloped in fire, tormented him painfully. The huge size of his spear can be gauged from the fact that, compared with it, the tallest pine, cut off the hills of Norway to be used as the mast of some gigantic ship, world appear but a small stick.

7.2 Section 6: Satan Rallies his Subjects: Lines 283 to 621

Satan calls all the angels who are in the burning lake. The devils wakeup, stir themselves, fly up and assemble around Satan. Milton describes their assembly in a military fashion. The chief devils are named and described like this.

As soon as Beelzebub stopped speaking, Satan started moving towards the shore of the lake of fire. The huge disk of the shield which hung on Satan's shoulders was large like the sphere of the moon, which Galileo watched with his telescope in the evening from the top of Fesole or in Valdarno to catch sight of new lands or rivers or mountains in its spotted globe.

The broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
At evening from the Top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno to descry new lands,

Satan endured all the discomfort till he reached the shore of the lake of fire, and called to his followers. His troops, who still retained their angelic shape, lay astounded on the lake of fire like the fallen leaves of autumn that lie scattered on the brooks in the vale of Vallombrosa where the shady Tuscan trees with their arched branches form bowers beneath.

Satan spoke to the fallen angels so loudly that all the hollow-deep of fire echoed and jolted them out of their desperate state. He addresses them again:

"The pursuers of the Almighty will soon observe your wretched condition even from the vaults of Heaven, and taking advantage they will come down and completely crush you, if you continue to lie flat like this; or you may be transfixed to the bottom of this wretched pit with thunderbolts. Therefore, get up and take courage, otherwise you will ever remain fallen."

His swift pursuers from Heaven-gates discern
The advantage, and, descending, tread us down
Thus drooping, or with linked thunderbolts
Transfix us to the bottom of this gulf?-

Awake, arise, or be for everfallen!"

The followers of Satan heard these words, and they were much ashamed. They started flying as watchmen, found sleeping on duty by their superiors of whom they are afraid, shake off their sleepiness and begin to move even before they are fully awake. They were quite aware of their wretched condition, as well as felt acute pain all over their bodies. But they at once obeyed the command of their leader.

The leaders of these rebel angels started moving fast towards the place where their great commander Satan stood. They were godlike in shape and form ad excelled all human beings in beauty and brightness. They were angels who, before they were thrown out of Heaven, enjoyed princely power and dignity and sat on thrones. But their names were erased from the heavenly Book of Life because of their rebellion and no records were left of them in Heaven.

The first to get up was the cruel Moloch, covered all over with the blood of human sacrifice. Countless parents shed tears when their children were sacrificed to him. But the cries of the children, who were sacrificed through fire which kept burning in his hollow body, were not heard by their parents because at the time of sacrifice, the followers of this horrid devil, used to beat noisy drums.

Next cameChemos, the vulgar and dreadful god of the Moabites. He was worshipped by them in the country which extends from Aroar to Nebo, both important cities.

Along with Moloch and Chemos came Baalim and Ashtaroth, both male and female, who were worshipped in the region which extended from river Euphrates, on one side, to the river that serves as the boundary between Egypt and Syria, on the other side.

In company with these came Astoreth, whom the Phoenicians called by the name of Astrate, queen of Heaven. She was represented with crescent horns and during moonlight nights, the Phoenician virgins came out to worship her bright idol.

Astoreth was followed by Thammuz. It was supposed that his wound was renewed annually. So in Lebanon the Syrian maidens were lead to mourn his death every year by singing love songs on a summer day when the smooth flowing river Adonis became purple red (supposed to be due to the blood flowing from the wounds, of Thammuz) and rising from the mountains of Lebonon, it flowed red into the sea.

After Thammuz came Dagon who was really sad when the Ark of God, captured by the Philistines, fell upon his image and crippled it.

Dagon was followed by Rimmon, whose delightful temple was built in the beautiful city of Damascus, on the banks of the fertile and clear streams, Abanna and Pharphar.

After the devils named above, there came a group of devils who bore names that were famous in ancient times-Osiris, Isis, Orus and their followers. With their beastly forms and wicked rites of worship, they deceived the fanatic people of Egypt and the Egyptian priests into seeking them in the shapes of wandering beasts rather than in those of men.

In the end came Belial. He was the most lewd of the devils that fell from Heaven. He was very vulgar and loved vice for its own sake. There was no temple built to him, nor did any incense burn in his honour.

Such are the names of the more important of the Devils. It will take a long time to tell the names of the other devils, although those of them who were worshipped as gods in ancient Greece were renowned far and wide in their own day. They were believed to be gods by the ancient Greeks who traced their descent from Javan, a grandson of Noah.

All these devils, and many more, came in a crowd to the place where Satan stood. They came with dejected looks looking downwards. Yet in their looks there appeared hidden a gleam of joy on finding their chief not entirely without hope and (on finding) themselves not completely lost in defeat. This latter fact (that his followers still retained their balance of

mind) threw on Satan's face, too, a similar mixed expression of sorrow relieved by a little joy. But Satan with his usual pride addressed them in high-sounding words which encouraged them and removed their fears.

Suddenly through the gloom (of Hell) ten thousand flags rose and started waving with their bright clours. Along with this rose a vast forest of spears. There was also seen a crowd of helmets and shields in thick lines which seemed to be depthless. At once after this, the rebels started marching in a perfect battle-order to the accompaniment of the Dorian music of flutes and recorders. The music was such as inspired the great heroes of ancient times. As they armed for the battle, they were filled with determined courage, rather than anger or violence; they remained firm and unmoved with no dread of death and never took flight and never retreated in a cowardly manner.

As Satan surveyed his innumerable troops his heart expanded with pride, he felt glorified, and his determination to wage war hardened.

Satan's eyes were cruel, but they showed signs of grief and passion when he saw the condition of his companions in crime or of his followers. Once they enjoyed the bliss of heaven, but were now condemned to live in pain in Hell. It was because of Satan's own fault that millions of angels were thrown out of heaven as a punishment and were deprived of eternal glory and bliss, yet these angels stood obediently with all their glory gone. They looked like the stately forest oaks or mountains with their tops burnt by lightning, as they stand, though bare, on the blasted heath where they were struck with lightning.

Satan now prepared to speak. At this the rebel angels bent their rows on both the sides and formed a semi-circle around him. They were fully attentive and silent. Satan tried three times to speak; and all the three times despite all his scorn (for God) tears came into his eyes, such tears as angels weep and he could not speak. At last the following words, intermixed with sighs, came out of his lips:

7.3 Section 7: Satan's Speech to Devils: Lines 622 to 669

"O millions of immortal spirits, O the Powers who are match-less in strength and are unequalled except by the Almighty ; the war that we fought in heaven was not ignoble, though its result was terrible for us, as is evident from our present position here, the horrible change that has overtaken all of us proves that. But not even the sharpest intellect, capable of knowing both the past and the future, could ever forecast or know that such a united force of gods as ours would be repulsed by the enemy.

Our first journey out of Hell would be to that place to pry into what God has done there, or we will go somewhere else, for this hell cannot and shall not keep divine beings like us in a perpetual bondage, nor shall we remain forever covered by perpetual, darkness. But our plans need full discussion and deliberation. The idea of peace is a sign of despair, for none among us would like to submit and remain a slave. The only alternative is war, whether open or secret, and we should resolve to wage such a war.

Peace is despaired,
For who can think submission? War,then,war,
Open or understood, must be resolved.

As soon as Satan finished his speech, millions of shining swords, drawn from the sheaths by the rebel angels, went up in confirmation of what he had said. The sudden brightness of the raised swords illuminated the dark Hell far and wide.The rebel angels shouted loudly against the Almighty and struck their fully drawn swords or spears on their shields. In this way they created a noise like that of war and hurled defiance towards the vault of heaven.

Satan praises all the fallen angels for their strength. He says that they will regain their rightful position. Satan mentions that God is about to create a new world. He says thatthey must resolve their issues through a war. He concludes his speech and all the devils support him by striking their shields with the swords.

7.4 Section 8: The Building of Pandemonium: Lines 670 to 798

Close to the place where the fallen angels had gathered, there was a hill whose dreadful top threw up flames of fire and rolling smoke. The rest of the hill shone brightly with some bright scurf (metallic ore) a sure indication that there existed inside the hill, large amount of metallic ore, produced by sulphur.. A large number of the rebel angels went towards that hill with great speed, like the groups of pioneers, who armed with spade and pick-axe, go as an advance party to dig a trench or clear a field or construct ramparts for the royal camp. These rebels were guided by Mammon, who was the least upright of the spirits that fell from heaven.

Soon this group of angels dug up a big hole into the hill, and brought out bars of gold. On the plain nearby a second group of devils, with wonderful skill, melted the solid ore in cells made in the ground, beneath which flowed liquid fire from the lake in tube-like channels. They separated one metal from another and removed the scum that rose on the surface of the melted metal.

Thus did a huge structure rise from the land with such ease and speed, with the accompaniment of sweet and soft music, that the whole edifice seemed to have risen naturally out of earth like mist or vapour which is exhaled by it. The building was built like a temple with square columns, and the pillars were constructed in the typical Doric style, and overlaid with golden frieze. There were bossy sculptures engraved on the columns as well as on the pillars. The entire roof was ornamented with gold. In magnificence and richness, this building surpassed all the grandeur and glory of the great monuments built in Babel or Cairo to enshrine their great gods such as Belus or Serapis, or the palaces of their kings, even at the moment of their highest glory, when Egypt and Asyria rivaled each other in grandeur and riches. The fast-rising edifice stood straight high, firm and fixed, and looked stately and formidable.

As soon as the building was ready, its brass doors were opened wide: the inside showed a huge space, with soft and smooth pavements. From the arched roof were hanging as if by magic, many rows of brightly-lit lamps which shed a bright light as they were fed by oils like neptha and asphaltus. These lamps gave forth brilliant light, as if it came from the skies. The crowd of fallen angels entered the building hastily, admiring what they saw.

In the meanwhile the swift-moving messengers under the command of Satan, the supreme poser in (Hell), with formidable ceremony and trumpets, proclaimed throughout the ranks of the rebel angels that an important meeting would be held in the Capitol (i.e., Pandemonium), the conference hall of Satan and his comrades.

They were swarming like the bees during the spring-month of May, when the sun is in the Taurus Zodiac, and when the bees fly to and fro among the dewy flowers, or settle on the wooden plank outside their hive, which is the suburbs of their straw-built palace (hive), newly filled or decorated with balm, either to fly about freely or to discuss their state affairs. So large in numbers were these fallen angels that they all felt short of space, till a signal was given by Satan and there happened something wonderful.

As bees
In spring-time, when the Sun with Taurus rides,
Pour forth their populous youth about the hive
In clusters ; they among fresh dews and flowers

Fly to and fro, or on the smoothed plank,
The suburb of their straw-built citadel,
New rubbed with baum, expatiate, and confer
Their state-affairs, so thick the aery crowd
Swarmed and were strained.

Their (the bees)revelry and jocund music attract the peasant and his heart is filled at once with joy and fear. In this way, the fallen angels reduced their giant size to small shapes and became pigmies and like fairy-elves in size. Now they could move to and fro freely in the spacious halls of the infernal court, although they were still numberless. The chief angels, the seraphs and cherubs, however, remained in their original forms, and sat on their thrones in secret chambers far within the hall. After a short time, the detailed reasons for the summons were read out, and then the great meeting or conference of the fallen angels began.

7.5 Summing Up

This second part of this lesson has provided you a detailed summary of *Paradise Lost Book 1*. For your convenience, we divided the poem in to eight parts and the second part, i.e., from section five to section eight is presented here. We tried to provide the paraphrased text and also some of the lines from the original poem as they would help you for presenting annotated passages in the examination. The next lesson will discuss the critical aspects related to *Paradise Lost* Book I. We provided some links under 'references' and ' additional sources' and we advise you to go through those sources for better understanding.

7.6 **Comprehension Check Questions**

1. What does Milton compare Satan with?
2. What are the names of thefallen angels mentioned?
3. Write about Moloch.
4. Who is Chemos?
5. Write about the speeches of Satan.
6. How did Satan inspire the fallen angels?
7. Write about the construction of Pandemonium.
8. Comment on the similes used by Milton to describe Satan.

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LESSON 8

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PARADISE LOST

8.0 Objectives

After going through this lesson you will

- Understand the features of an epic
- Know why *Paradise Lost* is an Epic
- Understand the epic similes used by Milton and
- Assess the character of Satan

Structure of the Lesson

8.0 Objectives
8.1 Paradise Lost as an Epic
8.1.1 Epic - Its Kinds
8.1.2 Milton as an Epic Poet
8.1.3 Features of an Epic
8.1.4 Epic Features in Paradise Lost
8.2 Epic Similes in Paradise Lost
8.3 Satan's Character
8.4 Summing Up
8.5 Comprehension Check Questions
8.6 References
8.7 Additional Sources

8.1 *Paradise Lost* As An Epic

8.1.1 Epic –Its Kinds:

An epic may be broadly described as a long narrative poem based on events of national, sometimes of universal importance. An Epic (from Greek *Epos*; a word) is a poem on a grand theme, narrating the exploits and achievements of a great hero or heroes, written in a lofty, elevated style. Epics are usually of two kinds-*national epic* and *literary epic*. The national epic deals with the exploits and adventures of some hero belonging to the nationality of the poet, himself. The literary epic also deals with the adventures of ahero, but who belongs to no particular nation, but one who has a universal appeal and is of interest to all people and all ages. *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharatha* are the two great epics from India.

The earliest epics dealt with the golden age of the mythical past. Their action was quick moving and was full of violent scenes. The values sketched were courage, heroism, personal endurance and strength. The setup was feudal. The ultimate triumph of the hero was central but not exclusively so. The Old English fragment 'The Battle of Malda'illustrates this. Homer, the Greek, was the first epic poet. He wrote *TheIliad.* Virgil, the Roman, composed '*Aeniad*'as a literary epic. The literary epic has a formal design and shape which we do not find in Homer's *Iliad*.

8.1.2Milton as an Epic Poet:

Milton originally wanted to write an epic dealing with the adventures and exploits of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. But later, he gave up the idea in favour of a poem, dealing with the universal theme of the creation of man and his seduction and fall. Thus the epic, "Paradise Lost"has become a poem with a universal appeal. We can say without hesitation, that *Paradise Lost* is the best of English epics having a universal appeal. David Masson says that "It is an epic of the whole human race".

Milton's *Paradise Lost* is literary, but he keeps both Homer and Virgil in front. It is sometimes stated that the lyrical quality of Milton's poetry prevents the poet from being a true epic poet. In spite of the narrative quality of his work, the lyrical genius of Milton makes him reveal his personality through his work. Whether the lyrical quality in an epic is essentially a drawback or not, is not confirmedly decided. But we should agree with one thing, that Milton's poetry achieves charm and grandeur because of his lyrical quality and its autobiographical element.

John Milton is unique in the field of literary epic writers. His cherished object is to pursue "something unattempted yet in prose of rhyme". He wants to do something which 'posterity shall not willingly do'.

Milton handles all the machinery of an epic with perfect mastery and with a deft hand. One of the most important epic features in *Paradise Lost* is the usage in abundance of elaborate epic similes. This convention is set up by the classical epic poets like Homer and Virgil.

8.1.3 Features of an Epic:

These are the conventional qualities of an Epic poem:

- The epic poet makes an invocation to some gods or goddesses in the opening lines of the poem. The purpose is serious.
- In each poem, there is some peculiar passion, which is its distinguishing feature, from the other poem of the species. *Illiad* is distinguished by the passions of anger and terror and *Aeniad,* by soft and tender passions.
- An epic must contain many episodes and allusions.
- Supernatural machinery is introduced in Epic poetry. Instead of the gods and goddesses of Homer and Virgil, Milton and Dante used the angels, archangels and devils.
- An epic generally has vows and pledges of heroes.
- An epic should have combats and battles.
- There should be the fearful and lofty description of weapons and ornaments in an elevated style.
- There should be a presentation of the visits of the gods and angels to subterranean regions.

- The style must be heroic and elevated.
- Finally, there should be an elaborate image of Epic similes.

8.1.4 Epic Features in *Paradise Lost*

Milton begins the poem with the usual **invocation** to the Muse. He adopts the 'device of exordium'. He prays to God to help him write the great epic.

"Sing Heavenly Muse…..rhyme"(6 to 15)

The theme is lofty and it is

'Of Man's first disobedience…tree, seat"(1-5)

Milton wants the muse to out spread her wings and sit 'dove like' on him. Milton's aim is to justify the ways of God to man. The theme has a cosmic interest and it is a fit subject for an epic. An epic has a big setting. It is almost awe-inspiring. The **action** of *Paradise Lost* is set against Heaven, Hell, and Earth. The subject matter of the poem is Man's fall, brought about by Satan'in revenge for his expulsion from Heaven. The action shifts from Heaven to Hell and Earth and it heightens the effect of the epic. A battle is fought in Heaven between Satan and God. It is set on a lofty note and the note is sustained throughout. The infernal serpent deceived the mother of mankind and

"He trusted……..attempt (40-49)

God, the Almighty hurled him down the Heaven to 'bottomless perdition'.

"In adamantine chains"(48-49)

Satan is fallen from Heaven to Hell.

Satan realizes their miserable position. He rouses Beelzebub into thinking. He suggests that they should move to the shore and discuss ways and means of fighting against God. The 'Pandemonium'is built. A conference is held and impassioned speeches are made. A decision is taken to fight against God. It is followed by Satan's voyage of discovery and his entrance into Eden.

Milton deals with the eternal problem of good and evil in *Paradise Lost.* The action shifts from Heaven to Hell and Hell to Heaven. There is an endless and at times concealed clash between good and evil. Coleridge observes that 'the interest goes beyond the limits of a nation and that it is the true occasion of all philosophy'. Milton is concerned with the question of right and wrong. Milton's theme is religious and scriptural while his form is classical.

Horace suggests that the action should begin in Heaven. Milton starts with the Angels in Hell, after their fall and proceeds to their decision to corrupt man (Book I &II). There are also a number of visionary glimpses of the future (BK I & II). These repeat in a modified form like Virgil's notion of epical history as having a relevance to later times.

The older epics make use of the **supernatural element**. It is used at crucial moments. Milton's characters are both human and superhuman. Satan and his followers, the son of God, the Angels and the messengers of God are superhuman; only Adam and Eve are the human characters.

The epic has **organic unity**. There are many episodes and allusions. Every episode is linked with the central action. Satan's speeches to Beelzebub and the description of Satan, and other angels, their comparisons are marvelously presented in a lofty and elevated style. The rebel angels are compared to Barbarian hordes, and to locusts. The chiefs of the rebel angels are known as the heathen Gods. They are also described. The 'passion', the chief feature in an epic, in the *Paradise Lost* is 'vengeance and anger'.

A characteristic feature of the older epics was the **long exhaustive list** of either ships or warriors. Milton in Book I lists the chief among Satan's crew. Their account is based on both the Old Testament and his classical scholarship. (Refer to the list of fallen Angels like Moloch, Chemos, Astoreth, Thammuz, Dagon, Rimmon, Osiris, Isis, Orus etc.,) Milton puts the first man and the first woman at thecentre of his epic. They are placed in a delicate balance between the devils in Hell and God and Angels in Heaven. In describing the attributes, Milton makes use of what is known as the epic simile. It compares a specific moment of action to a phenomenon outside its context. Homer's similes were based on nature. Milton relates his images to the terrible reality of Satan's followers, with an intention to create a grotesque effect as their intentions are bad. The fallen Angels on the lake of fire are compared to the 'autumnal leaves' that fill the brooks in vallambrosa covered by high Arthurian shades. "Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks"(302-305).

Milton adopts the epic manner. His opening is dramatic. There are impassioned war-like speeches. Much of the action takes place in Hell, in chaos, in Heaven and on the Earth. And this is also one of the chief features of an epic. The action in an epic should take place in the subterranean regions and the visits of the Gods or angels should be presented. '*Paradise Lost'* is a curious example of the fusion of 'tradition and individual talent'. Milton is a master of grand style. The theme is great, the setting remote and the characters are mostly supernatural. Milton draws upon classical myth and literature, upon the Bible and mythology. There are Latinisms and the style is very much elevated. This sublimity of style achieves a certain deliberate distance.

"*Paradise Lost*"was not written in a mood of bitterness and disillusion. It expresses hope tempered by hard experience and careful reflection. Milton desires to create a convincing world of beings beyond the human, in places beyond our experience, and his faith fixed in the years of hope, affliction and despair, must embody itself in a message for all men. The subject of *Paradise Lost* is universal and timeless.

Milton the Scholar, achieves grand success in *'Paradise Lost'.* It is the reward of a Scholar. It is a unique literary Epic.

8.2 Epic Similes In Paradise Lost

The epic simile is a long comparison of an event, object or person with something essentially different. As a means of comparison it is very useful and it intensifies its effect. The Epic simile can also help in linking the main events of Milton's poetry with earlier literature or with non-literary fields such as exploration, scientific discovery or even domestic concerns. It is first used by Homer and Virgil. Milton links his Epic with other cultures and other kinds of literature through these similes. Epic similes also enable Milton to control the degree of importance which we attach to a piece of information. The Epic similes of Milton are more impressive than those of Homer. They are more in number, greater in variety, richer in appeal and grander in presentation. They are the show of a scholar with a turn for music and sensuous beauty. They give us glimpses into things, into people of far away and long ago. Prof. Raleigh says, that "from Herodotus down to Galileo

and the North American Indians ,Milton compels the authors he had read, to the gracing of his work".

An Epic simile goes beyond the point of comparison. It is almost strained beyond endurance. It fulfills what Johnson calls 'the second function of a simile'. It ennobles the object with which it is compared. Such a simile compares a specific moment of action in the poem to an action or phenomenon outside its context. Milton's similes illustrate a remarkable range of knowledge. Biblical and classical references run side by side with references to folklore and travel, the familiar and the strange. But the reference is secondary in importance to the effect it seeks to achieve.

The Epic similes of Milton are word pictures. They aim at a total impression of grandeur. Though they contain fine details, they are intended to be viewed as a whole. Milton follows Dante's method of description. Milton's similes enable him to express the inexpressible. Satan's size is huge. He is compared to Titan and then to a Leviathan. The comparison of Satan with Leviathan is apt and suitable. (BK I 200-208) (1) ……or that sea beast **Leviathan, which God of all his works Created hugest that swim the ocean stream.** This is the first of the great Epic similes of *Paradise Lost*. In these lines, Satan's gigantic size is emphasized. An Epic simile is also called a Homeric simile. In a Homeric simile the comparable thing eclipses the compared thing. But Milton is a Master of similes, Homeric and others. It gives us an idea of the range of Hell. It raises an impression of vastness. Satan is compared to Leviathan mentioned in the Old Testament. Milton elaborates on Satan's deceit and treachery. Eve is deceived by Satan's eloquent flattery and she eats the forbidden fruit. The comparison is moral as well as physical. Other details are not relevant; but they contribute to the sublimity of Epic style. The suggestion of Satan's huge dimension is emphasized in another Epic simile. In the simile, Satan's ponderous, massive, round shield is compared to the moon.(2) (286-292).

> The broad circumference
> Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
> Through optic glass The Tuscan Artist views
> At evening from the Top of Fesole.

The shield of Satan is big in size. The broad circumstance is compared to the orb of the moon as viewed through the optic glass of the Tuscan artist. The artist is Galileo. Apart from personal experience in Italy, Milton indulges in a grand description. Those details are superfluous; but a beautiful word picture is raised. This Miltonic simile is unique in the completeness of its correspondences with the object and it is followed by another Epic simile and it takes us to Norwegian hills (292-294) (3). **His spear-to equal which the tallest pine-Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast-of some great admiral, were but a wand.** But this is not an elaborate affair. It shows Milton's pictorial richness, descriptive power and gift for sustained sonorous music. It is a well sustained flight of poetry and it contributes to Epic-grandeur.

For example, the comparison of Angels flocking into pandemonium with 'bees clustering round the hive in spring time'-(4) a simile found in Homer, Virgil and others-produces the effects of noise, number and space. A little later, the same Angels are compared to fairy elves carrying on midnight revels, 'vigour is enlarged into a vaguely wicked abandon'. Another simile (5) ……**as when the sun new-risen Looks through the horizontal misty air-shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon-In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds-On half the nations, and with fear of change -Perplexes monarchs.** Intends Satan's diminished glory (594-599). Here Satan is compared to the sun in

a mist. It is followed by another simile which depicts the faded glory of Satan and his companions, the fallen Angels. (612-615) (6)

…yet faithful how they stood,
Their glory withered: as, when Heaven's fire
Has scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines,
With singed top their stately growth,though bare,
Stands on the blasted Heath.

The similes of Milton are suggestive. They provide the reader with vistas vast. They telescope the past and the future in the present. An idea of the size of his appearance is given by the use of a negative simile. The mast of a big ship is just a wand in comparison with the spear of Satan.

***As bees, In spring-time, when the Sun with Taurus rides,**
Pour forth their populns youth about the hive
In clusters;

The fallen angels are compared to bees and to the 'thick autumnal leaves that fill the brooks in vallambrosa where the Etrurian shades cover high'. Homer's epic similes depended on nature. Milton relates beautiful nature images to the terrible reality of Satan's followers creating a grotesque effect. They are compared to "scattered sedge which disturbed the Red sea and over (9) throw Busiris and his Memphian chivalry". It is a long simile. The sedge on the red-sea is like the fallen angels on the lake of fire in Hell. The Egyptian army cannot stand the 'rod of Moses'. So Satan and his followers fall before God. Satan shares the treachery of Pharoah and Moses, for the equality of God. Pharoah heads to total ruin and so does Satan. These similes are suggestively significant.

Milton works out a design for the use of similes. Milton uses similes in a parenthetic way also. (762-767). (10) It is incidental and it also brings the whole scene of encounters between armed combatants. Each has a tone and purpose of its own. There is a gradual progression or forward movement in the Epic similes, in keeping with the onward movement of the story. When the Angels fly in air, they are compared to "the swarm of locusts which darkened the sky of Egyptian king", when attacked the Israelite treacherously.

As they alight on the shore, they are compared to the northern hordes which descended on southern Europe from time to time. When they are ready to fight against God, they are like the huge armies of which we have been told in legend and history since the creation of man.

The similes of Milton impart human interest and variety. He introduces familiar and contemporary things into the remote and majestic theme of the poem. The palace of the Hell is something far beyond the glory of Babylon or great Alcario. The army of rebel Angels far exceeds those 'that fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side mixed with auxiliary Gods:

The Epic similes contribute to the grandeur of epic style. They provide variety and human interest. While exhibiting Milton's range of knowledge, they give us vistas into things of far away and long ago. They show Milton, the sensuous poet and classical scholar with an accent on grand music. Milton's similes are definitely functional and they have something indefinable. They impart variety, vastness and amplitude to the epic, and elevation and dignity to Milton's style and diction.

8.3 Satan's Character

The character of Satan is the most predominant throughout. Satan is a being of decision and action in Book I of Milton's '*Paradise Lost'*. Some of the critics considered him as the Hero of *"Paradise Lost'* and some considered him as the spirit of Milton himself. Satan is stretched upon the burning lake- a huge figure reminding us of the Titan and the Leviathan. He is indomitable and unyielding. The infernal serpent becomes humanized. The humanized Satan dominates the first two books. Wherever he appears in these two booksSatan is an arresting figure. We see that Milton's idea of Satan is of a complex being who must be presented in an unusual way. The infernal serpent is apt to be forgotten as Satan proceeds. He revolted against the Almighty and for this offense he was "hurled down into Hell headlong. He was struck with thunderbolts and lightnings and made to suffer the tortures of the burning lake of fire in Hell. Yet he bears them and remains stubborn. He courageously bids farewell to the delights of Heaven and hails the horrors of Hell. He has the spirit and courage to extract delight in misery and is capable of making a distress of what is delightful. He says,

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

Distress doesn't make him discouraged-He is heroic in nature.

When Satan speaks he captures our attention. The opening lines of Book Iare fraught with sighs. They express the misery of defeat, pity for a companion in ruin, regret for comradeship leading only to disaster. Satan does not regret his fall because he was able to know the real strength of God. Then, there is an upward sweep of great energy expressed in words of superb defiance. (105-109)

> "…What though the field be lost?
> All is not lost;"

Satan shows dignified contempt for God. He does not want to beg God for a favour. It is an ignominy, shame and downfall. In words of cool calculation, Satan says that he should fight either by force or by guile. Reconciliation is out of question. God, the tyrant should be challenged.

Satan is open to the distorting influences of pride. He is firmly determined. We admire his determination and courage which he has "never to submit or yield". He is burnt with the desire of revenge. *Paradise Lost* contains many examples of Satan's misfortunes. Satan's basic nature is Good; but he is obliged by circumstances to be otherwise. "There are Paradise mockeries, slightly falsified versions. The more Satan is lost in the art of falsification, the less good becomes his nature". This is simply an expression of the Augustinian idea that the sinner becomes more sinful through practice. Beelzebub is nervous; but not Satan; with majestic reproof, Satan declares that 'to be weak is miserable'. Beelzebub acknowledges the superiority of Satan that his very (even) voice would rouse the fallen Angels. Satan is lovable to his followers. He is a good leader and commander. He is not a coward and he is not going to beg God for mercy because of fear. He claims to be equal to God both in arms and spirit. This claim is sheer arrogance on his part. They should derive good out of evil. They delight in doing evil. The second speech shows Satan's maturity of self-confidence. Satan shows a good deal of dramatic talent. It is also a revelation of evil. We are fascinated by the evil in Satan. Satan's villainy is made clearer by the suspicion of Beelzebub (158-162). Satan is in no mood to bear eternal punishment from God. He wants

to hit back. He therefore suggests to Beelzebub that all of them should move towards the shore of the lake and then debate and decide the future course of action. It means involvement and participation of his followers and it is a quality of sustained leadership. His unflagging determination is revealed in the words:

"What re-inforcement we may gain from hope,
If not what resolution from despair".

Here we are given the idea of Satan's bodily dimensions. They make him exalted in our eyes. When we study the description we feel Satan walking in our hearts with his mighty wand. He is compared to Briareos who fought against Uranus and to Typhone who fought against Jove. He is also compared to the sea-monster Leviathan (202-202). Satan is the voice of Milton himself; so that W.Blake says, "Milton was of the devil's party without knowing it".

Satan is unhappy that he has to live in Hell-absolutely uncongenial to him. Hell is full of mournful gloom. Yet he hails horrors of the Hell happily. He gets over his initial hesitation. It is a superb speech of dramatic shifts as Satan moves from sorrowful acceptance to immense defiance. He calls himself proud possessor of Hell. He pretends that he is free from God's interference. He feels that it is better to "reign in Hell than serve in Heaven". (261-263).

He is not interested in doing good. He wants to find evil out of good. Satan addresses his followers. His speech to the fallen Angels is brief but it has the desired effect. He makes them feel ashamed for lying "on the fiery lake in abject condition". It is a rousing call in which flattery, scorn and alarm are skillfully mixed and in which the concluding words, are exhortation and warning fused into one tremendous sentence:

"Awake, arise or be forever fallen".

There is progression with each speech. He revives the courage of his followers. There is sarcasm and there is a threat. The followers of the fallen Angels are stung by the sarcasm and 'scared by the threat'. In his speeches and actions we see the Heroic movement of Satan. He infuses fresh courage into their hearts and dispels their fears. From regret to resolve, from contempt to decision, from sadness through defiance to further decision , from scorn to exhortation, from pride and flattery to demagogic assertion, these are marks of progression towards decision and action by Satan.

The fifth speech reveals Satan's skill as a leader. Satan tries to remove every trace of disappointment from his followers: His mastery is not questioned. He makes clever references to their change. He subtly defends himself as the leader of an army in defeat. "While praising that army, Satan says, that no one could have foreseen its defeat. Though defeated, they have hurt God by reducing Heaven's population ;under cover of this mixture of praise and lie, Satan defends himself openly":

"Forms, witness all the host of Heaven
If counsels different or danger shunned
By me have lost our hopes"

Satan ends the speech on a stirring note of call to battles. He stands like a mighty tower. He still looks like an Archangel though defeated (594-597This speech is a piece of studied public utterance such as Aristotle in his 'Rhetoric' might have approved. It has the shape of a miniature drama with a moving introduction leading to a hard core of argument and ending with a dramatic gesture to which the followers respond appropriately:

"……to confirm his words, out flew
Millions of flaming swords".

Satan is humanized by Milton. He shares many human failings like audacious nature,obstinacy,deceptive logic, fallacious reasoning and false rationalization. He is a leader under stress and in distress and he therefore makes use of all the weapons in the armory. Satan is a great figure and he is meant to be so. Simultaneously Satan's character is not without its weak points. The heroic nature is marred by one malicious feature in his character. He has ever been unscrupulous in his schemes and actions. But his character is conceived by the poet with the utmost skillfulness. "The voice of Satan is Milton's own when it craves for liberty and abhors the monarchy of God". He has ever been animated by the spirit of liberty. He says, "Better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven". Satan is powerful in his speeches and actions.

In spite of a humiliating position, Satan lives in hope. Milton puts all his personal fervor and unfulfilled aspiration into Satan. He is even called a member of the Devil's party without knowing it. Satan looks like a hero in the first two books. For Coleridge, Satan typifies "arrogance and sensual indulgence, finding in himself the sole motive of action". But even Coleridge shares the romantic tendency of seeing in Satan, his "ruined splendor which is the very height of poetic sublimity". Satan is an enduring exercise in evil and the fascination of evil. Adam and Eve are human.So is Satan. Though fallen, Satan is a free agent. That is perhaps the mission of Milton, the man.

8.4 Summing Up

Paradise Lost is a great poem which leaves scope for many critical angles. It stands as a great epic in the history of English Literature. This lesson (based on the first book) has given you some of its features like 'the features of an epic', 'why *Paradise Lost* is an epic', 'the different epic similes used by Milton' and the ' character of Satan' as we understand from the prescribed book (I). Certain critics observe that Milton has portrayed Satan in his own style.But Milton's chief aim, as you understood the poem, is to 'justify the ways of God to men'. The links provided under 'additional sources' will make you understand other critical aspects involved in the study of the poem.

8.5 Comprehension Check Questions

1. What is an 'epic'?
2. Who are the epic poets mentioned in the lesson?
3. Why did Milton choose to write an epic?
4. What are the features of an 'epic'?
5. List out some of the epic features from the book.
6. Write about the epic similes mentioned in the book.
7. What are the features of poetry mentioned in the poem?
8. Can Satan be the hero of Paradise Lost? How is he portrayed?
9. What qualities of Satan do you support and why?

10. What are the qualities that brought the doom of Satan?

8.6 References

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LESSON 9

ALEXANDER POPE'S THE RAPE OF THE LOCK

9.0 Objectives:

After going through the lesson, you will

- Understand the features of Augustan Age and the literary scene before Alexander Pope
- Know about the Life of Pope and his works
- Know Pope as a satirist and
- Appreciate the humour presented in the poem

Structure of the Lesson:

9.0 Objectives
9.1 Features of the Augustan Age
9.2 Life and Works of Alexander Pope
9.3 Literary Scene before Alexander Pope
9.4 Canto - wise Summary of the Poem
9.4.1 Canto 1
9.4.2 Canto 2
9.4.3 Canto 3
9.4.4 Canto 4
9.4.5 Canto 5
9.5 Summing Up
9.6 Comprehension Check Questions
9.7 References
9.8 Additional Resources

Expansion of the Structure:

9.1 Features of the Augustan Age:

The period running from the end of the seventeenth century through most of the eighteenth is called variously the Neoclassical period or the Augustan Age or the Age of Reason or Enlightenment. The neoclassicists accepted one or the other classical poetry and drama, argued in favour of the three unities, conceived of the poet as a craftsman rather than as a seer and of art as communication rather than as an expression. They preferred such strict forms as the Heroic Couplet to Blank Verse and Senecan Tragedy to Shakespearean and the writers of the first part of the century like Pope, Swift, Steele, and Addison looked to the period of Augustus Caesar for inspiration. Hence the period is sometimes called Augustan.

In terms of attitude, the period is also called the Age of Reason, although strictly speaking, “Age of Common Sense” would be the more accurate term. Tired of the intellectual and religious excesses that had led England through a long and bitter civil war, many of the intellectuals of the period accepted the notion that 'truth is a product of reason rather than of faith'.

9.2 Life and Works of Alexander Pope:

Alexander Pope was born on 21 May 1688 to Alexander Pope (Father) and Edith (Mother) as their only child. They embraced the Catholic faith. Catholics were doomed to suffer in the reign of the protestant crown and government in those days. He was a hard-working student and at the age of twelve itself, he started learning French, Greek and Latin. This hard work on his part impaired his health and he was advised against rigorous study. He was advised rest. He was forced to lead a leisurely life and this leisure led him to study a number of books and ultimately to writing. Dr. Arbuthnot was his doctor and they also became good friends in course of time. He became the leading literary figure of his times and naturally had an opposition group also working against him. He remained a bachelor throughout his life but he loved to enjoy the company of cultured and beautiful ladies of the day like Martha Blount and Lady Montage. George Sampson aptly sums up the biography of Pope in *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* as follows:

"Alex Pope (1688-1714) began life with several disadvantages. He was the child of elderly parents; he was physically weak and deformed and he was a Roman Catholic. His feeble health denied him a school, his faith denied him a university and so the most instinctively classical of our poets missed the instinctively classical education of his day. But there were advantages. He grew up in an indulgent home on the verge of Windsor forest, and his intellectual isolation gave him intellectual freedom. As we can understand from his "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot", in his own words, "he lisped in numbers". By the age of twelve itself, he decided to be a poet."

He started his poetic career with *Pastorals* (1709). *Essay* on *Criticism* (1711) and then the most witty and successful *Rape of the Lock*(1712) expanded in (1714) and *Windsor Forest* (1718). His collected works were published in 1717 and with this, he established himself as a poet. In 1714 he started translating *Homer* and this made him financially independent. He wrote *Dunciad* in 1728 and he revised it in 1742 under the title *New Dunciad* ; and published his *Moral Essays* (1731-5), *Imitations of Horace* (1733-38), and the *Essay on Man* (1733-34). He attempted a philosophical analysis of the nature of man in this. He died in 1744, at the age of fifty six, as a contented man.

9.3 Literary Scene before Pope:

The metaphysical movement exhausted itself and literary standards and values were confused. It was an age that believed in the order of the universe and the rational ability of man's mind. These beliefs influenced poetry in many ways. "Poets tended to strive after lucidity, balance and perspicacity as though to reflect the order and reason of the universe they felt they lived in. Instead of the mystery of the universe they stressed its splendid comprehensible efficiency and harmony; and rather than exploring the emotional extremes and excesses of the passionate man, they preferred to hold up an ideal of the well regulated, witty, balanced mind of the rational man". Though the age proudly called itself "Augustan", poets like Pope were aware how often people fell far below the ideal standards of a rational civilization. That's why their work had a twofold focus. It celebrates the ideal of a reasonable, gracious civilization and at the same time it mocks at the folly, vice and vanity of the world they lived in. *The Rape of the Lock* amply represents this.

Thus we find some sort of a classification or respect for rules, intellectual quality, insistence on a set poetic style, the emergence of the Heroic couplet and the treatment of urban life in addition to the points already mentioned.

The Rape of the Lock is written in the mock-epic genre, and the metre used is the Heroic couplet.

The poem is divided into five cantos. The poem starts with the getting up of Belinda, the heroine of the poem and ends with her fight with Lord Peter, the reason being that the latter cuts off Belinda's locks. The events that take place in between are described very humorously. Contemporary life, habits, manners, and particularly life in the high class society are described in the poem. The moral standards of the people of the day are also described in the poem.

9.4 Summary of the Poem

9.4.1 Canto I

The poem starts with an invocation to the Muse and the poet states the theme of his poem and how he is going to elaborate that theme, though very trivial.

"What strange motive, Goddess! could compel.
A well bred lord to assault a gentle belle?
O say what stranger cause, yet unexplored,
Could make a gentle belle reject a lord?
In tasks so bold, can little men engage,
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage?'

Having stated what he wants to explore, the poet moves on to describe the noon, which is, just the time that Belinda like other "sleepless lovers" gets up from her morning bed. The sun is shooting his rays timidly through the curtains and opening the eyes of some lazy people. Lap dogs are ready to get up and sleepless lovers are also about to rise. Belinda is still drowsy and her guardian sylph, Ariel caused her a dream where she is instructed about sylphs and gnomes. She is advised to know her own importance and be careful.

The purity of melting maids,
In country balls, and midnight masquerades.
Safe from the treach'rous friend, the daring spark
The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,
When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,
When music softens, and when dancing fires?"

Some ladies are too conscious of their appearances. When peers, dukes with all their pomp and luxury greet these ladies "Your Grace", these ladies forget their boundaries and their egos are blown up. At this stage ladies master coquettishness and their hearts respond eagerly to admirers. Belinda also is one such.

When the world thinks that a maid (maiden) is going wrong, the sylphs take care of her and lead her away safely from these mystic mazes. They save the ladies from becoming the victims of men at parties or dances. Others might think that the ladies are deceiving men, but this is how the sylphs turn away the nymphs. The sylph now, for the first time in the poem, introduces himself as Ariel and that he is her protector. He says that while traveling through the high skies, he has seen that a danger is about to befall her that very day before sunset. He tells that he doesn't know what that danger is but he warns her to be aware of all, but mostly men.

Belinda's lap dog 'Shock' thinks that his mistress has overslept and wakes her up with his tongue. The moment she opens her eyes she finds a love letter on her bed and first she reads it where the other party's wounds, charms and ardours are explained in that letter.

Belinda is now in her make up chamber and it is described vividly. There are a number of vases with mystic contents in them. They are from different countries.

"This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box
The tortoise here and elephant unite,
Transformd to combs, the speckled and the White"

She uses all these various items that are spread on the cosmetic table:

"Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles,billet-doux"

Belinda ppicks up all the cosmetic items and repairs herself step by step. With each step her beauty and charm rise up. She combs her hair, applies pastes and rouges and lipstick. Her beauty and blushes go up every moment. The sylphs also help her in her make-up and preparation.

"The busy sylphs surround their darling care,
These set the head, and those divide the hair
Some fold the sleeve, while others plait the gown;
And Betty's praised for labours not her own"

Now Belinda (Betty) gets ready for her social outing.

9.4.2 Canto II

Belinda starts taking a trip on the river Thames. The sun is shining at his peak in the noon skies. Belinda is also shining bright and competing with the sun. She is surrounded by a number of young and well-dressed ladies and gents. But she is the center of attraction.

A few similes are used in this Canto to explain the beauty and charm of Belinda. Belinda's physical appearance and dressing are described from line seven onwards. On her white breast she wore a sparkling cross. Her looks are very sprightly and are indicating her active mind. Her eyes are quick and unfixed. She is smiling equally at everybody. She has not been partial or specially favors none. She rejects but offends none. Like the bright sun, her eyes strike the gazers, and her favours are equal on everybody. She has grace and sweetness about herself. If she commits any mistakes, her face compensates for them all.

This lady has grown two locks which hang equally on either side of her ivory neck. "Like snares to birds, these locks are to mankind".

One adventurous baron admires these locks very much. He thinks of ways and means of securing and retaining these locks-either by force or by fraud.

Even before the sun has risen on that particular day, the baron has requested the heavens and all the other powers to grant him his wish of securing and retaining the lovely locks of the nymph. He has built an altar to love with 'twelve French romances, and kept

these three garters, half a pair of gloves and all the trophies' that he has received from his former loves. With a tender love letter he 'lights the pyre and breathes three amorous sighs to raise the fire'. Then he falls prostrate and requests the God to bless him to possess the locks and retain them for a long time. The powers grant him half his prayer.

Coming back to Belinda's boating on the Thames, the boats are gently gliding on the waters. There is soft music. The zephyrs are also very gentle. Whenever Belinda smiles, there is happiness and joy in the hearts of everybody there. Everyone is happy except her guardian sylph, Ariel. The impending disaster is looming large on his face. That's why, he has summoned his spirit forces and has started giving orders to them. The spirits are described at length here. The spirits, their hierarchical order and their duties are explained vividly by Ariel. Finally he tells them that a disastrous thing is going to happen that day, of which nothing is known. He doesn't't know whether "the nymph is going to break Diana's law or some china jar receives a flaw; or whether she is going to stain her honour" or whether she is going to forget her prayers or miss a dance; or whether she is going to lose her heart or her necklace at a ball; or whether her lapdog Shock is going to die".

> "Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
> Or some frail china-jar receive a flaw;
> Or stain her honour or her new brocade;
> Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade;
> Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball,
> Or whether heaven has doom'd that Shock must fall."

The moral order of the day is reflected in these lines, Breaking Diana's law, or a china jar are clubbed together. Breaking Diana's law has become as common as breaking a china jar. Staining her honour is as common as staining her dress. Also losing a heart is so cheap like losing a necklace. Coming back to the poem, Ariel is unable to know what the exact danger is, surmises various things and finally assigns different duties to different spirits. Zephyretta is to look after the fluttering fan. Brilante is to look after the coffee/tea drops, Momentilla is to watch, Crispissa is to look after Belinda's favourite lock and Ariel himself decides to be the guard of Shock.

Fifty chosen sylphs are selected to take care of Belinda's petticoat. Ariel warns them with dire consequences if they fail in their duties. The moment the orders are issued, some sylphs gather around the nymph, some watch the ringlets of Belinda's hair while some hang upon the pendants of her ear. Everybody is anxiously awaiting the impending disaster.

9.4.3 Canto III

There are quite a good number of towers by the river Thames. Of them, Hampeon towers is very majestic. Here all great people and British Statesmen meet and talk of the falls of various foreign tyrants and of ladies at home. Here sometimes Queen Anne takes the counsel of experts and sometimes tea. The ladies and gents of the sophisticated class come here to have the pleasures of a court for a while. They talk on various subjects like the dances they have attended, or the visits they have paid. Some talk of the glory of the British queen where as some talk of the charming Indian screen. Another one interprets motions, looks, and eyes and the reputation of a person is marred at every word. They spend their time in 'fanning' themselves, or 'having snuff' or in 'singing, laughing, ogling' and all that.

It is time for lunch. The judges are passing sentences so that they can go and dine. Belinda is after fame and decides to play ombre (play of cards) with two lords. She is very

happy over the expectant victory. The sylphs are very carefully watching her cards. They sat on each important card. As a war is described in an epic, the war of ombre is described at length in this mock-epic poem. How the forces of the two lords yield to the powers of Belinda is described very vividly. Belinda leads the game. She says, "Let spades be trumps", and trumps they were. With this the war starts. Belinda's is upper hand for quite sometime but by a wild trick, one baron dominates her. Belinda uses all her talent and regains her place. Out of sheer joy, she shouts with great elation and the walls and the woods and the canals re-echo.

After the game, they wish to have coffee. After taking coffee, a lord devises a plan to have the lock from fair Belinda. A lady by name Clarissa assists him in this adventure. Just as ladies handover spears to their knights when the latter go to wars, Clarissa now hands over a pair of scissors to the baron. As Belinda has bent her head to sip the coffee, Lord Peter works the little engine (scissors) on her back. The spirits blow back the hair and twitch the diamond in her ear: Belinda looks back thrice and the foe comes nearer. At that moment Ariel is watching the ideas rising in the mind of Belinda about her earthly lover. He finds himself unable to protect her when she is in such thoughts. He leaves the rest to fate and retires. When the lord cuts the hair, a sylph is also cut into two but being airy substance, the sylph unites itself again .The hair is severed from fair Belinda's head for ever and ever.

On realising what happened, Belinda cries like a lady that has lost her husband or a lap-dog or costly china vessels. The lord in victory cries that his adventure and his prize will be there in history and that it will be remembered as long as the story of Troy is remembered or ATALANTIS is read. He is so overjoyed at his triumph in getting fair Belinda's lock.

9.4.4 CANTO IV

Belinda is very sad about the lock, cut by Lord Peter. Nobody else was so sad like her, either in previous history or mythology (Ref. lines 3-10). Sylphs have withdrawn from the scene and Ariel has left weeping. Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy gnome is in search of spleen, Umbriel finds spleen in her bed sighing with pain and head-ache. Two maids representing ill nature attend on her.

There on the earth, Belinda sunk in bed, is worried at her lot. She has lost her prestige and dignity. She is allergic towards the new dress that she has worn on that day.

The place of spleen is filled with 'glaring fiends, and snakes on rolling spires/Pale specters, gaping tombs and purple fires;/ Now lakes of liquid gold, Elysian scene,/And crystal domes, Angler in machines," Bodies are changed into various forms. Tea pots are alive with one arm held out and one bent. A jar sighs here and a goose pie talks there. Men are like fancy works and maids are turned into bottles calling aloud for corks. The place is mysterious all over. Umbriel, the melancholy gnome has passed all this with a branch of healing spleen wort in his hand, Finally, he finds spleen and addresses her aa 'a wayward queen, parent of vapours and female wit' who rules the sex from fifteen to fifty and who gives the hysteric or poetic fit. She is responsible for different people behaving in different ways on different tempers; and for some people to write plays and some to pray. Umbriel reports to spleen that there is a nymph (Belinda) on the earth who is responsible for the happiness of the world. He devises spleen that if she is affected, half the world will be affected. The goddess seemed to reject him but has granted his prayers. She has given him a bag where in there are the forces of 'female lungs, sighs, sobs, and passions and the war of tongues, fainting fears, soft sorrows, melting griefs and flowing tears'. On his return to the

earth with this bag, Umbriel finds Belinda being comforted in the arms of her friend Thalestris (Mrs. Morley, sister of Sir Plume in real life).

Belinda is very angry and Thalestris is fanning her anger. She says to Belinda, “Is it for this you have taken so much care to comb the hair and prepare the necessary essences? Is it for this that you took the trouble of binding your hair with iron hoops? Is it for this that you strained your tender head with lead balls? Now the fool (Lord Peter) will exhibit your lock very proudly. Fools envy and ladies stare at him. I see the tears in your eyes and hear the horrid things people say about you. You have become a woman of no worth and admiration, a woman unworthy of toasts and all your honour is lost in a whisper. How can I defend your fame? Being your friend is useless if I don’t help you at this juncture. That fellow will exhibit this lock in Hyde Park and immediately there follows a great commotion and there will be an end of men, monkeys, lap dogs, parrots and all.

Raging at what has happened and what is going to befall, she demanded her brother Sir Plume to get back the lock. Sir Plume is a sophisticated and soft creature. He is a mild type. He has a round and unthinking face. He advises Lord Petre to return the lock. But Lord Petre swears on the lock, and says that it is not to be returned or restored, but it is going to be there with him forever like an ornament. Looking at all this Umbriel breaks the vial of sorrows. Suddenly the beautiful nymph turns to a creature of grief, with tears in her eyes and bent head and says to the effect, "cursed be this day that has snatch’d away my best and favourite lock. I would have been happier if only I had not seen the Hampton court. Many maids have been deceived like this and I am not the first. It would have been wonderful if only I stayed in a lone island where the court has no impacts on me-like playing ombre and tasting bohea. I should have been a rose bloomed and died unnoticed. Why did I move with youthful lords? I wish I stayed at home saying my prayers. Omens have told me this morning that something bad is going to happen. But now it is too late. The two locks gave new beauties to my snowy neck Now this sister-lock is alone and uncut and is afraid of its own security. O Fate, you could have selected some other lock than this”.

The canto ends with the repentance of Belinda.

9.4.5 CANTO V

A mock-war between Belinda’s group and Lord Petre’s group is described here. This is once again in tune with the epic qualities.

The baron has not paid any attention to the pleas of Thelestris. Of course, it is imaginable in view of the fact that Belinda herself has failed in getting back the lock. Belinda wonders why so much attention is paid to beauties by wise men and fools alike. She fails to understand why they are called angels and adored like angels; why young people crowd around their coaches; why everybody else bows to them unless it is to rouse the ego in them. She turns philosophical and ponders over that whether pointed or not, locks must turn grey and that beauty must decay. She justifies that good humour on the part of ladies can prevail when 'airs, flight, screams and scolding fail'. She realises that merit rather than beauties or charms wins the soul. Nobody likes these words of Belinda. Thalestris gave orders to attack the enemy. Fans, silks and whale bones are used. Noise and shouting mount up and an uncommon war has begun. Umbriel and the other spirits gather at a height to view this war and assist the parties if necessary. Thalestris has killed a good number of people by her looks and words. Sir Plume attacked Clarissa but Chloe stepped in and killed him with a frown. She smiled at the dead Sir Plume and the latter got revived because of the former’s smile. Belinda now finds the baron and attacks him. She charged powerful lightning from

her eyes but the baron has withstood because of his manly strength. She threw some snuff at the nostrils of the baron and the gnomes directed every atom of it towards the baron. Suddenly there are tears in his eyes and the hall re-echoed with his sneezes. Belinda now threw a bodkin at him. He declares that he is ready to be burnt alive in cupid's flames. She cried, "Restore the lock". The roofs re-echoed it. Every nook and corner is searched for the lock, but it is not to be found anywhere.

Some thought that it went up to the moon because it is a popular belief that all the things missing on the earth will be found there on the moon. But if we trust the Muse, she saw the lock going up and up leaving behind a radiant trial of hair.

In conclusion the poet consoles Belinda by saying that her lock will add lustre to the skies. The millions that are slain by Belinda and Belinda herself may be no more. The sun may set for ever but the lock will be preserved for ever by the Muse and fair Belinda's name is inscribed among the stars.

9.5 Summing Up

This lesson has provided you with the basic information related to the features of Augustan Age and the life of Alexander Pope with his stance as a satirist. The canto wise summary will help you to understand the theme of the poem. But you are advised to go through the original text for better appreciation. The next lesson will guide you to approach the poem from different critical angles.

9.6 Comprehension Check Questions:

1. What are the features of Augustan age?
2. Write about the life of Pope as a student.
3. What are the conditions that led to the writing of the poem?
4. Write about the habits of high society women as described in the poem.
5. How does Pope describe the habits of men and women?
6. Write about the supernatural machinery.
7. What happened to Belinda? Was it a serious problem?
8. What are the names of sylphs mentioned?

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LESSON 10

ALEXANDER POPE'S THE RAPE OF THE LOCK - A CRITICAL STUDY

From the previous lesson you came to know about the age of Alexander Pope and the theme of the poem ***The Rape of The Lock.*** As you already know about the features of an epic, you can enjoy a mock-epic which has a lighter purpose. This lesson will discuss several critical aspects related to the poem.

10.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will

- Understand the nature and kinds of satire
- Know about Pope as a Satirist
- Understand the aspects of *The Rape of the Lock* as a social satire and a mock-epic

Structure of the Lesson

10.0 Objectives

10.1 Pope as a Satirist

10.1.1 Nature of Satire - Its Kinds

10.1.2 Pope as a Satirist

10.2 Factors of Pope's Satiric Genius

10.2.1 Pope and Dryden

10.3 The Rape of the Lock as a Social Satire

10.4 The Rape of the Lock as a Mock Epic

10.5 The Machinery in The Rape of the Lock

10.6 Summing Up

10.7 Comprehension Check Questions

10.8 References

10.9 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

10.1 Pope as a Satirist Or 'The Rape'as a Social Satire / "The Rape"as a Mirror of 18th Century Satirical Life/ Pope's View of the Ladies of His Age

10.1.1 Nature of Satire - Its Kinds

The word 'satire'is derived from the Latin word *"SATURA LANKS"*. It is the name of a plateful of the various fruits of the year, offered in worship to CIRES, the goddess of agriculture. From this fact satire came to mean a sort of miscellany.

"A satire is a literary work which searches out the faults of men or institutions in order to hold them up to ridicule"so says, William J. Long. According to Dryden "the true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction". A satire is meant for the reformation or correction of the human weaknesses, vices or follies.

A good satirist is a critic whose aim is to reform or correct human follies and the weapon which he uses for his purpose is that of laughter. He rarely attacks directly, but clothes his attack in allegory, fable, mock-heroic parody or burlesque. Concentration and brevity are the main contents to intensify the effect. So verse is a better medium for satire than prose. There are good satirists in prose also. Swift is one of the best English satirists in prose.

The satiric element differs from a comic one. Comedy evokes laughter as an end itself, while satire derides it. A satiric element uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt existing outside the work itself. Satire was first written partly in verse and partly in prose. It was developed by JUVENAL, HORACE and PERSIUS in Italy.

Satire may be of two kinds. (1) Formal (2) In formal or 'direct' and 'indirect' or 'personal' and 'impersonal'.

In the 'formal' or 'personal' satires the satiric voice speaks out directly in the first person. The Formal satire is of two types; (1) Horatian Satire (2) Juvenalian satire. In the Horatian satire the character of the speaker is that of a person who is urbane, witty and tolerant of the world. He uses a relaxed and informal language to evoke a smile at human follies and absurdities. Pope's *Moral Essays* and other essays contain a Horatian stance.

In Juvenalian satire, the stance of the speaker is that of a serious moralist. He uses a dignified and public style of utterance to decree modes of vice and error which are no less dangerous because they are ridiculous.

In 'Impersonal' satire the satirist passes from the individual to the type, from the personal to the Universal. It has a wider sweep. Individuals are used as examples of vices and follies that infect the age.

10.1.2 Pope as a Satirist

Pope survives by his satires. Satire predominates the works of Pope. He follows the Horatian mode of satire. Pope himself was conscious of his power and capacity as a satirist. He knew that he could shine out in his poetic branch more than inany other branches. He openly declared his role as a satirist in the following words.

> "Satire's my weapon but I'm too discreet-
> To fun amuck, and tilt at all I meet

I only wear it in aloud of Hectors
Thieves, super cargoes, sharpers and Directors".

Pope directed his satires against several classes of people. He was never afraid to

"Brand the bold front of shameless guilty men
Dash the proud Gamester in his gilded car
Bare the-mean Heart that lurks beneath a star".

He had the courage to strike boldly at corruption in high places.

"so proud, I am no slave

So impudent I own myself no knave".

The aim of Pope's satire was to amend vice by correction and reformation. He tried to follow the Dryden's definition of satire. There were various factors which gave a satiric turn to the genius of Pope. The spirit of the times favored the growth of this literary form. The age believed that the function of literature is not to entertain but also to reform. Authors tried to improve the manners and morals of the people. The poets and the critics of this age believed in and followed the models of literary standards of the classical Latin writers of the past.

They failed to realize the merit of the masters of old literature like Chaucer, Spenser and Shakespeare. They believed in gaudiness and in phraseology. They adhered to and perfected the closed couplet as the only possible form of any serious work in verse. The most common was satire.

10.2 Factors of Pope's Satiric Genius

The circumstances of Pope's life and his character also pre-disposed him to satire. He suffered from a number of disabilities. He was weak, sickly, and deformed. His life was a long disease and he had many enemies. His ill-health made him ill-tempered and peevish. He was quick to take offense. He was extremely vindictive. He stored up in his memory all the taunts and sneers of his enemies, and when the occasion came, he replied to them with virulence and brutality. The aim of much of his satire was to cause pain to his enemies. His vindictive nature didn't spare even ladies with whom he had once been on friendly terms. He had acunning and scheming nature..

Pope was a Catholic and Catholics in that age were looked down upon. Pope wanted to have his revenge upon the Protestants. He therefore used the weapons of satire to have his revenge.

Thirdly, Pope, in his life, was a man of extremely suspicious and irritable temperament. He could not put confidence in any one. His life was a series of petty intrigues, trickeries and deceptions. A man of such a temperament could not cultivate the habits of forgiveness. Most of the satires of Pope were the result of personal malice and enmity.

10.2.1 Pope and Dryden

'*The Rape of the Lock*' is not only a satire against Arabella - Fermour, but against the whole world of feminine frivolity. Through Arabella he satirized and censured the whole

range of the female sex. He blended the satirical mock-heroic vein with delicate fancy. Hazlitt called it "unmatched specimen of exquisite filigree work".

Pope's satire differs from that of Dryden. Dryden's '*Macflecknoe*' is a poem against Shadwell. But '*The Rape of The Lock*'is not a poem against any one. It opposes not a person, but a moral fault -- immoderate female pride.Another difference is that, every line in 'Macflecknoe' points out the humiliation of Shadwell, and the lines of 'The Rape of the Lock' do not insult all the women.

Dryden's object was to bring the downfall of Shadwell, but Pope's object is to conciliate everybody by means of mirth. Pope's object is not identical with Dryden's, when '*Macflecknoe*'and '*Dunciad*' are compared. The '*Dunciad* is not only an attack on bad writers and bad writing; it is Pope's pessimistic commentary on an important development of the civilization of his time. It is a bitter protest against the leveling down of literary standards.

His epistles and satires are the adaptations of Horace. His famous 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot'is now called as the 'Prologue to Satires'. Pope's satires are trenchant and direct. They are caustic and venomous. They contain the sweet venom which provides a good laughter to the reader and gives a dangerous bite to the satirized person. Thus Pope ranks high among the satirists of England and his place is with Dryden and Byron among the English satirists.

10.3 *The Rape of the Lock* as a Social Satire

The Rape of the Lock is Pope's first and finest satire. Wanton remarked about this poem"I hope it will not be thought as an exaggerated panegyric to say that *The Rape of the Lock* is the best satire, that it contains the truest and the liveliest picture of modern life, and that the subject is of a more elegant nature, more artfully conducted than any other Heroic comic poem".The *Rape of the Lock* is a social satire and the purpose of the poem, as Pope himself declared was 'to laugh at the little, unguarded foibles of the fair-sex". It is a satire upon feminine frivolity. In his essay on women, Pope frankly avers that "every woman at heart is a rake". Pope says, "Women in short are all frivolous beings whose one genuine interest is in love-making". Such satirical ideas are presented in *The Rape of the Lock.*

The social satire was prompted by trivial incidents. A lover (LORD PETER) raped his beloved's (ARABELLA FERMOUR- BELLINDA) lock. The lady was indignant and the two families fell off. A common friend Caryll asked Pope to write something to laugh away the anger of the lady, so that the Cordial relations between the two families are established once again. This was praised by even the worst critics of Pope. Hazlitt called it as "the most exquisite specimen of the filigree work". Dr.Johnson praised it as "the most airy, the most ingenious, the most delightful of all Pope's compositions".

The Rape of the Lock was a vivid little picture of society and a tremendous satirical weapon on the "Fair-Sex". Pope knew the fashionable life of the ladies more intimately than Addison. Addison is one of his 'Spectator' papers described the general condition of women in that society. "The toilet is their great scene of business ... their more serious occupations are sewing and embroidery". Pope has satirically presented their lives more intimately than Addison.

The ladies are the fashionable butterflies. 'A world of fashion is skillfully displayed in its gorgeous and attractive hives. Everywhere the emptiness is visible beneath the outward

splendor", so says, ELWIN. The beauty of Belinda, the details of her toilet, her troops of admirers etc., were beautifully described.

The Rape of the Lock is a mock epic. It is the triumph of the insignificant. At every step there is skillful mingling of the great with the trivial. Now let us examine the condition of the ladies and Pope's satiric touch of the times.

The fashionable ladies of the day left their bed pretty late in the day. Belinda also wakes up late. She is awakened by the 'timorous ray of the sun'. It denotes the laziness of the ladies who awake so late till their bodies are heated (bathed) by the sunshine. They had their maid servants to wait for them in the anti-chamber. Their duty was to wake them up by ringing the hand-bells and by knocking the slippers. Lapdogs were favourites and they lay idly with their mistresses in their beds. "Ombre"playing was their favourite game. After waking, ladies spent their time in toilet with the assistance of their servant maids. Jewels, cosmetics, powders, rows of pins, perfumes and paints lay on the toilet table along with the nicely bound copies of the Bible and love-letters (billet-doux). Their toilet tables became the "altars'. Bellinda, like all the ladies of her age, pays much (attention) in giving the final touches to her lips and cheeks. She shows much interest in curling her hairlets.

Thus adorned, the fashionable butterflies come to the fashionable spots in their gilt coaches. They assemble at Hyde-park. They spend their time in music, dance and rivalry. They take part in Ombre game and play with stakes. They care more for dresses, dances and gaieties of life than for their honour and their religion. They enjoy the company of troops of lovers. They accept lovers into their bed-rooms too. Coquetry was a part of their daily life. They try to look as beautiful as possible. Women's hearts are toy shops. Pope says, 'every woman is at heart a rake'. They are like grown up children, now attracted by one toy now and by another in the next moment.

"With varying vanities from every part,
They shift the moving toy shops of their heart".

Their vanities have no end. They love not for worth of character but for coaches, sword-knots and such other glittering bubbles.

"Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots, sword-knots strive,
Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive".

They are the 'inferior priestesses who worship the goddesses in their looking glasses". (Lessie Stephen's Opinion)

Coming to the condition of men, the satiric vein is not so harsh. It is an age of vain chivalry or feminine chivalry. The fashionable gentlemen of the times are the real fops, 'tailor made men' without an air of grand higher ideals. So that our "gentle, valiant"Baron rudely raped (cut) the lock from Bellinda's head. They are fops and gallants who are intent on love-making. They ride in coaches six and in sedan-chairs. They drink and gamble. They ogle at the ladies from the side boxes in the theatres. They speak an affected language. They are lovers of the fashionable type.

The picture of the Hampton court is also presented in this book.We can see its long canals, the delicate turf and the yew trees, we see the beaux and belles flocking in the court.

Thus *The Rape of the Lock* is a severe satirical weapon on the fashions, dresses, amorous intrigues, idle parting of women and mainly against the feminine frivolity.

The fashionable gentlemen lounging about in wide skirted coats and high heeled shoes, flaunting their snuff boxes and their Malacca canes have not been spared. The satire is strong and biting. Pope does not simply laugh at feminine frivolity but seems to take delight in ridiculing deliberately, beneath a thin cover of wit and pleasantry.

These are the aspects of social life presented in *The Rape of The Lock*. Thus *The Rape of the Lock is a satirical mirror which reflected the caricatures,* the follies of the human beings past and is reflecting these things *of the present and will reflect these things of the future.*

10. 4 The'Rape of The Lock 'as a Mock Heroic Poem or a Heroic Comical Poem or As a Parody of the epic.

The 18th century in English poetry saw an outburst of burlesques or parodies in and of Heroic style.Fielding's tragedies of 'Tom thumb' and Gay's 'Beggars' Opera' were burlesques of dramatic form. Cazamian opines "inthe classical period of the golden age of the parody, Alexander Pope was no exception to the general rule." His *Rape of the Lock* is a parody of the Heroic style and it is a Mock Heroic poem or a Heroic comical poem. The spirit of the Augustan age found its expression in imitating antiquity in a vein of mockery. A mock epic is a travesty of the leading features of the epic machinery, the lofty incidents, characters and style to the exaltation of a trivial subject. An epic may be loosely defined as a 'narrative in verse in which heroic actions are revealed in an elevated style'. When the exalted style and the manner of an epic are used for a trivial subject we get a 'mock epic'. Thus in a mock epic there is a 'contrast between the trivial theme and the lofty treatment'. (Prof. Cour Thope's Definition).

The Mock Epic is as old as the epic itself. There are some writers who attempted the burlesques as Mock Epics. The 'Battle of the Frogs and Mice' 'Lutrin Dispensary'are only a few examples of the Mock Epic before Pope. In writing '*The Rape of the Lock'*, Pope has attempted nothing new. He is a mere imitator of predecessors. But in his hands the genre of Mock Epic took a shape and wore a mantle of new style. His Mock Epic is more complete, more perfect, more proportioned and more delicate than any other forms of this kind. Many effective forms and devices are used in '*The Rape of the Lock*'. Hazlitt says, *"The Rape of the Lock* is the triumph of insignificance, the apotheosis of foppery and folly". The theme of *The Rape of the Lock* is cutting off a lock of a lady's hair. This subject is too trivial and too low to find out any epical treatment. The subject is ludicrously undeserving of a Heroic manipulation. Let us now note how Pope has succeeded in blending the Heroic subject with the theme of a Mock Epic:

1) In every Epic, the poet makes an invocation to the Gods or Goddesses in the opening lines of his poems. The purpose is serious. In a quite funny way. Pope, according to the epic convention, invokes the muse and proposes.
2) An epic is characterized by length and its story covers years. But Pope's mock heroic epic on the other hand is short and its action covers only a few hours.
3) Every epic has some peculiar passions. The passions of the '*Iliad*'areanger and terror. Aeneid has the soft and tender passions in its reign. Coquetry is the reigning passion in Pope's epic of Bellinda's agony about her 'stolen lock'.
4) An epic must contain many episodes. Pope also introduced several episodes in *The Rape of the Lock* such as the episode the 'game of Omber' which is the prelude to the central action. In Canto V the game of Omber is described through several similes.

5) The Hero of an Epic must be massive. He must be heroic in figure, in his labour and in his deeds. But Pope's poem has no hero but his poem is occupied by Bellinda's screams and flashes of lightning from her eyes and they remind us of an Epic Hero.

6) An epic poet always makes use of the supernatural machinery. In this aspect also Pope has successfully imitated his predecessors. Instead of the Gods and Goddesses of Homer and Virgil, and the Angels and the Devils of Dante and Milton, Pope has introduced the gnomes and sylphs of the ROSICRUSCIAN system. The Gods and Goddesses of the Epics are stupendous creatures. But Pope's sylphs and gnomes are tiny. They have the sun blazing insect wings. They sit on cards. They have thin glittering textures. (55 to65 lines) They are the mere body guards of Bellinda. They affect nothing in the poem. They are helpless and weak.

7) Ariel is personified as a supernatural being and also as the chief of them, like Satan in *'Paradise Lost'*. Satan threatens the inferior Gods and Ariel also threatens the Sylphs and gnomes. He also gives punishment to these beings. He also addresses them grandiloquently like Satan. (74 to 135; 123 to130 Imp)

8) An Epic generally has vows of heroes. He performs certain rights and says his prayers to please the celestial beings and to get their blessings for success in forthcoming valorous deeds. In this Mock Epic, Baron also propitiates the God of love and offers love trophies to him. He wants his blessings. It is described in the real Mock Epic fashion.

9) The Epic Hero goes out for some mortal battles and wins. But here, Baron goes out to commit the r*ape of the lock*.

10) In the Epic there should be combats. Here too we see a battle between Bellinda and Baron in the V canto. It is a very lively example of the Heroic type in a Mock Heroic vein. It is a battle fought with a pinch of snuff and a bodkin and the effect is ridiculous in the extreme.

11) The descriptions of the weapons in *The Rape of the Lock* are also in the Mock heroic way. The Epic hero has his arms and seven-fold shield to protect him from the assault of his enemy. Here Bellinda's chief weapon is her beauty and her seven-fold shield is her 'seven-fold fence'stiff with hoops and ribs of a whale. Her petty coat is indirectly compared to the shield of Ajax in '*Iliad*'. Ajax has a seven-fold shield.

12) It is a common feature of epics to present the visit of spirits to subterranean regions. Satan travels from the depths of Hell to his newly created world. In Spencer's epic, we have the descent of Duessa to the NETHER world. Pope has parodied this feature of the epic also. We have the travel of UMBRIEL to the cave of spleen to bring vexations of all sorts for Bellinda. Thus *The Rape Of the Lock* is a parody of the Epic.

10.5 The Machinery of The Rape of The Lock or The Supernatural Element in *The Rape of the Lock*

"The Machinery crowns the whole work"so says Lebossu. It is the introduction of some supernatural agency or personage in a poem. A number of poets had stressed its importance. No epic poem can possibly exist without the use of these machines. When a hero fails to extricate, by human weakness, the poet seeks relief from heaven and gives him the supernatural powers. That is the advantage of the use of 'machinery'.

Pope himself defined the word 'machinery'as a term to signify that part which the deities, angels and demons are made to act in a poem". The mechanism of the 'Machinery'is clearly discussed in a book called "LE COME DE GOBALIS"by Bayle, which is an account of the Rosicrucian philosophy. In this he argued the four orders of the spirits--the Sylphs, Gnomes, Nymphs and Salamanders. These four form the basis for the Machinery in The *Rape of the Lock*. According to the Rosicrucians, the four elements are inhabited by spirits of four different kinds.

1) The Sylphs are the spirits of air and they are the most good natured.

2) The Gnomes are the spirits of earth and they delight in mischief.

3) The Nymphs are the spirits of water.

4) And Salamanders those of fire. They were of both sexes and they did not show much interest in the deeds of human beings.

Pope adopted the Rosicrucian doctrine of spirits in his book. But he introduced several changes in the old conception. He set aside the gross and the mysterious origin of the spirits. He rather imported the Platonic doctrine about the human souls after the loss of their human bodies. He sub-divided these spirits into various classes according to his needs. Some worked in the upper regions of the purest air and some in Hell and some others were employed to attend the fair. Pope's Sylphs, Sylphids and all Gnomes display the influence of earlier poets of the Epics. They play a significant role and a useful part in the play. Their function is more delicate.They are the unseen protectors and the mischief makers to women. They help Bellinda in her decoration.

In an Epic the Machines are large and powerful. But in the '*Rape of the Lock'* they are made weak and tiny to create a mocking Epic. The Sylphs are diminutive beings. They are not seen. But they win forever. (40 to 50 lines). They have insect wings and fifty of them are required to form a circle round the petty coat of Bellinda. They preside over the toilet. "Save the powder from too rude a gale, steal from rainbows a brighter wash, curl their waving hair assist their blushes". They can assume either sex. Ariel is the in-charge of Bellinda's pet dog. When their bodies are divided they are airy substances again. "Fate urged the sheers and cut the Sylph in twain but airy substance soon unites again".

They can foretell the future. Ariel knows that some disaster threatens the brightest fair that day though he did not know the exact nature of the disaster. (100 to 115 lines). They are invisible to the mortals but they can look into thin hearts. They hover round them. They whisper some suggestion. They avoid them from doing bad. They play a vital role in the human affairs. Thus Ariel looks into the heart of Bellinda and finds 'an early lover lurking in her heart'.

The Sylphs are male and the Sylphids are female. They are the souls of dead women. Still they are greedy. They crave for the earthly things and affairs i.e., the card games, fashionable carriages, danceetc. They are kind and good natured. But the gnomes are bad. In this play Umbriel is a gnome. It goes to the underworld, to the cave of spleen and brings from there all sorts of vexations to pour over the head of Bellinda, because they are the guardians of lovely maidens. The Sylphs and Sylphids tried their best to safe guard Bellinda's beauty. They perform all sorts of services for the fair-sex. They enjoy friendship when there is chastity. The Sylphs and Sylphids become helpless when they observe an earthly lover lurking in the heart of Bellinda. It is only then the rape is affected.

"Suddenly he viewed, in spite of……retired".

They remain helpless and don't effect anything in this poem, for Bellinda doesn't follow the advice of Ariel to beware of a lover, a man.

DENNIS found some defects in the machinery of *The Rape of the Lock*. He observes,

"They are not taken from one system. In the first canto we hear about the Rosicrucian Visions; Sylphs, Gnomes and Salamanders. In the second one we meet with fairies, genii and daemons, beings which are known to the fanatic sophists. In the fourth canto, spleen and the phantoms are seen. They are derived from the powers of Nature. In the 5th canto we find the beings belonging to the Heathen region, i.e., Fate and Jove. Thus they belong to different regions and races. There is no unifying thread in their origin."

Pope's Machines contradict the doctrines of the Christian religion. They contradict all sound morality. There is no allegorical or sensible meaning in them. Instead of making the action wonderful and delightful, they render an extravagant, absurd and incredible touch.

Addison advised Pope against the introduction of the Machinery. Anyhow, Pope has played with them very skillfully though they belong to different races and regions. The Machinery enabled him to create the Mock Epic effect. All the Epic poets like Homer, Virgil, Tasso, Milton made use of the Machinery. Pope also parodied it. In epics, the Machines are strong and mighty but here they are tiny and weak. CUNNINGHAM expresses "In the Sylphs we witness a down scaling of the Epic Machinery. They are in perfect and abundant harmony with the spirit of the times. Without them the Mock-Epic would have remained a dull and trivial affair. They admirably served the purpose of the poet."

10.6 Summing Up

Hope the lesson has offered you the necessary inputs related to the poem as a satire and as a mock-epic. Compare and contrast the poem with *Paradise Lost* and try to observe how a mock-epic is being created with a trivial theme. Also go through the references and sources offered and you will develop more ideas about the poet and this famous poem.

10.7 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Write about the personal life of Alexander Pope.
2. Why did Pope choose satire as his medium?
3. What is Rosicrucian method?
4. What are the different kinds of satire?
5. Write about the works of Pope.
6. What is the reason for the trouble in the poem?
7. How can you say that the poem is a mock-epic?
8. Write about the machinery used by Pope in the poem.
9. What are the similes used by Pope in the epic style?
10. Write a brief critical note on the poem.

10.8 References

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10.9 Additional Sources

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LESSON- 11

HE ODES OFJOHNKEATS-1

(http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:John_Keats_by_William_Hilton.jpg)

11.0 Objectives

This lesson will help you to Understand

The features of the Romantic Age

Appreciate John Keats as a Romantic Poet

Understand the different aspects of John Keats as a Poet

Read and understand the poem *Ode to a Nightingale*

Structure of the Lesson

11.0 Objectives
11.1 A Brief Introduction to the Romantic Age
11.2 Life of John Keats
11.3 John Keats as a Poet
11.4. The Ode in English
11.5. Keats and his Odes
- **11.5.1 Keats' Medievalism**
- **11.5.2. Keats' Hellenism**
- **11.5.3 Keats as a Poet of Nature**

11.6 *Ode to a Nightingale* - Opinions of Critics
- **11.6.1 *Ode to a Nightingale – poem***
- **11.6.2. Analysis**

11.7 Summing Up
11.8 Comprehension Check Questions
11.9 References
- **11.9.1 Additional Resources**

Expansion of the Structure

11.1 A Brief Introduction to the Romantic Age:

'Romanticism' has nothing to do with the word 'romantic' used generally in the context of love. Romanticism is an artistic and philosophical movement that occurred worldwide refining the ways of the people of western culture in terms of sensibility.

England and Germany became the hubs of the Romantic Movement. It started with the publication of the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridgein1832, which marked the death of Sir Walter Scott and Goethe. It also marked the spectrum on the international scene with the poetry of Robert Burns and William Blake in England,the early writing of Goethe and Schiller in Germany and the great period of Rousseau's influential writings throughout Europe.

It was also the age of revolutions —the American in 1776 and the French in 1789, an age of upheavals in political,social and economic traditions.

Imagination.Nature,symbolism and myth, emotions, lyric poetry and the self became the important aspects of thought during this movement. It had deviated from the Neo-classical culture and established the individualistic nature of man.

The Romantics preferred boldness and the 'natural' things were presented in a 'supernatural' way (Coleridge) and 'supernatural' things were presented in a 'natural' way (Wordsworth). There were several paradoxical combinations.

The Romantics were ambivalent towards the 'real' social world around them. They were politically and socially involved and at the same time distanced themselves from the public. They lived in a world away from the real.

To be brief, Romanticism was a movement that marked the revolution in literature, philosophy,art,religion and politics from the Neo-classical and formal orthodoxy of the preceding period. It also marked the feeling of the artist and writer from restraint and rules of the earlier period. The major poets of the Romantic Age include William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and John Keats.

11.2 Life of John Keats:

John Keats was born on October 31, 1795. He was the eldest of the five children of a stable-keeper. He went to John Clarke's school at Enfield with "liberal outlook and progressive curriculum" and found a friend in Charles Cowden Clarke, the son of a school master. Keats developed interest in classics and history. He was remembered by his friends for his "extremes"— generosity, pugnacity, and a passion for reading. He lost his father in a riding accident in 1804, and his mother in 1810.

In 1811, John Keats became an apprentice at Guy's Hospital to a surgeon at Edmonton. During 1815-17, he continued his studies at the London hospitals but his heart was not in medicine and he felt that he was born to become a poet. Finally, he abandoned surgery for literature. Under the influence of Leigh Hunt and with the help of Clarke, Keats settled down to a literary life. Through the kindness of Hunt, several sonnets by Keats appeared in *The Examiner*.His poems in 1817, with all their immaturities, included the well-known sonnet *On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer*. But itdid not attract much attention. It was followed in 1818 by the long narrative poem *Endymion* which received warm praise

from his friends but was attacked savagely by *The Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine.*

The hostile reviews deeply wounded the poet and, in the opinion of some critics, hastened his death. But in fact Keats was a man of great courage and, instead of being crushed by adverse criticism, he went on with his work with the idea of producing poetry that the world should not let him die. As Matthew Arnold says, Keats had "dint and iron"in him. *Endymion* is romantic in subject, treatment and language. It contains an extravagant wealth of imagery and suffers from an excess of unnecessary details. But it also contains some remarkable passages of great beauty and charm.

The wretched circumstances of Keats's life make a pathetic reading. Exposure during a walking tour in Scotland and the strain of nursing his brother Tom, who died in December, 1818, brought about a breakdown in his health. He felt very depressed and downcast. To aggravate his misery, he fell passionately in love with a girl called Fanny Browne who did not respond to his love. The bitterness of this disappointment weighed heavily upon his already drooping spirits and broke his health.

Keats published only one more volume, *Hyperion And Other Poems,* 1820. This volume contains his great contributions to literature: the fragmentary *Hyperion, The Eve of St. Agnes,* the splendid odes *To Autumn, To a Nightingale, On Melancholy* and *On a Grecian Urn ;* and the ballad, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci.* All these are precious treasures of English poetry. Shelley was so impressed by the beauty and promise of *Hyperion* that he sent a generous invitation to Keats to come to Pisa and live with him; but Keats declined the invitation as he had little sympathy with Shelley's social and political views.

Young as he died, he was one of the most germinal poets, and left a deep mark on English literature. The first memorial to Keats was unveiled in the parish church of Hampstead on July 16, 1894, a bust sculptured by a Boston lady and presented by Americans. In 1909, the house in which Keats died was opened as a Keats –Shelley memorial. In connection with centenary celebrations, a movement was started which in 1925 acquired Lawn Bank, formerly Wentworth Place, Hampstead, where Keats lived during 1817-20, as a home for the Dike collection of relics. There the poet is said to have heard the nightingale of his famous ode. The Keats Museum was opened in 1931.

Referring to the circumstances of Keats's life, J.W. Beach writes:"There was, to begin with, the somewhat low life background of the livery-stable where his father worked. There was the want of refinement in his mother's character and the early death of both parents ; the uncongenial profession of medicine to which he was apprenticed, the vulgar companionship of young hospital attendants ; the sickness and death of his brother Tom, whom he nursed during the three months of his decline ; his own illness and his somewhat neurotic disposition ; his unhappy infatuation with Fanny Browne ; the ugly, confining streets of London ; and a general social tone and atmosphere that made him what critics called a 'Cockney'poet. It all must have added up to something from which his soul ardently craved relief".

W.H. Hudson observes, "Historically, Keats is important for three reasons. First, on the side of form and style he is the most romantic of the romantic poets, handling even his Greek themes with a luxuriance of language and a wealth of detail as far as possible removed from the temperance and restraint of Hellenic art. Here, in particular, we note his entire rejection of the classic couplet, for which, following the lead of his friend Leigh Hunt, he substituted the couplets of the loose romantic type. Secondly, more than any other great poet of his time, he represents the exhaustion of the impulses generated by the social upheaval and

the humanitarian enthusiasms of the Revolution. With him poetry breaks away from the interests of contemporary life, returns to the past, and devotes itself to the service of beauty. It is for this reason that he seems to stand definitely at the end of his age. Finally, his influence was none the less very strong upon the poets of the succeeding generation.

11.3 John Keats as a Poet:

Middleton Murray considers that pure poetry consists in 'the power so to express a perception that it appears at the same time to reveal new aspect of beauty and new aspect of truth', and the pure poet according to him is 'the highest of all poets, not because he turns his face away from life to devote himself to some abstract and ideal perfection, but precisely because he, more than any other kind of poet, submits himself steadily, persistently and unflinchingly to life. He, more than any other poet, has the capacity to see and to feel what life is. Because of this, the pure poet is the complete man'.

John Keats belongs to the younger group of the poets of the second part of the Romantic Period. Keats was more influenced by Spenser."Keats in his London suburb sang of Endymion and the Moon, of the magic casements and perilous seas", says Herford. Keats is the worshipper of beauty and is a conscious artist. He considers Shakespeare as the ideal.

Keats was a very careful artist. He revised and remodeled his poems and took utmost pains in polishing them. He uses the choicest and most appropriate diction. There are many jeweled phrases in his poems. The extraordinary appeal of Keats's poetry depends not only on his rich sensuousness, his lush imagery, and the passionate exaltation of his feelings, but also on his gift of phrase. The beauty of his phrases, the subtleties of rhythm in the combination of words and their evocative power compel the imagination of the reader to the mood which the poet seeks to produce in the reader.

Keats is the poet of Nature. He is subjective, lyrical and sensuous. An all embracing sensuousness is the determining element of the distinctive individuality of Keats's genius. Keats's sensuousness is serious, comprehensive and full blooded. The visible world for Keats is chiefly the world of nature. He is deeply interested in the natural phenomena. Nature is the perennial source of his poetry. He is a great pains taking artist. Unlike the other Romantics, he chisels each word before using it in his poems. He has the architectonic design in choosing the words. His poetry consists of clear- sightedness and lucidity. There is a pictorial quality and clarity in Keats' poetry. He is imaginative. He is romantic and narrative and he is a medievalist. He has the Hellenic spirit in his veins, in his blood and from his birth. He is a genius self-taught.

11.4 The Ode in English:

In ancient Greek literature, an *Ode* was a long lyric poem sung to the accompaniment of dance and music. In Greek poetry there were two forms called: Horatian and Pindaric. The first one derived its name from its imitation by Horace. It consists of a series of uniform stanzas like those written by Alcaman, Sappho, etc.; and the other, called the Doric Ode, also Pindaric, was designed for singing by groups of voices, with its three-fold structure, strophe, anti-strophe, and epode. The second was the variety adopted by the great Greek dramatists. In English literature, the Choric or Pindaric Ode is imitated by Congreve, Gray, and other 18th century writers. The form is found in such imitations of classical tragedy as Mr. Arnold's Merope and Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*. The elaborate *Epithalamion* of Spenser is the earliest type in English of the Horatian ode; Collins' *Ode to Evening*, Wordsworth's *To Duty,* Shelley's *To the West Wind* andKeats's *Odes* are examples of the regular and simple Horatian

type. A mixed type called the Irregular Ode arose in English literature with Cowley who failed to understand the Strophic arrangement of the ancients. Dryden's *Ode* on *St. Cecelia's Day,* Wordsworth's *On the Intimations of Immortality,* and Tennyson's*Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* are noble triumphs of this irregular type.

11.5 Keats and His Odes:

The great *Odes* of Keats such as *To Psyche, To the Nightingale, On a Grecian Urn, To Autumn* are of the Horatian type, but with elaborate metrical scheme. Some of them are inspired by the old Greek world of imagination and art, some by the moods of the poet's own mind and some by his romantic dreams. Taken together the *Odes* are the proof of his skill in construction and harmony. "Everything here co-operates to enchant a sensual and dreamy contemplation: the outlines, the colour, the emotion, and the melody; the tone has a smooth suavity, and yet is free from any excess of softness or ease: indeed it is constantly relieved by notes of vigor".

Keats survives by his odes. They are the peaks of his poetic achievement. They lead us into personal contact with the mind of Keats. Human life is brief but 'art' is permanent. If Wordsworth spiritualizes Nature, Shelley intellectualizes it. But Keats expresses nature through the senses –the colour, the smell, the touch and the pulsating music. Sensuous beauty is an obsession with Keats.

The great odes show the matured poetic power of Keats. They are known for pictorial richness, sensuous beauty, magical felicity of diction and a feeling of repose. There are many phrases and words which show Keats at his poetic best.

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE is a fine blend of reverie and reality. *Ode to Autumn* is a triple symphony of sound, sight and smell. It is a glorious description of Autumn. *Ode on a Grecian Urn* tells us about the permanence beauty. There are many glorious lines which show the shaping splendor of Keats, the artist.

Next to Shakespeare, Keats makes us realize the oneness of beauty and truth. Keats attempts a classical variety of the Ode— Pindaric or Horatian. He became a modern ode writer, attempting the stanzaic form. We see the Hellenic spirit pervading in Keats'Odes-mainly in his *'Psyche'* and the *'Grecian-Urn'*. They are the reflections of the poet's innermost sensuous mind.

11.5.1 Keats'Medievalism

Keats in his poetry often takes the reader to the medieval world of romantic mystery. His imagination roams in the medieval world of romantic knights and slim damsels. Unable to endure the lifelessness, the ugliness and meanness of his time, he turned his back on it and sought the glory that he needed in the stories of old Romance, in the far-off loveliness of Greece.

11.5.2 Keats' Hellenism

Keats was a Greek by temper and mood. There were two elements in the condition of their times which irritated the romantic poets. One was that modern science had deprived nature of beauty by depriving it of life. The other was that worldliness of heart had robbed men of the child's unconscious love of the loveliness of the universe. And poet like Keats, had fled to Greece to find the divine element of life and of childhood in the world.

11.5.3 Keats as the Poet of Nature:

Keats was one of the supreme poets of Nature. To Wordsworth Nature is a living soul with power to influence man for good or ill. Keats neither gives a moral life to Nature, as Wordsworth did, nor attempts to ask beyond her familiar manifestations, as Shelley did. Shelley is the poet "of sky and sea and cloud,the gold of dawn and the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.The world of Nature that he paints is rarely a world that we know". But in Keats's Nature poetry, realism or the quest for pure truth informs every detail. He is the predecessor of the Tennysonian school because all his Nature poetry is based on exact knowledge, and the knowledge of a man deliberately observing and storing up the minutest details of what he sees.

Keats'treatment of Nature is intrinsically different from that of his contemporaries. As is pointed out, "He loved and interpreted nature more for her own sake, and less for the sake of sympathy which the human mind can read into her with its own workings and aspirations. He had grown up neither like Wordsworth under the spell of lake and mountain nor in the glow of millennial dreams like Shelley, but London-born and the Moorgate young man was gifted, as if by some mysterious birth-right, with a gifted insight into all the beauties, and sympathy with all the life of the woods and fields". The surprise of a town-bred child in its first field of buttercups, and the rapture of a lover gazing on the face of a beloved may be said to represent, in combination, Keats'attitude towards Nature. His organic sensibility, that diffused consciousness of physical well-being which, with the tendency that Hume emphasizes of the human mind, 'to spread itself on external objects'gives an imaginative mind, life and personality to the objects described, is less strong in Keats than in Wordsworth and Shelley. But he surpasses them both in the acuteness of his special senses.

11.6 *ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE* - Opinions of Critics

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE is the loveliest poem of Keats. Different critics commented on its greatness in different ways:

"It is unsurpassed in the English language for its sheer loveliness. It is a poem of midnight, and sorrow and beauty. Its pattern is intricate." —Middleton Murray.

"This ode is the greatest, as concerned composition, that Keats made, and is the richest in variety of passionate expression." —Elton.

"I could not name an English poem of the same length which contains so much beauty as this ode."—Robert Bridges.

Here is the poem for reading:

11.6.1 *Ode to a Nightingale* –Poem

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

Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

II

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

III

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

IV

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

V

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

VI

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

VII

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

VIII

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

11.6.2 Analysis:

"My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains my sense"-

This is the poet's condition when he listens to the Nightingale in the midnight. His heart-ache comes from the excessive happiness in participating with the bird's happiness. The heart is the organ of feeling, and of humanity. It is the part of the body in which the excessive flow of the feeling is translated into physical ache. But drowsiness steals over him as though he had drunk some 'poison' or 'hemlock'. But it is not created by taking any poison. The happiness in feeling the bird's song acted as a sedative. At the thought he asserts himself, "O for a draught of vintage". He calls for a 'beaker full with beaded bubbles winking at the brim". The first stanza emphasizes the strength of the inner feelings of the poet.

And regarding "the purple-stained mouth", he wants to drink the wine what Blake would have called 'the spiritual sensations' of wine that would make glad, the heart of man. The poet wants to drink the nectar of the birds'song which comes from its purple-stained mouth. He wants to drink it. That draught he longs for, would carry him out of the world, in to the forgetfulness of human sorrows. He wants, 'to fade away in to the forest dim'.

In the third stanza Keats keeps his stress on his particular and personal griefs. He explains 'the weariness, grief and the fret'of this murky world. Here, in this world the "palsy shakes us" and leads us into the sad struggles and at last it gives us the 'grey hairs'.

The youth that 'grows pale and specter-thin and dies' is his dearly loved brother Tom, who had died but five months before. The 'Beauty's lustrous eyes'are of Fanny Browne and 'the new love that can't look at them beyond tomorrow'is Keats own new love which had already become an agony by his premonition that he too was doomed to follow the way of his brother who suffered from tuberculosis. The stanza is tense with emotion or personal suffering controlled by his poetic genius.

And in the fourth stanza the poetic genius of Keats takes its full swing:

"Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards, But on the viewless wings of poesy", he flies to the realm of forgetfulness and immortality,where the Nightingale dwells and about which it sings. "The Queen Moon is on her throne in all her splendor clustered by all the starry fays". There is light everywhere in the Heaven and the night is tender but here in this realm of the nightingale, there is no light except (save) what glimmers down when the gentle breeze moves the thick green canopies

He fails to see the flowers at his feet. In the sweet 'scented gloom', he guesses each sweet flower. He hears the 'murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves'. He becomes 'half-conscious'.His poetic genius transports him. He has imaginatively passed through a death flown on the wings of imaginations to the Nightingale's' immortality.' His soul is poured forth with her soul in her ecstasy, but the recoil comes. If he were intended to die, he would have not heard the song.

An added depth and richness of experience is given:

"Now more than ever seems it rich to die

To cease upon the mid-night without pain".

He sees the song and bird as one. The bird becomes pure song and inherits the eternity of beauty.

"Thou wast not born to death, Immortal Bird !

No hungry generations can tread thee down.

The song of the bird is the voice of eternity, "Sounding in the ear of high and low-", bringing solace to "Ruth in tears amid the alien corn" and it is the same enchanting voice," The same that oft-time hath charm'd magic casements".The imaginative vistas lead us through the verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways and open to the perilous seas of thought and experience.

Gradually the bird's 'plaintive anthem'fades 'past the near meadows, on the still stream, up the hill side, and now 'tis buried deep'.Keats finds himself recalled to painful actualities; his imagined escape from temporal reality becomes deceptive. The bird's song becomes to him a 'plaintive anthem'.

The Nightingale's song is the symbol of eternity. And it is stained by the poet's despair. It stands as if it were caught and enmeshed in the still sad music of humanity. Prof. Middleton Murray says-"its marvel is that it holds suspended in a moment of absolute beauty the tension between Mortality and Immortality between Time and Eternity, between Life and death. It denies nothing of human experience, and it makes a great affirmation".

The poem is remarkable for its uniform level of exaltation, its organic unity,its vivid pictures, its rapturous music, its verbal magic and its concentrated thoughts and epithets such as 'sun-burnt mirth', 'beaded bubbles winking at the brim, and 'alien corn' etc., It is sheer poetry which is incantation,and its suggestive appeal is unlimited.

John Middleton Murray, in his book, *Keats and Shakespeare*, admires the miraculous sweep of the imagination by which the nightingale is suddenly endowed with immortality. He writes:"Shakespeare himself never made a more perfect or more dazzling flight of the imagination. The nightingale is mortal as any son of man. So speaks the rational mind; but the poetic mind is of another order : it can move sovereign through the dimensions, it can impose eternity on the temporal, it reveals miracles by performing them. In no poem is the ecstatic self-abandon of the poet more in evidence than in this ode. The stanza-form in which it is written is in itself a beautiful invention. It consists of ten lines, which are iambic pentameter except the shortened eight-line which is trimeter, skillfully introduced to redeem the rather long stanza of five-foot lines from monotony and also to throw into stronger relief the inevitable beauty of the last two lines in each verse. Its intricate rhyme-plan which ever repeats and yet varies its chimes so as to keep the ear ever expectant is a-a-b-a-b-c-d-e-c-d-e".

The poem is "immortal and no hungry generations can tread it down".

11.7 Summing Up

Hope you have got a basic understanding about the Romantic Age and its chief poets along with an introduction to the study of John Keats. The sensuous imagery of John Keats makes him a unique poet. We advise you to read the poems repeatedly for a better understanding and appreciation.

11.8 Comprehension Check Questions

1.What is meant by 'Romanticism'?

2.How is the Romantic Age different from the Neo- Classical period?

3.What are the features of the Romantic Period?

4.Who are the major poets of the Romantic Period?

5.Comment on the tragic life of John Keats.

6.What is 'Hellenism'?

7Comment on the sensuous aspects of the poem *Ode to a Nightingale*.

8 Is Keats an escapist?

9.Summarise the poem in your own words.

10.What are the images presented in the poem?

11.9 References

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11.9.1 Additional Sources

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LESSON 12

JOHN KEATS - 2 (ODE ON A GRECIAN URN)

12.0 Objectives

After going through this lesson,you will

- Understand the impact of Greek literature on Keats' mind
- Appreciate the poem with its different images

Structure of the Lesson

12.0 Objectives

12.1 Keats and Greek Literature

12.2 *Ode on a Grecian Urn* –Poem

12.3 *Ode on a Grecian Urn* –Analysis

12.4 Summing Up

12.5 Comprehension Check Questions

12.6 References

12.7 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

12.1 Keats and Greek Literature

Keats's boyish enthusiasm had been nourished by his Elizabethan reading, by Leigh Hunt, by the *Elgin Marbles*, and by Wordsworth. One reason for Keats's high regard for *The Excursion* would be the account in the fourth book of the Greek religion of Nature and its imaginative expressionin myth. Classical myth had been a very rich element in Renaissance poetry from Spenser to Milton, but had been blighted by Augustan rationalism. It revived with the romantic religion of Nature and the imagination. Keats's *Sleep and Poetry* contains echoes of Wordsworth's sonnet, "The World is too much with Us."

Keats had no first-hand knowledge of Greek literature. He derived his knowledge of the Greek classics from translations and books of reference like Chapman's translation of Homer, and Lempriere's *Classical Dictionary.* His sonnet on *Seeing the Elgin Marbles* reveals the important influence exerted on him by Greek sculpture. According to a critic, *Hyperion* is in poetry what the Elgin Marbles are in sculpture. The calm grandeur of Greek art, its majesty and symmetry and simplicity, its economy of ornament and subordination of parts to the whole, came to Keats through his knowledge of these marbles. This influence is most obvious in the two odes, *On Indolence* and *On a Grecian Urn.*

Keats is a Greek, in his manner of personifying the forces of Nature. His Autumn is divinity in a human shape: she does all kinds of work, and directs every operation of harvest. 'Whoever wandered into the lonely places of the wood might expect to hear his pipe or even

to catch a glimpse of his hairy hands and puck-nosed face ; and the Pan of Keats's ode is half-human, too, as he sits by the riverside or wanders in the evenings in the meadows. Keats has "contrived to talk about the gods much as they might have been supposed to speak". The world of Greek paganism lives again in his verse, with all its frank sensuousness and joy of life, and with all its mysticism.

Keats is sensuous. His odes are the reflections of his innermost mind. But the *'Ode on a Grecian Urn'*is somewhat significantly different. This is an indoor poem whereas Keats's other poems *"Ode to the Nightingale', 'Ode to the Autumn', 'Ode to Psyche'and 'On Melancholy'* are the outdoor poems. This Poem deals with 'art' especially with a man-made work of art. It doesn't't deal with Nature. Keats has the Hellenic spirit. His mind responds to the examples of the Greek art. Its style and design are carefully observed by Keats and are beautifully recreated by him in the form of verbal pictures. Here in this poem too, we see the architectonic skill of Keats. This Ode is a network of sound patterns of assonance and of deliberate echoes. The purposeful aim of the poet is neatly portrayed with a miraculous effect.

Commenting on the message and the artistic excellence of the Ode on a Grecian Urn, Middleton Murray writes in his book, *Keats and Shakespeare*, "the same acceptance, the same triumph through despair (as in *Ode to a Nightingale*) is in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, of which the final words are so often and so pitifully misunderstood as the utterance of a sort of aestheticism:

> Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
>
> Than ours, a friend to man, to whom you say'st,
>
> 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty', -that is all
>
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

If Nightingale's song delighted and depressed the poet, the beauty of this antique Urn enchanted and excited him. In this poem, the sense of the Eye and the sense of the Ear are magnificently maintained."

12.2 Ode on A Grecian Urn –Poem

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,

Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,

Sylvan historian, who canst thus express

A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape

Of deities or mortals, or of both,

In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?
Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!
Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.
Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?

And, little town, thy streets for evermore

Will silent be; and not a soul to tell

Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede

Of marble men and maidens overwrought,

With forest branches and the trodden weed;

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought

As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!

When old age shall this generation waste,

Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe

Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

12.3 *Ode on a Grecian Urn* - Analysis:

The Urn's untarnished beauty after many centuries is stressed in the very first lines. Its beauty is inviolate. It is the foster-child of 'silence and slow time'. The words -"silence and Slow-time" recall the time in its passive aspect, as distinguished from its active, destructive aspects. These words are suggestively shaped and deliberately organized. It gives much more effect than "My heart aches". The 'Urn'is the sylvan historian, as, on it is depicted the scene of woodland commemorating a pastoral festival. The scene is depicted with a border of leaves. The leaf pattern was common on Greek vases. This delineation is sweeter than poetry. Gods and men in beautiful valleys, rustic simplicity, homely joys, maidens and their wild ecstasies are all painted on the Urn. This poem is a piece of artistic panache (sense of style). Keats has the sense of self-consciousness. It is one of the poem's most notable achievements. The Grecian Urn forms the perfect symbol.

Art captures the moment and makes it eternal. Art freezes the current of time but in life songs end, youth passes, trees become bear, love diminishes and beauty fades. 'Life' is brief but 'Art' is long. Heard melodies are sweet but physical. Unheard melodies are sweeter and spiritual. Spiritual love sings and cannot fade. It is eternal. Perennial melodies are evergreen, young, warm and passionate.Such unchanging love is depicted on the Urn. It has no painful after-effects. It is divine. Human love is desolate. Human life seems imperfect, momentary and transient. But the Urn is only art. Its great limiting defect is that it never moves, that its human beings never become alive with the breathing life of a living, enjoying and suffering human creature. The lover on the Urn cannot kiss. The perfection of the 'Urn'is a wonderful idea. An idea which teases us because of its very impossibility. But his

lady love's beauty cannot fade, so that there is no grievance for him. His love is happier than the feverish and panting human love, yet there is also the poignant desolation.

The happy boughs cannot shed their leaves. The young lover can never kiss. His love never fades. The unwearied, happy melodist sings his piping songs forever fresh and forever new. The love of enjoying joy is ever panting (eager), ever young and ever warm. These are the symbols of earthly paradise. Love is compared to a young heifer (cow). It is lead to the green altar to be sacrificed there in more ways than one.

The Urn has a complex meaning and it is found in the first line. "Thou still un ravished bride of quietness." The word 'still'means both 'motionless' and 'yet'. The Urn is standing as still as a bride at the altar, perfectly'virginal'and is'yet unravished', as though it is like a bride whose marriage has never been consummated. The result is a wonderfully compressed double sense, a rich symbiosis in which the Urn seems perfect and virginal, yet also uncreative and sterile". (From J.R. Watson)

The Urn has symmetry and beautiful sculpture. So that he addresses it as 'O Attic shape, fair attitude". The silent forms and patterns on the urn tease us out of thought that frustrates our attempts to understand concepts like 'eternity'. The notion of eternity is difficult for ephemeral mortal creatures to appreciate. The Urn is called 'cold pastoral' as a pastoral scene is depicted on it. The *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is not a dream of unattainable beauty. And also it is not the symbol of an impossible bliss beyond mortality. It stands detached and immobile and it is not subjected to the ravages of time. So it is cold. Keats believes that what imagination ceases as beauty must be truth. Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream-he awoke and found it true. "Beauty is truth, Truth is Beauty:. This famous passage is the life-creed of Keats .himself who says elsewhere"A thing of beauty is a joy forever".

Ode on a Grecian Urn takes up the thought of the seventh stanza of the *Ode to a Nightingale*. Its motto is : mortal beauties pass away, but not those of art. It is a much more objective and descriptive poem than the 'Nightingale'. The poet's momentary emotional state enters less into the poem. He is concerned to establish at least one enduring value below the sphere of the moon, and he finds it in the existence of the beauty of art. It is the only way in which human feeling and natural loveliness can be given lasting significance. The happy boughs that cannot shed their leaves and the lover who can never kiss, but whose love can never fade, are types of the only earthly paradise.

Robert Bridges claims of Keats 'the supreme and quintessential poetic gift, and he defines pure poetry as 'the power of concentrating all the far-reaching resources of language on one point, so that a single and apparently effortless expression rejoices the aesthetic imagination at moments when it is most expectant and exacting, and at the same time astonishes the intellect with a new aspect of truth'. It is a fine definition of pure poetry any critic has ever given, and one is immediately struck with its fidelity to Keats'own dictum at the close of the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* :

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

The two other Odes also reflect in abundant measure the harmonious mingling of these two. In the *Ode to a Nightingale*, Keats has achieved a marvelous synthesis. The poem is as perfect as a Greek statue, and has all the mystery and colorfulness we associate with

medieval romance. Keats has indeed managed to conjure up a lovely dream land where all that is beautiful in the two worlds find a place. The same remarks apply with even greater force to the other poem, *Ode to Autumn*. There is a dignity and loftiness about this Ode which we normally expect only in the masterpieces of Greek art, Keats had introduced into such a framework all the sensuous beauty of medieval romance. The atmosphere of the season has nothing somber about it. It has charm all its own and is lavishly endowed with colour, perfume, sound and movement.

This poem moves through a Spenserian land scape of the mind, speaking Philosophically, beauty is the aesthetic absolute, that is, '*Anando Brahma',* which is timeless and space- less. It is beyond space and time, but human experience is within the spatiotemporal continuum. Keats equates poetic beauty with aesthetic absolute.

12.4 Summing Up

Hope you observed the difference between the two poems *Ode to a Nightingale* and *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. This poem speaks about the paradoxes and has certain enigmatic lines. It requires a very thorough and repeated reading for a better comprehension and appreciation.

12.5 Comprehension Check Questions

1. What is Hellenism?

2. What does the Urn portray?

3. How does Keats speak about the permanence of art?

4. What are the images presented by Keats that are related to life?

5. Is Keats a poet of nature? Justify.

6. Does the poem carry a note of pathos? Explain.

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Lesson 13:

ODE TO AUTUMN

13.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will be able to

- Understand the conditions that led to the creation of the poem
- Appreciate the different images of Autumn described by the poet and
- Analyse the theme of the poem

Structure of the Lesson

13.0. Objectives

13.1 Introduction to the Poem

13.2 *Ode to Autumn*– Poem

13.3 Analysis of the Poem

13.4 Summing Up

13.5 Comprehension Check Questions

13.6 References

13.7 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

13.1 Introduction to the Poem

Ode to Autumn is the perfect piece of Keats' workmanship and it claims the highest place. It is purely objective and descriptive. The emotion, fused completely on the object, expresses through itself completely. It presents the season of 'ripeness and fulfillment'. Autumn, if seen poetically, is 'the prelude to winter'. Keats sees it as a 'still pause in time, when everything has reached its perfection and also 'ripeness to the core'.

In a letter written to Reynolds from Winchester, in September, 1819, Keats says: 'How beautiful the season is now--How fine the air. A temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather--Dian skies--I never liked stubble-fields so much as now--Aye better than the chilly green of the spring. Somehow, a stubble-field looks warm--in the same way that some pictures look warm. This struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it.'

Harold Bloom calls it "one of the subtlest and most beautiful of all Keats's odes, and as close to perfect as any shorter poem in the English Language." Allen Tate agrees that it "is a very nearly perfect piece of style"; however, he goes on to comment, "it has little to say." The extraordinary achievement of this poem lies in its ability to suggest, explore, and develop

a rich abundance of theme without ever ruffling its calm, gentle and lovely description of autumn.

John Keats Wrote Ode "To Autumn" on September 19, 1819. He wrote several odes, which are his greatest poetic achievements. With the exception of "To Autumn" which he wrote in September, he wrote all the odes between March and June of 1819. During this time, he was struggling with a fatal illness as well as mourning the death of his brother. He also had an intense love affair with Fanny Browne, who later became his fiancée. Sadly, John Keats died from tuberculosis at the age of 25 in 1821.

13.2 Ode to Autumn– Poem

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!

Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;

Conspiring with him how to load and bless

With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;

To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,

And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;

To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells

With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,

And still more, later flowers for the bees,

Until they think warm days will never cease,

For Summer has o'erbrimmed their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?

Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,

Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;

Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,

Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook

Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;

And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep

Steady thy laden head across a brook;

Or by a cider-press, with patient look,

Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, -

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day

And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn

Among the river sallows, borne aloft

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;

Hedge-crickets sing, and now with treble soft

The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;

And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

13.3 Analysis of the Poem:

In the first stanza, Keats describes the bounty of Autumn. Autumn is the 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness'. It is the 'close bosom friend of the maturing sun'. It conspires with the sun to load the fruits with juices and to bend the trees full with apples'. The ripening continues and the cells of the bees are 'over brimmed'; yet the ripening continues: 'budding more and still more later flowers for the bees". Thus through the imagery the poem suggests a prolonged fulfillment.

In the second stanza, autumn is personified in a variety of attitudes. But the dominant image is of Autumn as a harvester.Because,it sits motionless and appears "sitting careless on a granary floor". Autumn feels drowsy or sleepy with the fume of poppies "on a half-reaped furrow". Finally, Autumn is seen near a 'ciderpress' and watches the last drops oozing hour by hour. This stanza presents two images. The drowsy Autumn and the Autumn with a laden head across a brook. The watching of the last oozing suggests that the harvest is "drawing to a close".

The third stanza presents a tone of tenderness, and the sad music of autumn. The poet asks Autumn"where are the songs of spring?" But the question is followed by a consoling answer. "Think not of them, thou hast thy music too". Then, an image of a day is presented. Like Autumn, the day is about to end and death is accompanied by a fulfillment. This stanza proceeds with the image of death and its songs. The symbol of Autumn compels the attitude of contemplation. The poet says indirectly that "life in all its stages has certain identity and beauty which man can appreciate by dis-engaging his own ego". The personified figure of Autumn has the concrete images of life". Such is the music of Autumn.

Hough in his book, *The Romantic Poets*, writes, "It is in sense a return to the mood of the 'Ode on Indolence'– making the moment sufficient to itself. It is the most perfect in form and detail of the odes, and also the most difficult to penetrate below the surface, for it is apparently the most purely objective and descriptive. The emotion has become completely fused with the object, and expresses itself completely through it. There are no questions and no conflict in the poem : the season of ripeness and fulfillment is seen as though it is quite

final. Autumn as a poetical symbol is commonly the prelude to winter. Keats sees it as a still pause in time, when everything has reached fruition and 'ripeness is all'. The old question almost raises its head in the last stanza :

> Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?
>
> Think not of them, thou hast thy music too.

'To Autumn' is the most impeccable of his odes,remarkable for the fitness of its thought and music to the season it celebrates and also for the beauty of autumn in the second stanza. And though it is the briefest of his odes, the evolution of thought is perfectly logical and distinct".

13.4 Summing Up

You should have by now observed that this poem is different from the other two poems, ' Nightingale ' and ' Grecian Urn'. This is not a complex poem and it only describes the Autumn season from different angles. Autumn is personified and Keats describes autumn as a harvester and a gleaner. Keats also describes the music of autumn.

13.5 Comprehension Check Questions

1. When did Keats write this poem?
2. What are the differences between this poem and the other two you have read?
3. How does Keats describe 'autumn'?
4. What are the sights and sounds described in the poem?
5. What is the music of autumn according to Keats?

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LESSON 14

ODE TO PSYCHE BY JOHN KEATS

14.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will

- Understand the background to the poem
- Appreciate the images used in the poem and
- Know about Keats as a sensuous poet

Structure of the Lesson

14.0 Objectives

14.1 Introduction to the Poem

14.2 The Legend of Psyche

14.3. *Ode to Psyche*– Poem

14.4. *Ode to Psyche – Analysis*

14.5. Summing Up

14.6. Comprehension Check Questions

14.7. References

14.8. Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

14.1 Introduction to the Poem:

"Ode to Psyche", was the first of his major odes of 1819. This poem is an experiment in the ode structure. "Ode to Psyche" is important because it is Keats's first attempt at an altered sonnet form that would include more lines and would end with a message or truth. Also, he did not want the poem to be based simply around that message, so he incorporated narrative elements, such as plot and characters, along with a preface to the poem. Of these additions, the use of a preface was discontinued in his next odes along with the removal of details that describe setting within the poems; they would only be implied within later odes.

In a letter to his brother, Keats wrote that this was the first poem with which he had taken even moderate pains. He believed that the poem would read more richly because of the leisurely manner in which he had written it. He also explained in the letter that 'Psyche' was not embodied as a goddess before the time of Apuleius, the Platonist, who lived after the Augustan age, and that the goddess was never worshipped with any of the ancient fervor. Keats did not wish to let a Greek goddess remain neglected. He, therefore, wrote this poem as a tribute to her.

14.2 The Legend of Psyche:

Psyche was such a beautiful damsel that Venus became jealous of her. Venus sent Cupid to make Psyche fall in love with some ugly creature, but Cupid himself fell in love with her. He placed her in a palace, but only visited her in the dark and forbade her fromany attempts of seeing him. Her sisters, out of jealousy, told her that her lover was a monster and would devour her. One night she secretly lighted a lamp, and looked at Cupid when he was asleep. Amazed and agitated at the sight of his beauty, she let fall on him a drop of oil from the lamp, and thus woke him up. There upon, the god left her, angry at her disobedience. Psyche, lonely and repentant, searched for her lover all over the earth. Venus imposed various superhuman tasks upon her which, however, she was able to accomplish, except the last. Jupiter, at Cupid's entreaty, at last consented to her marriage to her lover, and she was taken to heaven and deified. The myth symbolizes the purification of the human soul by passion and suffering.

Psyche is the Greek word for the soul. Keats seems to regard Psyche not only as the personification of the human soul but also as the personification of beauty.

14.3 *Ode To Psyche*- Poem

O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung

By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,

And pardon that thy secrets should be sung

Even into thine own soft-conched ear:

Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see

The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?

I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,

And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,

Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side

In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof

Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran

A brooklet, scarce espied:

Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,

Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,

They lay calm-breathing, on the bedded grass;

Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;

Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,

As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
    At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love:
        The winged boy I knew;
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?
        His Psyche true!
O latest born and loveliest vision far
    Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!
Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,
    Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
        Nor altar heap'd with flowers;
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
        Upon the midnight hours;
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
    From chain-swung censer teeming;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
    Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.
O brightest! though too late for antique vows,
    Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
    Holy the air, the water, and the fire;
Yet even in these days so far retir'd
    From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
    Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspir'd.
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
        Upon the midnight hours;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet

From swinged censer teeming;

Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat

Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane

In some untrodden region of my mind,

Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,

Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:

Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees

Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;

And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,

The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;

And in the midst of this wide quietness

A rosy sanctuary will I dress

With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,

With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,

With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,

Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:

And there shall be for thee all soft delight

That shadowy thought can win,

A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,

To let the warm Love in!

14.4 *Ode to Psyche - Analysis*

The ode is addressed to Psyche. Psyche is the Greek word for the soul. The legend of Psyche depicts that Psyche was a damsel, a king's beautiful daughter with whom Cupid, the god of love, fell in love and who was after many vicissitudes united with him. It was only in the 2nd century A.D; Psyche was given the status of divinity. For this reason,Keats refers to her as the 'latest born of all the gods and goddesses' who had their abode on Mount Olympus. She is fairer than 'Phoebes' sapphire regioned star'. Keats deplores for the fact that Psyche has never been duly worshipped. Hence, in this Ode, he offers himself as her worshipper.

He seems to regard Psyche as the personification of Beauty, rather than of the human soul which she is normally believed to symbolize.

The remarkable thing in this poem is the concrete and sensuous imagery. It is one of the chief characteristic features of Keats's poetry. First he gives a lovely picture of Cupid and Psyche lying in an embrace in deep grass beneath "the worshipping roof of leaves and trembled blossoms by the side of a brooklet." There are flowers of all different colours. Keats is originally sensuous. Another sensuous picture follows in the lines where the lovers are described "as if disjoined by soft handed slumber", "ready still past…out number".

Couched side by side

In deepest grass, beneath the whispering roof

Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran

A brooklet, scarce espied :

The lovers lay in the midst of flowers of varied colours. We get one of the most exquisite pictures in Keats's poetry in the two lines in which he describes with an unsurpassed felicity of word and phrase, the flowers of different colours:

'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers fragrant-eyed,

Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian….

The use of the compound epithets 'cool-rooted' and 'fragrant-eyed' shows Keats's genius for original phrase-making. Another sensuous picture follows in the lines where the lovers are described as lying with lips that touched not but which had not at the same time bidden farewell :

As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,

And ready still past kisses to outnumber

At tender eye-drawn of aurorean love……..

Keats means that, on waking up the two lovers will start kissing each other again and that the number of their kisses this time will exceed the number of kisses they have already exchanged before falling asleep.

Concrete and sensuous imagery continues in the poem when Keats describes the superior beauty of Psyche as compared with Venus and Vesper. Venus and Vesper are themselves described in lovely phrases :"Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star:and"Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky". Psyche is not only the latest-born but also the loveliest of all the half -forgotten gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus. Then follows a description of the paraphernalia of worship in a temple; altar, virgin-choir, lute, pipe, sweet incense burning in a chain-swung censer, shrine, oracle, the fervor of a priest.

In the concluding stanza, we have more of concrete and sensuous imagery. We are given pictures of a forest, wild-ridged mountains, streams, birds, breezes, and wood-nymphs lulled to sleep. One of the most exquisite pictures comes at the endwhere we see a bright

torch burning in the casement to make it possible for Cupid to enter the temple in order to make love to Psyche.

In the second stanza all the beautiful things are mentioned but they are short-lived; the morning rose, the rainbow and the anger ofa mistress-these objects fade quickly and to turn to them was nourishing the fit of melancholy. True melancholy is to be found in the company of beautiful things which have a short existence, but not by thinking of the sedative, poisonous drugs. True melancholy can be seen only with the beautiful things but not with the ugly things. True melancholy has its shrine in the very temple of delight. It is inseparable from the experience of joy and delight. A person, who has a capacity for enjoying the raptures of delight only can experience the finest shades of melancholy. Those who experience the ecstasies of joy are capable of feeling the breezes of melancholy. He, who has a dull and blunt soul, can never have any experience of feeling true melancholy.

The poem contains exquisite imagery: Like the picture of rain falling from a cloud, the sunlight playing on the wet sand etc., Above all, the picture of a man catching the soft hand of his beloved who is in an unresponsive mood is extremely beautiful.

"Or, if thy mistress….her peerless eyes",-

The abstract terms are personified in the final stanza.

In the final stanza, the sensuous nature of Keats is in full swing. He takes nature into his poetic embrace. We are given pictures of a forest, wide ranged mountains, streams, birds, breezes and wood nymphs lulled to sleep. One of the most exquisite pictures comes at the end where we see a bright torch burning in the casement to make it possible for Cupid to sharpen his awareness.

H. W. Garrod, in his analysis of Keats's sonnet form, believes that Keats took various aspects of sonnet forms and incorporated only those that he thought would benefit his poetry. In particular, Keats relies on Petrarch's sonnet structure and the "pouncing rhymes" that are found within Petrarch's octave stanzas. However, M. R. Ridley disputes that Keats favours Petrarch and claims that the odes incorporate a Shakespearean rhyme scheme.

Commenting on this poem, L.M. Jones says:"Psyche symbolizes, of course, the soul in the old sense of the world, the sum total of the human consciousness. For Keats, we may be sure, a most important component of that consciousness was the imagination. In promising to worship Psyche, he was announcing his intention allegorically of becoming a psychological poet, of analyzing the human soul, of glorifying the imagination, of studying the human mind in order to show how an awareness of its complexity could enrich human experience…It is especially appropriate that Keats chose Psyche as his object of worship, because for him the best means of approaching the immortal world was through the use of the most active ingredient of the human soul, the imagination. A simple belief in the old gods was no longer possible, but man was not therefore doomed to mere animality. He might still employ the imagination to break through the bonds of the mortal and finite. Psyche was an excellent symbol for the imagination as an instrument to bridge the gap between the mortal and immortal because she stood between both: she had been mortal and she became a goddess".

David Perkins thus comments upon the idea of the last stanza:"But most of all one wonders about the frank recognition that the visionary poet must work subjectively, that because the poet worships Psyche in an unbelieving world, the worship must be private. It

can exist only in the mind, and even in some untrodden region of the mind, a place set apart and secluded where other processes of cognition will not intrude. In other words, the visionary and the mortal worlds cannot be known simultaneously, and the poet must protectively isolate the vision in order to enjoy it. To the extent that he consecrates his own mind as a shrine to Psyche, he retreats from confronting 'the agonies, the strife of human hearts'. The very clear recognition of this which the ode expresses later became one reason for rejecting an openly visionary poetry. In the ode itself, however, these implications seem to be more than acknowledged: they are welcomed, and the poet expresses a firm resolve to protect his vision from the withering touch of actuality:.

Kenneth Allott goes on to observe firstly that the poem opens badly but warms up rapidly after a weak start and, secondly, while the poem is a happy one, its tone is more exactly described if the happiness is thought of as defensive or defiant.

1. The poem moves through three stages. In the first stage (Lines 1-23) , Keats sets out to praise Psyche as the neglected goddess whose sufferings and mistakes represent the inevitable conditions of human experience

2. The second stage of the poem covers lines 24-49, Keats passes easily from the neglect of Psyche to the fading and wearing out of the belief in all the gods and goddesses, and then to a regretful expression of feeling for the largeness of life in an age when all Nature was still "holy", all enjoyment whole-hearted, and every herdsman or shepherd the poet of his own pleasure3.

3. The third and final stage of the poem consists of lines 50-67, beginning with the emphatic assertion: "Yes, I will be thy priest…" The whole of this last stanza, consisting of a single long but quite coherent sentence, develops its momentum quietly at first, then confidently, and finally with exultation at its climax in the last four lines.

Commenting on the last lines, H.Bloom says:

There is a lay, in these final lines, upon the familiar myth of Eros and Psyche which Keats has put aside in the main body of his ode. The mythical love of Eros and Psyche was an act in darkness; the bright torch burns in the natural tower of consciousness which Keats has built for the lover's shrine. The open casements that open on the fairy vision of the *Nightingale* ode. Here it emphasizes the openness of the imagination toward the heart's affections.

Robert Bridges has written of the 'extrême beauty" of the last stanza of this ode and has ranked the whole poem above *On a Grecian Urn* (though not above *On Melancholy)*. T.S. Eliot has also given high praise to this ode. In the opinion of Kenneth Allott, *To Psyche* is neither flawless nor the best of Keats's odes, but to him it illustrates better than any other, Keats's possession of poetic power combined with what was for him an unusual artistic detachment. It is also a remarkable poem in its own right. It is the most architectural of his odes, and it is certainly the one that culminates most dramatically.

14.5 Summing Up

This poem describes Psyche and Cupid in a soft embrace and the poet describes their surroundings in beautiful images related to the five senses. He says that Psyche is the latest of all the goddesses and he wants to be her priest. He wants to build a temple in his mind and offer everything to her. He immortalises Psyche through his poem.

14.6 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Who is Psyche?

2. Why could not Psyche see Cupid?

3. Why did Venus punish Psyche?

4. Who helped Cupid and why?

5. Where does the poet find the couple?

6 .How does he describe them?

7. What does he want to do?

8. Explain the poem in your own words.

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LESSON 15

ODE ON MELANCHOLY

15.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson you will be able to

- Understand the conditions that led to the writing of the poem
- Appreciate the poem with all its images

Structure of the Lesson

15.0 Objectives

15.1 Background to the Poem

15.2 *Ode on Melancholy* —Poem

15.3 Analysis of the Poem

15.4 Summing Up

15.5 Comprehension Check Questions

15.6 References

15.7 Additional Resources

Expansion of the Structure

15.1 Background to the Poem

"Ode on Melancholy", which was written in 1819, is the shortest of the odes of John Keats. Keats was going through a book by Richard Burton on *The Anatomy of Melancholy* when he wrote this poem. This was published in 1820 and it consists only of three stanzas with ten lines each. The poem was set in iambic pentameter in the rhyme scheme of ababcdecde.

The general idea of the poem is that true melancholy is to be found not in the sad and ugly things of life but in the beauty and pleasures of the world. A note of melancholy runs through the whole poem.

As in the other odes like ' Nightingale', Keats does not escape from the painful realities of the world, but looks into the face of pain and speaks. This was written in four stanzas originally but Keats deleted the first stanza. The present stanza appears to have been started abruptly. The following one was the deleted first stanza:

"Though you should build a bark of dead men's bones,

And rear a phantom gibbet for a mast,

Stitch creeds together for a sail, with groans

To fill it out, blood-stained and aghast;
Although your rudder be a dragon's tail
Long sever'd, yet still hard with agony,
Your cordage large uprootings from the skull
Of bald Medusa, certes you would fail
To find the Melancholy —whether she
Dreameth in any isle of Lethe dull."

Now observe the remaining part of the poem, which is available with three stanzas:

15. 2 Ode on Melancholy –Poem

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.
But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;

And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips

Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,

Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:

Ay, in the very temple of Delight

Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,

Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue

Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;

His soul shalt taste the sadness of her might,

And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

15.3 Analysis of the Poem

In the "Ode on Melancholy" the problems of the artist are in abeyance, and Keats returns to ordinary human experience, to the problem of happiness in life.Keats asks us not to go towards 'lethe', or take any intoxicating drink or a poisonous one which induces sleep to forget pain or melancholy. He says that it should be experienced. He recognizes that sadness is an inevitable complement of the moments of intense sensuous happiness that so far have been the peaks of his experience :

She dwells with Beauty-Beauty that must die,

And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips,

Bidding adieu.

Though the poem appears to have started abruptly, the language and images created in the poem offer the essence of Keats' imaginative work. 'Lethe' is a river whose waters in Hades bring forgetfulness to the dead. 'Nightshade' and 'Wolfsbane' are poisonous herbs that contain sedatives. Yew berries are symbols of mourning that can usually be found in cemeteries. He says that melancholy dwells along with happiness only. We cannot experience true joy without experiencing pain. At the same time he explains that we cannot appreciate the value of melancholy from things that induce sleep or death but we can learn it only from beautiful things which are ill-fated and destined to die.

The poem has a gradual thematic progression. Stanza I asks us not to try to escape pain. Stanza II tells us what to do —embrace the transient beauty and joy of both nature and human experience which contain pain and death. Stanza III makes it clear that in order to experience joy, one must experience sorrow and should know that beauty dies and joy evaporates.The essence of the poem lies in the third stanza.

Robert Bridges writes about this ode:“The perception in this ode is profound, and no doubt experienced. The paradox that melancholy is most deeply felt by the poet most capable

of joy is clinched at the end of the observation of the reaction which satiety provokes in such temperaments, so that it is also in the moment of extreme joy that it suddenly fades:

> Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips :
>
> Ay, in the very temple of Delight
>
> Veil'd Melancholy has her Sovran shrine.

Melancholy, being a goddess, is immortal, but she lives with Beauty, Joy and Pleasure, all of which suggest either mortality or pain. Keats uses contrasting images to show the transience of this mundane life.

Between the *Nightingale Ode* and *Melancholy,* there is a closer connection. In the *Ode On Melancholy,* whatever is beautiful in the world is spoilt by something in the nature of our apprehension of it. In the *Nightingale Ode,* the singing of the nightingale is spoilt, not by any anguish which there is in its joy, but, as in the lines to Reynolds, by the intrusion of a human trouble.

Keats was considerably influenced by Spenser and was, like the latter, a passionate lover of beauty in all its forms and manifestations. This passion for beauty constitutes his aestheticism. Beauty, indeed was his pole-star, beauty in Nature, in woman, and in art. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever", he writes and he identifies beauty with truth. "Of all the poets in his time Keats is one of the most inevitably associated with the love of beauty in the ordinary sense of the term. He was the most passionate lover of the world as the carrier of beautiful images and of the many imaginative associations of an object or word with whatever might give it a heightened emotional appeal". Poetry, according to Keats, should be the incarnation of beauty, and not a medium for the expression of religious or social philosophy.

Harold Bloom observes," The magnificence of the *Ode on Melancholy*'s final stanza is in its exactness of diction as it defines the harmony of continued apprehension of its unresolved contraries. Only 'beauty' that must die is beauty; Joy cannot be present without simultaneously bidding adieu: and 'aching' pleasure is immanent only by turning to poison for us,even as we sip its real honey. For, like rest of Keats' s odes, this poem is tragic, and it reaches beyond the disillusionments of a state of experience into the further innocence of a poet's paradise. The strenuous tongue does not simply sip the grape's juice; it 'bursts' the grape of Joy, with the inevitable double consequence of tasting might and the sadness of might."

H.W.Garrod observes, "The whole of Keats's work, be it remembered, was done in a space of less than four years, the best of it within the limit of a single year. At all points the rapidity of his development is amazing. He ends, save for the *Odes*, still a conscious imitator of the manner of other poets. That he could never have rested there, the *Odes* make certain. Inevitably, in some other species, he must have found, before long, a manner as individual as that which he has attained in the *Odes.* That he could have carried this individual manner to success in compositions of a large compass in the narrative or heroic species, I do not feel certain".

15. 4 Summing Up

You should have observed the differences between other odes and this one. This is full of images related to nature. Keats's knowledge of various herbs and his passion for appreciation

of feelings like joy and melancholy is visibly felt. Keats reaches the stage of a philosopher and advises us to treat happiness and melancholy on equal terms.

15. 5 Comprehension Check Questions

1. When did Keats write this poem?

2. How was he inspired to write this?

3. What are the herbs mentioned in the first stanza?

4. How are the herbs useful?

5. Why does not Keats advise us to take them?

6. How is melancholy felt?

7. When can we appreciate melancholy?

8. Why does Keats use the image of rain?

9. How should one respond when one's fiancée is angry?

10. How is Joy described in the last stanza?

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LESSON 16

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S PRESCRIBED POEMS

http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/william-wordsworth

16.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson,you will

- Know about the life and works of William Wordsworth
- Understand the themes of the three prescribed poems of Wordsworth

Structure of the Lesson

16.0 Objectives

16.1 Life and Works of William Wordsworth

16.2 Wordsworth as a Poet

16.3 The Prelude

16.4 Tintern Abbey

16.5 Immortality Ode

16.6 Summing Up

16.7 Comprehension Check Questions

16.8 References

16.9 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

16.1 Life and Works of William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770, at Cockermouth, and his sister Dorothy, with whom he had close, friendly relationship throughout his poetic career, was born on September 25, next year, at the same place. William lost his mother in 1778 and his father in 1783. The spirit of classicism was waning in English Literature during these final decades of the century, and in Germany, Goethe's *Werther*, which was a landmark in the romantic literature of Europe, was published in 1774, and Rousseau's *Confessions* which had no less an influence on the romantic poets of England, saw the light of day in 1781, and a very important event, the American Declaration of Independence, took place in 1776.

Wordsworth's first published poem, *Sonnet*, *On Seeing Miss Helen Maria Williams Weep at a Tale of Distress* appeared in *The European Magazine* in March, 1787. *An Evening Walk* was written the year the French Revolution started with the storming of Bastille (1789). In 1790 Wordsworth had a walking tour of France. He came back to England in Early 1791 and returned to France late in the year to see the revolutionary fervor in Paris. He had a love affair with Annette Vallon, and their daughter Caroline was born in December 1792. He composed *Descriptive Sketches* in 1793 and returned to England to seek a livelihood. Godwin's *Political Justice* was published the same year, and the spirit of inquiry and quest took an artistic shape in 1794 in the publication of Blake's *Songs of Experience*. In 1795 Wordsworth and Coleridge came close to each other which finally resulted in the joint authorship of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). This very year Wordsworth wrote some autobiographical verse which was the foundation of *The Prelude.* This last decade of the 18th century saw a reign of terror in France with the meteoric rise of Napoleon.

In 1802 Wordsworth wrote much lyrical poetry and published a new edition of *Lyrical Ballads* with a revised *Preface.* In 1804 *Ode to Duty* was composed and *Ode on Intimations of Immortality,* was completed. In 1807 Wordsworth published *Poems* in Two Volumes and it was ridiculed in Reviews. The next year he left Dove Cottage for a larger house in Grasmere, and then in 1813 moved to Rydal Mount, home for the rest of his life. *The Excursion* was published in 1814, prefaced by an account of the plan for *The Recluse.* The argument and classification advanced by Wordsworth in the Preface to the Collected Edition of *Poems* spurred Coleridge to complete his own theoretical statement, *Biographia Literaria,* which was later published in 1817. In 1843 Wordsworth became Poet Laureate on Robert Southey's death. By now Wordsworth was a widely celebrated figure and there was steady increase in his American reputation. He died in April, 1850, and *The Prelude* which he wrote and rewrote almost throughout his life was published after his death.

16.2 Wordsworth as a Poet:

Throughout his life he wrote poems of philosophical issues, metaphysical problems and on man-nature relationship, and saw great writers like, Goethe, Coleridge, Jane Austen, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Balzac, Dickens, Carlyle, Tennyson, Ruskin, Browning, Thackeray, Arnold, etc. at work.. His own best poetry, as pointed out by Matthew Arnold, came, of course, between 1787 and 1807, the most fruitful ten years of his long poetic career. In the remaining years good writing came occasionally and sporadically. Wordsworth felt with pain this waning of poetic power in him and presented it in the *Immortality Ode.* The drama of a crisis is very convincingly and impressively presented in that poem though the philosophy given by Wordsworth to explain the crisis is wide open to debate and controversy.

16.3 *The Prelude*

Wordsworth had the ambition of writing a 'great'poem –very long, very rich, containing all his thoughts, and the history of the maturing of his poetic sensibility, an epic simultaneously personal, national, and universal. But he could never write this poem. Attempts remained unfinished. *The Prelude* was designed to be the *Prelude* to that poem. Throughout his life he kept on revising *The Prelude* but could not publish it. When it was published posthumously, the critics did not hesitate to call it a 'great'poem, Wordsworth's greatest and having wonderful coverage, depth and variety. Much of its content, of course, is to be found in the *Tintern Abbey* poem.

In his youth Wordsworth was inspired by ideas of Voltaire and Rousseau that led to the revolutionary movement in France. He welcomed the new democratic ideas because they tuned well with his reaction against the urban insularity of the 18th century English literature. Even when he was disillusioned with the French Revolution and began to hate its developments, his first concern was the poor, the rural, the lowly. His rich humanism made him very sympathetic to the suffering humanity in an age when industrialism and commercialism made the difference between the rich and the poor wider, uglier and more acute. He heard 'the still sad music of humanity'and was sad to see 'what man has made of man'. He felt that 'the world is too much with us'and realized that, as a poet, he had some responsibility. He wanted to show man the right path, and this made much of his poetry didactic. The moral concern, therefore, is very prominent in his poetry. This caused ire in Keats but did not deprive him of popular appreciation.

Even his poetic diction, that poetry should be written in the natural, unaffected language that the common man uses in his normal speech or communication, is derived from his concern for humanity at large, from his respect for the 'uneducated'rural people who have a rich heart, sincere feeling, and direct contact with nature, and do not 'lay waste'their powers in 'getting and spending'. Thus, his thought and art are essentially the outcome of the impact that the new vision leading to French Revolution created upon his mind. It is a turn from capitalism to socialism, but socialism of a very special kind in which the first criterion is the recognition of merit to be found abundantly in the poor and hardly in the rich.

The sub-title of *The Prelude,*'Growth of a Poet's Mind'is also very significant. Romanticism in Europe was a much-varied thing, but one thing was common in all literatures of the time: psychological explorations. The human mind, all romantic writers believed, was the centre of the divine scheme, the arena of the struggle of Good and Evil. It is a strange thing, and each discovery of its inner recesses is a thrill. And the poet has a richer mind, more sensitive and dynamic than anybody else's, in its creativity it is akin to God's ; and therefore the study of the growth of a poet's mind is not only a thrill in itself but also a religious pursuit, a study in god-head. From childhood to adulthood, this mind, through its experiences and responses, achieves maturity, a shape and a dimension, sensitivity of perception and intensity of feeling. In a poet's case, the acquisition is greater than in anybody else's case. Man's moral being depends on how the mind has worked and from what sources it has drawn its sap. The poet remembers past incidents and their impact on his mind.

16.4 *Tintern Abbey*

Wordsworth had first visited Tintern Abbey in 1793. After five years, in 1798, he set out on a walking tour along the banks of the river Wye and once more visited the place and enjoyed the picturesque scenery of the neighborhood. *Tintern Abbey* is a beautiful poetic record of his impressions of this memorable visit, and of the changes which had taken place

in his attitude to Nature since he had visited the place five years earlier. These changes were indeed momentous for the poet. He had passed through a series of mental and emotional conflicts and sufferings, as a result of his experiences of the French Revolution. The poet's inner life had received a tremendous shock and his hopes for mankind lay shattered. He was terribly in need of inner tranquility and peace. It was at this crisis that Nature showed him a way out. He now turned to the healing power of Nature to restore to him the peace which he had lost.

In *Tintern Abbey,* therefore, he proclaims the supremacy of Nature's influence, not only on the mind but on the spirit of man. This realization came to him with the power and tremendousness of a spiritual awakening. His experience of the cruelty of life and of the ruthlessness of human nature opened his heart and soul to the soothing, tranquil power of Nature, and he surrendered to this benevolent influence with the abandon and completeness of a dedicated worshipper.

Tintern Abbey embodies this new vision which the poet possessed, when he returned "a sadder but wiser man" to the quiet scenes at the Tintern Abbey in the company of his sister, and here he was amazed to find that his soul responded quickly to the new revelation which Nature imparted to him. He therefore triumphantly proclaims this new vision. Referring to the mood in which the poem came to him, Wordsworth says:"No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this".

Tintern Abbey is a poetic record of Wordsworth's development as a poet and of his attitude to Nature. It formulates in memorable lines of haunting beauty the cardinal principles of Wordsworth's love towards nature. Wordsworth visited the banks of the river Wye above Tintern Abbey first in 1793. After an interval of five years, he paid his second visit to the place, in the company of his sister, Dorothy Wordsworth. During the interval between these two visits, important changes had taken place in the poet's attitude to Nature. Wordsworth records these changes in the poem. The poem is thus a magnificent summary of Wordsworth's philosophy of Nature.

16.5 *Immortality Ode*

This greatest and noblest of English poems was written in two phases—partly in 1803 and partly in 1806. The theme of the poem is the immortality of the human soul which is remembered during the childhood and which fades away as age advances. The poem is based upon Wordsworth's actual experiences. Like Plato and Socrates, Wordsworth believes in the pre-existence and glorifies the childhood of man. The poem was published in 1807. The poet explains how the earth tries to take away man from the heaven with all its attractions. It celebrates Wordsworth's faith in the pre-natal existence of heaven. The poet uses musical language to present the images related to immortality.

16.6 Summing Up

Wordsworth occupies a special place among the Romantic Poets. He is a worshipper of Mother Nature. He looks at her with all love and devotion. He describes how his mind and soul are shaped by Nature in a philosophical way. A detailed study of his poems explains how closely he is connected with nature.

16.7 Comprehension Check Questions

1. When was Wordsworth born?
2. Write about the place of Wordsworth among the Romantics.
3. What was the first published work of Wordsworth?
4. Write about the philosophical influences on the mind of Wordsworth.
5. Write about the disillusionment created by the French Revolution.
6. Write briefly about *The Prelude*.
7. Why did Wordsworth write a poem on 'Tintern Abbey'?
8. What does the immortality ode describe?

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LESSON 17

WORDSWORTH'S TINTERN ABBEY

17.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this poem, you will be able to

- Understand the conditions that led Wordsworth to write this poem
- Appreciate the images described in the poem
- Analyse Wordsworth's love towards Nature and his sister Dorothy

STRUCTURE OF THE LESSON

17.0 Objectives

17.1 Background to the Poem

17.2 Poem *Tintern Abbey*

17.3Analysis

17.4 Summing Up

17.5 Comprehension Check Questions

17.6 References

17.7 Additional Sources

EXPANSION OF STRUCTURE

17.1 Background to the Poem

The poem *Tintern Abbey* was written when Wordsworth was at the height of his poetic powers and was published in the volume of Lyrical Ballads. This is the first poem in which Wordsworth's poetic genius finds a full expression. The low toned blank verse with the serene, spiritual touch of Nature moves with sureness and with an inevitable ease reflecting different phases of his mood. The poem is a record of the different stages of his love towards nature.

This poem was composed on his way to Bristol from Tintern. Wordsworth first visited Tintern in 1793 when as a young man and enjoyed the sensuous beauty of nature. But when he visited it a second time, he found that his attitude to the love of nature had taken a sober turn. When Wordsworth visited the place for the second time, he was not the same buoyant person who had come there five years ago. Gone are the 'dizzy raptures'and 'Glad animal movements of his early years; now he hears only the 'still, sad music of humanity".

In his first visit, the sights and sounds intoxicated him a lot. Nature was then a passion with him and he was thrilled by the spontaneous sensations of joy. During his second visit, we see a different Wordsworth, an individual, who was thoroughly disillusioned, and disturbed and vexed due to the din and disturbance of the cities and towns and due to the influence of the French Revolution. Wordsworth, who first greeted the new movement with great enthusiasm and fervor, lost his faith in humanity, Nature and even in God. He tried vainly to seek shelter in the dry intellectualism of Godwin, but it was not the balm he so badly needed to comfort his hurt soul. The spiritual crisis had brought inner darkness and despair with its pain. However he gradually recovered his confidence in human nature due to the healing influence of Dorothy, his sister. In 'The Sparrow's Nest' he confesses his debt to her.: ""She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;/And humble cares and delicate fears,/ heart, the fountain of sweet tears,/ And love, thought and joy".

17.2 Poem:

William Wordsworth's

LINES WRITTEN A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY

FromLyrical Ballads[London: J. & A. Arch, 1798]

LINES WRITTEN A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY,

ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR,

July 13, 1798.=====

Five years have past; five summers, with the length

Of five long winters! and again I hear

These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs

With a sweet inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
Which on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which, at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Among the woods and copses lose themselves,
Nor, with their green and simple hue, disturb
The wild green landscape. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreathes of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees,
With some uncertain notice, as might seem,
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
The hermit sits alone.
Though absent long,
These forms of beauty have not been to me,
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too

Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,
As may have had no trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life;
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lighten'd:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft,
In darkness, and amid the many shapes
Of joyless day-light; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart,
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee
O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the wood
How often has my spirit turned to thee!
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,

With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was, when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led; more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by,)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite: a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, or any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed, for such loss, I would believe,

Abundant recompence. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear, both what they half-create,*
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.
Nor, perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me, here, upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou, my dearest Friend,

My dear, dear Friend, and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! And this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain winds be free
To blow against thee: and in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; Oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts

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

(http://www.rc.umd.edu/sites/default/RCOldSite/www/rchs/reader/tabbey.html)

17.3Analysis:

Tintern Abbey is a poetic record of Wordsworth's development as a poet and of his attitude to Nature. It formulates in memorable lines of haunting beauty, the cardinal principles of Wordsworth's love towards nature. Wordsworth visited the banks of the river Wye above Tintern Abbey, first in 1793. After an interval of five years, he paid his second visit to the place, in the company of his sister, Dorothy Wordsworth. During the interval between these two visits, important changes had taken place in the poet's attitude to Nature. Wordsworth records these changes in the poem. The poem is thus a magnificent summary of Wordsworth's philosophy of Nature.

Wordsworth first describes the landscape near Tintern Abbey. Five years have passed since he first paid a visit to these scenes. These five years have been animportant period in the poet's life, and now, once more, he stands beneath the dark sycamore tree and listens to the sound of the waters rolling down. He sees the same steep and lofty cliffs and feels the same sense of deep seclusion which he had experienced on his earlier visit. He gazes in front of him and is struck by the deep calmness that prevails over the whole scene. "Five years have past; five summers, with the length… Nor, with their green and simple hue, disturbthe wild green landscape." (lines 1-16)

The quiet beauty of the place is in complete harmony with the silence of the sky. He views the cultivated farms and the quiet cottages and clusters of fruit-trees loaded with unripe fruits. It is a scene of quiet pastoral beauty. The cottages are “green to the very door”. The poet watches the wreaths of smoke sent up by the cottages in silence among the trees, and thinks that the smoke may be proceeding from some gipsy camps or the cave of some solitary hermit.

The poet then describes the beneficent ministry of these “beauteous forms “to the growth of his inner life. Throughout the interval of these five years, the beauty of this spot has lingered in his memory. Often in his loneliness amidst the noise, “fret and fever”of life in towns and cities, it has cheered his spirit and filled his heart with a sense of peace and tranquility. It has also influenced his moral nature, enabling him to perform those little, nameless and unremembered acts of kindness and love which make up so much of a good man’s life.

But more important than all these blessings, he has owed to these “beauteousforms”another gift, at once rare and sublime, the gift of a clear and piercing vision into the very mystery of life.

Norless, I trust,

To them I may have owed another gift,

Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,

In which the burthen of the mystery,

In which the heavy and the weary weight

Of all this unintelligible world

Is lighten'd:—

In such a serene and blessed mood, he has been enabled to forget the heavy and weary burden of physical existence and become “a living soul”. The memory of the lovely landscape near Tintern Abbey filled him with spiritual enlightenment in which he felt as though his body contained the higher life of the spirit. At such moments, he was able to commune with eternal things and obtain that clear vision which helped him to see “into the life of things”.

This is a personal poem representing the poet's attitude towards nature at different stages of his life. The faith of the poet in the greatness of Nature, and its benign power is revealed. It traces and distinguishes the several stages of his education by nature and the several phases of his own love for her. Wordsworth is concerned to explore the effects of memory, time and the landscape itself upon the human heart. This poem records the developing power of a mind and heart that are affected by nature with great sensitivity and passion. The movement of the poem here is in three parts. The first one begins with ‘A presence’; the second with “A sense sublime’and the third, with ‘A motion and a spirit’.

.... For I have learned

To look on nature, not as in the hour 90

Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes

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

Wordsworth's first love of nature was a healthy boy's delight in freedom and open air –'the glad animal movement of boy hood'. Nature was a beautiful playground for his activities. "Among the hills and valleys, over the mountains, by the sides of the deep rivers"he had a healthy life of sport and adventure, in ecstatic joy like a lamb. He was absorbed in his 'Coarser Pleasures'-the fishing, and bathing in the pools among the rocks of mountain streams, the gathering of flowers and nuts, the horse riding and hunting for birds'eggs in green woods. He says that they are the 'glad animal moments'.

His love of nature now turns into an aesthetic passion, intense, absolute and self-suffering. "That blessed mood... In which the burthen of mystery",we see "in to the life of things" when the mysterious burden of heavy and weary weight of this unintelligible world"

is lightened, and when the "breath and motion of our human blood and this corporal frame" is suspended, we become a "living soul".

This is not mysticism but, rather, a state of aesthetic contemplation. All the contemplation of objects except the aesthetic is essentially practical, and also directed towards personal ends. The poet's genius freed contemplation from the drive of the will, and consequently the poet is able to see with a quite eye. To see "into life of things" is "to see things for themselves", their true nature and not their potential use. The poet attains this state through memories of Nature's presence. They present him a blessed mood. The objective world becomes near and familiar, and thus ceases to be a burden.

Having made this declaration, Wordsworth gives his first intimation of doubt as to the efficacy of Nature's presence. His 'Coarser Pleasures'now lost their charm and he began to love Nature for her own sake. The glad animal moments are now all gone. Earlier,the'sounding cataract haunted'him 'like a passion'.

"..the tall rock,

The mountain, and the deepened gloomy wood,
Theircoloursand their forms were then to me

An appetite".

He was altogether untouched by intellectual interests. Now the 'dizzy raptures'have disappeared. There are no 'aching joys'now.The poet became a pantheist. His pantheistic sensations found the way to spiritualism. In this mature stage, he looks on Nature and hears in it."The still, sad music of humanity/Nor harsh, nor granting, though of ample power/To chasten and subdue".

Through a 'still, sad music of humanity', he finds a more sober spirit in Nature. He gains an intimation of immortality hidden in the life of man. As he listens to the 'sad'music, he hears evidence not only of man's mortality, but of man's inseparable bond with Nature too. The 'stillness'of the 'sad'music is to the spirit but not to the sensual ear. It is an art of meditation. The meditation does not start in the mind, but it is first felt as a presence that disturbs the mind with "the joy of elevated thoughts".

He finds a universal soul pervading all over the world and in every object of Nature."a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused,/Whose dwelling is the height of setting suns /…..And rolls through all things".

Now he is able to see and hear a primal unity manifested simultaneously in all subjects and all objects. He realizes that Nature and the Mind are not utterly different, but they are together.

The creative soul in him has been awakened. The visible beauties of Nature are now seen as manifestation of divine reality. He still loves Nature as he can apprehend it by eye and ear, though he has lost the 'acting joy'that is Nature's gift:"-both what they half create, /And what perceive; the anchor of,/ My purest thoughts, the muse, the guide….being".

Wordsworth wishes to avoid the suggestion of a total absorption of Nature into man. Man is almost totally absorbed in Nature. Recollection of an earlier vision of the outward Nature acts as a catalyst. Wordsworth realizes and recollects the earlier relation between man and Nature. The mature love for Nature, leads to love other men, to hearing the 'still, sad music of humanity'. It becomes a kind of meditation. It brings vision and joy together again by linking them both with the heart's generosity and kindness towards fellow men. Only Nature has the privilege of leading us from joy to joy. We have to wait upon her, brood on past joys, and have faith that she will not abandon hearts that have loved her-she impresses us with her 'quietness and beauty'-she protects us from the 'evil tongues and rash judgements' and from the 'success of selfish men'by keeping us safely in her lap.

He says that he sees the gleam in her eyes (Dorothy's) that he can no longer see in Nature. His survival will be in her eyes. He will live in her memory.

May I behold in thee what I was once,

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

Knowing that Nature never did betray

The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,

Through all the years of this our life, to lead

From joy to joy: for she can so inform

The mind that is within us, so impress

With quietness and beauty, and so feed

With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,

Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men, 130

Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all

The dreary intercourse of daily life,

Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb

Our cheerful faith that all which we behold

Is full of blessings.

The closing lines of the poem, with their immense music are exquisite. The poem holds the autobiographical honesty of Wordsworth. The poem is the revelation of his inner personality, his moral and spiritual life as well as his pantheism. The language is serene and majestic.

...Nor wilt thou then forget,

That after many wanderings, many years

Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,

And this green pastoral landscape, were to me

More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake. 160

17.4 Summing Up

Hope you have understood and appreciated the impact of nature on Wordsworth and how nature has protected and shaped his mind. He meditates on the mysterious power of nature and also of Dorothy, for saving him from a tumultuous and chaotic distraction and for restoring his vision.

17.5 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Why did Wordsworth write this poem?
2. How many times did Wordsworth visit Tintern Abbey and what were the differences in his perception?
3. Why was he disturbed?
4. How did he describe the changes in his perception?
5. What examples were given by Wordsworth to project his philosophical views?
6. What is the contribution of Nature on the shaping of Wordsworth's mind?
7. How did his sister Dorothy help him?
8. Summarise the poem in ten sentences.

17.6 References

1. Garrod, *Wordsworth: Lectures and Essays*
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LESSON 18

ODE INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

18.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson you will be able to

- Understand the theme of the poem
- Appreciate the images of childhood as described by the poet
- Analyse the differences between childhood and adolescence

Structure of the Lesson

18.0 Objectives

18.1 Introduction to the Immortality Ode

18.2 Poem: Ode on Intimations of Immortality

18.3 Analysis of the Poem

18.4 Summing Up

18.5 Comprehension Check Questions

18.6 References

18.7 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

18.1 Introduction to the Immortality Ode

"Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"is one of the greatest and noblest of English poems. It was written partly in 1803 and partly in 1806 and was published in 1807. According to Wordsworth, "two years at least passed between the writing of the first four stanzas and the remaining parts". The poem is based upon Wordsworth's actual experiences. The theme of the poem is 'the immortality of the human soul of which one is aware in childhood but which fades from one's mind as one achieves adulthood.

This poem is an irregular Ode because it is marked by lack of uniformity in metre and in the length of its XI stanzas. This is to say it is not written in the same metre throughout and that all of its stanzas do not consist of the same number of lines. The length of the stanzas varies from 9 to 38 lines. Thus stanzas I, II and VI consist of nine lines each, whereas stanza XI consists of thirty eight lines.

The poem is written mainly in the iambic metre. Some lines, however, are in anapaestic (metre in which each foot consists of three syllables, the first two of which are

unaccented, and the third accented) and trochaic (metre in which each foot consists of two syllables, the first of which is accented and the second unaccented).

18.2 Poem: Ode On Intimations Of Immortality

I

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;--
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II

The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose,
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare,
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday;--
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy!

IV

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see

The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel--I feel it all.
Oh evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the Children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm:--
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
--But there's a Tree, of many, one,
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

V

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

VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely Nurse doth all she can
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,

And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII
Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little Actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

VIII
Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy Soul's immensity;
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,--
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX
O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest--
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:--
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X
Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright

Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI
And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
Is lovely yet;
The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

18.3 Analysis of the Poem

The poet begins by saying that all familiar objects of nature, like the meadows, the grove, and the stream, appeared to be invested with heavenly beauty and charm in his childhood. He regrets that they are no longer beautiful, now that he has grown up.

The rainbow, the rose, the moon, the starry sky, and the sunshine all appear to suggest that old glory has vanished from the world. Thus, of all birds, animals and creatures who are making merry in the spring season, the poet alone feels sad. He throws himself, whole heartedly into the general spirit of the spring season. Certain objects of nature, however, remind him that he has lost the vision of childhood. Among such objects are, a particular field, and a particular flower which he had known in his childhood.

The poet then gives expression to his belief in the doctrine of the pre-existence of the human soul. He feels that the child has a more glorious vision than man, because the former has recently come from heaven. The poet believes that the human soul leads an existence in heaven before it comes to the earth. Man brings along with him a heavenly glory or a heavenly light, when he is born into this world. This heavenly glory becomes fainter and fainter as the child grows into the boy, the boy into the youth, and the youth into man.

The earth,by offering earthly pleasures and comforts to man, tries to lure him away from the heaven. The earth, which may be called as the nurse of man, while he may be described its foster child, lavishes the love and affection of a mother upon the growing child. Even while the child plays with his toys, he tries to imitate the actions of his elders. He arranges his toys in order to imitate happy and sad scenes of life. When he will grow up, he would learn the language which is used by a businessman, a lover or a fighter.

According to the poet, the child is the best philosopher and a seer blest, because he understands those spiritual truths which evade grown-up persons. The child is also aware of his immortality. It is, therefore, very strange that the child should lose sight of his spiritual heritage, and try to anticipate the slavery of social conventions, by desiring to grow up.

The poet is thankful to the memories of childhood, not so much for the innocence, delights and freedom that is enjoyed by the child, but for those persistent doubts concerning the reality of the external world. These persistent doubts make man see through the veil of objective reality and thus man is able to realize that all external or objective reality is a mere illusion. The poet feels happy to think that even in manhood, in calm moments, we can realize that we come from heaven, which is our real home.

The poet thinks that his loss has been great, but that his compensation has been even greater. Thus though he has lost the vision of childhood, he has gained humanity and maturity. In addition to this gain, he has developed sympathy for his fellow men. He also feels sure that there is life beyond this life, and that, as he grows, he will develop a philosophical outlook.

The poet appreciates nature in a different mood. Instead of the rapturous vision of childhood, his vision of nature now is marked by sobriety. He feels that he can perceive something nobler and wiser even in the humble and commonplace objects of nature. The poet says that the clouds which gather round the setting sun appear to him somewhat solemn and subdued in their colours, because of the fact that the poet has realized that man is mortal . This is to say that the realization of human suffering has made the poet more sober and serious now. He therefore, does not appreciate nature in a delightful or rapturous mood, but in a serious and sober one.

There is no doubt that the poet seems to have borrowed the doctrine of pre-existence of the human soul from Greek philosophers like Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato. It is well-known that Pythagoras propounded the theory of the transmigration of soul. Plato in *Phaedo* dealt with the nature of death and the question of the immortality of the soul. Socrates is also supposed to have believed in the doctrine of pre-existence of human soul. When he dictated a long note to Isabella Fenwick at the age of seventy two, Wordsworth felt that he might be misunderstood regarding his faith in pre-natal existence of the soul as it violated the Christian faith. Hence he explained that it should not be treated as a doctrine against Christianity but should only be treated as the common experience of a poet: "that the passing of youth involves the loss of a freshness and radiance."

Wordsworth himself has remarked in the preface to this poem. "Accordingly, a pre-existent state has entered into popular creeds of many nations, and among all persons, acquainted with class in literature, is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy……When I was impelled to write a poem on the "Immortality of the Soul". I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundations in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a Poet". The poet, also might have borrowed the idea of the poem from "The Retreat"by Henry Vaughan (1622 to

1695). In this poem Henry Vaughan gives expression to the same thoughts concerning the pre-existence of the soul, and expresses the same views about the vision of childhood.

"Happy those early days, when I
Shin'd in my angel infancy :
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race
Or taught my soul to fancy aught
But a while celestial thought
When yet I had not walked above
A mile or two from my first love
And looking back at that short space
Could see a glimpse of His bright face"

The doctrine of pre-existence suggests that human souls are in existence, possibly in a higher and better state, before they become united with the bodies, to which they are attached in this life. Further, much of the best knowledge that a man attains is but recollection of truths known by the soul in its pre-existent state, or of the spiritual light of that heavenly home which we forsake at birth, and to which we shall return at death.

The child's knowledge of immortality is based upon his reminiscences (or memories) of his life in heaven before his birth. This view,'the doctrine of reminiscence forms the core of the poem. The long title of the poem clearly expresses the theme. Our knowledge of the soul's immortality is based on our memories of childhood when we still remember our life in heaven. Whether Wordsworth's theory is plausible or convincing is a controversial matter but the poem has been recognized as a masterpiece of philosophical or metaphysical poetry.

The poem gives expression to the doctrine of pre-existence of the human soul in stanzas fifth to eighth. In the fifth stanza, the poet says:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
The soul that rises with us our life's star
Hath had elsewhere its setting.
And cometh from afar :
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,

But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.

In the fifth stanza, the poet suggests how the earth tries to attract man away from heaven. In the seventh and eighth stanzas the poet refers to the fact of the child's anxiety to the poet which implies the child is a mighty prophet and a blest seer because he has recently come from heaven, and because he understands those spiritual truths which evade grown-up persons.

The poet thus tries to explain why the child has a more glorious vision than a grown-up person. The poet's argument seems to be as follows:

"The human soul had a pre-natal existence in heaven. At that time it had a close contact with God. Memories of this heavenly contact invest everything, that the child sees on the earth, with a heavenly light; but as the child advances in years, he loses sight of his

spiritual heritage. He gets so much absorbed in the common activities of life that he almost forgets completely that his real home is heaven and not earth."

Earth has desires which are of the same kind as herself(of the earth, temporary/fleeting…). She entertains almost the same feelings for the child as a real mother does. Inspired by very noble motive ,the earth tries her best to make her adopted child as her real child. The earth tries to make the child forget his spiritual heritage as well as the spiritual splendor which the child has previously experienced in heaven.

If we look at the child who is six years old and is pigmy-sized, we will find that he is greatly pleased with his newly learnt amusements. We find him sitting in the midst of toys or objects which he himself has arranged in order to represent his idea of life. He feels annoyed when he is disturbed by the kissing of his mother as he is busily engaged in his play, and as his father looks at him fondly and lovingly.

The child will give up his previous amusement a little later and will, with new zest and vanity, undertake to play the part of a mature actor. He will reenact from time to time the parts of persons from different stages of life, down to the part of an old man suffering from paralysis. The child would try to exhibit all the humours of mankind, that is, their whims, follies, and odd manners, by imitating the actions of the grown-ups.

The poet regards the child as a great prophet and a blessed seer. He thinks that the child possesses all those spiritual truths which human beings struggle all their lives to discover because they wander in the land of spiritual darkness.

The poet suggests that death is not the end of life as there is a life beyond death. The soul, after waiting for some time in the grave, returns to heaven. Thus there is a life beyond this life. The soul is immortal. The body may perish but the soul cannot, because the soul returns to heaven after the body perishes.

The poet feels that the child is unconsciously working against his own happiness by trying to grow up and bind himself in the chain of worldly desires and worldly troubles. He forgets that while he was in heaven he was free from all these worldly desires and troubles. He deliberately tries to imitate the actions of adults and there by he reveals his anxiety to grown-up people. He does not know that when he grows up he will not be able to enjoy freedom from worldly desires and troubles.

The poet means that the child will very soon have his full share of earthly sorrows, troubles and misfortune. Social conventions will hold him in their grip. These social conventions would be as thick as frost and as profound as life itself. They will bind him in chains, cloud his vision and make his life miserable.

The poet says that the memory of the period of childhood inspires in him a state of constant happiness. The poet means that inspired by the memories of the period of childhood, and remembering that we come from heaven which is our real home, we persistently doubt whether those things which we perceive through the sense are real. He suggests, of course, that during the moments when we doubt the reality of earthly things we see through the veil of material or worldly reality. We realise that these external things seen by the senses are not real.

The poet suggests that the noble emotions and lofty instincts of the period of childhood make a man realise how base or ignoble he is.

The poet says that he is grateful to the period of childhood because the memory of the inborn feelings of the period of childhood is the source of all our joy in life and because it is the guiding star of all our perceptions and beliefs. The poet means that the earthly light shows us the earthly objects; but the heavenly light reveals what lies beyond the earthly

vision, thus,he calls the memory of the period of childhood as the fountain of all spiritual light. During childhood the child is nearer heaven and, therefore, he has a vision of his divine origin. The memory of this vision of childhood proves to be the source of all our joy.

The outward appearance or the size of the child is not a true index to the spiritual superiority or greatness possessed by the child. The child is the best philosopher because he still retains his spiritual inheritance (he still remembers that his real home is heaven from which he has recently come). The child is a seer or a prophet living amongst the grown-up people who are spiritually ignorant or blind. Though the child is deaf and silent, he can understand the profound mysteries of eternity (past, present and future). The child is constantly visited by the vision of God or heaven.

The poet says that these spiritual truths, once understood by man, create a permanent impression for all future times. They can't be removed from the state of our memory either by laziness or by our furious pursuit of worldly pleasures. Similarly, they cannot be removed either by youthful waywardness or by manly preoccupations, or by numerous cares and anxieties of life which run counter to happiness.

The poet says that he will be satisfied with the thought that, early sympathy for nature which he felt in childhood, continues to inspire him even in his matured years.

He feels that he need not lament the loss that he has suffered, rather he should be satisfied with the gain that he has obtained. This gain lies in four things: firstly, in the interest in nature which he felt during childhood and which he will continue to feel in his matured years. Secondly it lies in the all-embracing sympathy for his fellow men,which he has learnt from human suffering. Thirdly it lies in his firm belief that man's soul is immortal and that there is a life beyond death. Fourthly, this pleasure lies in the fact that as the poet has advanced in years, he has developed a philosophical outlook about life. He says:

The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

18.4 Summing Up

You might have noticed how Wordsworth has developed his philosophical outlook from the sources of nature. Both the poems *Tintern Abbey* and *Immortality Ode* show his love for nature and the development of his philosophy. This poem shows his observations about the loss of innocence and heavenly nature with the advancement of age.

18.5 Comprehension Check Questions

1. What is the main idea of the poem?

2. Why does the poet want to celebrate childhood?

3. What are the observations of the poet about childhood?

4. What are the games played by the child?

5. How does the earth receive and entertain the child?

6. How does the child move away from heaven?

7. What are the observations of the poet about immortality?

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LESSON 19

INTRODUCTION TO THE PRELUDE

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

19.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will be able to

- Understand the conditions that made Wordsworth write the poem
- Know about the epic stature of the poem
- Analyse the philosophical influence of Nature on the poet's mind

Structure of the Lesson

19.0 Objectives
19.1 Background to *The Prelude*
19.2 Composition of Book1
19.3 Purpose of the Poem
19.4 The Theme or Subject of *The Prelude*
19.4.1 Book I
19.4.2 Books II &III
19.4.3 Book IV
19.4.4 Book V
19.4.5 Book VI
19.4.6 Book VII
19.4.7 Book VIII
19.4.8 Books IX &X
19.4.9 Book XI
19.5 Books XI- XIV
19.6. *The Prelude* and Other Poems
19.7 Summing Up
19.8 Comprehension Check Questions
19.9 References
19.9.1 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

19.1 Background to *The Prelude*

The authentic assertion by Helen Darbishire that 'the finest fruit of Wordsworth's great creative period is the poem published after his death in 1850 under the title of *The Prelude'* will never be disputed by anyone. But the irony of the situation is that, to the great poet-priest of Nature, it was but a minor piece of poetical work. He could in all probability never dream during his life time that,(in this 'portico to his Gothic Church', to his 'cherished monument' - *The Recluse,)* he was leaving for the posterity, a monumental work. Indeed, he did not think it to be worthy enough to have a separate title.

Most of the famous critics like Aubrey de Selincourt, Garrod or Helen Darbishire have amply quoted from the poet's *Preface* to the first edition of *The Excursion* in 1814.

Several years ago, when the author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, he took a review of his own mind, and examined how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them. The work is addressed to a dear friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius. It springs from a determination to compose a philosophical poem, containing the views of 'Man, Nature and Society' ; and it was entitled, *The Recluse,* having for its principal subject 'the sensations and the opinions' of a poet living in retirement.

The preparatory poem was biographical, and the poet felt that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself ; and the two works had the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the "anti-chapel has to the body of a Gothic Church". As the poet himself has observed, "the first and third parts of *The Recluse* will consist chiefly of meditations in the Author's own person; and in the Intermediate part (*The Excursio*n) the intervention of characters speaking is employed, and something of a dramatic form adopted".

19.2 Composition of Book1

We come to know that the poem 'was commenced in the beginning of the year 1799 and was completed in the summer of 1805'. But some recent commentators like Thomas Hutchinson, Harper and especially Garrod, after painstaking researches have established that the preamble to Book I (lines 1-45) was in all probability composed in 1795 on his way from Bristol to Racedown. It has also been established that the first tentative draft of Book I of *The Prelude* was made in the winter of 1798-99, when he was in Germany and probably Book I and II were finished by October, 1800. Then, for some reason or the other the poem was laid aside till January, 1804. It was taken up in right earnest and was completed towards the end of May, 1805. In his letter to Sir G. Beaumont on 3rd June of the same year, the poet writes:

> "I have the pleasure to say that I finished my poem about a fortnight ago. I had looked forward to the day as a most happy one : and I was indeed grateful to God for giving me life to complete the work such as it is ... I ought to add that I have the satisfaction of finding 'the present poem not quite of so alarming a length as I apprehended".

From Wordsworth's own statement it has been quite clear that this was to be the preparatory poem and was also to be biographical. So no separate title was given to it by him. And the title-*The Prelude* under which it was published in 1850 was chosen by his wife, Mary Wordsworth. In fact, Wordsworth never intended to get it published during his life time. The poet would call it the 'Poem on his own early life' and to Dorothy it was the 'poem to Coleridge'. To Coleridge it was nothing but a part of *The Recluse*, a great philosophical poem that was to be the monument work of the life of the poet. On the 8th March, 1798 Coleridge wrote to Cottle :

> 'He (Wordsworth) has written more than 1200 lines of a blank verse superior, I hesitate not to aver, to anything our language which any way resembles it. Poole

thinks of it as likely to benefit mankind much more than anything Wordsworth has yet written'.

And from a letter written on 11th March, 1798 to James Losh we get from Wordsworth:

"I have been fairly industrious within the last few weeks. I have written 706 lines of a poem which I have to make of a considerable utility. Its title will be, *The Recluse* or 'Views of Nature, Man and Society'."

It has also been found that the poet had written some 1300 to 1500 lines that was nothing but the beginning of *The Prelude*.It may be concluded now that 'the guardian angel of Wordsworth's poetical genius', Coleridge, both guided and inspired the poet to compose-

…some philosophic song

Of truth that cherished our daily life ;

With meditations, passionate deep

Recesses into man's heart, immortal verse

Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre ;

So, before undertaking the arduous task of composing his great 'philosophic song', the poet began with '*the* preparatory poem,' *The Prelude' ;* and the poem was dedicated to his dear friend, Coleridge, 'most distinguished for his knowledge and genius'.

19.3 Purpose of the Poem

The purpose of the poem is twofold: first, a self-examination, to fathom out if he was indeed a real poet and if he was fit enough for composing a great poem that will stand the test of time; and secondly, a 'self-expression, enfolding the expression of an age of renewed nobility and manners':

May my life

Express the image of a better time'

More wise desires and simplest manners.

This is also quite evident from the introductory lines of *The Prelude* and there the poet speaks of himself quite explicitly as –'a renovated spirit singled out for holy services'. He also speaks of his verse as a 'priestly robe' with firm belief that he was –'a renovated, spirit singled out'.Garrod has very nicely explained the point in the following lines:

A critical and close observation will reveal that in theme, style and structure, it has close resemblance with an epic. Of course, the theme here in this poem is the loss of the paradise of the childhood, then to regain that blessed stage through highly developed power of imagination and mystic experience of inexplicable delight through contacts with the sublime and beautiful aspects of Nature.

19.4 The Theme or Subject of "The Prelude"

The very sub-title of this great poem, *The Growth of a Poet's Mind* makes it crystal clear at the very outset that *The Prelude* is not an autobiography from the pen of Wordsworth in the usual sense. "In *The Prelude* Wordsworth gives a record-and he will vouch for the truth of it-of that inner life out of which his poetry grew". And the record starts from his very infant days when the poet 'held mute dialogues with his mother's heart. So we find the poem dealing with three main experiences of the three important stages of his life –the childhood, the adolescence and the period of his adventures in France and telling us in the end about his Imagination and Taste.

This long poem or personal epic of Wordsworth traces the growth of the poet's mind and soul from his infant and childhood days at Cockermouth in Cumberland and in the Grammar School at Hawkshead down to his settlement at Grasmere, when his mind attained its full maturity. The poem consists of fourteen books. Let's have a look at the outline summary of these books:

19.4.1 Book I

In Book I we find the child deriving great delight from common sports and pastimes like fishing, bathing, bird-nesting, bird-snaring, skating, kite-sailing, expedition in a stolen boat, naughts-and-crosses and cards. Almost all these pastimes would take place amidst lovely or sublime surroundings of nature. But even at this stage, slowly and almost imperceptibly the boy's sensuous love of Nature began to change into some sort of spiritual or mystic love.

19.4.2 Book II& III

In the second book we get the second stage in the relation of the child to Nature. Book III deals with the poet's actual residence at Cambridge. He relates his experiences and tells us that he cared not much to be a scholar. It was a period of 'submissive idleness' and uncalled for captivity.

19.4.3 Book IV

Book IV gives an account of the long summer vacation when he returned to well-known scenes of his native hills and to his old friends and companions. In this book, we get those beautiful lines that tell us about his realization that he was 'a dedicated spirit'.

19.4.4Book V

Book I to IV may be taken as the first movement of this long poem. After this the narrative is suspended and in Book V he tells about his indebtedness to books and reading in early life. The poet's famous tribute to the great English poets is included in this Book and we get such fine lines as :

> …And the gentle Bard,
>
> Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State
>
> Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
>
> With the Moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,

I called him brother, Englishman and friend :

19.4.5Book VI

Again, in this Book we get an account of the rest of his university days; but he passes over it lightly. During these days he felt lonelier, but still Nature 'was sovereign in his mind.' In this Book we also find the poet 'emboldened to cherish ... ...That I might leave

Some monument behind me.

The poet tells us that he passed his second summer vacation quite happily with Dorothy and Mary Hutchinson and also gives an account of the walking tour of France and Switzerland during the third summer vacation.

19.4.6. Book VII

In this Book the account of his walking tour is continued for some time. Then the poet gives us the account of his residence in London where he moved after taking his degree in January, 1791. Here we find the poet more interested in people around him. Unfortunately, this Book contains, probably, the dullest part of the poem with the descriptions of his dull life in London.

19.4.7 Book VIII

We have the second phase of the poem with the poet's retrospective survey of his childhood and growing maturity and with its strange sub-title "Love of Nature Leading to Love of Man". It signifies that 'Love of Nature' leads the poet to the 'Love of Man'.

19.4.8 Book IX and X

The third movement of the poem begins here. In these two books, we find Wordsworth's zeal and enthusiasm for the French Revolution and his strange and exciting experiences during his subsequent visit to France.

"He also tells about his great intimacy with Beaupouis who inspired the poet with his great revolutionary enthusiasm. But soon came the great disillusionment. He was deeply shocked at the terrible course of events that followed and his faith in the great Revolution was shaken to the foundation".

19.4.9Book XI

Disillusionment continued and it was complete when all the great ideals of the French Revolution were doomed and France entered upon a policy of great military aggression. He was overwhelmed and probably faced the most bitter spiritual crisis of his life. He tried to tide over the crisis by deriving strength from Godwinism, but without any effect.

19.5 Book XII-XIV

The fourth and the last movement of the poem has been covered in book XI. In the last three books we find how the gradual restoration of the poet's faith in humanity was

ushered in. This happened mainly through the agency of Dorothy, Coleridge and the benign influence of Nature. In these Books we find the poet telling us how the imagination, absorbing all experience and transcending it, links mankind with the divine.

Wordsworth must be beginning to realize that a poem on his own early developments might make a valuable introduction to his subsequent master-work, *The Recluse,* which in keeping with the aspiration of Coleridge was 'to deliver upon authority a system of philosophy' after assuming the station of a man in repose, one whose principles were made up'. But fortunately Wordsworth was a poet first and not a philosopher as the friend of his heart and genius liked him to be. So his lofty venture composing a philosophic song ended in a few hundred lines of *The Prelude,* was brought to a close in 1805 with his 'fuller project of a poem including his experience in France and bringing his story down to 1798, when he felt his genius ripe for expression'. The following lines quoted from Helen Darbishire make the point crystal clear : "Wordsworth's genius could not express itself in Coleridge's terms : he could not write the true philosophical poem. Perhaps no poet can. At any rate he was right to follow his own bent. His poetic thought sprang out of the living body of his experience and could only be delivered through images and incidents and characters which belonged to the life of man and nature as he knew it : the autobiographic form of *The Prelude* fitted genius".

19.6 *The Prelude* and Other Poems

Wordsworth had abnormal powers to live intensely in the past ; he could also revive and recreate it. And his main purpose in *The Prelude* was 'to recall and quicken into permanent life those pregnant moments'. This is quite in keeping with his own theory of poetry-"Poetry takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility". In many of his famous poems, Wordsworth mainly talks of himself, of his experiences, of his vision of life and of his thoughts and beliefs. Among them the *Tintern Abbey*, *The Prelude,* and the lofty *Immortality Ode* are of special significance. They are faithful records of his inner life and emotional experiences and so enable us to have a glimpse of the innermost recesses of the Poet's soul. In fact, what *Tintern Abbey* tells us in brief, *The Prelude* reveals to us in detail. Both the poems present the changing pattern of the poet's relationship with Nature and illustrate a perception which is central to all Wordsworth's thought. In *Tintern Abbey* the poet reviews the changes which have come about in his attitude to Nature and distinguishes three major changes. And we find a corresponding pattern emerging in *The Prelude* also. In the first stage the poet derived simple physical sensuous delight in Nature :

I held unconscious intercourse with beauty

Old as creation ; drinking in a pure

Organic pleasure…….(Li 563-65)

In the second stage, he could have more mystical and spiritual pleasure from his close contacts with Nature :

Thence did I drink the visionary power;

And deem not profitless those fleeting moods

Of shadowy exultation. (Li 311-313)

And finally the love of Nature leads to the love of man and this change brings about a sober attitude :

…….in this time

Of dereliction and dismay. I yet

Despair not of our nature…and in thee,

For this uneasy heart of ours, I find

A never-failing principle of joy

And purest passion. (II, 440-50)

Again, in *The Prelude,* specially in Books I and II we may find three stages in the process by which the mystical relationship is established between the poet and Nature. First, the poet becomes conscious of the creative activity of his mind as it operates on what it sees:

…power

Abode within me ; a forming hand, at times

Rebellious, acting in a devious mood

In the second stage the poet is aware of images within his mind, 'as if they had passed through his senses, from an outer to an inner existence':

"Oft in these moments such a holy calm

Would overspread my soul, the bodily eyes

Were utterly forgotten and what I saw

Appeared like something in myself, a dream,

A prospect in the mind (II: 348-52)

And in the third stage there is absolute suspension of the life of senses, the poet experiences a deep mystical sense of delight and hears the self-same song of all the beings in this universe not with his physical ears but :

…when the fleshy ear

O'ercome by humble prelude of that strain,

Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

This is an echo definitely from those inspiring lines of *Tintern Abbey:*

…….that serene and blessed mood,

In which the affections gently lead us on,

Until, the breath of this corporeal frame

And even the motion of our human blood

Almost suspended, we are laid asleep

In body, and become a living soul

Thus in *The Prelude*, one of the greatest and loftiest poems of English literature, Wordsworth offers us a history of his mental and spiritual growth.

19.7 Summing Up

You should have understood the conditions that led William Wordsworth to write this great poem and the various influences on his mind. Wordsworth was disillusioned by the results of the French Revolution and he was able to revive himself with the help of Coleridge, Dorothy and Mother Nature. He describes various incidents that worked for the 'growth of his mind'. The next part of this lesson will enable you to know about the theme of *The Prelude* Book1.

19.8 Comprehension Check Questions

1. When did Wordsworth start writing 'Prelude'?

2. Why did he want to write a long poem?

3. How does he describe the book 'Prelude' ?

4. What is the name given to the long poem?

5. What are the features of an epic poem?

6. How do you justify *The Recluse* as an epic?

7. What does Wordsworth say in Book II?

8. What are the similarities between *The Prelude* and other poems of Wordsworth?

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LESSON 20
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE POEM, "THE PRELUDE": BOOK I

20.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson you will

- Understand the theme of the poem
- Analyse the Conditions that led Wordsworth attempt a long poem and
- Know about the different aspects of *Prelude Book 1*

Structure of the Lesson

20.0 Objectives

20.1 Background of the Poem

20.2 The Poet Returns to Nature and Broods

20.3 Subject Matter of the Proposed Epic

20.4 Childhood Pleasures

20.5 Bird-Nesting

20.6. Boating Episode

20.7 Skating Episode

20.8. Childhood Games and Nature

20.9 Summing Up

20.9.1 Comprehension Check Questions

20.9.2 References

20.9.3 Additional Resources

Expansion of the Structure

This great poem,'the finest fruit of Wordsworth's great creative period', is to be treated as the faithful record of the growth and development of the poet's mind. Its very sub-title, *The Growth of a Poet's Mind*, amply justifies the statement that it records the life of Wordsworth's poetic personality. As you have learned already, like an epic poem, this long poem is divided into fourteen books. The following link will take you to the poem

(http://triggs.djvu.org/djvu-editions.com/WORDSWORTH/PRELUDE1805/Download.pdf)

20.1 Background to the Poem:

In the first book of *The Prelude* we get the autobiographical account of the poet's childhood and school time. In the introductory part, i.e, from lines 1 to 269, the poet, before narrating his pleasant or painful experience of childhood days, first tells us how he was led to write this great poem.

The opening lines (1 to 45) of *The Prelude*, Book I, express the deep sense of joy and relief that Wordsworth felt after leaving the vast city of London for Racedown in Dorsetshire where the poet and his sister Dorothy settled in the autumn of 1795. He himself feels as a captive. He feels happy to be in the midst of nature again.

In that huge city he languished for long just like 'a discontented sojourner'. But in that chosen valley of Racedown, just in the lap of mother nature, the poet is as free as a bird to settle down wherever he likes. Gone is the burden of his unnatural life in London. He can now shake off the heavy load of despair and dejection from his soul.

20.2 The Poet Returns to Nature and Broods:

The mild breeze, 'the sweet breath of heaven', seemed to have aroused in him a corresponding breeze of inspiration, engendering in his soul a great creative energy that would lead the poet to 'fresh and lofty poetic activity'. Here we find Wordsworth, as usual, imparting a living personality to the breeze, a lifeless object of nature, as it seems to be somewhat aware of the great joy that it brings to the poet's mind. The fresh urge for poetic productivity is indomitable and under its powerful influence he will be able to compose regularly, poems of worship and verse of a lofty inspirational order.

Then the poet addresses his dear friend, Coleridge, who constantly encouraged the poet to undertake the composition of a great philosophic poem to be called *The Recluse* and tells him that he has never been in the habit of transforming a present joy into a subject for writing poetry. Here we may recollect the theory of poetry propounded by Wordsworth in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. It is the confirmed opinion of the poet that "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility".

It was a lovely evening and his soul once more wanted to measure its own power and ability. His thoughts or inspiration seemed to play upon his soul like the wind on the Aeolean harp. But soon it was clear that his soul was deceived, as it failed to respond to the wind of inspiration to produce a harmonious pattern. But after settling down at his hermitage at Racedown, he had a keen desire to prepare himself for some fixed project or plan. He should either gather a new store of knowledge or rescue his old stock of knowledge by some timely action, from total oblivion. Still loftier hopes arose in his heart. Some vague fancies and longings were drifting about aimlessly in his mind for many years.

Like a dove driven by the tempest, the poet seems to be goaded on by his poetic frenzy to search the topics of poetry for some exalted theme. Once more, as a person desiring to find if he is fit enough for undertaking an arduous task of writing a great epic, he subjects himself to severe self-analysis, makes a thorough investigation of his mind and the result seems to him to be much encouraging. Wordsworth finds that he has all the necessary equipment for achieving such a grand purpose.

20.3 Subject Matter of the Epic:

Next, the poet mentions some subjects which were considered by him as suitable for a great epic. First of all his mind turns to 'some old romantic tale by Milton left unsung'. It may be noted here that Milton in his Latin poem *Mansus,* expressed a keen desire "to recall in song the things of my native land and Arthur, who carried war even into fairy land". In a manuscript of Milton at Cambridge we also find a list of nearly a hundred possible subjects. But all these were left unsung by Milton. This also signifies that Wordsworth's first ambition is to emulate Milton whom he considered to be his ideal.

Next we find the poet mentioning various other subjects to which his mind turns from time to time. They are : Chivalry and war-like deeds of medieval knights, the noble and brave exploits of great heroes like Mithridates, Odin, Sertorious, Dominique de Gourgues, ("That one Frenchman"), Gustavus, a great far-famed Scottish hero Wallace. It may be noted here that it was his reading of Plutarch and Gibbon that attracted him to these noble themes. Sometimes he feels that it would suit him better to invent a story from his own mind, much more closely related to his intense feelings and habitual thinking. But the thin and vague structure of such a story soon fades away from his mind. So the poet is not at all satisfied with any of the above themes.

Finally, a passionate desire arises in his soul to write a philosophic poem dealing with some universal truth which gives strength and sustenance to our day-to-day life. This lofty poem should be sublime and highly melodious like the music of Orpheus playing on his lyre. Orpheus was the great musician in Greek mythology. It is said that when Orpheus played on his lyre, trees began to dance to the tune. Even Pluto, the god of Hades, was charmed by his music and set free his wife Eurydice. But very soon the poet recoils from such an arduous task. He seeks consolation from the fond hope that advancing years will endow him with mature power of thinking and clearer insight to compose such a great poem. The poet is hesitant to make a choice. This may be due to his lack of confidence, or to his desire to be very wise and cautious.

Thus he feels that instead of suffering from all this mental conflict it would be far better for him to roam about over the green fields and village pathways deriving only sensuous pleasure from the signs and sounds of nature with an uncensored indifference to all serious thoughts and subjects. The poet also regrets that in this way he finds himself going towards the grave without performing any useful or noble deed, just like an unfaithful manager of an estate who has received a lot from his master but has not rendered any real service to him in return. Here is an echo from one of the famous sonnets of Milton.

20.4 Childhood Pleasures:

All his mental conflicts on composing an exalted poem on a noble theme sends the poet's mind back to those childhood days which he passed in harmony beside River Derwent.

As a child of five, he came in close contact with nature at Cockermouth, his birthplace, and subsequently at Hawkshead in the valley of Esthwaite where his family shifted when he was a boy of nearly ten. At Cockermouth he bathed and dived in the River Derwent for long spells or at other times ran about swiftly in the sandy fields 'leaping through lovely groves of yellow rampart'. Sometimes he used to stand alone under the blue dome amidst the soft lovely surroundings and felt himself to be a Red Indian boy who had run out from his mother's hut in a playful mood. At Hawkshead, the poet and his companions had a greater freedom to take part in a variety of games. We come to know from

the poet how before he was even ten ,he used to catch woodcocks over the high hill sides under the light of the moon and also how he would sometimes catch hold of a bird which was trapped in the snare of some other person. But after the commission of such an unfair deed the poet with his guilty conscience felt that someone with low breathing was dogging his footsteps and would hear "low breathings coming after me and sounds of undistinguished motion."

20.5 Bird- Nesting

The next favourite sport of the poet was looking for bird nests. He tells us how they used to move about just like robbers in quest of high places just to rob birds'nests of their eggs. And sometimes he hung alone above the nest of a raven at a high altitude in a very precarious position. At such times he used to be overwhelmed with a mysterious awe by the strange sound of the dry wind and the unearthly appearance of the sky itself and the dark and gloomy clouds above.

Next, we find a few lines which are partly philosophical and partly psychological. Such thoughtful lines-not only in *The Prelude* but in many other famous poems such as *Tintern Abbey, Immortality Ode* and others lucidly reveal the poet's philosophy of Nature and Man, and go a long way to establish his claim to be a philosophical poet.

Nature possesses a mysterious kind of skill and power that can harmonise 'discordantelements' in our nature and thus bring them together in one harmonious combination. Then he expresses his deep sense of thankfulness to nature for all the means-sometimes pleasant and sometimes awful - employed by her for the healthy growth and development of his mind and soul.

Wordsworth might have been influenced to a great extent by the eighteenth century philosopher David Hartley and his theory of association. Hartley and other empiricist philosophers laid great stress on the early background and environment and expressed the view that the character of a man develops during childhood and youth as a direct result of his physical experiences and the feelings of pleasure and pain from such experiences. And we find Wordsworth sharing their view in *The Prelude to a great* extent. But as regards the working of the subconscious mind, he went much further and his ideas seem to be much nearer to the modern psychological theories.

20.6 Boating Episode:

Next we get one of the most celebrated passages from Wordsworth's sensitive pen. It contains the famous boating episode:

It was an act of stealth

And troubled pleasure.

And when the stolen boat started moving over the smooth lake there came echoing sounds, rather sounds of warning, from the mountain sides. After some time, to his great dismay, he found a huge and black peak rearing its head from behind the uneven range of hills. To the poet it seemed that it was an awful and strange living being with a will and power of its own which was following him with regular footsteps with some fixed purpose. With a trembling heart the child was back at the mooring place and went homeward in a pensive mood. But afterwards, for a long period the poet's mind was haunted during the day as well as at night

by huge and powerful forms and shapes, whose mode of life is mysterious and beyond the knowledge of human beings.

This boating incident is one of the finest illustrations of how the poet's soul was fostered by Nature's ministry of fear. It may also be noted here that even at this stage Wordsworth had the belief that the different objects of nature were animated by individual spirits with whom he could hold discourses. This is rather Greek-paganism, which ultimately gave way to pantheism, that conceives of Nature as the expression of one divine spirit, to a belief in the essential 'oneness of all'.

Next we get the poet's comments on the fellowship that existed between him and the different objects of nature even in those early days of his life. The poet once more expresses his gratefulness to the 'Wisdom and Spirit of the universe'that from the very earliest days of his childhood, took upon itself the task of shaping an intimate relationship between his human feelings and passions and everlasting things of nature.

20.7 Skating Episode:

The next joyful experience recalled by the poet is the exciting game of skating on the ice in the company of other young friends. The ringing sounds of their moving skates would be echoed by the leafless trees and the surrounding hills.

After this we find the poet solemnly addressing the "Presences of Nature in the sky and on the earth……"and souls of lovely places are telling just that it was surely some noble hope that actuated these 'Presences', these 'Souls of lonely places'to train and discipline his powers and passions and this was done through the ministry of fear and pleasure in the midst of his boyhood games, in the caves, in the hills or in the woods. Nature imparted characteristics of either love or fear to all such objects. This passage also bears testimony to Wordsworth's paganism in his early days.

20.8 Childhood Games and Nature:

Next the poet tells us that the recollection of the lovely natural surroundings in which they played their various games can never go away from his mind. For them it was the most beautiful valley under the sun. Even at this advanced stage of life the poet can recapture the same ecstatic feeling at the sight of the bowers of hazel trees with snowy-white bunches of flowers or that of the paper-kite among the clouds tugging at the string like a spirited horse which is pulling hard at its reins and sometimes lunging downwards all of a sudden, overpowered by the stormy wind. The magic-like enchantment of the fishing-rod and line is also unforgettable. We may note here that according to the poet. "Poetry takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility".

So far the poet has told us about joys whose source was eternal, that is, deriving pleasure from the sensuous beauty of nature. This joy, no doubt, filled his heart with grand and beautiful images of this earth and ultimately made him love them all. We may find here also links with Hartley's 'associationism' that tells us that moral character of a man develops during the early part of life as a direct result of man's physical experiences and the pleasure and pain they cause. Now the poet tells us of joys of subtler origin experienced by him in those early days. During passionate and most active period of his boyhood days those ecstatic sensuous pleasures were so simple and so pure that they seemed to have a more refined or a spiritual source.

Thus, very often even in the midst of those fits of sensuous pleasures and rapturous delight, the poet beheld flashes of momentary visions of divine beauty and the earth seemed to communicate to him things worth remembering-that it reminded the poet of his divine origin and of the visions of the divine life that he had, prior to his earthly life.

In this way through the solemn ministry of pleasure and pain, through the force of dimly recollected emotions and feelings those enchanting and sublime scenes became dear to him as a matter of habit and they became closely connected by some invisible bond with his primary affections and impulses ; and thus his enjoyment of nature became instinctive. Of course, the time for realizing their profound significance was reserved for a distant date.

At the end, Wordsworth once more addresses Coleridge and talks to him rather in an apologetic mood. The poet craves his forgiveness if he has been misled by his mistaken or fond love for those days of childhood or has narrated his story in a dull or feeble manner.

Finally, in his concluding remarks the poet says that he has, at least, succeeded in achieving one important object. His mind has been refreshed and rejuvenated. And if this genial mood persists he will be able to narrate the story of the later years of his life in the subsequent Books of *The Prelude* at an early date. The path lies clear before him as he has chosen a simple theme 'of determined bounds'.

The poet closes by expressing a hope that this humble labour on his part will, definitely, be welcome to his honored friend.

20.9 Summing- up.

Hope the detailed analysis of the poem has offered you the much needed guidance. For better understanding you have to read the original poem. Wordsworth's attachment with Mother Nature can be felt only through his poetry.

20.9.1 Comprehension Check Questions

1. What made the poet to return to Nature?
2. What did the poet expect from the French revolution? Why was he disillusioned?
3. What does he want to write in the first book?
4. Whose influence does the poet speak about?
5. When was the book planned and completed?
6. Summarise the theme of the poem in ten sentences.

20.9.2 References:

1. The Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth. Ed. Helen Darbishire. Hardcover –1958

by Dorothy Wordsworth (Author), Oxford University Press,1958.

2. Helen Darbishire, *The Poet Wordsworth*, Clarenden Press,1950.

3. Aubrey de Selincourt and Walter Allen, *Seven Great Writers, ELBS, 1964.*

4. H.W.Garrod, *William Wordsworth, OUP*

20.9.3 : Additional Resources :

1. Philip Wayne, *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth,* OUP

2. Aubrey De Selincourt , Six Great Poets: Chaucer, Pope, Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson, the Brownings, Scholarly Press May 1988,

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LESSON 21

LAST RIDE TOGETHER BY ROBERT BROWNING

Robert Browning is a famous poet in the Victorian Age. You are going to read some of his poems prescribed by the University. The present poem is the first in the series.

21.0 Objectives

After going through this lesson, you will be able to

- Know about the life and career of Robert Browning
- Understand the theme of the poem

Structure of the Lesson

20.0 Objectives

21.1 Life of Robert Browning
21.2 Browning's Career as a Poet
21.3 Browning's Marriage
21.4 Browning's Poetry
21.5 Introduction to the Poem Last Ride Together
21.6 Poem
21.7 Analysis of the Poem
21.8 Conclusion
21.9.1 Summing Up
21.9.2 Comprehension Check Questions
21.9.3 References
21.9.4 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

21.1Life of Robert Browning (1812-1889)

Robert Browning is one of the greatest poets in English literature and one of the most significant interpreters of the Victorian age. He was born in Camberwell, on May 7, 1812. The main stock of the Brownings was, it appears, West Saxon, but through his mother, the poet was German and Scotch as well. The poet's father and grandfather, both of them were clerks in the Bank of England and were well-esteemed and prosperous. The grandfather, we are told, was a somewhat hard and cynical man of the world, thoroughly practical and worldly. The poet's father, on the other hand, was a man of finer nature, with cultivated tastes in art and literature, and an ardent lover and collector of books. Browning owed a great deal to his father's own love for poetry and the arts.

It is interesting to observe that, unlike Tennyson, who is numbered "in the glorious company of Cambridge poets", academic or University training and discipline played no part in the life of Browning. Browning's intellectual life was moulded from his boyhood by the unchecked liberty given by his fatherfor reading. His father was an unusual man and had collected a large number of old and rare books, and was, besides this, a man of simple tastes and much kindness. The poet's mother, described by Carlyle as "a true Scotch gentlewoman"was a woman of delicate and nervous constitution, and according to Mrs. Sutherland Orr, her temperament was 'traceable' in the son.

Browning was educated at private schools near his home, but studied Greek for a short time, chiefly at University College, London, and French, with a private tutor at home. It may seem rather curious that his father did not send him to one of the Universities, but certainly encouraged and generously supported his son in all intellectual tastes and most oft-quoted example of Browning's alleged 'obscurity'.

21.2 Browning's Career as a Poet

Till the 1840s, it appears, Browning had achieved little success as a poet. *Strafford* had been his most successful work till now. At the suggestion of Moxon, Browning published a series of poems issued chiefly in parts. Accordingly, between 1841 and 1846, appeared that astonishing series of poetical pamphlets known as *Bells and Pomegranates.* There were eight parts, the first issued in 1841 and the last in 1846. The first began with *Pippa Passes* and the last part contained *Duria and A Soul's Tragedy*. In these were issued

the dramas, the *Dramatic Lyrics* and the *Dramatic Romances.* This series gained universal appreciation and Browning became known to a wider public.

21.3 Browning's Marriage

It was at this time that Browning was introduced to Mr. Kenyon, a lover of art and a friend of many good men, and through Mr. Kenyon, Browning was introduced to Elizabeth Barrett. Here we come to the great romance of Browning's life. Elizabeth Barrett (1806-1861) was born at Coxhoe Hall, Durham, and was the eldest of eleven children of Edward Moulton Barrett, a West Indian planter. An accident in her early girlhood had made her an invalid, and she lived more or less a recluse under the tyranny of her father. The Barrett family had settled in Wimpole Street, and it was here that Browning first met her, through Mr. Kenyon. The story of their courtship and marriage reads indeed like a romance. Elizabeth had read the earlier parts of the *Bells and Pomegranates* and the poems had won her enthusiastic admiration. Elizabeth was herself a poet, and in her poem *Lady Geraldine's Courtship,* she spoke of Browning as one of the poets whose poems were read to the Lady Geraldine:-

Or from Browning some 'Pomegranates' which, if cut deep
Down the middle,
Shows a heart within, blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.

This sympathy between her and Browning started a correspondence. He met her and immediately fell in love with Elizabeth, and decided to marry. Elizabeth's own words are that she was "caught up into love and taught the whole of life in a new rhythm". Her own *Sonnets from the Portuguese* contain a vital record of her love, and are some of the finest love poems in English literature. "Scarcely more ardent, never purer, notes were struck from love's lyre. Her father, however, did not approve of the marriage, and there was only one way to fulfill the ardent desires of the young couple. They decided to marry without her father's consent. The marriage took place in the Church of St. Marylebone, on 12th September 1846. It was a romantic proceeding, and though her father's attitude in the matter was always a sorrow to Elizabeth, she never doubted that she did right to set on her own conviction and decision.

Just a week after their marriage, the Brownings left for Italy, visiting Paris on the way. They spent the winter in Pisa, but moved to Florence in April 1847 and soon settled there in the Palazzo Guidi. For the rest of Elizabeth's life, they lived in Italy, mostly in

Florence with occasional visits to other parts of Italy, and to England and France. It was a new life for her, bright, happy and busy. In her own words: "We live on nothing or next to nothing, have six beautiful rooms, opening in a terrace, opposite the gray wall of a church called *San Felice* for good omen". Elizabeth's health improved marvelously in the mild climate of Italy. She loved Florence and Italy, and her own poetic powers blossomed under the stimulus of happiness. She was profoundly moved by the Italian movement for freedom, and her interest in the affairs of her adopted country were almost those of a patriot.

And when she died in 1861, it was a great blow to the poet. In the words of Mr. Kenyon, "so ended on earth the most perfect example of wedded happiness in the history of literature".

The sorrow of his wife's death was deeply felt by Browning. It seemed to have deprived him of his dearest motive of life. He stayed in Florence only for a short time and later settled in London. To return to his work, only two publications of his verse marked his Florentine period- *Christamas Eve and Easter Day (1850)* and *Men and Women (1855).* In these poems, there are sure traces of his wife's influence, and they are highly valued both for theme and style. They reveal not only the new interests of their life at Florence, but also the influence of Elizabeth.

Browning returned to London accompanied by his son, born in 1849, and settled there for the rest of his life. He never returned to Florence, nor did he visit Italy again till 1878. He lived at first in retirement, for London offended and depressed him. But with his interest in his fellowmen, he saw in time not a little of the best of London society. He devoted himself entirely to his poetry. His many volumes after 1861, show that he was at the height of his poetic powers. He published his *Dramatis Persona* in 1864 and *The Ring and the Book* in 1868-69 *The Ring and the Book* is undoubtedly the most magnificent of all his achievements, in spite of its length and inequalities.

His holidays for the rest of his life were spent in France, and these visits gave him not a few of the themes of his later poems. He visited Switzerland too and that also has left traces in his work. In 1878 he went to Italy, to simple old Asolo, an early visit to which had given him the scenery of *Pippa Passes.* He visited Venice and certain spots in the Alpine country of Northern Italy. He paid further visits to Italy, and it was on one of these Italian visits, in the autumn of 1889, that he fell ill and died in Venice on December 12, 1889. He had been ailing for some time, but maintained his mental vigour and clearness to the last. He

was buried in Westminster Abbey on the last day of 1889 among the great poets of his country and he rests now beside his great contemporary, Tennyson.

21.4 Browning's Poetry

Tennyson's greatness and strength consisted in the beauty and vividness of his descriptions, conveyed in verse of singular melody and smoothness. Browning's poetry was mainly introspective and reflective. In the words of Mrs. Sutherland Orr, "Browning's poetic genius consisted of an almost unlimited power of imagination exerted upon real things". Besides, his verse was couched in a style"wherein the language chases the flying, twisting thought with little hope of ever quite catching up with it"(T.G. Williams).

Browning is essentially a poet of 'man'. What interested him was the boundless sphere of human motive and the inexhaustible variety of human character. He was passionately interested in the play of emotions and was a tireless "searcher of the soul". His theme and sphere were the 'hearts and minds of men', and in his poems, most of which are cast in the mould of the so-called "dramatic monologue", he chooses for portrayal, the most significant moments and crises in the lives of his characters. This portrayal is always individual and intense and deals with the inner life of his characters. It is this special method that gives a unique psychological value to his portraits of men and women.

Browning's catholicity and tolerance are revealed in many of his poems. He holds by good, but is not afraid of evil. To him error and evil are as much a part of life as good. He often employs error and evil as ways to good. Many of his characters attain their glimpse of good through evil and crime. Life is not an easy, comfortable affair. Men must err and suffer in order that they may be perfected. All experience is thus the pathway to the 'Good, True and the Beautiful'. Andrea realizes his failure only after he comes face to face with the evil passions in his heart. According to Browning, it is this courageous facing that becomes the first step towards the individual's spiritual regeneration. Through fear, faith and hope, through suffering, agony and even death, the soul is purified and life is made worthy of divine acceptance.

The method of the dramatic monologue suited Browning's genius very well. For, Browning is not like Shakespeare, "an intuitive, but a reflective poet". Browning deliberately creates a particular situation and places his characters in it. As Walter Pater said "the poetry of Robert Browning is the poetry of situations". His delineations are the result of a conscious

mental process. So he does not usually create more than one character at a time. Nor does he trace the character through a series of events. "His pictures are limited to moments of time and to single moods. They reveal the inner depth seen through some crisis in life; and therefore, though they are highly impressive, they do not exhibit growth. Now for purposes such as these, the monologue is admirably adopted. It leaves the poet free to choose his own moment, to begin when he likes and end when he likes, and this is essential to the effect of many of Browning's poems". (Hugh Walker: *The Age of Tennyson).* The effect of such a method is to give the monologue an extraordinary power of gripping the reader's interest and attention. Browning can condense the essence of a whole life into a single episode or situation.

Browning often puts subtle analysis of thought and emotion into the mouths of characters who cannot be credited with any intellectual gifts. It has also to be mentioned that Browning's preoccupation with thought often hampers the lyrical spontaneity of his utterance. If lyric poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions", many of Browning's monologues cannot satisfy this definition. The subtle analysis of motive, the preoccupation with mental attitudes, and the objective approach to character which this method demands, are often unfavourable to that emotional spontaneity which is essential for lyric poetry.

21.5Introduction to "The Last Ride Together"

The Last Ride Together, which is one of the finest love-lyrics of Browning was printed in *Dramatic Romances* (1845) and later published in *Men and Women* (1855). According to Mrs. Sutherlaned Orr, this piece belongs to a group of Browning's poems which are "difficult to classify". Browning wrote a number of such poems which do not contain any "distinctive mood of thought or feeling by which they could be classified". Sometimes the prevailing mood in these poems is"either too slightly indicated or too fugitive or too complex or even too fantastic to be designated by any term but 'poetic'".

The poem is remarkable for the freshness and vividness of its feeling, and the vigorous style and the rhythm of the metre are perfectly suited to the thought and emotion which the poem seeks to portray. Each stanza contains eleven lines, arranged in an unusual rhyming pattern "*aabbcddeeec.* It is a typical "dramatic monologue", depicting the emotions of a final ride which a dismissed lover has been allowed to take with his beloved.

21.6 Poem: *Last Ride Together*by Robert Browning(1812-1889)

I said---Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
Since this was written and needs must be---
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,---I claim
---Only a memory of the same,
---And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

II.

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me, a breathing-while or two,
With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end tonight?

III.

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions---sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once---
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!---
Thus leant she and lingered---joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.

Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

V.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought,---All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

VI.

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for who can reach,
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

VII.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you---poor, sick, old ere your time---
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

VIII.

And you, great sculptor---so, you gave

A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
Greatly his opera's strains intend,
Put in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

IX.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being---had I signed the bond---
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

X.

And yet---she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,---
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

(http://classiclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/rbrowning/bl-rbrown-lastride.htm)

21.8 Analysis of the Poem:

The beauty of the poem lies in the moving revelation which it gives of the lover's deepest meditations on life and love, as he experiences the exquisite joy of being in the company of his beloved, probably for the last time. He has loved her with deep passion, but she has not reciprocated his love, and has grown tired of his efforts to please her, and at last,

dismissed him. All that he wants from her is that she should go with him for a last "ride together". This wonderful happiness of being with her, though only for a short time, thrills him. As they ride, his imagination pictures her as being drawn from heaven to his earth. He does not mind his past disappointment, his life's failure to gain her love. He is immensely thankful that she is now with him:-

My whole heart rises up to bless

Your name in pride and thankfulness !

All that he now claims is the sweet memory of the past, and "one more last ride : with him. Now with her, riding by his side, he is filled with joy. He knows that this happiness will last only for a short time, but he does not care for this :-

So one day more am I deified-

Who knows but the world may end tonight ?

As they ride together, the scroll of his soul unfurls, "freshening and fluttering in the wind". Past hopes are left behind, and a deep sense of resignation comes over him. He realizes that it is useless to struggle against life's 'awryness'. To brood over what might have happened is futile. No one can escape his destiny. She might have loved him or not-who can tell? But what matters to him now is that she is with him, and he is happy and contented. Then the thought comes to him that his life is not alone in its failure. All men strive, struggle and often fail. Few or none succeed:-

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?

Why, all men strive and who succeeds?

Men must always strive for the highest, though success is a mere illusion. They must bear up "beneath their 'unsuccess'". After all, in this world men can achieve only very little, and at the end of life, only very little can be achieved-"the petty done, the undone vast."The best success, after all, proves itself to be shallow. Here we come to Browning's most characteristic thought, which he has proclaimed in poem after poem, notably in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* :-

Not on the vulgar mass
Called 'work' must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price ;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice :
But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account ;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount :
.....
This I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

The lover reflecting on life's struggles says that if all our aspirations were to be achieved in full in this life, if the goal could be reached on earth, there would then be no need for heaven. With the peace that flows into his heart, the lover realizes that outward success is a mere illusion, a mirage. Why strive for earth's honours? The statesman's power, the soldier's glory –what does it all amount to?

Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing !what atones ?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

It is the Ideal that really matters, not its fulfillment. It is the poet's vision that lives, not what he achieves. The poet's brain beats into rhyme the idealist's vision:-

What we felt only ; you expressed

You hold things beautiful the best,

And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.

But he is sure that this does not bring happiness to the poet. He asks :"Is the poet one bit nearer his own vision ?"For the poet, as to him, the vision and aspiration are the real joy, and life which hungers and yearns for something sublime is the best. So to the lover, the success of his love or otherwise does not worry him. He is supremely happy because he rides with his beloved :-

Sing, riding's a joy ! For me, I ride.

It is the same thing in Art and Music too. The sculptor's creation, achieved after years of travail, is, in the world's judgment, a mere shadow. He may create a splendid figure of Venus, but we men, who understand nothing of the sculptor's art, "turn to yonder girl that fords the burn!"The musician's notes, which he perfects after agonizing effort, will receive only a tardy praise from the world:-

So meditating on life's mystery and the hollowness and unreality of human happiness, the lover realizes that all human attainments and works seem poor in the face of the infinite that lies beyond this earthly life. But he does not worry about this. He knows that his happiness must soon end. But he comforts himself with the thought that there is something more sublime after death. He is not sure what the life beyond holds for him. What he is sure of is that this thrilling experience of love which he enjoys at the moment is of greater meaning to him than all the uncertainty of the Beyond. He is contented and happy, and so he fancies himself riding with his beloved till the end of time, and he asks himself if his destined heaven may not prove to be this :-

What if we still ride on, we two,
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity-
And Heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

21.9 Conclusion:

The Last Ride Together is one of the most beautiful poems that Browning had written. In this he immortalizes one supreme moment of passion in the life of a dedicated lover. In the words of Mr. Fotheringham:"Its lyrical quality and movement with its firm and passionate grasp of the dramatic situation, makes the poem one of the finest of its class. And the mood of energetic abandon to the pure joy of the hour with clear sight of what it is, and that it is the last –it is characteristic of our poet to imagine and express this so finely. It is surely part of the poet's energy and manliness of feeling to conceive it happening in the way it happens, and he gets his conception into his verse. The tense spring of the verse gives the passions and the self-mastery of the lover in the poem". (*Studies of the Mind and Art of Browning).*

The Last Ride Together is indeed, a typical love poem of Browning. It is a poem of unsuccessful love in which the lover faces his defeat with courage and understanding. The keynote of the poem is the ecstatic satisfaction of the lover in his brief companionship with

his beloved. This is the lover's only reward, his sole and supreme satisfaction. The tragic note of this poem is similar to that we get in Shakespeare's immortal love-tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet.* The lover in the poem, though he is aware of his destiny, faces it with courage. But in his pure abandonment to this brief hour of love, he shuts out all his frustrated hopes, and realizes only that this is heaven. Like the lover in the other great love-poem, *In a Gondola,* the lover in this poem regards his one brief moment of supreme happiness as something that transcends all the pain and tragedy of life. It is in such portrayal of tragic passion that Browning reveals his insight and profound understanding of love as life's most powerful and vital emotion.

The lover in this poem has loved wholly and ardently one who has not returned his love. He accepts his fate and knows that he has failed. There is no bitterness in his heart, "since this was written and needs must be ". On the contrary, his heart is at peace, and rises up to bless his beloved "in pride and thankfulness ". He asks her to take back his love, and only wants her to grant him his one last wish, to ride with him for the last time. She grants his wish. As they ride together for the last time, he is filled with supreme happiness. The close companionship of his beloved is all that matters to him. He is only conscious of the blessedness of this brief hour of joy and ecstasy. He feels that at least for one day more, he is 'deified'.

21.9.1 Summing Up

Robert Browning's poetry contains vivid images related to human emotions and feelings. This present poem describes the heart and the feelings of a broken hearted lover who turns happy after a last ride with his fiancée who has rejected him. It shows the acceptance of his failure. You can observe the philosophical outlook and the tragic note of the poem.

21.9.2 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Write about the childhood of Browning?
2. What are the conditions that led Browning marry Elizabeth Barrett Browning?
3. Write about the poetic career of Browning.
4. What is the theme of the poem Last Ride Together?
5. What are the aspects of a dramatic monologue?

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LESSON 22

RABBI BEN EZRA BY ROBERT BROWNING

22.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson you will be able to

- Understand the philosophical outlook of Robert Browning
- Know about the views of Rabbi Ben Ezra about old age
- Assess how Browning presents ideas about youth,old age and life after death

Structure of the Lesson

22.0 Objectives

22.1 Theme of the poem Rabbi Ben Ezra

22.2 Title of the Poem

22.3 Poem Rabbi Ben Ezra with Stanza wise Summaries

22.4. Brief Summary of the Poem

22.5 A Critical Appreciation of Rabbi Ben Ezra

22.6 Summing Up

22.7 Comprehension Check Questions

22.8 References

22.9 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

22.1 Theme of the Poem *Rabbi Ben Ezra*

Rabbi Ben Ezra is rightly considered as the best philosophic poem of the great Victorian poet, Robert Browning. It embodies his philosophic thoughts about Youth, Old age, human soul, the purpose of human life, the ultimate destiny of man and his life beyond death in the kingdom of God. Browning's spiritualism and faith in God come out prominently in this long poem of thirty two stanzas. The poet is of the view that the human soul should be kept aloof from the contamination of the world and should be dedicated to the service of God. Man should not be lost in the dizzy raptures and enticing pleasures of youth. All the time the mind and heart of man should be engaged in thinking of his future-life after death, and man should not be lost in the fleeting and transient pleasures of present day life. Human life is a preparation for the next.

All these views have been put in the mouth of Rabbi Ben Ezra, the Jewish Medieval divine scholar who lived in the eleventh century, and whose commentaries on the books of the Old Testament are scholarly and philosophic in tone. The poem was first published in *Dramatic Personae* in 1864 and since that time has been recognized as the finest poem of Browning on the philosophic side. Rabbi's philosophic views embodied in this poem are really Browning's views about life and the human soul.

22.2 Title of the Poem

Rabbi is a Jewish word. It is applied to a teacher or doctor of the law. 'Ben'is another Jewish word meaning 'son of'andthe title would mean'Rabbi son of Ezra'. In this poem Rabbi, son of Ezra is addressing youth to take life seriously and employ the period of youth for the betterment of the soul. The utterances of Rabbi are about youth, old age, aims of youth, functions of old age, aims of life, preparation of the human soul for its heavenly life and so on. The poem is philosophical in tone and the philosophical ideas are interspersed throughout the poem.

Rabbi Ben Ezra was born at Toledo in 1012 and died in 1057. His best known works are Commentaries on books of the Old Testament.

22.3Poem: *Rabbi Ben Ezra* along with Stanza wise Summaries

1.
Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

Summary: One should not be afraid of the approaching shadows of old age. One should be happy. Youth represents only one part of human life. Old age completes it. Both youth and old age are designed by God. Our lives are in the hands of God, whom we should trust.

2. Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed "Which rose make ours,
Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

Summary:Youth is the period of high ideals. Youth cherishes ideals which seem to be utopian. Youth aspires for something which is unique and glamorous. Rabbi does not blame youth for the unattainable idealism, for it is natural for youth to be idealistic in life.

3. Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Summary: However foolish and idealistic the aspirations of youth may be, Rabbi is not objecting to them. He is not critical of youth's aspiring hopes and ambitions. These hopes and ambitions, doubts and uncertainties crowning the path of youth are necessary for animate living. Without them man would be just a clod.

4.Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

Summary: Man would be no better than animal, if he were to devote all his time to the satisfaction of his physical needs. Man's vision should be spiritual and he should also look at life beyond death. He should not be lost in the revelry of earthly life.

5. Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

Summary: Man must feel happy that he is more like God rather than like birds and beasts. Man shares the nature of divinity and is more elevated than animals. Men are inspired by divine and spiritual urges which do not propel animals.

6. Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

Summary: If man has the divine spark with him, he should not be daunted by the rebuffs and failures of life. Man must struggle and put heroic efforts to achieve his high ideals, without caring for the trials and tribulations coming in his life.

7. For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

Summary: It is better to aim high and aspire for higher objects though one may fail to attain them. Aspirations comfort a man though he might have failed to attain them.

8. What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Summary: Man cannot be considered better than an animal which has no spiritual life and which lives on the earthly plane. What will happen to the soul in its disembodied form when it is separated from the body, if no care is taken for the elevation of the spirit?

9. Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn?"

Summary: Rabbi's life in the past had been very useful. His experiences bring home the truth that life is worth living, and physical gifts must be properly utilized for the advancement of the human spirit.

10. Not once beat "Praise be Thine!
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:
Perfect I call Thy plan:
Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do!"

Summary: Rabbi is grateful to God that He had made him a man. He has complete faith in God's power and mercy and believes that whatever would be done by God as the embodiment of love though in his youth he had considered God as the incarnation of power.

11. For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest;
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

Summary : Our earthly life is sweet, and our soul is imprisoned in the body. The soul longs for freedom and yearns for heaven. Man must have some higher aims to pursue in his life.

12.Let us not always say,
"Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,

Let us cry "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

Summary: Man is a combination of the body and the soul. Body and soul are complementary to each other. Both are mutually helpful. The body helps the soul, as the soul stands by the body.

13. Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a god though in the germ.

Summary: Old age is to be welcomed for it brings the reward of youth's struggles. After the struggles of the body are over, man will pass to the next stage of divine life in the next world.

14. And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new:
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

Summary : When the period of youth (full of storm and struggle) comes to an end Rabbi will take rest in his old age. After that he will die, and march confidently ahead in his spiritual voyage in a disembodied form. In his old age he is fully prepared for the journey in the next world.

15. Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

Summary: A proper assessment of the activities of youth can be possible only in old age. Rabbi will judge in his old age what he has actually gained and what he has failed to acquire in his life. Everything will be clear like crystal to him in his old age.

16. For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,

Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

Summary: In the evening all our work comes to a close. One more day is added to the past. But before the darkness of the night sets in, there is a faint glow of the twilight. Old age represents the twilight of life. Before the darkness of death descends on us we have the time to review our activities in old age.

17. So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain:
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

Summary: Let the old man survey his whole life before he gives up the ghost, and ask judgment on the proper utilization of the opportunities offered to him during his life. This will give him courage and strength to face life after death.

18. For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

Summary: All that a man can do in this life is to learn by experience and use that experience for the betterment and enrichment of life. In his life on the earth, man can only get a glimpse of God's plan as regards the destiny of man. He can get occasional glimpses of God's perfect work in his life on the earth.

19. As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor be afraid!

Summary: The period of youth is the proper time for action and struggle. Old age is the period of repose and rest. Man, in his old age, should not be tempted into vigorous activities of youth. Just as age follows youth so death follows old age.

20. Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own
With knowledge absolute,

Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Summary: It is enough for old age if it can come to a definite and final conclusion about absolute values like Right, Good, and God. Any doubts about them and their power must be cleared off and disappear in old age. All the uncertainties clouding them in the period of youth must be swept off during old age.

21. Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Summary: Old age must distinguish between the noble and the ignoble.An old man must finally decide whether he was in the wrong in the past or the world was wrong in passing judgment on his work. In old age, it would be possible for an old man to arrive at the truth by the accumulated experience of a life time.

22. Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

Summary: During the period of youth one is torn by the diversity and difference of opinions. Youth is likely to be lost in a welter of confusing and conflicting opinions. Youth does not know what to accept and what to reject. Youth is torn between conflicting opinions.

23. Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

Summary: Though a man is commonly judged by his actual work and output by the people of the world, the judgment based on solid and tangible achievements need not be sound. It is a mistake to judge a man from what he has successfully achieved in the material world . The real worth of a man should be judged by other standards.

24. But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,

All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Summary: Rabbi says that the standard by which the materialistic people of the world judge a man's worth is defective and incomplete. While passing judgment on man's life and his achievements, we should take into account not only his tangible achievements, but also all his aspirations and unaccomplished impulses that led him to action in life.

25. Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Summary: People of the world ignore fine thoughts and fancies of a man in making judgment on/about his work, if they find that they have no practical value. God certainly takes man's weak resolves, thoughts, fancies etc., into account, while making a judgment on his actual worth in his earthly existence.

26. Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

Summary: God is the potter, time is the revolving wheel and man's soul is the clay which is moulded by God. It is a mistake to think that man's life is for the enjoyment of the fleeting moments of recent life only, without caring for the future.

27. Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
***That* was, is, and shall be:**
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

Summary: Browning is of the view that soul and God are eternal. The world changes but God and human soul endure for all times to come. What is real, lasts till eternity.

28. He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

Summary : Man has been put by God in the dance of changing circumstances and events in the world. The present should not be considered as an end in itself, but should be utilized for the progress of the human soul in the future.

29. What though the earlier grooves,
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Summary: It is immaterial that the pleasant experiences and joys of youth vanish, leaving behind grimness and dreariness in their trail. All the sterner aspects of life ought to be faced with equanimity and equipoise.

30. Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with earth's wheel?

Summary: There is no use in brooding over the past. After the brief period of earthly existence, Man will ultimately die, and his soul will ascend to the kingdom of God. Man is intended for God's use in the kingdom of God.

31. But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

Summary: Rabbi depended on God's mercy in his youth. He had faith in God while he was young and was not lured by the shapes and colours of vitalizing life represented by youth. He had never forgotten the end for which he was sent. He remembers God even in his old age.

32. So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

Summary: Rabbi prays to God in the end that his life may be accepted for His service. His cup should be used by God for drinking his wine. Whatever faults might have remained in

his life should be cured and removed by God. Let him have the satisfaction that he had spent his youth well. Let old age lead to death, and the fulfillment of his final destiny in the kingdom of God.

22.4 Brief Summary of the Poem

1. Youth and old age are designed by God. Old age completes the period of human life.
2. Youth is the period of high ideals. Rabbi does not blame youth for its unattainable ideas.
3. Hopes and ambitions, aspirations and idealistic beliefs are necessary for good and purposeful living. Without them man would be just a clod of earth.
4. Man should not devote all his time to the satisfaction of bodily needs. He should also look at life beyond this earthly life.
5. Man is akin to God. Men are inspired by divine feelings which do not animate the animal creation of God.
6. Since man has the divine spark irradiating his body, he should not be put away by failures and rebuffs in his life.
7. Man should aspire for higher ideals though he may fail to attain them in his life.
8. Man will not be considered better than animal if he has no spiritual urges.
9. The world need not be renounced for spiritual pursuits;. Earthly life is worth living and physical comforts should be properly utilized for the progress of the soul.
10. Rabbi has full faith in God. In his youth he had considered God as power, but in his old age he regards God as the embodiment of love. God is Love.
11. Our earthly life is sweet, and our soul is a prisoner in the body. Man should care for his soul and pursue his life in such a manner that the advancement of the soul may be brought about.
12. Man is a combination of the body and the soul. Both are complementary and each helps the other.
13. Old age should be welcomed for it brings the reward of youth's struggles. After old age, man will pass to the next scene of his life.
14. After old age comes death. Rabbi will march confidently ahead in his spiritual voyage after finishing his earthly journey.
15. A proper assessment of the activities of youth can be possible only in old age. During the period of youth everything is uncertain. In old age all things will be crystal clear.
16. Old age is like the twilight of the evening. Before the darkness of death may envelop us in gloom, we have the time to review the activities of life in our old age.
17. Let the old man survey his whole life and pass judgment on his activities ranging from the period of youth to old age.

18. Man should use the past experience for enriching his life in the future. Man can get occasional glimpses of God's perfect work in his life on earth.

19. The period of youth is the proper time for action and struggle. Old age is the period of repose and rest. Man should not throw himself headlong in the vortex of vigorous activities in the period of old age.

20. It is enough for an old man if he can come to certain definite conclusions about absolute values like Right, Good, and God.

21. Old age must distinguish between the noble and the ignoble. In old age man can arrive at truth.

22. Youth is likely to be lost in the welter of confusing and conflicting opinions. Youth cannot make a nice discrimination between what is right and wrong. Youth is torn between conflicting opinions.

23. People of the world judge a man by his actual output and solid achievements. The real worth of a man should be gauged by other spiritual standards.

24. The standard by which the people of the world judge a man's actions and activities is defective and incomplete. While passing judgments on man's life and activities we should take into account all his unrealized hopes and aspirations.

25. People of the world ignore fine thoughts and fancies cherished by a man while making judgment on his activities, and consider only his tangible achievements. God takes in to account all the unfulfilled aspirations while judging a man's work in the world.

26. God is the potter, and the soul is the clay. Out of this clay God forms the cup of the human soul.

27. God and human soul are eternal. What is real lasts forever. God and soul alone are real.

28. Man has been specially put in the dance of changing circumstances so that he may utilise them for the progress of his soul.

29. It is immaterial for the old man whether the joys of youth are there or not in his old age. Old age is grim and dreary. All the stern aspects of life in old age ought to be faced with courage.

30. There is no sense in brooding over the period of youth, which cannot be recalled. After the brief period of earthly life man will die and his soul will ascend to the kingdom of God. Man is the cup intended for God's use in the kingdom of God.

31. Rabbi had full faith in God's mercy while he was young. He had never forgotten his divine purpose in youth. He remembers God even in his old age.

32. Rabbi prays to God in the end that his life may be accepted by Him in His service. All the shortcomings and blotches of his soul should be amended by Him in His kingdom.

22.5 A Critical Appreciation of *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

Rabbi Ben Ezra is one of the greatest philosophic poems in English poetry, and is a poem of philosophic wisdom in Browning's poetic output. The poem embodies Browning's philosophy of life and his general attitude towards youth and old age. It is the matured expression of the poet about man's actual mission in life, and the purpose of man's existence on the earth. Its study will open a new vision of life, and to men of religious and philosophic temperament it will come as a benediction from heaven.

The great merit of *Rabbi Ben Ezra* lies in the fact that it exhorts young men and old persons to make the best use of their life. The poet very nicely outlines the role of youth as well as old age. The poet provides illuminating guidance to young men, as well as to persons reaching their grave in their old age.

Browning distinguishes that youth is the period of action, struggle, and achievement and old age is the time for contemplation, rest, and spiritual advancement. An old man should keep away from the fever and fret of life, and should not rush headlong into the vortex of hectic life :

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on ought found made;
So better, age exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt further.

The poem is meant for those persons who consider that the aim of life is for the gratification of bodily needs. Browning gives a jolt to such mundane worshippers of the body, and awakens them from their mistaken conception of life. Those who read this poem attentively will realize the meaninglessness of living life purely with the earthly and bodily motives. Man is a higher creature than brutes and animals. Man has a soul which is far more elevated than the soul of animal creation. It is necessary for human beings not only to care for their body but also for the elevation of their soul. If a man spends his life in mere eating and drinking, and has no consideration for the betterment of his spirit, he is not better than a brute:

Poor vaunt of life indeed
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast :
Such feasting ended, then
As an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubts the maid crammed beast?

Man should not choose to 'be brutish for he has a divine spark irradiating his being. He should develop his spiritual power and work for his salvation. Like Rabbi Ben Ezra he should be in a position to say-

Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute ; a god though in the germ.

This poem speaks about the importance of heavenly life. It confirms the faith of believers and makes them God-fearing and righteous in their lives. The poem teaches us to have supreme faith in the Almighty God, who has created us. God is Love and we should have faith in the One who loves us. We must love Him and worship Him. All will be for the

best for those who believe in God's mercy and kindness. We must surrender to God's mercy and believe in his dispensation. Our attitude should be –

Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, remake complete,-I must what thou shad do!

Like Rabbi Ben Ezra, we should say at the time of our departure from the world to the kingdom of God-

So, take and use Thy work
Amend what flaws may lurk
What strain O'the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

The poet says that we should never be afraid of death, for, after all we are heaven's consummate cup, and God will drink from the cup when it reaches the kingdom of God. Hence we should be ready to greet death when it comes in old age, for, death will open the gates to heaven, and bring us face to face with the creator-

Thou waitedstage ; wait death nor be afraid

This is a poem for the young and the old alike. It gives inspiration and courage to youth, and consolation and peace to old men. It is not pessimistic and cynical. It is optimistic.

22.6 Summing Up

You should have observed how Browning has presented the importance of different stages of life. We should not be afraid of old age and death. If we dedicate youth for all achievements we should grow wise and use old age as a kind of preparation for the next stage of life. We should enable ourselves to be accepted by God. Browning's view of virtuous life comes closer to the Indian way of looking at life philosophically.

22.7 Comprehension Check Questions

1. How is youth wasted normally by people?
2. What is thepoet's advice about spending of youth?
3. How is life compared by the poet?
4. Explain the image of God as a 'potter'.
5. How does the poet extend the image of 'cup' for life in Heaven?
6. Comment on the final note of the poem.
7. Explain how the poem is optimistic.

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LESSON 23
ABT VOGLER AND MY LAST DUCHESS BY ROBERT BROWNING

23.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will be able to

- Understand the themes of poems
- Know about the Nature of a Dramatic Monologue

Structure of the Lesson

23.0 Objectives
23.1 The Poem *Abt Vogler*
23.2 Utmost Faith in God and Glorification of Old Age as the Themes of the Poem
23.3 The Poem *My Last Duchess*
23.4 Characters in the Poem
23.5 The Characteristics of Dramatic Monologue and *My Last Duchess* as a Dramatic Monologue
23.6 Jealousy as the Theme of the Poem
23.7 Summing Up
23.8 Comprehension Check Questions
23.9.1 References
23.9.2. Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

23.1 The Poem Abt Vogler

Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon willed
Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep removed,—
Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name,
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved!

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise!
Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now combine,
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise!
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well,
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion he was,
Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest:
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,

When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was in sight.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match man's birth,
Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the sky:
Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering star;
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale nor pine,
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near nor far.

Nay more; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and glow,
Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the Protoplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should blow,
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at last;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the body and gone,
But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth their new:
What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall be anon;
And what is,—shall I say, matched both? for I was made perfect too.

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my soul,
All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly forth,
All through music and me! For think, had I painted the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-worth:
Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect proceeds from cause,
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled:—

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are!
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is nought;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought:
And, there! Ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the head!

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared;
Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go.
Never to be again! But many more of the kind
As good, nay, better, perchance: is this your comfort to me?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God: ay, what was, shall be.

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name?

Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by and by.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or agonized?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be prized?
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome; 'tis we musicians know.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones till I sink to the minor,—yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.

23.2 Utmost Faith in God and Glorification of Old Age as the Themes of the Poem

The poem, *Abt Vogler*is a meditative poem on coming to terms with 'loss and diminishment'. Like *Rabbi* it also glorifies old age.

Like many of Browning's dramatic monologues, *Abt Vogler* is also written in the voice of an actual historic personage. Vogler was a composer and musical innovator. In this poem, Browning imagines him as aged, growing infirm due to old age, and as meditating on the 'purpose and value of his life.' Browning reflects on finding peace in old age, a comfort in what has been accomplished and a trust in God for the future, both in this world and out of it. Both the poems make wonderful companion pieces and both are suffused with senile optimism.

Vogler realizes that many of his musical achievements will not outlive him and even those that do will not be enough to assure that he is remembered. Vogler feelsthat he has not

achieved any kind of perfection in his work or in his life. He sees his grand achievement as only"broken arcs." He says that perfection is found only in 'heaven'.

"On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round."

He has believed in good and in God and he believes in them still, even as his talents begin to waste away with age, even as death approaches.

Vogler returns to his faith in God and his steadfast belief that God will ultimately be just, that the ultimate fate of the universe will be, in God's hands, for good. Vogler unabashedly looks for a new life after this old one has passed away, in a heaven where all goods that were only partial on this earth will be finally completed.

" Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round."

Vogler takes himself through several changes in his mind as in music, reflecting on the art of music and also the technique of it. He closes with one of the most satisfying resolutions in the history of poetry, stating that, as in his music he has brought every piece he has composed to its necessary resolution, so too he brings himself and his life. He closes, he says, resting in the "C Major of this life."Any musician will understand the power of that central chord, that central resting place in music. Combining the language of music, philosophy and wisdom, he says:

"Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones till I sink to the minor,—yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep."

23.3 The Poem *My Last Duchess*

"My Last Duchess"is Browning's most popular and most anthologized poem. It first appeared in 1842 in "Dramatic Lyrics", in *Bells and Pomegranates* (1841-1846). It is probably the finest example of Browning's dramatic monologue. He paints a devastating self-portrait of royalty, a portrait that doubtlessly reveals more of the duke's personality than Ferrara intends. The duke makes ironical statements about his last duchess.

Poem:

FERRARA
That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Fra Pandolf"by design, for never read

Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess'cheek; perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much,"or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat."Such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—which I have not—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—
E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretense
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

23.4 Characters in the Poem:

Speaker (or Narrator): The speaker is the Duke of Ferrara. Browning appears to have modeled him after Alfonso II, who ruled Ferrara from 1559 to 1597. Alfonso was married three times but had no children.

Duchess: The late wife of the duke. Browning appears to have modeled her after Lucrezia de'Medici, a daughter of Cosimo de'Medici (1519-1574), Duke of Florence from 1537 to 1574 and Grand Duke of Tuscany from 1569 to 1574.

Emissary of the Count of Tyrol: The emissary has no speaking role; he simply listens as the Duke of Ferrara tells him about the late Duchess of Ferrara and the fresco of her on the wall. Historically, the emissary is identified with Nikolaus Madruz, of Innsbruck, Austria.

Count of Tyrol: The father of the duke's bride-to-be. The duke mentions him in connection with a dowry the count is expected to provide.

Daughter of the Count of Tyrol: The duke's bride-to-be is the daughter of the count but appears to be modeled historically on the count's niece, Barbara.

FràPandolph: The duke mentions him as the artist who painted the fresco. No one has identified a real-life counterpart on whom he was based. He may have been a fictional creation of Browning. Fràwas a title of Italian friars of the Roman Catholic Church.

Claus of Innsbruck: The duke mentions him as the artist who created "Neptune Taming a Sea-Horse." Like Pandolph, he may have been a fictional creation.

23.5 The Characteristics of Dramatic Monologue with reference to Browning's "My Last Duchess"

A dramatic monologue, which appears like a soliloquy with an invisible 'persona', usually includes all or a few of the following elements: a fictional speaker and audience, a symbolic setting, dramatic gestures, an emphasis on speaker's subjectivity, a focus on dramatics and problematics of irony or non-irony. Browning presents all these ingredients in the most appealing and fascinating way in the poem, "My Last Duchess".

Critics comment that Browning wrote poetry with a purpose –"to explore the heart and mind of his characters", by making them talk in a particular situation about a certain incident, idea or experience. In his dramatic monologues, he looks at life from different perspectives. In his monologues Browning presents"the inexhaustible multitudes of various lives which have been lived or can be lived."

Browning's monologues oftentake us into a world in which words are often less trustworthy. In Browning's dramatic monologues the speaker is often a liar. Even where the word'liar' might seem too strong, the speaker is often attempting to use his words to alter radically, his listener'perception of and attitude towards certain things, most notably the speaker himself. The speaker hopes that the world presented by his words will be taken as real, just as the liar wants his words to be taken as "true". Mastery over language and the transformation of life into art afford Browning's speakers a stay against the chaos of the world that acts independently of individual desire.

The typical speaker of a Browning monologue is aggressive, often threatening, nearly always superior intellectually or socially to the auditor, a typically eloquent rhetorician who

has complete control over what he speaks. Yet, such absolute control puts the listener on guard. A tension between sympathy and judgement, a power play between amazement and a sense of morality are among the striking features of dramatic monologue. M.W. MacCallum had observed in this regard, "But in every instance…the object (of the dramatic monologue) is to give facts from within. A certain dramatic understanding of the person speaking, which implies a certain dramatic sympathy with him, is not only essential, but the final cause of the whole species."

Browning's dramatic monologue always provides a scope for a psychological analysis. The duke is a very jealous man. He brags that he has had the duchess's portrait made by Fra Pandolf, a monk, obviously noted for his sacred art. The duke is very jealous and so he employs a monk to paint the portrait of his last duchess. The duke admits, "'twas not/ Her husband's presence only, called that spot/ Of joy into the Duchess'cheek"(lines 13-15). Then he notes that "perhaps/ Fra Pandolf chanced to say"(lines 15-16) and provides two exact quotations.

In 'My Last Duchess', the duke's egregious villainy makes especially apparent ,the split between moral judgement and our actual feeling for him. "The poem carries to the limit an effect peculiarly the genius of the dramatic monologue i.e. the effect created by the tension between sympathy and moral judgement." Browning delighted in making a case for the apparently immoral position, and the dramatic monologue, since it requires sympathy for the speaker as a condition of reading the poem, is an excellent vehicle for the 'impossible'case. The combination of villain and aesthete in the Duke creates an especially strong tension, and Browning exploits the combination to the fullest. In the end, it can be said that Browning uses the familiar techniques and requirements of a dramatic monologue in the most peculiar and exploratory fashion to yield an unfamiliar and unheard of art product that was to glorify his legacy for generations to come.

23.6 Jealousy as the Theme of the Poem:

The listener is the emissary of a count and is helping to negotiate a marriage between the count's daughter and the duke. The Duke is entertaining the Count's envoy (a person of high station--not a servant--who negotiates contracts or otherwise represents another's interests) by showing him around the palace. The time is probably the Italian Renaissance, though Browning does not so specify. The location is the duke's palace, probably upstairs in some art gallery, since the duke points to two nearby art objects. The two men are about to join the "company below"(line 47), so the fifty-six lines of the poem represent the end of the duke's negotiating, his final terms.

The suggestion is strong that he observed the whole enterprise. He gave Fra Pandolf only a day to finish the expensive commissioned art. Pandolf is a painter so notable that the duke drops the artist's name. The duke's jealousy was so vicious that he observed this chaste painter with his wife in order to be sure. Later, the duke implies that the duchess was the kind of woman who had to be watched, for she had a heart "too easily impressed"(line 23), and "her looks went everywhere"(line 24). The duke talks about her "love of sunsets", the "cherry bough" with which she was presented, her pet white mule—suggests only that she was a natural woman who preferred the simple pleasures. The duke says the duchess enjoyed the "company of other men" and implies that she was unfaithful. Whether his accusation is a fabrication is uncertain. The duchess died under suspicious circumstances on April 21, 1561, just two years after he married her. She may have been poisoned.

The poem reveals him as a proud, possessive, and selfish man and a lover of the arts. He regarded his late wife as a mere object who existed only to please him and do his bidding. He likes the portrait of her (the subject of his monologue) because, unlike the duchess when

she was alive, it reveals only her beauty and none of the qualities in her that annoyed the duke when she was alive. Moreover, he now has complete control of the portrait as a pretty art object that he can show to visitors.

The duke's pride and selfishness are also revealed. He is very proud of his family name, for, as he describes his marriage to his last duchess, he states that he gave her "My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name"(line 33). Yet he never once mentions love or his willingness to emerge from his own ego. Instead, he emphasizes that it is his curtain, his portrait, his name, his "commands"(line 45), and his sculpture. Tellingly, within fifty-six lines he uses seventeen first-person pronouns.

"Stylistically, Browning has written a tour de force. The fifty-six lines are all in iambic pentameter couplets. The couplet form is quite formal in English poetry, and this pattern suggests the formal nature of the duke and his control. Interestingly, unlike the traditional neoclassic heroic couplet, where lines are end-stopped, Browning favors enjambment, and the run-on line suggests the duke's inability to control everything—his inability to be a god."

The Duke, in his monologue, implies that the envoy, agent for an unseen Count, who is accompanying the Duke, is looking puzzled and wondering about the expression on the Duchess's face: the "earnest glance" of her eyes and the "spot of joy" in the blush of her cheeks (there is no thought here of her smile, just her eyes and cheeks). This also has a practical function in that the more the envoy knows about the Count's daughter's future home, the better his advice to the Count can be. At the end of the poem, the Duke reiterates his confidence in the Count; his opinions on the daughter's dowry (which will become the Duke's property); his objective in requesting the marriage.

"I said / 'Fra Pandolf' by design": Browning also includes Fra Pandolf to help develop the Duchess's character as well as the Duke's character. The story of the marriage of Alfonso II of Ferrara is that at twenty-five, he married a fourteen-year-old girl. In Browning's poem, Fra Pandolf was painting the Duchess's traditional wedding portrait. Knowledge of who the painter was proves that the girl was innocent and misjudged by the Duke, which is confirmed by the items the Duke accuses her with, like "cherries" and sunset. Knowledge of the painter also shows that the Duke is guilty of uncomprehending arrogance and has misjudged his bride to a grievous extent. The jealousy of the Duke gets reflected in all the lines of the poem.

23.7 Summing Up

The two poems discussed in the lesson show two different standpoints of Browning. Browning's faith in divinity and imperfection of human ability are reflected in Abt Vogler. Browning uses Vogler to make us listen to his voice. The other poem *My Last Duchess,*is a dramatic monologue and the poet subtly brings out the male chauvinistic attitude of the duke and the snubbed and submissive, but artistic and victimised nature of the duchess. The words and expressions stand as the best examples of Browning's mastery as a poet.

23.8 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Who is Vogler?
2. What does Browning say about artists?
3. How is God's world perfect?
4. How does the poet want to live in terms of music?
5. Who is the speaker of the poem' *My Last Duchess?'*
6. Who painted the portrait ofthe duchess?

7. Who is Fra Pandolf and why was he chosen?
8. How does the poet explain the character of the duchess?
9. What is the theme of the poem'My Last Duchess'?
10. Comment on the characteristics of the poem as a'dramatic monologue'.

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Lesson 24:
Four Poems of John Donne *(The Sun Rising, Ecstasy, The Apparition, The Anniversary*)

24.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson you will

- Understand the nature of the love poems of John Donne
- Appreciate his concept of love, his language and various images

Structure of the Lesson

24.0 Objectives
24.1 Biography of John Donne
24.2 Poem1 :*The Sun Rising*
24.3 Summary of the Poem *The Sun Rising*
24.4 Poem 2: *The Ecstasy*
24.5 Summary of the Poem *The Ecstasy*
24.6 Poem 3: *The Apparition*
24.7 Summary of the Poem *The Apparition*
24.8 Poem 4: *The Anniversary*
24.9 Summary of the Poem *The Anniversary*
24.9.1John Donne as a Metaphysical Poet
24.9.2 Summing Up
24.9.3 Comprehension Check Questions
24.9.4References
24.9.5 Additional Sources

Expansion of the Structure

24.1 Biography of John Donne

(Source: http://www.biography.com/people/john-donne-9277090)

John Donne was born into a Catholic family in 1572, during a strong anti-Catholic period in England. Donne's fatherwas a prosperous London merchant. His mother, Elizabeth Heywood, was the grand-niece of the Catholic martyr Thomas More. Religion played a passionate and disturbing role in John's life.

Donne's father died in 1576, and his mother remarried a wealthy widower. Donne entered Oxford University at age 11 and later the University of Cambridge, but never received degrees, due to his Catholicism. At age 20, Donne began studying law at Lincoln's Inn and seemed destined for a legal or diplomatic career. During the 1590s, he spent much of his inheritance on women, books and travel. He wrote most of his love lyrics and erotic poems during this time. His first books of poems, "Satires"and "Songs and Sonnets,"were highly prized among a small group of admirers.

In 1593, John Donne's brother, Henry, was convicted of Catholic sympathies and died in prison soon after. The incident led John to question his Catholic faith and inspired some of his best writing on religion. At age 25, Donne was appointed private secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England.

On his way to a promising career, John Donne became a Member of Parliament in 1601. That same year, he married 16-year-old Anne More, the niece of Sir Egerton. Both Lord Egerton and Anne's father, George More, strongly disapproved of the marriage, and, as punishment, More did not provide a dowry. Lord Egerton fired Donne and had him imprisoned for a short time. The eight years following Donne's release would be a struggle for the married couple until Anne's father finally paid her dowry.

In 1617, John Donne's wife died shortly after giving birth to their 12th child. The time for writing love poems was over, and Donne devoted his energies to more religious subjects. In 1621, Donne became dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. During a period of severe illness, he wrote "Devotions upon Emergent Occasions,"published in 1624. This work contains the immortal

lines "No man is an island"and "never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."That same year, Donne was appointed Vicar of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West and became known for his eloquent sermons.

As John Donne's health continued to fail him, he became obsessed with death. Shortly before he died, he delivered a pre-funeral sermon, "Death's Duel."His writing was charismatic and inventive. His compelling examination of the mortal paradox influenced English poets for generations. Donne's work fell out of favor for a time, but was revived in the 20th century by high-profile admirers such as T.S. Eliot and William Butler Yeats.

The following link offers more details about the poet: (http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/john-donne)

24.2 The Poem *The Sun Rising*

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late schoolboys and sour 'prentices,
Go tell court huntsmen that the King will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices;
Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Thy beams, so reverend and strong
Why shoulds't thou think?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long;
If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
Whether both th'Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou left'st them, or lie here with me?

Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, 'All here in one bed lay.'

She's all states, and all princes, I;
Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compared to this,
All honour's mimic, all wealth alchemy.
Thou, Sun, art half as happy as we,
In that the world's contracted thus;
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here, to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy centre is, these walls, thy sphere.

24.3 Summary of the Poem *The Sun Rising*

This poem gives voice to the feeling of lovers that they are outside of time and that their emotions are the most important things in the world. Donne exercises his intelligence and subtlety to present his world of love.

"The Sun Rising"is one of Donne's most charming and successful metaphysical love poems built around a few hyperbolic assertions. The speaker, who is a lover, explains that, love knows "no season, nor clime, / Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time". He asks the sun not to disturb him and his lady love. He tells the sun to go and disturb court huntsmen and school children.

In the second stanza, the speaker tells the sun that he is not so powerful, since the speaker can cause an eclipse simply by closing his eyes. This kind of heedless, joyful arrogance is perfectly tuned to the consciousness of a new lover, and the speaker appropriately claims to have all the world's riches in his bed. The speaker captures the essence of his feeling in the final stanza, when, after taking pity on the sun and deciding to ease the burdens of his old age, he declares "Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere."

He gives utmost importance to his lady love and says that all honour is nothing when compared to the company of his beloved. He commands the sun to shine on their bed, as it his world.

24.4 The Poem *Ecstasy*

Where, like a pillow on a bed
A pregnant bank swell'd up to rest
The violet's reclining head,
Sat we two, one another's best.
Our hands were firmly cemented
With a fast balm, which thence did spring;
Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread
Our eyes upon one double string;
So to'intergraft our hands, as yet
Was all the means to make us one,
And pictures in our eyes to get
Was all our propagation.
As 'twixt two equal armies fate
Suspends uncertain victory,
Our souls (which to advance their state
Were gone out) hung 'twixt her and me.
And whilst our souls negotiate there,
We like sepulchral statues lay;
All day, the same our postures were,
And we said nothing, all the day.
If any, so by love refin'd
That he soul's language understood,
And by good love were grown all mind,
Within convenient distance stood,
He (though he knew not which soul spake,
Because both meant, both spake the same)
Might thence a new concoction take
And part far purer than he came.
This ecstasy doth unperplex,
We said, and tell us what we love;
We see by this it was not sex,
We see we saw not what did move;

But as all several souls contain
Mixture of things, they know not what,
Love these mix'd souls doth mix again
And makes both one, each this and that.
A single violet transplant,
The strength, the colour, and the size,
(All which before was poor and scant)
Redoubles still, and multiplies.
When love with one another so
Interinanimates two souls,
That abler soul, which thence doth flow,
Defects of loneliness controls.
We then, who are this new soul, know
Of what we are compos'd and made,
For th' atomies of which we grow
Are souls, whom no change can invade.
But oh alas, so long, so far,
Our bodies why do we forbear?
They'are ours, though they'are not we; we are
The intelligences, they the spheres.
We owe them thanks, because they thus
Did us, to us, at first convey,
Yielded their senses' force to us,
Nor are dross to us, but allay.
On man heaven's influence works not so,
But that it first imprints the air;
So soul into the soul may flow,
Though it to body first repair.
As our blood labors to beget
Spirits, as like souls as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtle knot which makes us man,
So must pure lovers' souls descend
T' affections, and to faculties,

Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great prince in prison lies.
To'our bodies turn we then, that so
Weak men on love reveal'd may look;
Love's mysteries in souls do grow,
But yet the body is his book.
And if some lover, such as we,
Have heard this dialogue of one,
Let him still mark us, he shall see
Small change, when we'are to bodies gone.

24.5 Summary of the Poem *Ecstasy*

It is a complex and metaphysical poem dealing with the twin aspects of love—physical and spiritual. Some critics like Legouis find in it a plan for seduction with emphasis on the physical nature of love, while others like Helen Gardner find in it an affirmation of spiritual love. In fact, it deals with the relationship of the body and the soul in love.

Donne applies the feeling of 'ecstasy' to the experience of the lovers and finds that the essence of love is not sex but an overpowering feeling of unity in diversity.Donne has also interpreted love in a philosophic way. Love is an idea or a concept concretized through physical enjoyment of sex. He has also interpreted it according to the Platonic concept—the desire of the moth for the star, longing of one soul to seek communication with another. Donne also makes use of an astronomical idea that like the angelic forces, heavenly bodies are the motivating forces in human love, though they have no existence of their own. They are linked with the body, which is the overt and apparent machinery for love-making. The soul expresses itself through the body. In other words, the body is a medium used by the soul to achieve the consummation of love. Thus the poem uses a religious and mystical experience to interpret the complexity and depth of secular love.

The first stanza describes the physical setting of the two lovers. The lovers are seen sitting quietly, on the bank of a river over grown with violet flowers, looking into each

other's eyes and holding hands firmly. This physical closeness offers a romantic and pastoral setting—their hands cemented in mutual confidence and the eyes as if strung on a thread.

The poet compares the two lovers to the two armies. Their souls are like the negotiators. They are not committed to either side. Only those who are gifted can understand the dialogue of the two souls, and realize the true nature of love.

The fusion of the two souls is the real consummation of love. The new soul is composed of 'atoms'which are beyond decay. Just as the essence of the individual is not the body but the soul, in the same way, the essence of love is not sex but mutual dependence and affection. The body is no dross, but an alloy necessary for pure metals to become stronger. The body is the channel for the souls to inter-communicate with each other.

Donne feels that physical love is enriched by the mutual understanding of the souls of the two lovers. Spiritual love is not possible in a vacuum. Like heavenly beings that influence the actions of men through manifestation, the souls must express themselves through the bodies. The poet feels that an isolated soul is like a captive prince. Souls must return to the bodies and manifest the mystery of love. The body is the book of the love. Great mystics have also pleaded for the evolution of physical love towards holy or divine love.

24.6 The Poem *The Apparition*

When by thy scorn, O murd'ress, I am dead
And that thou think'st thee free
From all solicitation from me,
Then shall my ghost come to thy bed,
And thee, feign'd vestal, in worse arms shall see;
Then thy sick taper will begin to wink,
And he, whose thou art then, being tir'd before,
Will, if thou stir, or pinch to wake him, think
Thou call'st for more,
And in false sleep will from thee shrink;
And then, poor aspen wretch, neglected thou
Bath'd in a cold quicksilver sweat wilt lie
A verier ghost than I.
What I will say, I will not tell thee now,
Lest that preserve thee; and since my love is spent,

I'had rather thou shouldst painfully repent,
Than by my threat'nings rest still innocent.

24.7 Summary of the Poem *The Apparition*

This poem of John Donne explains the suffering created due to the pangs of rejection. Donne makes it a literal observation, claiming that his revenant will visit her and make herpale and shivery. He also takes joy in exacting revenge, waiting for the opportunity to make maximum negative impact as she discovers she is as neglected as he, and that her new lover is exhausted from her advances.

Donne might well have intended both meanings to hover in the air, suggesting that a woman moving on to another relationship must appear without a past, untouched and virginal, something which would cause even more ire from her forsaken lover, but some books have nailed it down to the single meaning.

Donne does take liberties with the rhythm in these 17 lines. Eleven lines are iambic pentameter, and one ("lest that preserve thee; and since my love is spent,") is stretched to hexameter, or somewhere in between; awkward to count out, but satisfying to read. Several lines are brief, almost bouncy, consisting of two, three, or four iambic or trochaic feet. The rhyme scheme (abbab-cdcdc-effe-ggg) is also unconventional.

24.8 The Poem *The Anniversary*

ALL kings, and all their favourites,
All glory of honours, beauties, wits,
The sun it self, which makes time, as they pass,
Is elder by a year now than it was
When thou and I first one another saw.
All other things to their destruction draw,
Only our love hath no decay ;
This no to-morrow hath, nor yesterday ;
Running it never runs from us away,
But truly keeps his first, last, everlasting day.

Two graves must hide thine and my corse ;

If one might, death were no divorce.
Alas !as well as other princes, we
—Who prince enough in one another be—
Must leave at last in death these eyes and ears,
Oft fed with true oaths, and with sweet salt tears ;
But souls where nothing dwells but love
—All other thoughts being inmates—then shall prove
This or a love increasèd there above,
When bodies to their graves, souls from their graves remove.

And then we shall be throughlyblest ;
But now no more than all the rest.
Here upon earth we're kings, and none but we
Can be such kings, nor of such subjects be.
Who is so safe as we? where none can do
Treason to us, except one of us two.
True and false fears let us refrain,
Let us love nobly, and live, and add again
Years and years unto years, till we attain
To write threescore ; this is the second of our reign.

24.9 Summary of the Poem *The Anniversary*

The Anniversary is one of John Donne's early love poems. In this three-stanza poem, the poet commemorates the first anniversary of seeing his beloved. Each stanza follows the rhyme scheme of aabbccdddd. In this poem, Donne uses poetic devices such as alliteration, consistent rhyme scheme, variation from the iambic pentameter and imperative opening to accumulate his ideas and so to add emphasis to them. As in *The Sun Rising,* he begins by using imagery from the political world: the royal court of kings. He juxtaposes this image with the supreme nature image, the sun, to encompass the highest concepts of the whole world (royalty and the life-giving sun)—only to point out that these things are mortal and have come one year closer to death since he first laid eyes on his beloved. He claims the only thing not subject to "decay"(line 7) is the love that he and the object of his affections share.

Their passion has “no to-morrow …, nor yesterday”(line 8) and is therefore timeless and beyond the reach of mortality.

The argument that Donne attempts to build is, no doubt, their love will not decay. He compares their love with the sun which represents time in the first stanza. He says that time is now a year older from when the lovers first met, but their love has never deteriorated even whilst everything draws to their destruction as time passes.

Donne furthers his argument in the second stanza in a similar way as the first. Donne suggests that even death cannot deteriorate the love between him and his lover. Donne suggests that even a prince will die. And when he and his lover pass away, their souls will continue their everlasting love.

Donne’s confidence comes to its highest point in the last stanza. He compares his love to even the most royal of the royalties –kings. Compared to kings, only two people can do treason to this love they have, whilst many can do treasons to kings. And so their love keeps them safe. "Years and years unto years”as well as “first, last, everlasting day”. To finalise his argument, he says that his argument extends beyond just this poem –and so it is not finished just like his love –that there are threescore.

24.9.1 John Donne as a Metaphysical Poet

The term “metaphysical”can be interpreted as beyond (meta) physical nature (physical). Dryden was the first to use the term in connection with Donne by saying that he “affects the metaphysics.”Dr. Johnson later described Donne (may be in a derogatory way) and his followers as the 'metaphysical poets'. However, we cannot call Donne’s poetry metaphysical in the conventional fashion, if "the term is to imply the exposition of some philosophical system of the universe, or speculation about the nature of things".

"Intellect and wit blending with emotion and feeling" marks metaphysical poetry, especially in the case of Donne. Indeed, Donne represents very well the school of poetry somewhat vaguely called “metaphysical”. He brought the whole of his experience into his poetry. He is erudite, “the monarch of wit”, colloquial, rhetorical or familiar. He chooses his language from "the court or the camp, the jargon of law, study, or the marketplace". These qualities are present in Donne’s poetry—in the earliest of his love poems as well as in the later religious poems.

In brief, the term “metaphysical poetry”implies the following characteristics:

- complexity,

- Intelectual tone,
- abundance of subtle wit,
- fusion of intellect and emotion,
- colloquial argumentative tone,
- conceits (which are always witty and sometimes fantastic)
- scholarly allusions,
- dramatic tone, and
- Philosophic or reflective element.

'Concentration' is an important quality of metaphysical poetry in general and Donne's poetry in particular. His poems are brief and closely woven around one particular topic. In *The Ecstasy,* for instance, the principal argument is that through the different acts of love the function of man as man is being worthily performed. The poet develops the theme without deviation or digression.

An expanded epigram would be a fitting description of a metaphysical poem. No word is wasted, and nothing described in detail. There is a sinewy strength in the style. Verse forms are usually simple, but always suitable in enforcing the sense of the poem. Donne often employs fantastic comparisons.

Striking and subtle wit marks the tone of metaphysical poetry. So do the various allusions and images relating to practically all areas of nature and art and learning. Allusions to medicine, Cosmology, ancient myth, contemporary discoveries, history, law and art figure in Donne's poetry.

Combination of passion and thought is a peculiar characteristic of metaphysical poetry, and is another form of wit. Thus there is a "unification of sensibility", to use T.S. Eliot's phrase, in metaphysical poetry. There is in Donne's poems an intellectual analysis of emotion. Every lyric arises out of some emotional situation, but the emotion is not merely expressed; it is analysed. *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* proves that lovers need not mourn at parting; *The Canonization* establishes that lovers are saints of love; *The Good Morrow* asserts that lovers are the best possible hemispheres who make up a complete world.

Argumentation and reasoning balance the passion in Donne's poems. No one can deny the passion in *The Sun Rising*, but there is also plenty of argumentation to prove that the sun has no power over the lovers, as love knows no season or clime. Similarly, in *The Canonization*, there is passion expressed through beautiful metaphors:

Call us what you will, we are made such by love;

Call her one, me another fly.

We are tapers too, and at our own cost die.

The use of colloquial speech marks metaphysical poetry, as far as Donne is concerned. This is especially apparent in the abrupt, conversational opening of many of his poems, for instance:

For God's sake hold thy tongue, and let me love (The Canonization)

Busy old fool, unruly sun (The Sun Rising)

Donne arrests our attention both by the content and the dramatic style of his poetry. Donne's love poems are especially entitled to be called metaphysical in the true sense. Poems such as *The Good Morrow, The Anniversary, The Canonization* and *The Ecstasy* raise, even though they do not explicitly discuss, the great metaphysical question of the relation of the spirit and the senses. They raise it not as an abstract problem, but in the effort to make the experience of the union of two human powers in love, and the union of two human beings in love, apprehensible. Often Donne speaks of the soul and of spiritual love. *The Ecstasy* speaks of the souls of the lovers which come out of their bodies to negotiate with one another.

Grierson aptly sums up: "Donne is metaphysical not only by virtue of his scholasticism but by the deep reflective interest in the experiences of which his poetry is the expression, the new psychological curiosity with which he writes of love and religion".

24.9.2 Summing Up

You should have observed how Donne's love poems carry a note of his philosophical outlook. Donne's expressions and language are passionate. It is observed that Donne's outlook of love is both physical and divine. The four poems prescribed for study are considered as some if the best poems of John Donne. Donne's work is favoured by some modern poets like T.S.Eliot and W.B.Yeats.

24.9.3 Comprehension Check Questions

1. What does the poet advise the sun?
2. Why does not he care for the beams of the sun?
3. How does the poet explain the state of lovers in ' Ecstasy"?
4. Why does the poet say that body is also important?
5. Sum up the poem 'The Apparition'.
6. What does the poet say about love in 'The Anniversary"?

7. Comment on the love poems of John Donne.

24.9.4 References

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24.9.5 Additional Sources

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M.A. DEGREE EXAMINATION, APRIL 2022.

First Semester

English

Paper II — POETRY – I

Time : Three hours Maximum : 70 marks

Answer ALL questions.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT I

(a) Write short notes on any FOUR of the following:

(i) Mock-epic
(ii) Romantic Revival
(iii) Puritanism
(iv) Elegy
(v) Middle English period
(vi) Platonic idealism
(vii) Neoclassicism

Or

(b) Bring out the characteristic features of Dramatic Monologue.

UNIT II

(a) Write an essay on Satan's speeches in "Paradise Lost, Book I".

Or

(b) Write a note on the theme and structure of "Paradise Lost, Book I".

UNIT III

(a) Evaluate John Keats as a poet of beauty and sensuousness.

Or

(b) In Shelley's poem "Ode to Skylark", how does the author contrast the life of the bird and of the man?

UNIT IV

(a) Discuss the central theme of Donne's poems prescribed for your study.

Or

(b) Make a note on Pope's personal element in the poem "The Rape of the Lock".

UNIT V

(a) Describe the development of thought in Prelude, Book I.

Or

(b) Bring out the salient features of Browning as a poet of man.

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