



Understanding Poetry

(Revised)

BEGE 106

IV

The Victorian Poets

Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Thomas Hardy, D.H.Lawrence,
G. M. Hopkins



School of Humanities
Indira Gandhi National Open University
Maidan Garhi, New Delhi

Block

4

THE GREAT VICTORIAN POETS

UNIT 16

Alfred, Lord Tennyson **7**

UNIT 17

Robert Browning **21**

UNIT 18

Matthew Arnold **38**

UNIT 19

Gerard Manley Hopkins **56**

UNIT 20

Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence **73**

EXPERTS COMMITTEE

Prof. Rupin W. Desai (Retired)
Delhi University (Chair)

Prof. Kailash Baral
EFLU Shillong

Prof. Ravinandan Sinha
St. Xavier's College, Ranchi

Prof. Anisur Rahman
Jamia Millia Islamia

Prof. Jasbir Jain (Retired)
University of Rajasthan

Prof. G.J.V Prasad
J.N.U. New Delhi

Prof. Amiya Bhushan Sharma
SOH, IGNOU (Convenor)

English Faculty

Prof. Renu Bhardwaj

Prof. Sunaina kumar

Prof. Anju Sahgal Gupta

Prof. Malati Mathur

Prof. Amiya Bhushan Sharma

Dr. Neera Singh

Dr. Nandini Sahu

Dr. Pema Eden Samdup

Ms. Mridula Rashmi Kindo

Dr. Pramod Kumar

Ms. Malathy A.

EDITOR AND COURSE COORDINATOR

Prof. Amiya Bhushan Sharma
SOH, IGNOU

COURSE PREPARATION

Units	Writers
16 & 17	Dr. Swarn Prabhat, Nalanda College, Biharsharif
18	Dr. Om Prakash, Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida
19 & 20	Dr. Sandhya Pai, St. Joseph's College for Women, Alappuzha

Print Production

Mr. C.N. Pandey
Section Officer (Publication)
SOH, IGNOU, New Delhi

September, 2014

© Indira Gandhi National Open University, 2014

ISBN-978-

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph or any other means, without permission in writing from the Indira Gandhi National Open University.

Further information on Indira Gandhi National Open University courses may be obtained from the University's office at Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-110 068 or visit University's web site <http://www.ignou.ac.in>

Printed and published on behalf of the Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi by the Director, School of Humanities.

Cover Design by : Ms Ketaki Kushahari Sharma

Laser Typeset by : Tessa Media & Computers, C-206, A.F.E.-II, Okhla, New Delhi

Printed at :

INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK 4

THE VICTORIAN POETS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the last block we read some of the Romantic poets; the poetry of an age of revolutions. 'The formal doctrines of the Romanticists' wrote Legouis and Cazamian, 'had never been officially recognized; to the end, they had been opposed by conservative opinion, and their disputed triumph was rather a question of fact than of rights.' In this block you are going to read a selection of the poetry of the British Isles at the height of its imperial glory. This age has been named after Queen Victoria who sat on the throne of England from 1837 to 1901. She was the sixth and the last monarch of the House of Hanover. Victoria was succeeded by Edward VII (1901- 10) of the House of Saxe-Coburg and George V (1910 - 36) of the House of Windsor. Accordingly some historians of English literature talk about the Victorian, the Edwardian and, the Georgian periods in English literature.

Funny as it may appear, the Victorian period symbolises growth and stability on the one hand, poverty, ugliness, squalor and injustice, especially among the urban industrial workers, on the other. Benjamin Disraeli (1804 - 81) a British politician, prime minister and novelist contrasted the conditions of the rich and the poor in his trilogy, especially the second novel in the series: *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845) and *Tancred* (1847). This divide in the society which saw prosperity and progress on the one hand and poverty and ugliness on the other, moralism and philanthropy on the one hand and capitalistic greed and corruption on the other is often referred to as '**Victorian Compromise**'. We can observe the social divide in the novels also of Charles Dickens, W. M. Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, George Meredith, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë, Thomas Hardy and, Mary Ann Evans who wrote under the pseudonym George Eliot.

The period 1901 – 14 is often called the **Edwardian age**. It is commonly used to contrast with the Victorian period. This was the age of H.G. Wells, Arnold Bennet and John Galsworthy. It is said that Queen Victoria sat on the throne like a great paper-weight and after her death things blew all over the place. The image gives expression to the sense of freedom going hand in hand with the lack of direction that characterizes the age. The other aspect of the Edwardian age is the cheering prosperity and quiet confidence that the empire gave to the English people, especially as it preceded the First World War (1914 - 18).

Georgian Poetry was a series of five volumes of poems edited by Edward Marsh. The project was conceived as a harbinger of a new age of nature poetry like those of the Romantic period. Some of the poets who found their poems published in the early volumes were W. H. Davies, John Masefield, D. H. Lawrence, Walter de la Mare, Lascelles Abercrombie, Gordon Bottomley and John Drinkwater. Among the poets in the later volumes were poets such as Edmund Blunden, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves and Isaac Rosenberg. However, on the whole, **Georgian poetry** acquired the image of work of an escapist nature.

When we talk about Victorian poetry we generally think of the poetries of Alfred Tennyson and Matthew Arnold who were in some ways part of the English

establishment. Tennyson succeeded William Wordsworth as the poet laureate at the latter's death in 1850 and Matthew Arnold became inspector of schools in 1851 in which capacity he served for 35 years. Besides, he was son of Thomas Arnold headmaster of Rugby.

In 1848 a group of artists – J.E. Millais, D.G. Rossetti, W. Holman Hunt - met as a group in appreciation of the Italian quattrocento and in defiance of Raphael as a master of 19th century English painting. William Michael and Christina Georgiana Rossetti brother and sister respectively of Dante Gabriel Rossetti were also important members of the group to which Walter Pater and William Morris were later roped in. Their outlook was coloured by nostalgia for the Middle Ages. The group known as **Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood** was strongly literary and their paintings were influenced by poets like Keats, Tennyson, Shakespeare and Dante.

Poets such as Browning and Hopkins are justifiably seen as **pre-modernists**. Late in the eighties we discover the poets of the **Aesthetic Movement**, members of the Rhymers' Club, such as Oscar Wilde, Arthur Symonds, Ernest Dowson and Lionel Johnson. They are also termed *fin de siècle*, i.e. characteristic of end of the nineteenth century. The aesthetes were influenced by the slogan *l'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake) which became popular in France in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially in the writings of Théophile Gautier. While the aesthetes believed in art for art's sake **the imperialists** such as Rudyard Kipling (he was born in Mumbai, the then-Bombay, in 1865), W. E. Henley and John Davidson believed in art for the sake of the British empire. They wrote jingoistic verse of which a few lines from Kipling's *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1892), 'Gunga Din' are quoted below:

Now in Injia's sunny clime,
Where I used to spend my time
A-servin' of 'Er Majesty the Queen,
Of all them blackfaced crew
The finest man I knew
Was our regimental bhisti, Gunga Din,
He was 'Din! Din! Din!
'You limp in' lump o' brick-dust, Gunga Din!
'Hi! Slippery *hitherao*
'Water, get it! *Panee lao*,
'You squidgy-nosed old idol, Gunga Din.'

Gunga Din is finally portrayed as a hero in contrast to the British soldier that killed him:

Though I've belted you and flayed you,
By the livin' Gawd that made you,
You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!

'The Decadents' is another name given to the aesthetes and the imperialists.

Amiya Bhushan Sharma

UNIT 16 ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 The Victorian Age
- 16.3 Tennyson: Life and Works
- 16.4 The Splendour Falls
 - 16.4.1 The Poem
 - 16.4.2 Glossary
 - 16.4.3 Discussion
 - 16.4.4 Appreciation
- 16.5 Tears, Idle Tears
 - 16.5.1 The Poem
 - 16.5.2 Glossary
 - 16.5.3 Discussion
 - 16.5.4 Appreciation
- 16.6 Ulysses
 - 16.6.1 The Poem
 - 16.6.2 Glossary
 - 16.6.3 Discussion
 - 16.6.4 Appreciation
- 16.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.8 Suggested Reading
- 16.9 Answers to Self-Check Exercises

16.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we shall discuss two lyrics and one long poem of Alfred, Lord Tennyson. After you have read this unit you should be able to:

- understand Tennyson's relationship with the Victorian age;
- have an idea of Tennyson as a lyric writer;
- discuss the poetic techniques of Tennyson

16.1 INTRODUCTION

Lord Tennyson is called a representative poet of the Victorian age. When we say this we mean that he is one poet in whose works the basic nature of the age – its achievements, doubts and fears – are best reflected.

As a matter of fact, the Victorian age was an age of great progress and of the consolidation of the powers of England. Naturally, a poet of this age is expected to be full of optimism. But Tennyson could see beyond the political and economic achievements of his time. He was studiously following the advances of contemporary science which moved Victorian men and women to scrutinize the

Biblical story of the origin of the creation on a rational basis. This instilled first doubts in the realm of religion.

Tennyson felt the emotional tremors of the people of his age. His poems document their anxiety; but Tennyson could also instil faith as he himself mastered a personal crisis and remained devoted to creativity. This balance is characteristic of his poetry and is also a great contribution to the Victorian age.

16.2 THE VICTORIAN AGE

Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837 and introduced such economic and political measures, with the aid of her astute ministers that England was at the zenith of development. She did not hesitate in ending the monopoly of merchants – the old *laissez – faire* policy was replaced by just intervention and close scrutiny of market trends by state.

The major industries of coal, iron, textiles and railway building continued to flourish. There were other European competitors like Germany, France and Belgium. But England left them far behind. Many new machines and gadgets were either invented by British scientists or perfected by them. Bicycle, camera, electric light and telephone not only made life comfortable for Britishers; they gave rise to new industries that considerably enhanced British exports and income.

The rise of Limited Liability Companies was a new thing. It ended the monopoly of one-family firms; on the other hand, it gave birth to a new era of capitalism in which the British middle class had a definite share. These companies were managed by Board of Directors; but any individual might become a shareholder. Common people cultivated the habit of investing in industrial stock and a few depended entirely on the dividends from industry.

The picture did not remain so bright for long. A series of conflicts jeopardized the Victorian peace and prosperity – there were troubles in Canada and India. However, Queen Victoria emerged stronger and her policies proved to be a mixture of toughness and liberality. The Sepoy Mutiny in India in 1857 compelled the queen to be sensitive to the demands of justice and trust. She rose to the challenge and in her proclamation in 1858 promised “It is our further will that so far as may be, our subjects of whatever class or creed, be fully and freely admitted to any offices the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, abilities and integrity duly to discharge.”

The assertion of her independence and fairness is evident in this. The presence of such a wise queen together with long strides in commerce and industry made the Victorian age one of the best ages for the English people. They enjoyed peace at home, their children got the best of education and they had a healthy social life. They worked hard; they had a grasp of the affairs of the world; they were constantly modifying technology for better communication and facilities. And they remained deeply religious.

Yet the most serious crisis of the Victorian times occurred in the realm of religion. So far science had not disturbed their faith. But the publication of Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology*, 1830 and of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, 1859 altered the scene.

Charles Lyell only studied the fossils and spoke of the great antiquity of Creation; Darwin accepted it and accounted on its basis for the differentiation of animal species by theory of Natural Selection. This was in direct conflict with the story of creation given in *The Book of Genesis*.

A storm rose and shook Christianity by roots. The Victorian intellectuals and writers, poets and novelists could not ignore the scientific basis of the theory of evolution propounded by Darwin. Faith was tinged with doubt; an attitudinal change had occurred, best expressed by Tennyson –

There remains more faith in honest doubt
Believe me than in half the creeds.

In view of such a spiritual crisis it would not be easy to sum up the Victorian age in a neat phrase. It was an age of prosperity, but also an age of gloomy forebodings; it was an age of imperial expansion, but also an age of colonial uprisings; above all, it was an age of peace, but there was an undercurrent of ‘sick hurry and divided aims.’

16.3 TENNYSON: LIFE AND WORKS

Alfred Tennyson was born in August 1809 in Lincolnshire where his father was a rector. It is said that the rectory had an enchanting landscape that moulded the aesthetic taste of Tennyson. Not only did he take in the beautiful topography of his birth place, he tried to compose lines that could match the sights and the sounds that he experienced as a child and as a young man.

Tennyson’s father had an academic bent of mind. He made the young boy learn Latin and Greek classics seriously. So when Tennyson came to Cambridge University in 1828 he had sufficient intellectual training to cope with the studies and other challenges of the legendary educational institution.

In Cambridge Tennyson became intimate with Arthur Hallam, the son of the eminent historian. Later on Mr. Hallam was engaged to Tennyson’s sister; he died, however, in Vienna on a trip with his father. Tennyson had already written poems that won distinction. But the death of Arthur Hallam shattered him. For some time he was dumb with grief and melancholy. Yet in this period he found poetic composition as a means of psychic relief. He composed short lyrics as his moods dictated him. This continued for a couple of years and the result was *In Memoriam*, a great elegiac poem. The poem is supposed to reflect not only the intense personal sorrow of the poet, but also to represent the chief conflict of the Victorian age – the conflict between science and religion.

The fact that Tennyson could transcend his personal losses and think in a systematic way about the larger concerns and issues of his age is of singular importance. It gives Tennyson’s poetry a lasting appeal.

The classical training that his father imparted to him remained a principal stimulus to Tennyson’s poetic life. He is one poet who chose a number of medieval and Greek legends as subjects for his works. But in all his works he tried to interpret the life of his times. In other words, the sense of historical continuity gives his perception of modern issues a sharper edge. His poetry makes the readers feel that there exists a sure fusion between the past and the present.

In 1850 Tennyson succeeded as the Poet Laureate and continued to publish poems some of which have political themes. Extensive travels in England and Europe – Holland, Belgium and Switzerland and – further sharpened his vision. He was able to think in a practical manner since he had first-hand experience of social, political and economic changes.

After a fulfilled life of a prolific poet he died in 1892 at the age of 83.

Major Works

Poems, Chiefly Lyrical 1830

The Lady of Shallott and other poems 1832

The Princess 1847

In Memoriam 1847

Maud and other Poems 1855

Enoch Arden 1864

Locksley Hall Sixty Years After 1886

The Idylls of the King 1888

16.4 THE SPLENDOUR FALLS

The two lyrics prescribed for you are extracts from *The Princess*, a poem that Tennyson wrote in his mature years when British political and social issues began to interest him seriously. It is said that *The Princess* covers a number of prominent issues related to women their status, their field of action, their educational and political rights, legal rights of marriage and property. The protagonist of the poem is Ida, a princess who holds extreme feminist views. She has raised an academy for training of women.

Tennyson's characterization of Ida gives a clue to his attitude towards women. Ida is independent minded but in her zeal she has developed attitudes and a temper that make her unfit for reforms that she wishes to carry.

These two lyrics occur at dramatic moments in the narrative and were added by Tennyson in a subsequent edition. Actually, these two lyrics are supreme achievements of Tennyson and can be enjoyed independently.

The first lyric *The Splendour Falls* is a song that occurs after the narrator and others have had a magnificent view of the palace that the princess has shown them. The narrator is simply charmed by this view.

The second lyric is sung by a maid who is specifically ordered to entertain by the princess.

Then she, 'Let someone sing to us: lighter more
The minutes fledged with music': and a maid
of those beside her, smote her harp, and sang

But the aftermath is quite ironic. In a fit of vanity the princess dismisses the tranquillizing effect of song:

She ended with such passion that the tear / she sang of, shook and fell, an erring
pearl / lost in her bosom: but with some disdain / Answered the princess, 'If
indeed there haunt / About the moulder's lodges of the past so sweet a voice and
vague, fatal to men / well needs it we should cram our ears with wool.

This declamation on the part of the princess is spontaneous, of course. But the conviction with which she attacks melodious associations with the past is clear indication of her prejudices and haughtiness. All tenderness is anathema to her as it would interfere with her plans for women's emancipation.

16.4.1 The Poem

The Splendour Falls

The **splendour** falls on castle walls
 And snowy summits old in story:
 The long light shakes across the lakes,
 And the wild **cataract** leaps in glory.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
 And thinner, clearer, farther going!
 O sweet and far from cliff and scar
 The horns of **Elfland** faintly blowing!
 Blow, let us hear the purple **glens** replying:
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in you rich sky,
 They faint on hill or field or river:
 Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
 And grow for ever and for ever.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 And answer, echoes answer, dying, dying, dying.

16.4.2 Glossary

- Splendour** : grand and impressive beauty
Cataract : large steep waterfall
Elfland : an imaginary country where elves – small creatures with magical powers – are supposed to live
Glen : narrow valley

16.4.3 Discussion

The lyric is an essay in landscape painting. The scene is that of sunset transforming a castle and its surroundings. The speaker notices not only the fall of sunlight but also of a fall of splendour, of a glorious hue, on the walls of the castle. This initial perception is in itself a cause of ecstasy. But this is not all. Each moment that succeeds brings in bright vistas of everything around. The bright light makes the snowy towers of the castle shine gloriously and then travels to the lakes and the cataracts in course of which its dynamism is revealed. It shakes the waters of the lakes and makes the cataract leap in joy. So happy is the speaker in the enjoyment of this scene that he wants the bugle to be sounded, allowing a synchronization of light and sound to follow.

The important thing, you should notice, is the impact of this scene on the speaker. We see not only the light adding beauty and glory to the castle but also creating absolute cheerfulness. It is this cheerfulness that sharpens observation and stirs the speaker for further activity.

The second stanza hints at the presence of someone else who is asked to hear by the speaker the faintly blowing horns of the Elfland. The sounds are at first thin and clear, then thinner and clearer whose echoes can be heard in the fields lying across. There is apparently nothing to suggest time – interval. But the thin sound and the elfland point to the onset of twilight – the light is there still, but like sounds it is also dying, taking leave of the world.

The identity of the listener is finally revealed in the third stanza – the speaker is addressing his beloved. He asks her now to enjoy the fainting sound of the echoes. But he also asks her to observe how the echoes move not only from hill to field or to river, but from soul to soul where they grow eternally. This is a unique experience of something transient acquiring eternity by sheer beauty.

16.4.4 Appreciation

The world of Nature maintains a course of life which is quite independent of an individual’s way of life and experiences. And yet at times there may be an identity between the two. Tennyson captures such moments in his lyrics beautifully. A number of his lyrics are good examples of pathetic fallacy, of the world of Nature reflecting the moods of the poet or the persona.

You must take note of the role of the dynamic verbs which Tennyson uses to describe the moment-to-moment changes in the scene – falls, shakes, leaps, flying, dying, blowing, replying, flying. The light and the sounds are not static. They have their own natural movement which, in turn, affects the objects within their range. But more important is the impact they have on the speaker.

Self-check Exercise I

1) Describe the scene of the poem in your words.

.....
.....
.....
.....

2) Identify three lines of the poem in which there is use of alliteration.

.....
.....
.....
.....

16.5 TEARS, IDLE TEARS

The popularity of this lyric is the proof of the value of its content. Though occurring in a dramatic context and sung by the maid of the princess as a routine duty it dwells on man’s feeling of loss which is the cause of the flow of tears. Tears express a feeling that may be spontaneous; but they may emerge from a powerful emotion that lies suppressed in humdrum life. Any touching sight can however bring it on the surface of consciousness and make us cry.

In *The Princess* the maid's song is surprisingly occasioned by the enchanting view of the palace. It must have created a feeling of awe and wonder in the maid also. But instead of bursting into a song that could express the shock of her delight, she chooses to sing a mournful song. The simplicity with which she touches on death and separation drawn not only a kindred feeling from the listeners; it makes them think of suffering as a vital fact of life.

16.5.1 Poem

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy **Autumn**-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam **glittering** on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the **underworld**,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The **casement** slowly grows a **glimmering** square
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy, feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret,
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

16.5.2 Glossary

Autumn fields	:	fields full of ripening corn in autumn.
glittering	:	shining brightly
the underworld	:	the place under the earth where people are believed to go when they die
glimmering	:	shining with a faint light
casement	:	a window

Similes

- fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail
- sad as the last which reddens over one
- sad and strange as in dark dawns
- Dear as remembered kisses after death

All these similes are quite unusual – they do not compare like objects; there is comparison between a state of mind and a natural phenomenon or a scene. Fresh, sad, strange, dear are adjectives which have been concretized in this way.

16.5.3 Discussion

The most arresting phrase in this lyric is divine despair, a paradoxical expression. Normally, despair cannot be linked with anything divine. To do so is to clearly refer to human limitation and this is what Tennyson does. The past cannot be recaptured. The tears that come to eyes spring from the realization that the happy days cannot be brought back.

Sadness became a part of Tennyson's life after the death of Arthur Hallam; but Tennyson was not lugubrious poet. He was reflective in nature, a person who took interest in philosophy and science. Naturally, every emotion to him was a subject of not only feeling but of study also. "I know not what they mean" – this line is indicative of the rational tendency that was always active in him. He makes therefore the speaker to understand the emotion behind the tears.

You should also notice that the tears have originated from a sight of the happy autumn fields, that is, of a seasonal movement that helps crops ripen and grow. It is this scene of richness and abundance that reminds of the like days that have slipped away. Happiness is locked only in memory now, lingering, of course, as a permanent feeling over which time have no control.

Do you notice a touch of irony in the phrase – idle tears? It can be a common sense version of becoming sentimental. But the things that are supposed to cause tears are not so insignificant. This creates a tension which adds to the merit of the poem. Why? Simply because the intellectual effort that is required to understand it makes the sentiment valuable.

After the tone has been set, the speaker goes on elaborating the qualities of the happy days which she is reminiscing. In the first place, they appear to be as fresh as the first sun rays falling on a ship. The freshness of the morning scene on a ship appears to Tennyson – from personal experience of voyages – to be more memorable. Memory alone helps a man bring back his friends from the underworld. But it is not only fresh, there is overwhelming sadness when the moment of loss is recaptured in totality.

There is abrupt change in the scene in the last two stanzas where the speaker alters the persona from a living person to that of one who is awaiting death. A dying person's sensitiveness to the music of the birds of the dawn is not lost, but the music seems to have become strange. The consciousness of leaving the world it is that makes the faculty of sight and hearing rather keener – to the dying eyes the big windows of the room seem to have become a glimmering square.

The perspective of death continues in the last stanza. The hint that the speaker is thinking not only of days that are no more, but also of a beloved who is no more is clear now – the kisses, the tokens of love, become painfully sweet; all fancies connected with love acquire a poignancy now. This what is Death in life – the condition of hopeless separation.

16.5.4 Appreciation

About popular pieces of creative writing it can be said that they touch universal chord. Being in a state of tears is quite normal for a person when he is separated from his love. And when this separation has been caused by death it is difficult to

seek consolation. Tennyson takes up this very situation in this lyric in which he develops this very idea of being inconsolable, the idea of being in incurable unhappiness.

What sustains this short poem is a unique blend of argument and feeling. The feeling is justified by argument, by parallels also between the state of mind of the speaker and the immediate surroundings. The autumn fields, the beam glittering on a sail, the half-awakened birds constitute the immediate world of the speaker. They provoke the feelings of loss and stimulate the memory.

The cadence is created by simple, familiar monosyllabic words – so sad, so strange, so fresh, thinking, glimmering, glittering are not exactly alliterative, but they weave a pattern of evanescence which is part of the theme.

Self-check Exercise II

1) Explain with reference to the context the following lines:

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes
In looking on the happy autumn fields
And thinking of the days that are no more

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2) Write a short note on the mood of the speaker.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3) Has the speaker justified his attitude? Give arguments in support of your answer.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

16.6 ULYSSES

Ulysses is also known as Odysseus. He was a king of Ithaca and he participated in the Greek war against Troy. After the siege of Troy he was returning home along with a number of soldiers in a ship. But he had angered Poseidon who, in turn, caused tempests and many obstructions that forced Ulysses to wander to many places. His wife Penelope and his son Telemachus were anxiously waiting for his arrival. In fact, Telemachus had already left home in search of his father.

The poem tells us that Ulysses is close to Ithaca. In spite of being so close to his home he is not happy. His wanderings have been quite fruitful as he came into contact with people of different countries from whom he gathered a lot of knowledge. He has now a feeling that he should continue this pursuit of knowledge. To lead a peaceful life at home would be quite a dull thing. He is also worried about his subjects who love only pleasure and care for material things.

Ulysses however hopes that his son can be taught to handle the political affairs and give a new orientation to his people. And after his son is ready, Ulysses will have time for more wanderings in order to have more knowledge.

This love for knowledge in a king who has suffered a lot not only makes the character of Ulysses distinguished; it gives a philosophical edge to the poem and takes us to a glorious aspect of Greek civilization. There is a grandeur in this quest for knowledge which touches us.

16.6.1 Poem

Ulysses

IT little profits that an idle king,
 By this still hearth, among these **barren crags**,
 Match'd with an aged wife, **I mete and dole**
 Unequal laws unto a savage race,
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
 I cannot rest from travel: **I will drink**
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
 Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
 That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
 Thro' **scrudding drifts** the rainy **Hyades** 10
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
 Much have I seen and known; cities of men
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,
 Myself not least, but honour's of them all;
 And drunk delight of battle with my **peers**,
 Far on the **ringing plains of windy Troy**.
 I am a part of all that I have met;
 Yet all experience is an **arch** wherethro'
 Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades 20
 For ever and for ever when I move.
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
 To rust **unburnish'd**, not to shine in use!
 As tho' to breath were life. Life piled on life

Were all too little, and of one to me
 Little remains: but every hour is saved
 From that eternal silence, something more,
 A bringer of new things; and vile it were
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
 And this grey spirit yearning in desire 30
 To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
 This is my son, mine own **Telemachus**,
 To whom I leave the **sceptre** and the isle
 Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
 This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
 A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
 Subdue them to the useful and the good.
 Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
 Of common duties, decent not to fail 40
 In offices of tenderness, and pay
 Meet adoration to my household gods,
 When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
 There lies the port: the **vessel puffs her sail**:
 There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
 Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me
 That ever with a frolic welcome took
 The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
 Free hearts, free foreheads-you and I are old;
 Old age hath yet his honour and his toil; 50
 Death closes all: but something are the end,
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
 Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
 The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
 The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
 Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
 Push off, and sitting well in order **smite**
 The **sounding furrows**; for my purpose holds
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
 Of all the western stars, until I die.
 It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
 It may be we shall touch the **Happy Isles**
 And see the great **Achilles**, whom we knew.
 Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
 We are not now that strength which in old days
 Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
 One equal temper of heroic hearts,
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

16.6.2 Glossary

- mete and dole** : to distribute
I will drink life to the lees : I will experience life to its full extent

scudding drifts	: drifting waves
Hyades	: nymphs forming a group of seven stars in the head of Taurus
Sceptre	: a staff which is the symbol of royal authority
sounding furrows	: loud stormy waves
Achilles	: the greatest of Greek heroes

16.6.3 Discussion

The poem begins with the early formulations of thoughts of Ulysses as he nears Ithaca. His memory of his wife, country and his people is clearer – he sees his wife now as an old woman; his own country not so flourishing as he left; and he is quite unhappy with his subjects whose life is centered in physical and material pleasures. He cannot imagine himself now becoming part of this listless scene in his country. It is true that he has suffered; but what he has seen by way of people and civilizations has filled him with great curiosity – he has learnt much that has transformed him from a mere king and a fighter to a man who wishes to understand the forces of this creation. He has met all classes of beings, peculiar men, gods and goddesses and this experience has already enriched him. He cannot think of being settled in a place and taking care of mundane things. He fondly remembers the things that he has seen and thinks of his personality as being moulded by them all. Has he seen all? He is convinced that this universe does not allow any body to see all – it is so constructed that only a part of the vast universe can come to a man's view.

He visualizes his ideas in the form of similes and metaphors – all experience is an arch, to follow knowledge, like a sinking star. The horizon is symbolized in the arch, the visible junction of the earth and the sky. There is a definite hint that this small view is not the full view; its imperfection is quite perceptible. And the sinking star is Ulysses himself, battered by war, age and sundry worries of the world. Yet the task of gathering more and more knowledge seems to him the only proper goal of life. There is a nobility in this craving that sets Ulysses quite apart not only from his subjects but also from other kings who have been interested in mere territorial conquests.

Had it been merely a wish it would not have been of any importance. But the thoughts of Ulysses are backed by determination – he has made up his mind to hand over the rule of the kingdom to his son, Telemachus, in whose abilities he has full confidence; he has also a hope that his subjects may be subdued by Telemachus in due course and their energies could be channelized in the right direction. He is also certain that Telemachus would be fulfilling all religious duties after his death.

Finally, he addresses his fellow mariners who have given their best to all his undertakings and exhorts them to seek a newer world. That is, he wants them not to be satisfied with a dull domestic life, but to explore new worlds that would broaden their view of life. He knows very well that they are also getting old like him. But it is better to end this life in the pursuit of greater knowledge than of material happiness.

16.6.4 Appreciation

It is a wonderful poem in which Tennyson makes a historical speaker touch upon issues of contemporary life. It is a fact that Ulysses was a legendary wanderer, an adventurous, fearless person who was forced by circumstances to go to strange places and meet strange people.

Tennyson therefore sees in him the prototype of the modern researcher or explorer. The scientific developments of his time were a thing of serious interest to him, and in his poetry he has paid tribute to the spirit of scientists and researchers who were expanding the area of human knowledge. In Ulysses, Tennyson sees such a figure who is willing to devote the whole of his life to exploration.

The poem has a dramatic structure – the development of the speech of Ulysses is entirely guided by the progress of his thoughts in course of his journey to Ithaca. The first point is the coming of the landmarks of Ithaca into his sight which stirs his memory; the second point is the rise of a conflict in his mind between his kingly duties and his appetite for knowledge which he acquired in the course of his wanderings; the third forms his decision in the fulfillment of which he seeks cooperation from his mariners.

As far as possible Tennyson tries to recapture the Homeric idiom– simple similes, a vigorous narrative style with appropriate pauses and shifts of mood and characterization through a long speech. A lot of associations are there in the poem with the ship and the voyages – shore, scudding drifts, vessel, sail, dark broad seas, sounding furrows, gulfs. They form the register of an accomplished voyager, ringing with authenticity of experience.

The command of blank verse is an important feature of the poem. It helps Tennyson follow every movement of the feelings and thoughts of Ulysses in a dramatic manner.

<p>Self-check Exercise III</p> <p>1) Write a short note on Ulysses, the king of Ithaca.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>2) What does Ulysses say of his adventures?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

3) Do you see any reference to the contemporary scene of Tennyson's lines in the poem? Quote the relevant lines from the poem.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

16.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we studied:

- the salient features of the Victorian age
- the life and works of Alfred Lord Tennyson
- the lyrical extracts from *The Princess*
- the poem *Ulysses* which has a historical background but a relevant message for the modern man.

16.8 SUGGESTED READING

For detailed study of the works of Tennyson you can turn to the following works:

Elaine Jordan, *Alfred Tennyson*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988

John D. Jump (ed.), *Tennyson, The Critical Heritage*, Routledge, 1967

F.B. Pinion, *A Tennyson Companion*, Macmillan, London, 1984

Robert Hoof, *Tennyson 1809-1892, A Centenary Celebration*, The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, 1992

16.9 ANSWERS TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

Self-check Exercise I

- 1) Go through the discussion of the poem.

Self-check Exercise II

- 1) Go through the discussion, especially the first two paragraphs.
- 2) Take help of the parts of the discussion in which the speaker's mood has been referred to.
- 3) Read Appreciation section carefully on the basis of which you can answer the question.

Self-check Exercise III

- 1) See the introduction of the poem.
- 2) Read the first two paragraphs of Discussion.
- 3) Read Appreciation, the first two paragraphs. See the last parts of the poem.

UNIT 17 ROBERT BROWNING

Structure

- 17.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Robert Browning: Life and Works
- 17.3 Poem: Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister
 - 17.3.1 Glossary
 - 17.3.2 Discussion
 - 17.3.3 Appreciation
- 17.4 Poem: Andrea del Sarto
 - 17.4.1 Glossary
 - 17.4.2 Discussion
 - 17.4.3 Appreciation
- 17.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.6 Suggested Reading
- 17.7 Answers to Self-Check Exercises

17.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will be reading two well-known poems of Robert Browning. These poems will give you an understanding of Browning's poetry which holds a distinguished place because of its optimistic note.

On reading this Unit you will be able to:

- appreciate the distinctive qualities of Browning's poetry and art;
- understand dramatic monologue which Browning exploited to portray the tensions within a character's psyche;
- understand the differences between Tennyson and Browning, the poets who were products of the same age.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

Robert Browning was only three years younger than Tennyson. And yet the differences between the two poets are so big that they seem to be writing in two different ages.

Tennyson, you must have seen, is basically an emotional poet, responding to the beauty and pain of life. His involvement with the polemics of his times was also deep: he was as much concerned with politics of democracy as with scientific researches of his time that had begun to instil doubts into the minds of the people. Robert Browning's concerns were never so comprehensive. An intense personal life made him inclined to study characters belonging to aristocracy, the priestly and the artistic classes in whom he noticed contradictions and paradoxes but also a zest for life.

He wrote a few lyrics in which you will notice the argumentative tone of John Donne. But he is chiefly famous for his dramatic monologues, a few too long to

be read in one sitting. These poems are generally about Italian figures from different classes of the society. Their passions, adventures and tensions create a lot of interest: they do touch upon issues of morality and psychology but Browning takes them in his stride and does not let us feel disturbed. This cheerful spirit of Browning has endeared him to modern poets though his poems are considered to be difficult on account of wide-ranging allusions.

17.2 ROBERT BROWNING: LIFE AND WORKS

Robert Browning was born in 1812. His father worked in the Bank of England and was a man of literary interests. He had a vast collection of books in his personal library. Robert Browning’s mother was a nice musician. It was natural for Robert Browning to be interested in literature and music. Before he entered University College, London he had acquired proficiency in French, Italian, Greek and Latin. However, he left the college without a degree.

In his youth Browning was greatly influenced by Shelley – his poetry and his atheism. He did not remain an atheist for long but he continued to be a radical like Shelley. In 1845, Browning met Elizabeth Barrett in London. When her father objected to their marriage, they eloped to Italy, the country that fascinated Browning.

Browning had started writing quite early. His first published work was a long poem – **Pauline** in which he tried to imitate Shelley’s style. He attracted critical attention by **Men and Women** in 1855. **The Ring and The Book** is an ambitious poem of his in which he justified the ways of God through extended blank verse monologues. These were greatly admired by Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot.

His dramatic monologues portray a great variety of characters speaking to a silent listener about themselves at some important moment in their lives. It is not actually what they say that is important, more important are the things which they do not speak of directly but which are revealed through their tone and the implications of what they think and do. Browning died in 1889 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Major Works

Pauline	1833
Parcelsus	1835
Men and women	1855
Dramatic Personae	1864
The Ring and The Book	1869
Asolando	1889

Self-check Exercise I

- 1) What impression of Robert Browning do you have after learning the facts of his life?

.....

.....

.....

2) How is dramatic monologue different from a lyric?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3) Name three important works of Robert Browning.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

17.3 POEM: SOLILOQUY OF 'THE SPANISH CLOISTER'

1

Gr-r-r – there go, my heart's **abhorrence!**
 Water your damned flower-pots, do!
 If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
 God's blood, would not mine kill you!
 What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
 Oh, that rose has prior claims –
 Need its leaden vase filled brimming?
 Hell dry you up with its flames!

2

At the meal we sit together
Salve tibi! I must hear
 Wise talk of the kind of weather,
 Sort of season, time of year:
 Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
 Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
 What's the Latin name for '**parsley**'?
 What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

3

Whew! We'll have our platter **burnished**,
 Laid with care on our own shelf!
 With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
 And a goblet for ourself,
 Rinsed like something sacrificial
 Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps –
 Marked with L for our initial!
 (He-he! There his lily snaps!)

4

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
 Squats outside the Convent bank
 With Sanchicha, telling stories,
 Steeping tresses in the tank,
 Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs
 - Can't I see his dead eye glow,
 Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?
 (That is, if he'd let it show!)

5

When he finishes **refection**,
 Knife and fork he never lays
 Cross-wise, to my recollection,
 As do I, in Jesu's praise
 I the **Trinity** illustrate,
 Drinking watered orange-pulp –
 In three sips the **Arian** frustrate;
 While he drains his at one gulp.

6

Oh, those melons? If he's able
 We're to have a feast! so nice!
 One goes to the Abbot's table,
 All of us get each a slice.
 How go on your flowers? None double?
 Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
 Strange! – And I, too, at such trouble,
 Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

7

There's a great text in **Galatians**,
 Once you trip on it, entails
 Twenty-nine distinct **damnations**,
 One sure, if another fails.
 If I trip him just a-dying,
 Sure of heaven as sure can be,
 Spin him round and send him flying
 Off to hell, a **Manichee**?

8

Or, my scrofulous French novel
 On grey paper with blunt type!
 Simply glance at it, you grovel
 Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
 If I double down its pages
 At the woeful sixteenth print,
 When he gathers his greengages,
 Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

Or, there's Satan! – one might venture
 Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
 Such a flaw in the **indenture**
 As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
 Blasted lay that rose-acacia
 We're so proud of! Hy, Zy, Hine ...
 'St, there's Vespers! Plena gratia
 Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r – you swine!

17.3.1 Glossary

Cloister	:	a monastery, one who leads a monastic life
Abhorrence	:	hatred
Salve tibi	:	a toast, literally <i>Your Health</i> in Latin
Parsley	:	a herb used in cooking
Burnished	:	highly polished metal
Refection	:	a light meal
The Trinity	:	One God known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
The Arian	:	a sect of Christians who believed that Jesus was of a similar nature and substance as God
Galatians	:	a book of the New Testament
Damnations	:	State of being in hell
Manichee	:	a sect of Christians who attribute evil to some adversary to God
Belial	:	a fallen angel
Indenture	:	a type of contract that forced a servant to work for the employer for a particular period of time
Plena gratia	:	full of grace

17.3.2 Discussion

The portraiture of ecclesiastical figures in a comic and satiric light has been in vogue in English literature since Chaucer who, through his prioress and monk, drew attention to their inadequacies, their virtual unsuitability for such duties because of their indulgence in material pursuits and luxurious living.

Robert Browning also observed the life of many persons working in the church. He found it in direct conflict with the principles and the code of conduct of the church. And yet as was his wont he expressed his disapproval in a gentle and humorous manner, taking misdemeanour in quite a light way.

In this poem the anonymous Spanish monk's attempt to denigrate his fellow monk, Lawrence, is a successful exercise in dramatic irony, the many allegations of the speaker reflecting actually his own flawed character. The speaker, in a bitter upsurge of jealousy, tries to tear apart Lawrence through the details of his routine activities – gardening, dining habits, conversation, love affairs and

Christian duties. But anger and envy are in themselves unchristian feelings, exposing the character of the speaker himself. Lawrence is portrayed as a glutton and as a person of loose morals, carrying out a clandestine affair with one or two local women. But the very tone in which these allegations are made point to the lapses of the speaker in all these areas.

In the last two stanzas the speaker declares his intention of further damning the soul of Lawrence. This is again an unchristian desire. A true Christian must try for salvation of individuals: he is not to do anything that leads to damnation. Moreover, the means that the cloister speaks of – the French novels – suggest that he is himself hooked on to such reading to satisfy his vicarious urges.

A sort of progress of the evil thoughts of the cloister is discernible in this poem of nine stanzas. In the first stanza he speaks of the healthy gardening activities of Lawrence that provoke him into a spiteful mood – *Hell dry you up with its flames*. This is quite unwarranted as Lawrence is shown doing his work with great care. Then follows the lunch-time scene in which Lawrence is shown as a glutton but also as a skilled conversationalist. In fact, a glutton rarely shows interest in conversation while he is gorging on food. There is thus a discrepancy between facts and cloister's reporting that catches our attention. The reference to Dolores and Sanchicha, the two local women, shows that the speaker is himself enamoured of their '*tresses blue black lustrous*'. The details of theological debates in the course of drinking fruit-juices are amusing. And more damning are the plans of trapping Lawrence by inciting him to read French novels. Finally, in the last stanza, there is direct invocation of Satan, an act that is against Christian faith.

17.3.3 Appreciation

The poem reminds of the personal satires written by Dryden and Pope. But Robert Browning takes one step further in making the speaker an object of satire. This is possible because of the dramatic monologue form where the speaker's tone yields an insight into his own character. Technically speaking, this poem is not a dramatic monologue as there is no listener here. It is a soliloquy. But the variation of tone and mood resembles the style of dramatic monologue, and there is a focus on the temperament and the character of the speaker.

A more significant thing, you should notice, is the use of Lawrence's voice also, creating a dramatic interval within the poem, enabling us to compare the two voices, that is, of the Spanish cloister and of Lawrence.

The use of colloquial phrases – *there go, my heart's abhorrence, oh, that rose has prior claims, oh, those melons!* – help the reader recreate every movement of the scene from the garden to the dining table. They also provide a glimpse into the changing mood of the speaker from anger to mirthful jest. They are a means of striking communication with the reader at an informal level.

There are high sounding words and phrases also – *Jesus praise, the Trinity, Arian, Galatians, Manichee* – connected with the Bible and the theological debates of the Victorian age. They make only pompous statement, a show on the part of the speaker of his acquaintance with controversies of his time. A monk who joined the church to enjoy the pleasures of life without honest work had to justify his position by these tricks.

Anyway, the poem is an entertaining piece – a triumph of poetic art that could present something ridiculous in style.

Self-check Exercise II

1) Describe Lawrence’s conversation as presented by the speaker.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2) What plan is the speaker making regarding damnation of Lawrence?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3) Why is the Spanish cloister so angry with Lawrence? Can you guess?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4) What light does the poem throw on the personality of Lawrence?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5) What impression do you have of the Spanish cloister?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

17.4 POEM: ANDREA DEL SARTO

Andrea del Sarto

(Called 'The Faultless Painter')

But do not let us quarrel any more,
 No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
 You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
 Treat his own subject after his own way,
 Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
 And shut the money into this small hand
 When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
 Oh, I'll content him, – but to-morrow, Love!
 I often am much **wearier** than you think,
 This evening more than usual, and it seems
 As if – forgive now – should you let me sit
 Here by the window with your hand in mine
 And look a half-hour forth on **Fiesole**,
 Both of one mind, as married people use,
 Quietly, quietly the evening through,
 I might get up to-morrow to my work
 Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
 To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this!
 Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
 And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
 Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
 For each of the five pictures we require:
 It saves a model. So! keep looking so –
 My **serpentina** beauty, rounds on rounds!
 – How could you ever prick those perfect ears.
 Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet –
 My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
 Which everybody looks on and calls his,
 And, I suppose, is looked by in turn,
 While she looks – no one's: very dear, no less.
 You smile? why, there's my picture read made,
 There's what we painters call our harmony!
 A common greyness silvers everything –
 All in a twilight, you and I alike
 – You, at the point of your first pride in me
 (That's gone you know), – but I, at every point;
 My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
 To younder sober pleasant Fiesole.
 There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
 That length of convent-wall across the way
 Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
 The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
 And autumn grows, autumn in every-thing.
 Eh? the who'e seems to fall into a shape

As if I saw alike my work and self
 And all that I was born to be and do,
 A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
 How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead;
 So free we seem, so **fettered** fast we are!
 I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
 This chamber for example – turn your head –
 All that's behind us! You don't understand
 Nor care to understand about my art,
 But you can hear at least when people speak:
 And that cartoon, the second from the door
 – It is the thing, Love! so such things should be –
 Behold **Madonna!** – I am bold to say
 I can do with my pencil what I know,
 What I see, what at bottom of my heart
 I wish for, if I ever wish so deep –
 Do easily, too – when I say, perfectly,
 I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
 Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
 And just as much they used to say in France.
 At any rate 'tis easy, all of it!
 No sketches first, no studies, that's long post:
 I do what many dream of, all their lives,
 – Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
 And fail in doing, I could count twenty such
 On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
 Who strive – you don't know how the others strive
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared
 Carelessly passing with your robes afloat, –
 Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
 (I know his name, no matter) – so much less!
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
 There burns a truer light of God in them,
 In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
 Enter and take their place there sure enough,
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
 The sudden blood of these men! at a word –
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
 I, painting from myself and to myself,
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
 His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
 Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
 Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp.

Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-grey,
 Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
 I know both what I want and what might gain,
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
 'Had I been two, another and myself,
 'Our head would have overlooked the world!' No doubt.
 Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
 The Urbinate who died five years ago.
 ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
 Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
 Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
 Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
 Above and through his art – for it gives way;
 That arm is wrongly put – and there again –
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's line,
 Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
 He means right – that, a child may understand.
 Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch –
 Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
 Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
 We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
 Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think –
 More than I merit, yes, by many times.
 But had you – oh, with the same perfect brow,
 And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
 And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
 The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare –
 Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
 Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
 'God and the glory! never care for gain.
 'The present by the future, what is that?
 'Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo!
 'Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!
 'I might have done it for you. So it seems:
 Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
 Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;
 The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
 What wife had Rafael, or has **Agnolo**?
 In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
 And who would do it, cannot, I perceive: Yet the will's somewhat – somewhat,
 too, the power –
 And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
 God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
 'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
 That I am something underrated here,
 Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
 I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
 The best is when they pass and look aside;
 But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.

Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
 And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
 I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
 Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
 In that humane great monarch's golden look, –
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl
 Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
 One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
 The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
 I painting proudly with his breath on me,
 All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
 Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts, –
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
 This in the background, waiting on my work,
 To crown the issue with a last reward!
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
 And had you not grown restless but I know
 'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
 Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
 How could it end in any other way?
 You called me, and I came home to your heart.
 The triumph was – to reach and stay there; since
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
 'Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
 'The Roman's is the better when you pray,
 'But still the other's Virgin was his wife –
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
 Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
 Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
 To Rafael I have known it all these years
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)
 'Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
 'Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
 'Who, were he set to plan and execute
 'As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
 'Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!
 'To Rafael's! – And indeed the arm is wrong.
 I hardly dare yet, only you to see,
 Give that chalk here – quick, thus the line should go!
 Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
 (What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?

Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost, –
Is, whether you're – not grateful – but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love, – come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you – you, and not with me?
Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The grey remainder of the evening out, Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more – the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them – that is, Michel Agnolo –
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth,
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand – there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scrudi for the ruff!
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?
I am grown peaceful as old age tonight.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis! – it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.

Well, had I riches of my own? you see
 How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
 They were born poor, lived poor and poor they died:
 And I have laboured somewhat in my time
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son
 Paint my two hundred pictures let him try!
 No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
 You loved me quite enough, it seems tonight.
 This must suffice me here. What would one have?
 In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance –
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
 For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
 To cover – the three first without a wife,
 While I have mine! So – still they over-come
 Because there's still Lucrezia, – as I choose.
 Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

17.4.1 Glossary

Wearier	: more tired
Fiesole	: a beautiful town in the north of Florence where Andrea del Sarto is settled
Serpentining	: like a coiled serpent, also very glossy
Fettered	: bound by chains, not in a position to move freely
Madonna	: a statue or painting of Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus
Agnolo	: Michael Angelo, the Renaissance Italian painter

17.4.2 Discussion

Andrea del Sarto, called the faultless painter for his technical perfection, was the court painter of king Francis of France, in the sixteenth century. The king sent him with large funds to Italy to purchase Italian works of art. But Andrea del Sarto settled in a comfortable house in Florence with that money and never returned to France. Although Michael Angelo and Raphael were legendary painters of Italy at this time, Andrea del Sarto earned distinction for his minute attention to details. He was therefore called the faultless painter, that is a painter in whose work everything was in perfect order.

The long poem is an example of dramatic monologue. On an evening when Andrea del Sarto is with his wife, Lucrezia, he turns introspective, thinks of his successful career, his betrayal of the French king and, basically, of a serious drawback of his that does not let him have a higher inspiration inspite of technical superiority. And he concludes that his mercenary outlook and his anxiety to keep his wife satisfied are the reasons behind his being at this low level in the world of art. A tone that alters between elation over achievement and then of frustration over a major failure dramatizes the mental conflict of Andrea del Sarto and lays bare several layers of his consciousness.

The pathetic appeal – *do not let us quarrel any more* – with which the poem begins is an index of Andrea del Sarto's state of mind. He further requests

Lucrezia to come closer to him so that he could watch Fiesole from the window of his house in a posture of intimacy and wake up the next day cheerful and fresh and finish a painting exactly according to the terms of the commission. It would be a great satisfaction for Andrea del Sarto to put '*the money into this small hand*'. While art has been a means of livelihood for many, Andrea del Sarto knows very well that he built up his career by fraud: he took money from Francis in the name of purchasing paintings but he used it to construct a house for himself and to fulfil the needs of his wife.

This knowledge or this feeling of guilt has brought no perceptible change in the outlook of Andrea del Sarto. To save a little money on a model he can use Lucrezia to whom his attachment is almost slavish.

For a moment, as he looks out of the window, at the beauty of Fiesole, he hears the last bells of the church and feels the chill of autumn in the wind. He can see lucidly '*autumn in everything*', that is, an inevitable decay of powers, faculties and creativity. In this moment he can view all his work as being '*a twilight piece*', that is, lacking brightness and splendour. This is to suggest that this specific moment is the articulation of an experience that has been with him for a long time. He has been living with this sense of failure for long and it is only now that he finds a release in these terms.

Andrea never forgets the supreme worth of the paintings of Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci and Michaelangelo simply for the reason that their works were inspired from an inner source. That source has dried up in Andrea del Sarto. He can very carefully draw something, making it exact and accurate. But the insight that leads to production of great work of art is out of his grasp. To be acutely conscious of this lapse comes from an understanding of art. And it is quite pathetic to note that an artist, in spite of being conscious of this flaw in him, can never overcome it.

To add to this note of pathos there is the infidelity of his wife who has fallen for a cousin, waiting to give a slip to her husband, come out and meet him. Andrea cannot have any restraining influence over his wife. So he has to come to terms with this also and he would rather let his wife enjoy this affair than quarrel openly with her. His degradation is complete. He may take satisfaction in being called a faultless painter, but his life is in a shambles.

17.4.3 Appreciation

As a poet Robert Browning possessed a keen insight in every aspect of art – the devotion that an artist should have towards his work, the mastery over the craft and a moral outlook. Without these three elements the work of an artist would be lacking in vitality and purpose. But his long association with poets, painters and musicians, which Italy had in abundance, gave him acquaintance with the shady side of artistic business also. He must have learnt with pain that an artist could perform for sheer mercenary motives and nothing else. The success could be valuable in terms of monetary gain and fame, but in the process the artist destroyed himself. It is this experience of the moral failure of the artist which is central to the poem.

The poem is a confession on the part of Andrea del Sarto who had great artistic promise. But he was ruined by one basic flaw – he could not devote himself to art. He further compromised his integrity by cheating King Francis and by

attaching himself to a woman to whom money and pleasure counted above everything.

Andrea del Sarto admits to have sold himself to keep Lucrezia satisfied. But is she satisfied? The betrayal to art and to the patron king haunts him back now not only in the sense of failure as an artist, but as a failure in life as a whole. An artist has his life in art – it is art alone that is his controlling destiny. To forget art and to lose oneself in materialistic pursuits is to move towards death.

Apart from presenting a case-study of Andrea del Sarto in such self-deprecating terms the poem is a verdict on a class of artists who allow themselves to be trapped either by sensual pleasures or material ambitions. Art is simply incompatible with physicality or materialism. Beyond the details of craft, art has a spiritual centre, a view of life of man and nature. This view remains open only to those artists who remain committed to the principle of art, to its spirituality.

Appearing to be comic, ironical and light-hearted, the poem is vindication of this doctrine of art. Robert Browning’s mastery of poetic voice is evidently of a moral nature only disguised in banter and ridicule. Many words and phrases – *serpentinaing, I am judged, a truer light of God, nearer heaven* – have a biblical ring. They suggest Andrea’s religious background which has been obliterated by his own acts. There is the memory of Dr. Faustus in his last moment realization – *Love, we are in God’s hand/ so free we seem, so fettered fast we are.*

Self-check Exercise III

1) Write a note on the personality of Andrea del Sarto.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) Why did Andrea del Sarto betray King Francis?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3) How are now the relations between Andrea del Sarto and his wife?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4) What view of art does Browning present through this poem?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5) Do you think Andrea del Sarto is a faultless painter?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

6) How is Browning different from Tennyson?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

17.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we studied:

- the life and works of Robert Browning, noting the dramatic monologue that he developed.
- the two poems in which Robert Browning’s contribution to dramatic monologue is well-represented.

17.6 SUGGESTED READING

For further studies in Robert Browning you can refer to the following works: -
W.C. De Vane, *A Browning Hand Book*, John Murray, 1955
Robert Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience*, Chatto, 1957
Ian Jack, *Browning’s Major Poetry*, Oxford University Press, 1973
J. Briston, *Robert Browning*, Harvester, 1991

Self-check Exercise I

- 1) Go through the second stanza of the poem. The topics of conversation are mentioned; on the basis of that develop your own idea. A part of it is continued in the sixth stanza also.
- 2) The details of various food-items and drinks are given in the fifth and the sixth stanzas.
- 3) Take help of the last part of Discussion.

Self-check Exercise II

- 1) Andrea del Sarto is presented as an artist who has sacrificed art for commercial success. At the root of this is, however, his passion for Lucrezia, his wife, to whom only pleasure and fashionable living matter. It is to keep her happy that Andrea pocketed the money given to him by King Francis; he constructed a house in Fiesole with this money and turned to a style of painting that could bring him quick success. He creates demand by working hard and maintaining a high level of accuracy in matters of form. The formal perfection appeals immediately to the public who acclaim him for being technically perfect.

But Andrea had good training. At this height of his career he comes to realize that his so-called perfection is a ruse to cheat the people. It is not an outcome of following the artistic principle. There is thus a great sense of honesty in his admission. Moreover, his references to Michaelangelo and other great painters reveal the understanding of spiritual foundation of art.

Andrea is, therefore, filled with remorse, guilt and a painful realization of truth together with a very frustrating sense of complete incapacity. His submission to the fancies and adventures of his wife makes him a farcical figure, though his sense of guilt does elevate him a little.

- 2) See the early parts of Discussion.
- 4) Consult Appreciation.
- 6) Browning is basically different from Tennyson in retaining an optimistic view of life, in developing dramatic monologue, in the range of his characters, and in keeping himself untouched by the religious-political issues that were being hotly debated in England.

Quote lines from poems.

UNIT 18 MATTHEW ARNOLD

Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Matthew Arnold
- 18.3 The Strayed Reveller
 - 18.3.1 Background of the Poem
 - 18.3.2 The Text
 - 18.3.3 A Discussion
- 18.4 The Scholar-Gypsy
 - 18.4.1 Background of the Poem
 - 18.4.2 The Text
 - 18.4.3 A Discussion
- 18.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.6 Answers to Self-Check Exercises

18.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Write about Matthew Arnold's life and work;
- Discuss Matthew Arnold's poetry in detail with special reference to:
 - i) The Strayed Reveller
 - ii) The Scholar-Gypsy

18.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we have discussed Arnold's life in brief as in case of any individual the experience of life certainly shapes the nature of his or her work at least to a certain extent. The two poems discussed here are two of Arnold's choicest creations.

The first poem, though it exhibits a good deal of poetical power, and occasionally depth of thought is often criticised for having either no subject, or being obscure in its subject. It sometimes reads in large part as a versified essay in criticism. It contains much commentary on poets and poetry.

The second poem, "The scholar Gypsy" is considered to be a poem that was based on Joseph Glanvill's recount of 'The Vanity of Dogmatizing'. It opens up on an afternoon in the month of August with the poet recounting his usual chores. It's a lovely poem that showcases the beauty of pastoral chores and life during this century.

18.2 MATTHEW ARNOLD

Matthew Arnold was a writer of many activities, but it is chiefly as a poet and a critic that he now holds his place in English literature. He was the son of the

famous head master of rugby, and was educated at Winchester, Rugby and at Balliol College, Oxford, where he gained the Newdigate prize for poetry. Subsequently he became a Fellow of Oriel College (1845). In 1851 he was appointed an inspector of schools, and proved to be a capable official. In 1857 he was elected professor of poetry at Oxford. His life was busily uneventful, and in 1883, he resigned, receiving a pension from the government. Less than five years afterwards he died suddenly of heart disease at Liverpool.

His poetical works are not very bulky. *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems* (1849) appear under the *nom de plume* of 'A' as did *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems* (1852). Then followed *Poems* (1853), with its famous critical preface, and *New Poems* (1863). None of these volumes is of large size, though much of the content is of a high quality. For subject, Arnold is very fond of classical themes, to which he gives a meditative and even melancholy cast common in modern compositions. The nature of his poetry is didactic.

His prose work is large in bulk and wide in range. Of them all his critical essays are probably of the highest value. *Essays in Criticism* (1865 and 1889) contains the best of his critical work, which is marked by wide reading and careful thought. His judgments, usually sane and measured, are sometimes distorted a little by his views on life and politics. Hence it can be said that Arnold is a more commanding figure and has exercised a wider influence as a prose writer. His earlier life is preoccupied with verse and his later life with prose.

A lot has been said and discussed about all sorts of 'conflicts', 'ambivalences', and 'dichotomies' in Arnold's mind and soul. His early letters to Arthur Hugh Clough, reveal his serious moral engrossment in his thinking about poetry. According to Gottfried, he was deeply troubled about the problems of the viability of the spirit and imagination in a world that was based on utilitarian standards of human behavior. One of the most dominant faiths that he had was that man could find salvation, which according to Arnold meant wholeness and harmony, only through poetry. A very important remark about Arnold is that critical effort and moral passion was employed in writing even in the earliest of his poetry and one should be aware of this fact to understand it properly.

18.3 THE STRAYED REVELLER

18.3.1 Background of the Poem

The Strayed Reveller is an unrhymed lyric poem written in irregular metre, was originally published in Matthew Arnold's first volume of verse, *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems*. This poem has received a very little attention, although it was very important for Arnold who gave it the place of honour in his first volume. It is often regarded as an investigation of the creative process of a poet. The poem is remarkable for its detailed descriptive passages. The poet hero of the Strayed Reveller chose the dangerous world of "natural magic" because he thinks that the god is indifferent and the human life is useless. The Strayed Reveller is an important document in the long argument between Arnold the romantic and Arnold the classicist. It also shows how Arnold's ideas about poetry interconnect with his ideas about God, nature and human life. At the core of the poem is a comparison between divine detachment and true poetic empathy as ways of seeing human life. The best recent critique of the poem finding in it

chiefly an analysis of the romantic mode of vision, disagree both about which part of the poem embody the romantic mode and about whether the poem rejects or celebrates it.

18.3.2 The Text

The Strayed Reveller

The Youth

Faster, faster,
O Circe, Goddess,
Let the wild, thronging train
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul!
Thou standest, smiling
Down on me! thy right arm,
Lean'd up against the column there,
Props thy soft cheek;
Thy left holds, hanging loosely,
The deep cup, ivy-cinctured,
I held but now.
Is it, then, evening
So soon? I see, the night-dews,
Cluster'd in thick beads, dim
The agate brooch-stones
On thy white shoulder;
The cool night-wind, too,
Blows through the portico,
Stirs thy hair, Goddess,
Waves thy white robe!

Circe.

Whence art thou, sleeper?

The Youth.

When the white dawn first
Through the rough fir-planks
Of my hut, by the chestnuts,
Up at the valley-head,
Came breaking, Goddess!
I sprang up, I threw round me
My dappled fawn-skin;
Passing out, from the wet turf,
Where they lay, by the hut door,
I snatch'd up my vine-crown, my fir-staff,
All drench'd in dew-

Came swift down to join
 The rout early gather'd
 In the town, round the temple,
 Iacchus' white fane
 On yonder hill.
 Quick I pass'd, following
 The wood-cutters' cart-track
 Down the dark valley;-I saw
 On my left, through the beeches,
 Thy palace, Goddess,
 Smokeless, empty!
 Trembling, I enter'd; beheld
 The court all silent,
 The lions sleeping,
 On the altar this bowl.
 I drank, Goddess!
 And sank down here, sleeping,
 On the steps of thy portico.

Circe.

Foolish boy! Why tremblest thou?
 Thou lovest it, then, my wine?
 Wouldst more of it? See, how glows,
 Through the delicate, flush'd marble,
 The red, creaming liquor,
 Strown with dark seeds!
 Drink, thee! I chide thee not,
 Deny thee not my bowl.
 Come, stretch forth thy hand, thee-so!
 Drink-drink again!

The Youth.

Thanks, gracious one!
 Ah, the sweet fumes again!
 More soft, ah me,
 More subtle-winding
 Than Pan's flute-music!
 Faint-faint! Ah me,
 Again the sweet sleep!
 Circe.

Hist! Thou-within there!
 Come forth, Ulysses!
 Art tired with hunting?
 While we range the woodland,
 See what the day brings.

Ulysses.

Ever new magic!
Hast thou then lured hither,
Wonderful Goddess, by thy art,
The young, languid-eyed Ampelus,
Iacchus' darling-
Or some youth beloved of Pan,
Of Pan and the Nymphs?
That he sits, bending downward
His white, delicate neck
To the ivy-wreathed marge
Of thy cup; the bright, glancing vine-leaves
That crown his hair,
Falling forward, mingling
With the dark ivy-plants—
His fawn-skin, half untied,
Smear'd with red wine-stains? Who is he,
That he sits, overweigh'd
By fumes of wine and sleep,
So late, in thy portico?
What youth, Goddess,-what guest
Of Gods or mortals?

Circe.

Hist! he wakes!
I lured him not hither, Ulysses.
Nay, ask him!

The Youth.

Who speaks' Ah, who comes forth
To thy side, Goddess, from within?
How shall I name him?
This spare, dark-featured,
Quick-eyed stranger?
Ah, and I see too
His sailor's bonnet,
His short coat, travel-tarnish'd,
With one arm bare!—
Art thou not he, whom fame
This long time rumours
The favour'd guest of Circe, brought by the waves?
Art thou he, stranger?
The wise Ulysses,
Laertes' son?

Ulysses.
 I am Ulysses.
 And thou, too, sleeper?
 Thy voice is sweet.
 It may be thou hast follow'd
 Through the islands some divine bard,
 By age taught many things,
 Age and the Muses;
 And heard him delighting
 The chiefs and people
 In the banquet, and learn'd his songs.
 Of Gods and Heroes,
 Of war and arts,
 And peopled cities,
 Inland, or built
 By the gray sea.—If so, then hail!
 I honour and welcome thee.

The Youth.

The Gods are happy.
 They turn on all sides
 Their shining eyes,
 And see below them
 The earth and men.
 They see Tiresias
 Sitting, staff in hand,
 On the warm, grassy
 Asopus bank,
 His robe drawn over
 His old sightless head,
 Revolving inly
 The doom of Thebes.
 They see the Centaurs
 In the upper glens
 Of Pelion, in the streams,
 Where red-berried ashes fringe
 The clear-brown shallow pools,
 With streaming flanks, and heads
 Rear'd proudly, snuffing
 The mountain wind.
 They see the Indian
 Drifting, knife in hand,
 His frail boat moor'd to
 A floating isle thick-matted
 With large-leaved, low-creeping melon-plants
 And the dark cucumber.
 He reaps, and stows them,
 Drifting—drifting;—round him,
 Round his green harvest-plot,
 Flow the cool lake-waves,

The mountains ring them.
They see the Scythian
On the wide stepp, unharnessing
His wheel'd house at noon.
He tethers his beast down, and makes his meal—
Mares' milk, and bread
Baked on the embers;—all around
The boundless, waving grass-plains stretch, thick-starr'd
With saffron and the yellow hollyhock
And flag-leaved iris-flowers.
Sitting in his cart
He makes his meal; before him, for long miles,
Alive with bright green lizards,
And the springing bustard-fowl,
The track, a straight black line,
Furrows the rich soil; here and there
Cluster of lonely mounds
Topp'd with rough-hewn,
Gray, rain-blear'd statues, overpeer
The sunny waste.
They see the ferry
On the broad, clay-laden
Lone Chorasmian stream;—thereon,
With snort and strain,
Two horses, strongly swimming, tow
The ferry-boat, with woven ropes
To either bow
Firm harness'd by the mane; a chief
With shout and shaken spear,
Stands at the prow, and guides them; but astern
The cowering merchants, in long robes,
Sit pale beside their wealth
Of silk-bales and of balsam-drops,
Of gold and ivory,
Of turquoise-earth and amethyst,
Jasper and chalcedony,
And milk-barred onyx-stones.
The loaded boat swings groaning
In the yellow eddies;
The Gods behold him.
They see the Heroes
Sitting in the dark ship
On the foamless, long-heaving
Violet sea.
At sunset nearing
The Happy Islands.
These things, Ulysses,
The wise bards, also
Behold and sing.
But oh, what labour!
O prince, what pain!

They too can see
 Tiresias;—but the Gods,
 Who give them vision,
 Added this law:
 That they should bear too
 His groping blindness,
 His dark foreboding,
 His scorn'd white hairs;
 Bear Hera's anger
 Through a life lengthen'd
 To seven ages.
 They see the Centaurs
 On Pelion:—then they feel,
 They too, the maddening wine
 Swell their large veins to bursting; in wild pain
 They feel the biting spears
 Of the grim Lapithæ, and Theseus, drive,
 Drive crashing through their bones; they feel
 High on a jutting rock in the red stream
 Alcmena's dreadful son
 Ply his bow;—such a price
 The Gods exact for song:
 To become what we sing.
 They see the Indian
 On his mountain lake; but squalls
 Make their skiff reel, and worms
 In the unkind spring have gnawn
 Their melon-harvest to the heart.—They see
 The Scythian: but long frosts
 Parch them in winter-time on the bare stepp,
 Till they too fade like grass; they crawl
 Like shadows forth in spring.
 They see the merchants
 On the Oxus stream;—but care
 Must visit first them too, and make them pale.
 Whether, through whirling sand,
 A cloud of desert robber-horse have burst
 Upon their caravan; or greedy kings,
 In the wall'd cities the way passes through,
 Crush'd them with tolls; or fever-airs,
 On some great river's marge,
 Mown them down, far from home.
 They see the Heroes
 Near harbour;—but they share
 Their lives, and former violent toil in Thebes,
 Seven-gated Thebes, or Troy;
 Or where the echoing oars
 Of Argo first
 Startled the unknown sea.
 The old Silenus
 Came, lolling in the sunshine,

From the dewy forest-coverts,
This way at noon.
Sitting by me, while his Fauns
Down at the water-side
Sprinkled and smoothed
His drooping garland,
He told me these things.
But I, Ulysses,
Sitting on the warm steps,
Looking over the valley,
All day long, have seen,
Without pain, without labour,
Sometimes a wild-hair'd Mænad—
Sometimes a Faun with torches—
And sometimes, for a moment,
Passing through the dark stems
Flowing-robed, the beloved,
The desired, the divine,
Beloved Iacchus.
Ah, cool night-wind, tremulous stars!
Ah, glimmering water,
Fitful earth-murmur,
Dreaming woods!
Ah, golden-haired, strangely smiling Goddess,
And thou, proved, much enduring,
Wave-toss'd Wanderer!
Who can stand still?
Ye fade, ye swim, ye waver before me—
The cup again!
Faster, faster,
O Circe, Goddess.
Let the wild, thronging train,
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul!

Matthew Arnold

Glossary

- Circe** : In Greek mythology Circe is a goddess who turned Odysseus's men temporarily into swine but later gave him directions for their journey home.
- Ulysses** : Ulysses is derived from *Ulixes*, the Latin name for Odysseus, a character in ancient Greek literature. He is known to be a legendary Greek king of Ithaca and a hero of Homer's *Odyssey* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_poetry
- The Youth** : The aspiring poet the transformation of whom forms the central part of the poem.

The transformation of a young man into a poet is the account that is at the core of this poem, though the story does not appear to dominate the whole poem at any point of its narrative flow. The poem is in form of a dialogue. It's a dialogue between a youth and Circe. The young man enters in the world of poetic creation and holds the cup of wine with a trembling hand. Goddess Circe welcomes him to take deep plunge in the sea of lyrical design.

The poem deals with the nature of the poet, incorporating two themes that were very common in nineteenth-century romanticism: the pinnacle of the artist and the agony of the artist. It is assumed that when Arnold wrote the speeches of the youth, he must have had a poet like Keats in mind. This is because Arnold at some point of time had observed to Clough in his letters that Keats was 'consumed' by the desire for 'movement and fullness', which was the same desire chanted by the intoxicated reveller.

The youth implores the Goddess to sweep his soul with the wild and bright procession of "eddying form". Arnold has also brought in the famous character of Ulysses in course of their dialogue. The subsequent stanza gives long colorful portrayal of the world of transition by the youth in course of his self-narrative. For Arnold the question how the poet sees is never separated from what he sees.

On the whole however the poem remains unclear. A major problem with the poem is the fact that it seems to violate the critical principles which Arnold was trying to develop at the time he was composing it. Although the poem has been written in dramatic form, it is marked with slight central action and is heavily overlaid with decoration. Similar is the case with the descriptive passages that are supposed to represent examples of the variety of human existence but become elements of digression because of their length and sensuous elaboration.

The reveller almost describes poetry as 'a true allegory of the state of one's own mind in a representative history'. Arnold was himself against this view. According to him if a poet became what he sang, then he sang himself in allegorical representation.

All these factors force us to think as to why Arnold, who himself was considered to be a reformer as far as poetry was concerned chose a poem with evident flaws as the title poem of his first volume of poetry. However we can also think that he was very well aware of what he was doing and chose the indirect means of irony and allegory rather than 'thinking aloud' in verse to which he objected.

The use of his legend of Circe has also often been questioned. According to Gottfried, although this is modern Circe who is refined, she still remains the dangerous seducer. So the reveller who was a youthful poet earlier, driven by his naturally ardent nature, went astray and willingly submitted to the Circean influence. The accusing questions of Ulysses further in the poem make it clear that the effect of Circe on the young poet was evil. She even denies that she led him astray. Towards the end of the poem, the reveller, does nothing but cries for more wine.

18.4 THE SCHOLAR-GYPSY

18.4.1 Background of the poem

‘The Scholar Gypsy’ is based on a story about a scholar who abandoned academic life to join a band of gypsies. The various places and landmarks mentioned in the poem are all actual ones situated around Oxford. The Shepherd is summoned to the hills to untie the wattle cotes: sheepfolds built of wattles or interwoven twigs; neither to leave his wistful flock unfed nor let his bawling fellows neither rack their throats nor allow the cropped grasses shoot another head. However, when the fields are calm and still and tired men and dogs all gone to rest, one can see only the white sheep cross the strips of the moon blanch’d green, the Shepherd must again renew the quest; the search for the Scholar Gypsy who is believed to be still haunting the vicinity.

18.4.2 The Text

The Scholar-Gypsy

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
 Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!
 No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
 Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
 Nor the cropp’d herbage shoot another head.
 But when the fields are still,
 And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
 And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
 Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch’d green.
 Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—
 In this high field’s dark corner, where he leaves
 His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,
 And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
 Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—
 Here will I sit and wait,
 While to my ear from uplands far away
 The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
 With distant cries of reapers in the corn—
 All the live murmur of a summer’s day.

Screen’d is this nook o’er the high, half-reap’d field,
 And here till sun-down, shepherd! will I be.
 Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
 And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
 Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;
 And air-swept lindens yield
 Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
 Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
 And bower me from the August sun with shade;
 And the eye travels down to Oxford’s towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—
 Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
 The story of the Oxford scholar poor,
 Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,
 Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
 One summer-morn forsook
 His friends, and went to learn the Gypsy-lore,
 And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,
 And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,
 But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,
 Two scholars, whom at college erst he knew,
 Met him, and of his way of life enquired;
 Whereat he answer'd, that the Gypsy-crew,
 His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
 The workings of men's brains,
 And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
 'And I,' he said, 'the secret of their art,
 When fully learn'd, will to the world impart;
 But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill.'

This said, he left them, and return'd no more.—
 But rumours hung about the country-side,
 That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
 Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
 In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
 The same the gipsies wore.
 Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring;
 At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
 On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frock'd boors
 Had found him seated at their entering,

But, 'mid their drink and clatter, he would fly.
 And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
 And put the shepherds, wanderer! on thy trace;
 And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
 I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place;
 Or in my boat I lie
 Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer-heats,
 'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
 And watch the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills,
 And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!
 Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,
 Returning home on summer-nights, have met
 Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,
 Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
 As the punt's rope chops round;
 And leaning backward in a pensive dream,

And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!—
Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemony,
Dark bluebells drench'd with dew of summer eves,
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none hath words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering Thames,
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,
Have often pass'd thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
Mark'd thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—
But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee eyeing, all an April-day,
The springing pasture and the feeding kine;
And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood—
Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of grey,
Above the forest-ground called Thessaly—
The blackbird, picking food,
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray,
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,
And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge,

Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
 Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
 And thou has climb'd the hill,
 And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range;
 Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
 The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—
 Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
 Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
 And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
 That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls
 To learn strange arts, and join a Gypsy-tribe;
 And thou from earth art gone
 Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—
 Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
 Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
 Under a dark, red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
 For what wears out the life of mortal men?
 'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
 'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
 Exhaust the energy of strongest souls
 And numb the elastic powers.
 Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,
 And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
 To the just-pausing Genius we remit
 Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?
 Thou hadst one aim, one business, one desire;
 Else wert thou long since number'd with the dead!
 Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!
 The generations of thy peers are fled,
 And we ourselves shall go;
 But thou possessest an immortal lot,
 And we imagine thee exempt from age
 And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
 Because thou hadst—what we, alas! have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
 Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
 Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
 Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
 Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
 O life unlike to ours!
 Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
 Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
 And each half lives a hundred different lives;
 Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill'd;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

Yes, we await it!—but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest! and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear;
With close-lipp'd patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbour to despair—
But none has hope like thine!
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free, onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—
Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales

Freshen thy flowers as in former years
 With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
 From the dark dingles, to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
 For strong the infection of our mental strife,
 Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
 And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
 Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
 Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
 Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,
 And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
 And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
 Fade and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
 —As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
 Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
 Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
 The fringes of a southward-facing brow
 Among the Ægæan Isles;
 And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
 Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
 Green, bursting figs, and tunniessteep'd in brine—
 And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves—
 And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail;
 And day and night held on indignantly
 O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
 Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
 To where the Atlantic raves
 Outside the western straits; and unbent sails
 There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
 Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
 And on the beach undid his corded bales.

Matthew Arnold

Glossary

- Wattled cotes** : The poet here urges to free the flock of sheep from its shed and let be liberated. This symbolism of liberation from any sort of binding is there from the beginning in the poem.
- Glanvil's Book** : Ranulf de Glanvill (sometimes written Glanvil was Chief justice of England during the reign of King Henry II and reputed author of a book on English law
- Oxford Scholar poor** : *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* by Glanvil was a reaction to scholasticism, the rigid analytical methodology then in vogue in universities across Europe, and it features a poverty-stricken scholar.

Godstowbridge : Godstow Bridge is a road bridge across the river Thames in England at Godstow near Oxford. The poem is replete with such details about the landscape around the university. For example references to landmarks like **Cummer Hills** or **Bagley Wood**:

Spark from Heaven : Arnold imagines the scholar Gypsy as a shadowy figure who can even now be glimpsed in the Berkshire and Oxfordshire countryside, waiting for the spark from Heaven, or some theological piece of knowledge to be revealed to him by God, and claims to have once seen him himself.

Matthew Arnold

18.4.3 A discussion

“The Scholar Gypsy” is often known as one of the best and most popular poems of Arnold. A poor Oxford university student constitutes the central character of “The Scholar Gypsy” who abandoned his studies to learn about the supernatural powers of the Gypsy people. Arnold begins the poem in pastoral mode, invoking an unnamed shepherd and describing the beautiful rural scene, with Oxford in the distance. The very first stanza of the poem suggests that something is amiss because the speaker imagines the sheep at night on a “moon blanched green” and then persuades the shepherd to “again begin the quest.” The moon acts like a symbol for the power of imagination and the word ‘quest’ appears to be a very loaded term for the rustic job of a shepherd. The pastoralism of the poem leads immediately to several themes. Most generally it represents, as it does for many poets, an escape from the intolerable world of court or affairs. He then repeats the gist of Glanvill’s story, but extends it with an account of rumors that the scholar Gypsy was again seen from time to time by shepherds, country boys, young girls and reapers etc. around Oxford. Arnold thinks of him as a shadowy figure who can even now be seen from time to time in the Berkshire and Oxfordshire countryside, “waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall”, and claims to have once seen him himself. Arnold certainly romanticizes the Oxford countryside, attributing to it his happiest days. Against this romantic background, then, Arnold places the quest for and of the scholar-Gypsy, which gives added significance to the background. This major English pastoral elegy has been written in a ten-line stanzaic pattern, constituting a total of 250 lines.

Arnold was not sure whether the scholar Gypsy was still alive after two centuries, but then ruled out the thought of his death. He cannot have died like a normal man. Having renounced such a life, he is hence free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt. The sick hurry and divided aims characterize modern life. The poet implores the scholar Gypsy to avoid all who suffer from it, in case he too should be infected and die. Arnold ends with an extended simile of a Tyrian merchant seaman who flees from the eruption of Greek competitors to seek a new world in Iberia. Since for Arnold Christianity was dead, and nothing seemed to occupy its place that could give meaning to life. This situation resulted in a constant search, loneliness and a void in life. In other words it can be said that it was the confrontation between the wisdom of the heart and the wisdom of head. The head is aware of the real condition of the modern world, but the heart is invariably drawn to the simpler life represented by the scholar and Oxford.

As a poet Arnold at times used to give a record of the sick society in his poems. “The Scholar Gypsy” is also one such poem. In this poem the attitude of Arnold towards the Gypsy is similar to the attitude of an adult towards a child. Arnold appreciates the innocence of the Gypsy and envies it at the same time but finally realises that he could not return to such a stage of innocence. Arnold believed that a child lost its innocence not due to some sin but simply by gaining experience and developing into an adult. The Gypsy similarly was the manifestation of a good that was lost. When Arnold juxtaposes the Gypsy’s composure with the problems of his own age, he is not lampooning the nineteenth century but is rather exploring its spiritual and emotional losses.

At the end it can be said that The Scholar Gypsy is a great modern melancholy and widened and spiritualized into a spirit of mystery and dreams.

18.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you read about the life and works of Matthew Arnold and examined two of his poems. You should now be able to examine appreciate and discuss Matthew Arnold’s poems in general and these two poems **The Strayed Reveller** and **The Scholar Gypsy** in particular effectively.

18.6 ANSWER TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

Now that you have read the poems carefully, try to answer the following questions.

- a) Discuss the central idea of the poem “The Strayed Reveller”.

Ans: Refer to the paragraph in section 18.3.3.

- b) Briefly discuss Arnold’s usage of the legend of Circe in his poem “The Strayed Reveller”.

Ans: Refer to the paragraph in section 18.3.3.

- c) Elaborate upon the theme of the poem “The Scholar Gypsy”.

Ans: Refer to the paragraph in section 18.4.3.

- d) Do you think the Oxford countryside is romanticized in the poem The Scholar Gypsy?

Ans: Refer to the paragraph in section 18.4.3.

References:

A Critical History of English Literature by David Daiches. Volume four.

A History of English Literature by Arthur Compton-Rickett.

History of English Literature by Edward Albert.

Matthew Arnold’s ‘The Strayed Reveller’ by Leon A. Gottfried.

The Two Worlds in Arnold’s ‘The Strayed Reveller’ by Dorothy M. Mermin.

UNIT 19 GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Structure

- 19.0 Objectives
- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Gerard Manley Hopkins
- 19.3 Notes
 - 19.3.1 A Note on Sprung Rhythm
 - 19.3.2 A Note on Inscap
- 19.4 Pied Beauty (1877) (p. 1918)
 - 19.4.1 Introduction
 - 19.4.2 The Text & Glossary
 - 19.4.3 Analysis of the Poem
- 19.5 The Windhover (1877) (p.1918)
 - 19.5.1 Introduction
 - 19.5.2 The Text, Glossary & Synopsis
 - 19.5.3 Discussion
 - 19.5.4 Comments
- 19.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.7 Answers to Self-Check Exercises

19.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Talk about Gerard Manley Hopkins the poet, his life and work.
- Appreciate Hopkins' poem 'Pied Beauty'
- Analyze the thematic as well as technical aspects of 'The Windhover'

19.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will discuss the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, which is said to occupy two worlds. Hopkins was a poet who lived during the latter half of the Victorian period, but whose poetry was published only in 1918, posthumously. He is considered to be a herald of modernist poetry, because of his daring innovations and experimentations in poetic language, technique, and style. Subject wise, he is predominantly the product of his times. He praises the beauty and grandeur of God's creations, explores his spiritual tensions and investigates his relationship with God.

Hopkins uses unusual prosody, compound words, archaic words and complex images in his poems. He also bases his poems on a personal philosophy he had evolved as a part of his religious vocation. The radical nature of his poetry makes it a bit difficult to understand him at a single reading. We have to get introduced to the special features and intricacies of this writer. But once the shell is broken, the kernel is sweet and tasty. Effort has been made in this unit to help you appreciate such intricate poetry.

We have included additional notes which would give you an idea about Hopkins' practice of sprung rhythm and his concepts of inscape and instress. Knowledge of this is a prerequisite in understanding and appreciating Hopkins.

The first poem 'Pied Beauty' which was written in 1887 is a curtal sonnet, which means it is shorter than the traditional sonnet. The poem glorifies God who has created 'Pied Beauty': natural beauty with spots, blotches, dots and speckles. Hopkins is different from the rest of the Nature poets as one who loves things for their unusual quirks, personal oddities and individual qualities.

The second poem 'The Windhover' is another sonnet, but in the traditional mould. The poem gives a magnificent word picture of a falcon or a kestrel in midflight, before it swoops down majestically. Like in most of his poems, Hopkins moves from the creature to the creator, wondering how much more glorious would be God's beauty.

We have adopted different strategies in examining the poems which have been selected for detailed study. The analysis provided along with the first poem in 19.4 will serve as a guide to help you analyse poems on your own during examination. In 19.5 we have adopted a different method which will help you comprehend the text better and learn to appreciate Hopkins' poetry for its technical skill and beauty of images. Read through the unit section by section and do the exercises as you read. Hope you enjoy your journey of discovering Hopkins.

19.2 GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

(b. 28 July, 1844 Essex, England – d. 8 June, 1889 Dublin, Ireland)



Gerard Manley Hopkins

Gerard Manley Hopkins was born at Stratford, Essex, England, as the eldest of nine children to Manley Hopkins and Catherine Smith, a prosperous and artistic couple. His father was by turn, the proprietor of a marine insurance firm, the British Consul General in Hawaii, Church Warden, and a published writer and reviewer. His mother was greatly fond of music and reading. They were deeply religious High Church Anglicans and Hopkins was inclined towards asceticism from his boyhood.

Hopkins' maternal aunt Maria Smith Giberne taught him to sketch. His talent was promoted by many and his first ambition was to be a painter. His early

training in visual arts later helped him when Hopkins became a poet. While he was studying at the Highgate boarding school, he composed his first poem, 'The Escorial', at the age of ten, inspired by John Keats.

Hopkins attended the Balliol College, Oxford, where he studied Classics. He won a 'Double First' in the subject and was awarded the title, 'The Star of Balliol'. He forged a lifelong friendship with Robert Bridges at Balliol, which later resulted in Hopkins' posthumous fame. At Balliol, Hopkins was greatly impressed by the work of Christina Rossetti, befriended writer and critic Walter Pater and became a follower of Edward Pusey, member of the Oxford Movement – all these proved to be seminal influences.

In 1864 he first read John Henry Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* [A Defence of My Life] which is the classic defense by Newman of his religious views and his conversion to Catholicism. Cardinal Newman was a prominent figure in the Oxford Movement which had led to the establishment of Anglo-Catholicism. Two years later in 1866, Hopkins was received into the Catholic Church and within a short while he resolved to join priesthood. His conversion estranged him from his family. As the first step towards his religious life, Hopkins burnt all his poems because he felt that poetry would prevent him from total devotion to his faith. He later reconciled to the idea of a poetic vocation for a priest, on reading the philosophy of Duns Scotus, the medieval theologian. Hopkins joined the Society of Jesus to become a Jesuit father.

Hopkins went to learn theology at St. Beuno's Jesuit House in North Wales, which had a lasting influence on his creativity. There he came across Welsh poetry from which he fashioned his unique 'sprung rhythm'. At the encouragement of his superior Hopkins broke his silence of seven years to write 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' which praised the heroic self sacrifice of a group of Franciscan nuns whose ship sank in a storm. Though conventional in theme, the poem was daringly experimental, where he realized "the echo of a new rhythm" which he named "sprung rhythm".

The frown of his face
 Before me, the hurtle of hell
 Behind, where, where was a, where was a place?
 I whirled out wings that spell
 And fled with a fling of the heart to the heart of the Host.
 My heart, but you were dovewinged, I can tell,
 Carrier-witted, I am bold to boast,
 To flash from the flame to the flame then, tower from the grace to the grace
 Stanza 3 'The Wreck of the Deutschland'

You will notice the uneven lines, rhythmic and verbal effects and unusual word combinations. However, the poem was not published, as it was rejected by the Jesuit magazine.

He continued to write poetry but these were read only in manuscript form by his friends. After working as a parish priest, teacher and preacher in several churches and institutions, Hopkins was appointed Professor of Greek Literature at University College, Dublin. He found the environment uncongenial and he was unhappy and overworked. In 1885, he started writing a series of sonnets

beginning with “Carrion Comfort” that mirror his anguish, desolation and frustration and are known as “terrible sonnets”. They showcase the great dilemma he felt in reconciling his immense fascination for the sensuous world and the equally powerful devotion to religious vocation.

Hopkins died of typhoid fever in 1889 with the last words on his lips, “I am happy, so happy” and is buried in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin. In 1918, Robert Bridges, his friend who was the poet laureate of Britain at the time, published a collection of his poems. These original, subtle and vibrant verses, with rich aural patterning, displaying imaginative and intellectual depths had a marked influence on the major 20th century poets like T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Dylan Thomas and many others.

Do you find Hopkins’ life interesting? If you wish to know more about his life which has inspired a great deal of critical research, which has whetted curiosity about his great self-denial and his friendships, so much so that some have found evidences of homo-eroticism, you can either refer to the Encyclopaedia or browse online for scholarly articles.

Now try out these questions in Exercise I and find out how well you have followed the biographical note.

Self-check Exercise I

Answer the following questions in the space provided. Check your answers with the answer key provided in [19.7] after doing the exercise.

- 1) Which was the poem written by Hopkins under the influence of John Keats? At what age did he write it?

.....

- 2) Who was John Henry Newman? What work is he known for?

.....

- 3) What was the immediate reason for the writing of the Wreck of the Deutschland?

.....

19.3 NOTES

19.3.1 A Note on Sprung Rhythm

To enjoy and appreciate Hopkins, it is necessary to understand the concept of sprung rhythm. ‘Sprung rhythm’ is the term coined by Hopkins to denote a complex system of metrics which he derived partly from his knowledge of Welsh poetry. Hopkins was inspired by the Welsh prosodic feature called ‘*cynganedd*’ [Pron. k??°haneð] which uses a concept of sound arrangement within one line, using stress, alliteration and rhyme.

Sprung rhythm is opposed specifically to ‘running’ or ‘common’ rhythm, such as the iambic meter, and provides for feet of varying lengths. In running/regular rhythm, stressed and unstressed syllables will alternate in pattern. In sprung rhythm, stressed syllables will occur at regular intervals but the unstressed or slack syllables may vary from one to four.

For instance, in the following line, which is written in iambic meter, you will notice that the first word in each foot is unstressed or slack while the second one is stressed or accented.

[Each foot is separated with the ‘slash’ [/] sign. The unstressed syllables are indicated in normal font while **stressed** ones are denoted marking them in **bold and underlining** them.]

The cur/few tolls/ the knell/ of part/ing day [From Gray’s ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’]

Whereas this example of sprung rhythm given beneath will give you an idea how slack syllables vary in number:

Margaret are you/ grieving

Over Goldengrove/ unleaving [From Hopkins’ poem ‘Spring and Fall’]

Sprung rhythm gave Hopkins’ poetry a masculine vigour which renders it muscular, flexible, vibrant and organic. It reflects the dynamic quality and variations of common speech and creates more acoustic possibilities. Sprung rhythm in many ways anticipates free verse [*vers libre*] of modern times.

Other features of Hopkins’ poetry:

Hopkins energized language greatly. He dug up archaic and dialectal words and also coined new words. Hopkins was influenced by not only Welsh but also Anglo-Saxon or Old English poetry. Alliterations and Compound terms were features of Anglo Saxon Poetry. Hopkins uses these liberally in his poems.

- 1) **Alliteration** [repetition of initial consonant sounds in near lying words]:
e.g.: “king/dom of daylight’s dauphin/dapple-dawn-drawn falcon...”; “hear
in hiding” etc],
- 2) **Assonance** [repetition of vowel sounds to create internal rhyming]:
e.g.: rose-moles, finches wings, wimpling wing etc
- 3) **Compound words** e.g.: ‘couple-colour’, ‘dapple-dawn-drawn’ ‘blue-bleak’
etc.

19.3.2 A Note on Inscape

Hopkins believed that all phenomena in the world possess a unique quality or design. This design is a dynamic one. Thus a tree differed from another tree, a stone from a stone, and a blade of grass from another. This special individualizing quality which he perceived in every single thing, he calls **Inscape**. Hopkins was influenced by the philosophical concepts of the medieval schoolman, the theologian Duns Scotus. Duns Scotus has used a Latin term '*haecceitas*' which denotes the discrete qualities that make it a particular thing – which Hopkins translates as '*thisness*'. It is 'thisness' which is prevalent in everything that gives it its special quiddity or essence. The recognition of this inscape in other things is termed **Instress**. It can be defined as the apprehension of an object in an intense thrust of energy which enables one to realize its specific distinctiveness. Hopkins tries to capture this inscape in his poems. Thus he shows us how "Kingfishers catch fire and dragonflies draw flame": through their special vibrant colours that nature has endowed them, kingfishers and dragon flies enthrall us with their swift movements, and it impresses upon our mind in an instant. Our receipt of their unique quality or inscape into our minds is the instress that occurs in this case. Anybody who has eaten a plum knows how the juice flows into the mouth, at the instant of biting it, suffusing the whole mouth and being with sweetness or sourness. The perception of inscape is just like that! Hopkins' inscape is very much like Wordsworth's 'spots of time,' Emerson's 'moments,' and James Joyce's concept of the 'Epiphany', though Hopkins' concept is fundamentally religious.

Hope you have understood these very important concepts. Now shall we try answering a few questions to see whether you have grasped the 'inscape' of Hopkins' ideas?

Self-check Exercise II

- 1) Write down briefly about the features of sprung rhythm.

.....

- 2) "As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
 As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
 Stones ring"

Identify alliteration and assonance in the above mentioned lines.

.....

- 3) Who is the medieval philosopher who influenced Hopkins in his concept of Inscape? What was the term that he used to signify the distinct quality in each being?

.....

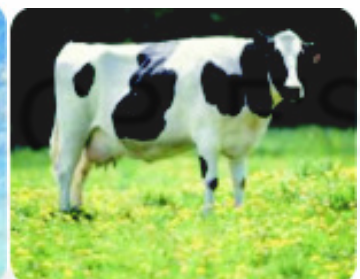
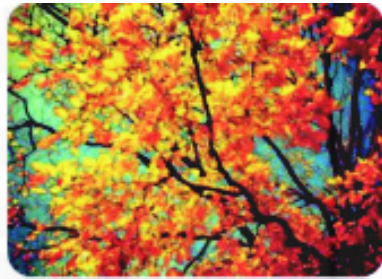
(You may now cross check your answers with those in 19.7)

19.4 PIED BEAUTY (1877)

19.4.1 Introduction

Beauty is of all sorts. Some may see beauty in the curve of a lady's brow, in the innocence of a baby's face, in the red, red rose that blooms on a thorny plant, in placid lakes or mountain slopes. Hopkins sees beauty in spots, speckles, dots and blotches. In a world where we spend lots of money and time to remove spots from our faces, Hopkins' vision emerges as one of a kind, and helps us see beauty even in motley!

Hopkins wrote this poem in 1877, the year he was ordained as a Jesuit priest. It is a curtal sonnet, which means that it is shorter than the usual sonnet, which as you know is 14 lines long. 'Pied Beauty' is 11 lines, the last line, but a stub. Did you know that Shakespeare too has written curtal sonnets? But Hopkins's curtal sonnets follow a specific pattern based on the Petrarchan sonnet. The octave which is usually eight lines is truncated to six [two tercets each, rhyming ABC] and the sestet is shortened from six lines to a quatrain [four line stanza] and an additional tail piece. This alteration of the sonnet form is quite fitting for a poem advocating originality and contrariness. Let us read the poem and find out what it means. First read the poem aloud that you get a feel of it. Then go through the poem again, slowly this time, reading with the help of the glossary. Don't get intimidated. The analysis will help you to discover the beauty and sense of 'Pied Beauty'.



19.4.2 The Text

PIED BEAUTY

Glory be to God for dappled things —
 For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
 For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
 Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
 Landscape plotted and pieced — fold, fallow, and plough;
 And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
 Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
 With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
 He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
 Praise him.

Glossary

dappled	: spotted, speckled, pied, multi-coloured
couple-colour	: two colours
brinded	: also brindled; brownish yellow or gray coat with spots or streaks of darker colour
rose-moles	: reddish spots on the skin
stipple	: pattern of spots; a device in painting which marks a surface with numerous dots or specks
trout	: a fish related to salmon



finch	: a small bird
fallow	: uncultivated land
tackle	: equipment or gear for fishing
trim	: equipment
“counter, original, spare or strange”	: things which are unconventional and strange
adazzle	: dazzling (Hopkins’ coinage)
fathers-forth	: creates, begets

19.4.3 Analysis of the Poem

‘Pied Beauty’ which is one of Hopkins’ happy poems, is a hymn of creation that praises the creator by praising the created world. It glorifies all the things on this earth that are either ‘pied’ or spotted. The poet thinks that it is a manifestation of God’s creativity. With the eye of a painter, Hopkins vividly sketches in kaleidoscopic variety, all the objects and patterns which provide an example of this kind of beauty.

Hopkins starts with a eulogy of Lord the creator: “Glory be to God for dappled things”. This is followed by an inventory of things which are dappled or spotted. He includes in this list, the sky that is dappled at dawn, with blotches of blue colour splashed against pale white, the contrast described as ‘couple-colour’ by Hopkins. It reminds him of “brinded cow” or ‘brindled’ or ‘piebald’ cow, whose

hide is again a contrast of brown against white. Then he describes the trout fish which swims, that has its body painted [stippled] with rose coloured moles. The next image, a complex one, is of a chestnut, the meaty interior cradled within its hard shell falling out, hiding its smouldering brilliance like coals in a fire, black on the outside, but glowing within as it splits and falls. The tiny birds, finches, are multicoloured usually with specks on their wings; and the landscape of a farmland, enclosed in patches, forms a pattern according to the way in which it is cultivated or left fallow or freshly ploughed. The last example in the octave is taken from the world of man, where the tools and equipments of his trade, make a dappled pattern in their variety. Hopkins places man in his context – he is only a part of the extensive natural world. And even human achievements such as trade, gear, tackle and trim, can be seen only as a part of the larger scheme of things.

In the final five lines, Hopkins goes beyond the physical characteristics of the things he has described, and delves into their natures or moral qualities. Thus all things, highly original, unconventional and strange, whether they are freckled or fickle, with all their attributes of swiftness or slowness, sweetness or sourness, brightness or dimness, come from him, the creator. In their multiplicity, the creatures affirm the permanence and immutability of God the father, and inspire the world to “Praise Him.”

Hopkins follows the adulatory style of the Psalmist in the Old Testament in the opening line. Interestingly, he also ends on a note of veneration: “Praise him!” These opening and closing lines with their parallelism, rework the mottoes of Jesuits, “to the greater Glory of God” and “praise to God always”, making the poem akin to a ritual observance, thus giving it a traditional flavour. This tempers the unorthodoxy of the appreciation – the poets’ fascination for dappled or spotted things. The parallelism in the first and the last lines, correspond to the larger symmetry of the poem: the octave, starting with praise, moves on to a laudatory inventory of creatures; the sestet, starts with a description of the characteristics of creatures and ends by praising the creator.

The poem runs on like an extended sentence, the long **predicate** that resembles a list, at last yields to a striking **verb** of creation in the penultimate sentence – “fathers-forth” – which is the *volta** of the sonnet, leading the reader to acknowledge the ultimate **subject**, God the creator. It takes the theological position that the great variety in the created world is a testimony to the infinite power of the Creator. It also takes a polemic/political stance against the uniformity and standardization which was a feature of Victorian society, by appreciating differences summed up in “fickle, freckled”. Neither is Hopkins’ appreciation merely an aesthetic one. By juxtaposing ‘fickle’ with ‘freckled’, Hopkins introduces a moral tenor, which imbues a mere physical description with a deeper and denser significance. It calls for an acceptance of unsightly and quirky things as beautiful creations of God. That their particular individualizing attributes are of mysterious derivation is brought to attention by Hopkins in the parenthetical musing: “(who knows how?)”, hinting at its divine origin. Thus Hopkins deviates from conventional romanticism which sees beauty only in conventionally beautiful things.

* *Volta*: In sonnets, the *volta*, or turn, is a rhetorical shift or dramatic change in thought and/or emotion.

Hopkins' sprung rhythm adds vitality and vigour to the poem, which races down the list of dappled things. Alliteration sprinkled abundantly in lines such as "Glory be to God", "Fresh firecoal chestnut-falls, finches' wings", "plotted and pieced", "fold, fallow", "tackle and trim", "fickle, freckled" "swift, slow, sweet, sour", and assonance resonating within expressions like "rose-moles", and "finches' wings", impart a great aural felicity to the poem. The poet's boldness in coining new compound expressions like "couple-colour", "fresh-firecoal", adds vividness to the verbal pictures. Hopkins' linguistic experimentations are not mere embellishments. They go beyond their decorative capacity to structurally augment the thematic elements of the poem. Hopkins effectively conveys the inscape of dappled and spotted things through these rich and dense expressions.

Self-check Exercise III

- 1) What are various dappled things that Hopkins describes in the first stanza of his poem?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Which is the verb used by Hopkins on which the meaning of the whole poem hinges?

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3) Write down two examples each of a) alliteration b) assonance c) compound terms that are used in the poem.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 4) Look up a dictionary or an encyclopaedia for the meaning of 'parallelism' and record it below.

.....

.....

.....

.....

19.5 THE WINDHOVER (1877)

19.5.1 Introduction

Have you seen an eagle or a falcon soaring high up in the sky? It is a majestic sight. What differentiates the bird of this family is its capacity to stay immobile in the air for a while without moving its wings, before it suddenly swoops down on to the earth, may be, to catch its prey! It is the hovering of the bird in midair that caught Hopkins' attention which came out as this much anthologized magnificent poem.

The Windhover was written on 30 May, 1877, the same year as 'Pied Beauty', but published only 1918. On rising early one morning, Hopkins happened to see a common kestrel which is also called Windhover because of its tendency to hover. Struck by the majesty of the bird, Hopkins was inspired to write a poem. But as is usual with Hopkins, the creature is but a pretext to perceive the majesty of the creator. Hopkins has used the subtitle *To Christ, Our Lord*, by which he wishes to call our attention to the greater splendour of God.

Like 'Pied Beauty', 'The Windhover' apotheosizes the glory of creation. If there is a list of images in the first poem, the latter one has a single image of a falcon or a kestrel. But Hopkins presents two facets of this bird, in *statis* and *kinesis*, i.e. in stationary position and movement. Written in the Petrarchan mode, the sonnet describes the bird in the octave and then moves on to compare the bird with the greater majesty of Christ, the Lord, in the sestet. Hopkins' devotion to God pours out in passionate words which culminate in two vivid images of self-effacement and self-sacrifice in the last tercet of the sestet.

Hopkins considered 'The Windhover', "the best thing [he] ever wrote". Hopkins avoids the 'same and tame' cadence of conventional poetry which he calls, Parnassian poetry*, and writes in sprung rhythm making his poem come fierce and alive. The poem with its vivid and condensed images, its words twisted out of present day meanings, to accommodate archaic ones, lends itself to several interpretations. We will read more about them when we discuss the poem in detail.

Eagles have fascinated poets before. Here is a short poem by Alfred Tennyson, another Victorian poet, titled 'The Eagle'.

"He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls."

It would be good for you to read it and compare it with Hopkins' poem 'The Windhover', after you have read the poem, which is given below. Read the poem carefully, not once but two or three times, with the help of the glossary given beneath.

* Competent Poetry written without much inspiration. As from the heights of Parnassus, mountain sacred to the Muses according to Greek mythology

THE WINDHOVER

To Christ our Lord

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
 dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
 Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
 High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
 In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
 As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
 Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
 Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
 Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
 Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: sheer plód makes plough down sillion
 Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
 Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

Glossary

- minion** : darling, favourite
- dauphin** : [pron: /d??fæn/] crown prince or heir to the throne of France
- Falcon** : is a raptor [bird of prey], belonging to the family of *falco*, with sharp talons and curved beak. The kestrel which belongs to this family has brown coloured plumage. Falcons are used for the hunting game called falconry [pron: /f?k?nr?/] with the help of a trained bird of prey. There is a covert reference to the game in the poem.
- wimpling** : with folds, like in a wimple [a gathered headdress for nuns]
- buckle** : 1) to fasten; 2) to give way under strain
- chevalier** : a knight; a chivalrous man; a cavalier
- sillion** : furrow; soil turned over by a plough; “sillion” is a medieval term for the small strip of land granted to monasteries to farm.
- vermillion** : a brilliant scarlet red colour

Synopsis: [A synopsis is included here to help you read the poem and understand it better.]

The narrative persona, 'I', captures the image of a falcon in his eye/mind, who is the darling of morning, the crown prince of the kingdom of daylight, who is intensely drawn towards dappled dawn [early morning with streaks of red in the sky], as he rides the air. He looks as if he is riding the thermal* [rolling air], by pulling his wimpling [folding] wings back, like a horseback rider reins in his horse by pulling at it. And then, from his static position, he suddenly swoops down smoothly, gliding like a skater skating in a rink, manoeuvring a curve, hurling himself against the big wind. The heart of the persona, hidden within him, yearned to be like the bird, to achieve its mastery over the elements.

The bird which encapsulates brute beauty, bravery and action with its air [manner], pride, plume [feather], buckles [fastens itself to the greater beauty of God /or/ gives away before the greater beauty of God]. The poet tells Christ, whom he addresses as chevalier, that the fire that breaks at this act of buckling, is a million times lovelier and more dangerous. For, Christ's supreme sacrifice on the cross for the whole of humanity is definitely more glorious than the hunting bird's terrestrial exploits.

But that is not a matter to wonder. For, sheer hard work makes the ploughshare dragged within the sillion [furrows in the farm] shine brightly. Or it may be that even the furrows shine when the plow turns up the dull clods of earth and the new earth glints with minerals. And ash covered embers [blue-bleak], when they break open, they reveal in the gash, their heart of smouldering fire [gold-vermilion].

19.5.3 Discussion

Now that you have read the poem carefully, try to answer the following questions, so that we can discuss the poem.

- a) Record briefly the images that suggest the majesty and grandeur of the Windhover.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

[Read the octave: The sight of the kestrel in the mid air, which is majestic like the dauphin, rides like an accomplished horseman, which shows tremendous mastery of movement and fights the big wind, like a cavalier. Then it swoops down in a majestic sweeping motion, showing its mastery over the air.]

*Thermal: an upward current of warm air, used by gliders, balloonists, and birds to gain height.

- b) How does the poet establish the supremacy of Christ over the kestrel?

.....

.....

.....

.....

[Kestrel is a majestic bird. In stasis and movement, it shows its majesty and command. The creature is magnificent indeed. But the beauty of the creator is a million times told lovelier. The kestrel is a bird of prey, a raptor, hence dangerous. In its bright plumage, in its command of the situation, in its haughty demeanour, it wins the hearts of the onlookers, who aspire to be like it. But the beauty of Christ is multi-fold, when compared to the kestrel. Christ, who died on the cross, comes across as more dangerous and lovelier through his sacrifice for the whole of mankind. His bravery is one of a kind. Not the physical bravery of the bird, but spiritual bravery, which wins over the soul. If the bird is like a cavalier soldier, fighting the wind, Christ is the chevalier of human hearts.]

- 3) Do you think that the sonnet form has helped Hopkins to convey his ideas better?

.....

.....

.....

.....

[The sonnet form of the poem is the perfect vehicle for thoughts. The poet is able to convey ideas and paint word pictures in a condensed manner. The structural virtuosity of the Petrarchan mode with its octave and the sestet, works perfectly to convey the images of the Windhover and Christ. The movement from the kestrel to Christ is beautifully executed, with the Volta coming in the sestet. The tercets in the sestet too balance the image of Christ with the two metaphorical images revelatory of his sacrifice.]

19.5.4 Comments

- The 'I' mentioned in the poem can be the poet himself, or the persona of the poet.
- The poem is mimetic and visual. The poet tries to capture the movement of the falcon through a series of verbal shots – montages*.
- The word 'caught' is extremely significant. The poet does not use tame words like 'saw' or 'beheld'. 'Caught' is in keeping with the image of falcon, which catches the prey. It is an epiphanic moment, when the inscape of the bird is 'caught' in the mind of the writer, with all its permutations, in a split second.

* Montage is a cinematic term; it is a device in editing, which combines different shots to create a scene.

- The first line is an **enjambment** – a run on line – which spills over from the first to the second.
- The soundscapes of Hopkins’ poem help us to ‘catch’ the inscape of the bird.
- Notice the alliterative repetition of /d/ sounds in the second line, they sound like a drum roll, accompanying the entry of a king, in this case, the dauphin.
- Also notice the repetition of sibilants in the line: “off forth on swing /As a skate’s heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend”. Can you hear the sound of the skates cutting through the ice, as it glides over it?
- The bird by rebuffing the wind achieves or masters something in his successful negotiation. It is this act that fascinates the poet, whose heart comes out of hiding. But stepping out of one’s ego and inhabiting another creature, as the poet does here, grants one sacramental joy of being alive.
- Hopkins uses synaesthetic images. The **visual**, **auditory** and **tactile** images are very effectively evoked. We can **see**, **hear**, and **touch** very vividly and clearly.
- The poem captures in detail, words and images of **medieval chivalric culture**: minion, dauphin, dappled, falcon, wimple, chevalier and sillion.
- Wimple – folded cloth – is part of a nun’s headdress, which presses against her temples and keeps her hair back. In other words, the bird is exulting not only in the freedom of the air, but also in the resistance or the friction offered by it.
- In the line: “Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume”, in order to make sense, you have to connect ‘brute beauty’ to ‘plume’ [the reddish-brown plumage of kestrel which conveys its brute beauty; ‘valour’ to ‘air’ [air of bravery] and ‘act’ to ‘pride’[proud act].
- The sonnet is in the Petrarchan mode. Though the sprung rhythm and enjambments used make it appear rather alien to us. The octave presents the bird’s flight. The sestet is an open avowal of the greater majesty of Christ, the chevalier.
- The rhyme scheme is strange and unusual – the octave has one only one rhyme – ‘A’ – since each line ends in ‘-ing’. Though these are not gerund in all the instances [as in ‘king-’, thing etc], the stanza gives us a feeling of continued action. The sestet which consists of two tercets rhymes ‘BCB-CBC’, interlocking the latter idea with the previous one.
- The Volta [turn] of the poem comes with the word “Buckle”.
- The poem is thematically, structurally and syntactically very challenging to the reader. But rewarding too.

Self-check Exercise IV

- 1) Identify the words taken from medieval chivalric culture used in the poem.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) What are the terms used by Hopkins to describe the Windhover?

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3) Which are the two images used at the end of the poem, to denote self-effacement and sacrifice?

.....

.....

.....

.....

19.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have been introduced to the life of Gerard Manley Hopkins, and examined two poems written by him. Both the poems are sonnets, but the first one is a curtal sonnet, while the second is written in the Petrarchan mode. We hope that you will be able to distinguish the features of both. You have also learnt about Hopkins' innovation in prosody, the sprung rhythm. It would be good to analyse the advantages of using sprung rhythm instead of conventional English meters like the iambic. You have also come into touch with Hopkins' concept of Inscape, which we are sure, will make you look at the objects around in a different light, which is the ultimate goal of learning literature: it widens the horizons of the mind.

We also hope that reading these poems has whetted your curiosity and appetite for more of Hopkins' poems. You will find them in anthologies or collections of poems or you can browse the net to read them as they are all available online.

19.7 ANSWERS TO SELF CHECK EXERCISES

Self-check Exercise I

- 1) The Escorial; at the age of ten.
- 2) Cardinal Newman, one of the major figures of the Oxford movement or the Tractarianism, which resulted in the rise of Anglo-Catholicism; *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*
- 3) The sinking of the ship Deutschland, which resulted in the martyrdom Five Franciscan Nuns, who sacrificed their lives to save others; and the urging of Hopkins' superior to write a poem to commemorate the event.

Self-check Exercise II

- 1) See the Note on Sprung rhythm; second Para, third sentence.
- 2) Alliteration: **kingfishers catch** [/k/ sound repeated]
dragonflies draw
rim in roundy wells
Assonance: dragonflies draw; tumbled over rim in roundy...; stones ring;
- 3) Duns Scotus; 'Haecceitas' or thisness

Self-check Exercise III

- 1) Read Stanza 1 of the poem; Check paragraph 2 in the Analysis of the poem
- 2) Fathers-forth
- 3) Any of the examples in the last paragraph of the Analysis.

Self-check Exercise IV

- 1) Minion, dauphin, falcon, wimpling, chevalier, sillion
- 2) Morning's minion, kingdom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn falcon
- 3) The ploughshare which shines due to friction when it cuts deep into the sillion; the ash-covered ember that glows gold-vermilion when it falls and breaks.

UNIT 20 THOMAS HARDY AND D.H. LAWRENCE

Structure

- 20.0 Objectives
- 20.1 Introduction
- 20.2 Historical Background
- 20.3 THOMAS HARDY
- 20.4 To An Unborn Pauper Child (p.19)
 - 20.4.1 Introduction
 - 20.4.2 The Text
 - 20.4.3 An Analysis of the Poem
- 20.5 Great Things 1964 (p. 19)
 - 20.5.1 Introduction
 - 20.5.2 The Text
 - 20.5.3 Discussion
 - 20.5.4 Comments
- 20.6 D.H. LAWRENCE
- 20.7 Bavarian Gentians (p. 19)
 - 20.7.1 Introduction
 - 20.7.2 The Text
 - 20.7.3 Analysis
- 20.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 20.9 Answers to Self-Check Exercises

20.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Talk about Hardy the poet, his life and work.
- Appreciate his poems 'To an Unborn Pauper Child' and 'Great Things'
- Understand and analyse D.H. Lawrence, the poet.
- Analyse the thematic as well as formal aspects of 'Bavarian Gentians'

20.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence, two major writers at the turn of the twentieth century. They were novelists of great repute, but their contributions to the world of poetry are equally seminal and individual. But unfortunately, their reputation as poets was subsumed within their status as novelists. Hardy had made his presence felt by the end of the Victorian era, while D. H. Lawrence who was his younger contemporary started writing at the beginning of the twentieth century. Both wrote novels which created great controversies because they lived in an age that was still in the grip of rigid Victorian moral attitudes. Both wrote poems which are noted for their distinctive voice and idiosyncratic treatment of subjects.

We will be reading about the two poets in detail in the separate introductions to each. Though there is a gap of forty five years between them, we are struck by certain similarities in their disposition and outlook. Both Hardy and Lawrence struggled against Victorian hypocrisy and prudery*. Both had to face censorship for their frank treatment of sex and immorality, though in varying degrees. Both immortalized the counties they came from, in their novels: Hardy made the county of Dorset and nearby lands famous as Wessex, while Lawrence wrote about the Mining town of Eastwood in Nottinghamshire in his novels. Lawrence was greatly influenced by Hardy, and published a study on him. Both died in the third decade of the twentieth century. Hardy in 1928 and Lawrence in 1930 – though Hardy was eighty seven years old and Lawrence just forty four.

In this unit, we will acquaint you with two poems of Thomas Hardy: ‘To an Unborn Pauper child’ and ‘Great Things’. You will notice how Hardy’s philosophies of fatalism and pessimism are deeply mirrored in the first. The second, a breezy little poem – rather uncharacteristic – offers a nice balance, and speaks about the small things that make the poet happy. The poem by D. H. Lawrence that you will read in this unit is ‘Bavarian Gentians’ – a sombre poem, full of beautiful and dense images and mythological allusions. By the end of the unit, you will be able to read, critically assess and appreciate these poems.

To read and understand Hardy and Lawrence one needs to know about the backgrounds from which they hailed. As writers who were influenced by the *zeitgeist* (the spirit of the times), it is necessary for us to delve into the Victorian age and the early twentieth century, the periods spanning their lifetimes. The next section will offer you an insightful peek into the historical background of the age in which these writers lived – glancing at the political, social and ideological upheavals of the times.

Different strategies have been adopted in examining the poems which have been selected for detailed study. The analysis provided along with the poems will serve as a guide to help you analyse poems on your own during examination. They will also help you comprehend the text better and learn to appreciate Hardy’s and Lawrence’s poetry for their metrical patterns and beauty of images. Read through the unit section by section, pause till you digest what you have read, and do the exercises as you read. Hope you enjoy your journey of discovering the poetic side of these literary giants.

20.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Now get ready for a swift tour of the Victorian age and the early Twentieth century. Victorian age, the period signifying the reign of Queen Victoria from her accession in 1837 to her death in 1901, was an age of contradictions. On the one hand, it was a period of incredible economic expansion and rapid change. Britain had become the mistress of sea and land, and its capital London had become the first urban capital of the world, the first metropolis. An urban economy based on manufacturing, international trade and financial institutions boomed, and the lay

* Victorian hypocrisy and prudery: Pretention of having higher moral standards and excessive, affected modesty, which is considered to be a characteristic of Victorian age.

of land changed with a rapidly enlarging city. Transport and communication facilities improved tremendously and distances shrank. England had become the workshop of the world, the world's banker as well as the world's policeman. But on the other hand, it was also an age of paradoxes and uncertainties. The success of the nation reached its pinnacle and then began to wane. By the end of the 19th century, the euphoria, optimism and positivism of the earlier decades started dwindling to be replaced by doubts, scepticism and even pessimism. The gulf between the haves and the have-nots had widened. The traditional villages and towns observed a depletion of population as London and other industrial cities burst at the seams with people gathering there from all over. The phenomenon resulted in the emergence of a new suburbia, with slums and rookeries*. Crime rate accelerated. A series of social reforms were initiated trying to address the problems and issues.

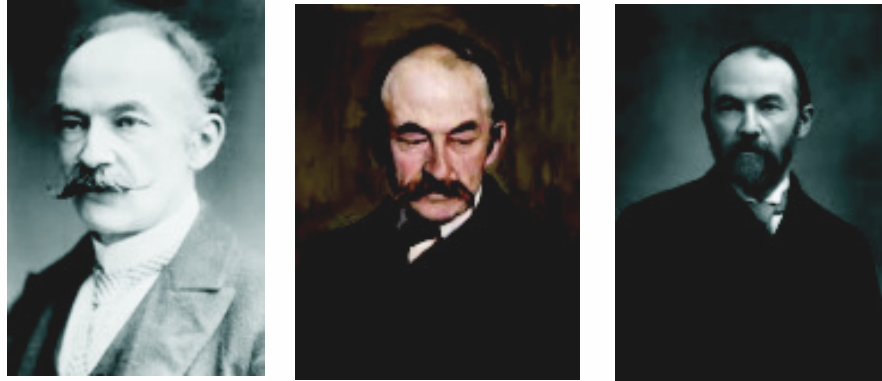
Ideologically too Victorian age sent contradictory signals. While religious and philanthropic movements gathered momentum, the very basis of belief systems crumbled. The concept of creation was questioned following the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. While family values were lauded and practiced, Queen Victoria herself towering as the emblem of customary domestic values, a bohemian life style started making its presence felt towards the end of the 19th century. These changes are apparent when we survey the literature of the times. Browning, one of the preeminent poets of the Victorian era had deemed that "God's in his Heaven/All's right with the world!" at the heyday of the Victorian period; but pangs of doubt trouble a pessimistic Matthew Arnold three decades later, who sees the present world as "a darkling plain /Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, / Where ignorant armies clash by night." World was slowly turning rudderless, with doubt and despair climaxing in the literature of the times.

This is the world inhabited by Hardy. By the turn of the century, decadence had set in. Psychology was recognised as a science after the publication of Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretations of Dreams* in 1901. Old moral values which had signified the Victorian era eroded as they were held up to question. Victorian age gave place to the Georgian era, an age that witnessed the rapid degeneration of the British Empire after the Boer War in Africa and the emergence of new predicaments which had worldwide repercussions. Russian revolution had taken place and England witnessed the rapid rise of a labour class into power. In the second decade of the century, the World War I erupted when Hardy was in his seventies and Lawrence at the peak of his career. Modernism had dawned and existential philosophies had gained ground in the philosophical realm. The world had truly passed into the chaotic ethos of the twentieth century.

* Rookeries: overcrowded slums of London were known by this name in the 18th and 19th centuries and were the haunt of criminals and prostitutes. (As they were living like crows or rooks, nesting together and filling the surroundings with their hoarse cries)

20.3 THOMAS HARDY

[b. 1840 Upper Bockhampton, Dorset - d.1928 Max Gate, England]



Thomas Hardy was born on 2 June, 1840 in the village of Higher Bockhampton in the county of Dorset, one of the poorest and backward rural counties of England remaining unchanged for centuries. His father, also named Thomas, was a stonemason, builder and a fiddler who used to play in the local parish choir. His mother Jemima was the true guiding star of his life, who though, was a housemaid and a cook before her marriage, was an avid reader of literary books. Hardy inherited his musicality from his father and his love for books from his mother. It is said that Hardy loved solitude and drew his impulses from the natural world around him. He received his schooling first from National school in Bockhampton and later at Mr. Last's Academy in Dorchester, a non-conformist school. Though he showed great academic potential, his formal education came to an end at the age of 16, when he was apprenticed to a local architect, John Hicks.

During his tenure there he came across the Dorchester poet William Barnes who influenced him to write nature poems and Horace Moule, a scholar who encouraged him to read Greek tragedies and contemporary English literature. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* had a profound influence on him. In 1862 Hardy moved to London and worked as an assistant architect to Arthur Blomfield who restored and designed churches. He won prizes from the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Architectural Association. Hardy was appointed to oversee the disinterment of graves in the churchyard of St. Pancras Old Church. This event had a great influence on him and he later wrote his 'grave' poems based on this experience. Hardy was drawn into the cultural life of London. He visited museums, galleries, attended plays and operas. He read avidly and started writing poetry. Though the first poems were rejected by publishers, one finally published in the Chambers Journal won him a prize. His poems highlighted his concerns which he had gleaned from reading and observation, and foreshadowed the themes of his later prose fiction. Disillusioned with traditional Christianity, Hardy became more and more aware of human misery and loneliness. His fatalism stemmed from the hard realisation of an uncaring universe and the role of chance in human life.

Disenchanted by London, Hardy returned to his native Bockhampton in 1867, worked for a while as an architect and then gave up his job to pursue a full time career as a writer. His first novel *The Poor Man and the Lady* was not published, and the next one *Desperate Remedies* was published anonymously. *Under the*

Greenwood Tree, which followed, was favourably received, as was *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. *Far From the Madding Crowd* gained public notice and brought him financial success which was repeated by *The Return of the Native*.

Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence

In the meanwhile, Hardy who had experienced several rejections from women, fell in love with Emma Lavinia Gifford, a Cornish lady, and married her. It is believed that *A Pair of Blue Eyes* was inspired largely by their courtship. They settled at Max Gate, a large Mid-Victorian villa, which Hardy had designed himself, which he considered his ‘country retreat’ – and this became his permanent abode (*see image*).



Max Gate



Hardy's Map of Wessex



A view of Dorset

Though the couple had a happy and contented life, and shared several passions like travelling and cycling, as years passed, Emma grew estranged from her husband mainly due to the content of his fictional writings and his romantic attachments to artistic young ladies. Lack of offspring might have also be a reason for this. Though *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Woodlanders* and other novels had gathered popular as well as critical acclaim, Hardy's last and greatest fictional works *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) shocked, dismayed and outraged the Victorian public with their subject matter. Considered too pessimistic, they accused Hardy of being too preoccupied with sex. Decried as ‘Jude the Obscene’ the hue and cry created by his last novel disturbed Hardy and made him give up writing novels altogether and return to his first love, poetry. Hardy considered poetry to be, “the heart of literature”. In 1898 he published the *Wessex Poems*.



WESSEX COUNTRY



Wessex is Hardy's fictional universe. (See pictures). Strongly identifying himself and his work with Dorset, Hardy borrowed the name of the old Anglo-Saxon kingdom, coined the names of villages and towns to represent actual places and even provided a map of the area (see images above). His novels were called *Wessex novels* and turning to poetry, he continued in the same vein. He was fascinated with other features of southern England especially the Stonehenge, the ancient druid rocks (see below), which interest is reflected in his poems like 'The Shadow of the Stone'.



Hardy's poetry wears a pessimistic, fatalistic and existential outlook evoking the dark, rugged landscape of Dorset. It laments the bleakness of human condition. He is one who "holds that if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst", as he states in his poem '*In Tenebris II*'. Even the term '*In Tenebris*', meaning 'in the darkness', which forms the title of a series of lyrics, highlights the bleak, doomstruck human world. His poems are haunted by a pervasive sense of the forlorn. There are instances in which Hardy's tragic view of life makes him refer to humans as 'Time's Laughingstocks', and point out to 'Life's Little Ironies'. Among Hardy's poems we will be able to identify a number of recurring themes and images. These overarching themes can be divided into three central categories of ghosts, grave and afterlife; God, nature and rural life; passage of time; love and war. His love poems are not traditional romantic love poems – but starker and darker poems of loss, ghosts and transience.

Hardy was inspired by the great panorama of Napoleonic Wars and wrote an epic drama in blank verse titled *The Dynasts*, published in three parts over five years. It presents Hardy's idea of "evolutionary meliorism", a belief in the power of humankind and a hope in the eventual amendment of the world through human actions. He also wrote lyric poetry which is considered to be his best. He forged a modern and original style combining colloquial diction and rough-hewn rhythms which nevertheless closely followed conventional techniques, paying attention to the musical aspects of language. His greatest poems were written after the sudden death of his wife Emma in 1912. They are considered to be the "finest and strangest celebrations of the dead in English poetry", according to the Hardy biographer Claire Tomalin. Shortly after Emma's death, Hardy married Florence

Dugdale, his secretary, who was forty years his junior. But he remained remorseful of Emma's death.

By this time, Hardy's literary authority was acknowledged beyond dispute. A very prolific writer, he has written 14 novels, two plays, more than 40 short stories and over 900 poems. The major collections of his poems include: *Wessex Poems*, *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901), *Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses* (1909), *Moments of Vision* (1917), *Satires of Circumstance* (1914), *Collected Poems* (1919) etc. The University of Aberdeen awarded him an honorary degree and in 1910, King George V conferred the Order of Merit on him. In 1912, the Royal Society of Literature awarded him a gold medal. Hardy was visited by several writers at Max Gate and he exercised tremendous influence on writers like James Barrie, Rudyard Kipling, G B Shaw, Virginia Woolf and many others. During the World War I he took active part in campaigns, visiting military hospitals and POW (Prisoner/s of War) camps. His poems on war, with their visceral imagery influenced the War poets like Siegfried Sassoon. After his 87th birthday, Hardy grew weaker and he became ill with pleurisy. He died on 11 January, 1928 and had two simultaneous funerals. His body was cremated and ashes deposited in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, while his heart was buried alongside Emma in Stinsford Churchyard in Dorchester.

Did you find Hardy's life interesting? If you wish to know more about this fascinating man, his life and times and his novels and poetry, you can either refer to the Encyclopaedia or browse the net. The following sites may be helpful: *The Thomas Hardy Website* and the *Victorian Web*. Now try to answer these questions in Exercise I and check how well you have grasped the biographical details.

Self-check Exercise I

Answer the following questions in the space provided. Check your answers with the answer key provided in (20.9) after doing the exercise.

- 1) What was Thomas Hardy's profession before he became a full time writer? What stands as a major testimony to that profession?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 2) What is the imaginary fictional world created by Hardy? What is it named after?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3) Which were the works that brought notoriety to Hardy?
.....
.....
.....
.....

4) Mention two volumes of poetry written by Thomas Hardy.
.....
.....
.....
.....

5) What is the name of the epic drama written by Hardy? What is it based on?
.....
.....
.....
.....

6) What is the major philosophical tone of Hardy's poems?
.....
.....
.....
.....

20.4 TO AN UNBORN PAUPER CHILD

20.4.1 Introduction

The poem 'To an Unborn Pauper Child' is taken from the collection, *Poems of the Past and the Present: Poems of Pilgrimage*, published in 1901. In the preface to the collection Hardy noted: "the road to a true philosophy of life seems to lie in humbly recording diverse readings of its phenomenon as they are forced upon us by chance and change." It is believed that the poem was inspired by an incident that occurred in the Dorchester Magistrate's Court, which he chanced upon. Hardy read of a pauper woman in the records of the court of petty sessions which said that "she must go to the Union-house to have her baby", and this occasioned the poem.

Hardy's poems convincingly convey the sadness of life and mirror the pathos encapsulated in Virgil's dictum: *Sunt lacrimae rerum* – "There are tears in things". There is nothing hopeful about earthly life. In this poem, Hardy adopts an anti-natal stance. He stands with the Greek dramatist Sophocles who said in *Oedipus at Colonus*, that, "Not to be born is, beyond all estimation, best; but when a man has seen the light of day, this is next best by far, that with utmost

speed he should go back from where he came.” Because what is life but “*Envy, factions, strife, battles, and murders*”. And in the end comes the pitiful lot of the old: “*blamed, weak, unsociable, friendless, wherein dwells every misery among miseries.*” “To an Unborn Pauper Child” is a dark poem which is meant to be a warning to the yet-to-be born child. It bids the child to stop breathing while still in its mother’s womb and bid good bye to the world. The world is a dark, dreary one full of ‘travails and teens’ - difficulties and sorrows, with nothing alleviating about it. So it is better to sleep the eternal sleep.

There are several other pieces on the birth of young children in English poetry. Hardy’s poem is comparable to William Blake’s ‘Infant Sorrow’ in which the infant says: “Into the dangerous world I leapt”, or Louis MacNeice’s ‘Prayer before Birth’. Yet there are other poems in which we may detect a more optimistic outlook, as in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s ‘Frost at Midnight’ and W.B. Yeats’ ‘A Prayer for My Daughter’.

Now let’s read the poem and get a hang of the cadences. Written in the traditional rhythmic mode, the poem consists of six stanzas of six lines each, rhyming aabbcc. The first, the second and the fifth lines in each stanza are cast in iambic tetrameter; the third and the fourth in iambic dimeter and the sixth, which is the last line, is fashioned in iambic pentameter, which gives the effect of a grand statement. Iambic is a traditional meter in English language composed of two syllables of which the first syllable unstressed or unaccented and the second one stressed or accented. The last three lines of the first stanza have been scanned for you, which would give you an idea about the three different feet or meter used here. Please note that the end of each foot or meter is indicated with a slash (/) mark. The stressed syllable is highlighted and underlined while the unstressed is indicated in ordinary font.

*The **Doom** /sters **heap*** (2) – Iambic dimeter

***Travails** / and **teens** / **around** / us **here**,* (4) – Iambic tetrameter

*And **Time** /-Wraiths **turn** /our **song** / **singsings** / to **fear**.* (5) – Iambic pentameter

If you read the poem aloud, you will get feel of the meter as it jolts over the evenly bumpy path of iambic. Use the glossary given beneath the text to understand unfamiliar words.

20.4. 2 The Text

To an Unborn Pauper Child

Breathe not, hid Heart: cease silently,
And though thy birth-hour beckons thee,
Sleep the long sleep:
The Doomsters heap
Travails and teens around us here,
And Time-Wraiths turn our songsings to fear.

Hark, how the peoples surge and sigh,
And laughters fail, and greetings die;
Hopes dwindle; yea,
Faiths waste away,
Affections and enthusiasms numb:
Thou canst not mend these things if thou dost come.

Had I the ear of wombed souls
Ere their terrestrial chart unrolls,
And thou wert free
To cease, or be,
Then would I tell thee all I know,
And put it to thee: Wilt thou take Life so?

Vain vow! No hint of mine may hence
To theeward fly: to thy locked sense
Explain none can
Life's pending plan:
Thou wilt thy ignorant entry make
Though skies spout fire and blood and nations quake.

Fain would I, dear, find some shut plot
Of earth's wide wold for thee, where not
One tear, one qualm,
Should break the calm.
But I am weak as thou and bare;
No man can change the common lot to rare.

Must come and bide. And such are we —
Unreasoning, sanguine, visionary —
That I can hope
Health, love, friends, scope
In full for thee; can dream thou'lt find
Joys seldom yet attained by humankind!

Glossary

Doomsters	: fate; deities presiding over fate
Travails	: oppressive labour
Teens	: woes, pains, inflicted harms
Wraiths	: spectre of the dead
Hark	: Listen! (interjection)
Ere	: Before
Terrestrial	: relating to the earth and its inhabitants



Terrestrial chart	:	the life span on earth
Vain	:	useless
Pending	:	not yet settled or decided
Fain	:	happily, gladly
Wold	:	a tract or large area of open land
Qualm	:	an uneasy feeling about the rightness of a chosen course
Lot	:	destiny, fate
Bide	:	wait, tarry
Sanguine	:	cheerfully confident, optimistic
Visionary	:	characterized by foresight
Scope	:	possibilities

20.4. 3 An Analysis of the Poem

The poem 'To an Unborn Pauper Child' begins with a shocking injunction. The poet bids the pauper child in his mother's womb not to breathe, but to cease or die silently. To sleep the eternal sleep though its hour of birth is approaching near. The poet warns the child that doomsters or deities of fate are heaping hard times of pain and woe on human life. The spectres of time are turning the spontaneously happy moments (songsingings) to fearful ones. He asks the child to listen to the sighs of countless people. In this world, laughter fails, greetings die in the throat. Hope diminishes; faiths lose their impact and cease to be. Affections freeze and enthusiasms abate. By being born on earth, the child cannot redress these pitiful things.

Hardy says that if he had the attention of the babies in the womb before their time on earth started, and if they in turn had the choice to decide whether they should live or die, he would describe to them the conditions of the earth and ask whether they were willing to be born under these circumstances. But this is a futile desire, as his warning would never reach the baby that is locked away in its mother's womb. None would be able to describe the plan that life has in store for them. And so the baby will be born ignorant of what awaits it in this world, even though earth shattering things are occurring here.

The poet says that he would gladly find some enclosed plot in the wide expanse of the earth, where the child would remain without a tear or disquietude. But the poet admits his incapacity to do this, as he is as weak as the baby. He cannot change the common destiny to a rare one. So, since he is unable to change the fate of the baby or to give warning of what is in store for it, he asks the child to come and dwell on the earth. And because humans are by nature happily optimistic, visionary and not given to reason, he can hope and wish that the baby, once it is born, will live in love, good health, friendship and possibilities galore. He dreams that the child will attain joys which are rarely attained by mankind.

Hardy's fatalism and pessimism is indisputably evident in the poem. The poet begins in utmost despair and speaks in a doom-filled voice that nothing is pleasant or promising for the yet-to-be-born child. But in the last stanza there is resignation in his tone and the poem ends by expressing a fervent prayer that things may be better for the child. Time is perceived as an enemy of man in

Hardy’s writings. Curious notions of Fate as Doomsters and of Time as Wraiths which haunt, lend it a note of ominous determinism. Time erodes all such natural positive values as “laughter”, “hopes”, “faiths”, “affections” and “enthusiasms”. While pitted against these positive nouns stand negative verbs: “sigh”, “fail”, “die”, “dwindle”, “waste” and “numb”, which highlight the withering process. Though the poem addresses the unborn ‘pauper’ child specifically, the terrible things he attributes to the world may be applicable to any child born into the world, even though it may be said that without the support systems needed to exist on earth, the lot of a pauper child may be all the more pitiable. Hardy has witnessed several disruptive events in the world, and had seen the various modes of fighting and the aftermath of World War I – and the line “Though skies spout fire and blood and nations quake” might be a reference to the aerial warfare and blitzkrieg* during the World War.

The poem is addressed to the child. It is an ‘apostrophe’: a rhetorical device in the form of an address to someone not present. Many of the stanzas begin with injunctions and interjections: “Breathe not, hid Heart: cease silently”, “Hark!” “Vain vow!” “Must come and bide”. Written in traditional meter and stanzaic pattern, the poem effectively makes use of alliterations such as, “hid Heart”, “cease silently”, “birth-hour beckons”, “Travails and teens” “surge and sigh”, “pending plan”, “wide wold” etc. Personification of Time as Time-wraiths conveys the vagaries of time as well as the tormenting and obsessive nature of the phenomena on human psyche. Provincialisms and archaisms such as ‘teens’, ‘wold’ and ‘fain’ which mean ‘harms’ ‘open land’ and ‘gladly’ respectively lend quaintness of the old world to the poem. There are strange coinages like ‘theeward’, which sound unfamiliar and rather awkward. The rhythm of the iambic meter imparts a rhythmic tone to the poem, similar to the rocking of a cradle. For Hardy, poetry was “emotion put into measure” where “the emotion must come by nature”, but measure must be “acquired by art”. ‘To an Unborn Pauper Child’ is a perfect synthesis of emotion and measure; a splendid blend of nature and art.

Self-check Exercise II

1) What is Hardy’s injunction to the unborn pauper child in the first stanza.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2) What condition of the world makes it an undesirable place to be born?

.....
.....
.....
.....

* German: Lightning War

3) What is the “vow” that Hardy is unable to fulfil?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4) What are the tones conveyed in the poem?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5) What is the wish that the poet has for the about-to-be-born child?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

20.5 GREAT THINGS (1964)

20.5.1 Introduction

This poem is different from the previous one, and is one of Hardy’s sunnier, springier and simpler poems. Highly nostalgic, the poem speaks about Hardy’s self-indulgent love for things like cider, dance and love, which he labels as “great things”. The poem ‘Great Things’ was included in the collection, *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses*, published in 1917. The theme of *Moments of Vision*, states Hardy, was to “mortify the human sense of self-importance by showing or suggesting, that human beings are of no matter or appreciable value in this nonchalant universe.” But as is often the case, Hardy’s poems within a collection, though often arranged under headings, may divert from their stated purpose.

Here we may see the young Hardy, footloose and fancy-free, or one who is very much in love with the merry aspects of life. He is one who is not torn apart or depressed by the “travails and teens” of life, but flinging into its mirth and gaiety with wholehearted gusto. A very simple poem, it itemizes and states what the

things he consider ‘Great’ are! It gives us a glimpse of Hardy country with its references to Weymouth and Ridgeway. We encounter the same sort of simplicity and ebullience that we find in the Scotch poet Robert Burns’ poems like “Auld Lang Syne”. Hardy was a lover of Omar Khayyam and the last book that was read to him just before his death was Edward Fitzgerald’s English translation of it. The hedonistic love that one finds in *Rubaiyat* comprising wine, women, verse and music is easily observable in ‘Great things’:

“A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!” (*Rubaiyat*)

The poem consists of four stanzas of eight lines each. The refrain at the end of each stanza is a repetition of the opening statement of each, a slight difference being made by appending ‘O’ in front of the refrain. But the last stanza is an exception, where the stanza begins in a question mode and ends with an emphatic ascertainment of the same. So we can state that the poet has made use of incremental repetition, which is considered to be one of the features of the ballad stanza. The first and fifth lines rhyme (e.g.: thing – summoning; things – flings) as do every second alternate lines in each stanza, (e.g.: me – thirstily – hostelry – me; me – silently – tree – me) lending it a euphonic congruence and cohesion. There are a couple of provincialisms that Hardy uses in the poem. Make a note of them.

Now read the poem, preferably aloud to get a feel of the sounds and the jiggy, toe-tapping rhythm. Read it again with the use of the glossary to understand the meanings and allusions.

20.5.2 The Text



Cider/Cyder



Dance

Great Things

Sweet cyder is a great thing,
A great thing to me,
Spinning down to Weymouth town
By Ridgway thirstily,
And maid and mistress summoning
Who tend the hostelry:
O cyder is a great thing,
A great thing to me!

The dance it is a great thing,
A great thing to me,
With candles lit and partners fit
For night-long revelry;
And going home when day-dawning
Peeps pale upon the lea:
O dancing is a great thing,
A great thing to me!

Love is, yea, a great thing,
A great thing to me,
When, having drawn across the lawn
In darkness silently,
A figure flits like one a-wing
Out from the nearest tree:
O love is, yes, a great thing,
A great thing to me!

Will these be always great things,
Great things to me? . . .
Let it befall that One will call,
“Soul, I have need of thee”:
What then? Joy-jaunts, impassioned flings,
Love, and its ecstasy,
Will always have been great things,
Great things to me!

Glossary

Cyder	:	or cider drink taken from apple
Weymouth	:	town in Dorset, England
Hostelry	:	an inn, pub or a hotel
Revelry	:	merrymaking; lively and noisy festivities
Lea	:	an open area of grassy or arable land
One	:	God, considered as the One.
Jaunts	:	a short excursion or journey made for pleasure
Impassioned	:	emotional, exciting
Flings	:	unrestrained pursuit of one’s emotions or desires



Weymouth



Ridgeway



Hostelry

20.5.3 Discussion

Now that you have read the poem carefully, try to answer the following questions, so that we can discuss the poem.

- 1) Why does the poet consider 'sweet cyder' a great thing?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) What are the elements of dance that makes the poet like it?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3) What are the romantic components of love that the poet identifies which makes it precious and great?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 4) What philosophy of life do you perceive in the final stanza of the poem?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

[1. The poet states that sweet cider is a great thing to him. As he passes by Weymouth and Ridgeway feeling thirsty, the mistress and the maid who run the hostelry or the inn, invite him to drink cider. A thing that assuages thirst and is sweet and pleasurable in addition, is definitely a great thing.]

[2. The poet likes dance because it happens in an atmosphere of mirth, gaiety and romance. In candle-lit ambience, with the most suitable partner, one may settle

down to night-long celebrations, and return only when the day starts dawning. These pleasurable moments make dance a great thing to him.]

[3. Love is beautiful for assignations and stolen moments in the dark. The lover moves across the lawn in darkness waiting for his partner. The lady love flits to her lover silently like the silent bird flying out of the tree. These secret meetings and trysts add to the romance and mystery of love, and make it a great thing.]

[4. The poet speaks about the inevitable death which would summon all people, one day. So when the final call comes and we are forced to make an exit, all the things that one found joy in when alive, such as joyous travels, impassioned dances and ecstatic love, will become things of the past, but nevertheless would remain precious and great. This philosophy ties it up closely to hedonism, Epicureanism and the concept of ‘carpe diem’ or ‘seize the day’.]

20.5.4 Comments

- It is a ‘feel good’ poem, written in a gay mood. It has the structure, feel and rhythm of a folk song.
- There are elements of hedonism, which is the philosophy or doctrine that states that pleasure or happiness is the highest good.
- The poet describes the pleasure of drinking sweet cider, partaking in dance and being in love.
- These activities have been identified as the sweetest by people in several lands. Omar Khayyam has glorified it. ‘Halavadi’ poets in Hindi Literature have done it. The poets who advocate ‘carpe diem’ or the philosophy of ‘seize the day’ have considered it the highest good.
- The poet imparts a local flavour to the practice of imbibing cider. Drinking cider and ale is an activity that is indulged in by country people. They visit the local pub or hostelry to drink. They are tended by the mistress of the pub or by the bar-maid. These characters impart a local flavour to the poem. The poet roots this activity in the reality of Dorchester by making references to Weymouth and Ridgeway, two important places in Dorset and Hardy world. The verb ‘spinning down’ instils a spirit of jaunty happiness and conveys a mood of tipsiness.
- Dance is the art of passion. Dancing with a partner is one of the happy activities that the people of the west indulge in. Often dances are all night festivities, where one takes turns dancing with various partners. With fast and slow dances such as a tango or a waltz, mood sets in. Candle-lit dances are romantic affairs. The dancers return home only when the day starts breaking. Hardy very poetically describes the day break. Dawn is a party-wrecker who peeps in to spy on the dancers.
- Dorset and whereabouts are always a part of Hardy’s world. References to the local places and terrain sprinkle the poem. The reference to ‘lea’ or open tract of land draws our attention to one of the physical features of Dorset.
- Love is a great thing because of its secretive and romantic nature. Lovers have a clandestine assignation at night in the garden, which is one of the thrills of being in love. The lover waits for his beloved in the darkness and

sees the joyous sight of his lady love flitting across the lawn to where he stands with the swiftness of bird which swoops silently from the tree nearby. The poet beautifully invokes the impatience of waiting and the rapture of the meeting. He also conjures up the atmosphere of darkness and secretiveness in which the impatient lovers meet furtively.

- The final stanza brings the reader down to ground realities. Life on earth is transient and death will come inevitably. The poet imagines Death calling out to him when his time is up. But even then, the joy jaunts to drink at pubs, passionate dances and secret meetings of love will always have been great things to him.
- In the last stanza the poem slides from simple present to future perfect, emphasizing the perennial quality of his likes. Whatever happens, these things would always remain great things for him. He wishes that it may be so forever.
- The fifth line of each stanza ends in ‘-ing’, (‘summoning’, ‘dawning’, ‘a-wing’) lending it a sensation of continued activity, that his love for these things is something perennially lasting. In the last stanza this line ends in the plural – ‘flings’ – in tune with the summing up that is being done in that stanza.

Self-check Exercise III

a) Read the first stanza and indicate the rhyme scheme.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

b) What does the presence of the mistress and the maiden in the hostelry convey to the reader?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

c) Why does Hardy consider dance as a great thing?

.....
.....
.....
.....

d) What is so special about love that it makes it a great thing?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

e) What in essence does the final stanza of the poem say?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

20.6 D. H. LAWRENCE

(b. 11 September, 1885, Eastwood, Nottinghamshire – d. 2 March, 1930, Vence, France)



Introduction:

D.H. Lawrence was an iconoclastic writer who revolutionized fiction writing at the beginning of the 20th century with his frank portrayal of sensuality and earned notoriety while he lived. He was a versatile genius who was a novelist, poet, short-story writer, translator, essayist, critic and a painter. Born as the fourth child of Arthur John Lawrence, a barely literate miner and Lydia, a former teacher who passed on her sensitivity and intelligence to her children, Lawrence's formative years were spent in the mining town of Eastwood in Nottinghamshire. This land he called, "the country of my heart" and formed the background of much of his writings. The tensions latent in his family life, especially between his crude father and his sensitive and educated mother, informed his works. He attended the Beauvale Board School and won a scholarship to Nottingham High School.

He worked as a junior clerk in a factory for a few months, but left it after he contracted pneumonia. His friendship with Jessie Chambers burgeoned at this time, as both of them shared a love for books. He also started writing poems and short stories during this period. In 1907 he won a prize in the short story competition in the Nottingham Guardian, the earliest recognition of his talents. In 1908 he received a teaching certificate from the University College, Nottingham.

He left for London to teach at Davidson Road School, Croydon. His talent as a writer was recognized by Ford Madox Ford and he was commissioned to write a story for *The English Review*, titled the *Odour of Chrysanthemums*. In 1910 Lawrence's mother, with whom he had a very close relationship, died of cancer, leaving him devastated. During this time, his first novel *The White Peacock* was completed, and soon he started working on his celebrated novel, *Sons and Lovers*, which was closely autobiographical in nature. He had broken off his engagement to his childhood friend Louie Burrows in the meanwhile, and decided to become a full time writer.

Lawrence met Frieda Weekley, the wife of his modern languages professor and the mother of three children, and promptly fell in love with her. Frieda was six years older than him and of German parentage. Their elopement created a furore. They first settled in Metz, where the political tensions during the First World War had Lawrence arrested as a British spy. He was released at the intervention of his father-in-law and they left for Italy across the Alps. During their stay in Italy, Lawrence completed *Sons and Lovers*.

The couple returned to England and Lawrence soon became friends with writers and critics including John Middleton Murray, Katherine Mansfield and the Welsh poet W.H. Davies. They kept on shuttling between the continent and the British Isles. In July 1914, they got married and settled in Zennor, Cornwall. But the local government considered the presence of a controversial writer and his German wife so near the coast to be a war time security threat and banished him from Cornwall. Lawrence was forced to leave Cornwall at three days' notice under the terms of DORA – Defence of the Realm Act. He lived in Derbyshire for a while, shifting from address to address, due to poverty. This wrote his celebrated short story *The White Peacock* while living there.

Lawrence wrote and completed *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. The former was suppressed after an investigation into its alleged obscenity. All throughout his life Lawrence had to face censorship. *The Rainbow* was published only in 1920, and is now considered one of the major English novels with great intellectual subtlety.

After the war, during which he had to suffer trauma at the hand of local authorities, Lawrence began his voluntary self exile – which he terms his 'savage pilgrimage'. He returned to Britain only twice and went travelling all over the world, bitten by wanderlust and writing extensively. His novel *Kangaroo* relates some of his experiences in Australia as well as his wartime experiences in Cornwall. In 1922, Lawrence settled in a utopian community at Kiowa Ranch, near Taos in New Mexico, where he wrote some of his noted critical articles on American Literature. When his health deteriorated, they were forced to leave New Mexico for Italy. Lawrence completed *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, his last major novel, which reinforced his notoriety as a writer of pornography. Lawrence

defended himself in two of his collections of satirical poems *Pansies* and *Nettles* and also in his tract on *Pornography and Obscenity*.

Lawrence was a great advocate of the bodily instinct. He believed that European civilisation gave too much emphasis to the intellect. In his famous ‘belief in the blood’ speech, Lawrence says: “My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. The intellect is only a bit and a bridle.” In a letter to Ernest Collings, Lawrence writes: “I conceive a man’s body as a kind of flame, like a candle flame, forever upright and yet flowing; and the intellect is just the light that is shed on to the things around.” He is concerned with the mystery of the flame forever flowing, which comes out of practically nowhere, and being itself, it lights up whatever there is around it.

In the final years of his life, Lawrence was exceptionally active, writing poems, essays, reviews as well as producing oil painting. His last important work was *Apocalypse*, a reflection on the Book of Revelation. He died due to complications of tuberculosis at the Villa Robermond in Vence, France.

Lawrence legacy is vast and varied. Though best known for his novels and short stories, he was also a prolific poet, writing about 800 poems. Though in the beginning, his style is Georgian with well-worn poetic tropes and archaic language, it changed dramatically after the World War I. Influenced by Walt Whitman, Lawrence adopted free verse as his medium, ridding himself of stereotyped movements. Lawrence believed in writing poetry that was “stark, immediate and true to the mysterious inner force which motivated it”. His best known collections are *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* and *Tortoises*, in which he deals with nature and natural subjects. ‘Snake’ is one of his most anthologized poems. He also wrote several love poems in the anthology, *Look, We have come through!* Many of his later poems are in the modernist tradition, though he is different from other modernists. His collections *Pansies* as well as *Nettles* contain bitter satires on the moral climate of England. The poems written during the final days were printed posthumously as *Last Poems and More Pansies*, and contain Lawrence’s most celebrated poems on death, ‘Bavarian Gentians’ and ‘The Ship of Death’.

Self-check Exercise IV

1) Which place does Lawrence call “the country of my heart”?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2) Which is the most autobiographical of Lawrence’s works?

.....
.....
.....
.....

3) Which novel of Lawrence was based on his experiences in Cornwall?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4) What does Lawrence refer to his self exile as?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5) Which poet influenced Lawrence to write in free verse?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

6) What does Lawrence speak about in his celebrated 'belief in the blood speech'?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

7) Which anthology contains love poems by Lawrence?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

8) Which poetic collections contain satires ridiculing the moral climate of England?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

9) Which are the famous poems on death written by Lawrence?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Now read the poem 'Bavarian Gentians' to get a taste of Lawrence's poetic style. Please make use of the glossary to understand the terms and the various mythological allusions in the poem. Read several times to grasp the poem wholly and make a special note of the inherent, informal music of the poem.

20.7 BAVARIAN GENTIANAS



20.7.1 Introduction

The poem 'Bavarian Gentians' is included in the collection *Last Poems and More Pansies*. For Lawrence, the phenomenal world of flora and fauna held a mystical aura, often teaching human beings the higher moral values of life. The subject, be it a bird, beast, plant or a flower, stands as a symbol of various facets of human nature. 'Bavarian Gentians' is a poem of death and eternal life. There are two versions of the poem with the texts differing in the latter half.

Written during his last days on earth, the poem stems from the interminable long-suffering wait of D.H. Lawrence as a tuberculosis patient for death to descend on him. The movement towards death is slow and sure. John Keats, another poet whose tragic life was cut off in its prime, bemoans the plight of the world in his poem 'Ode to the Nightingale': "Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies", referring to the sad end of his brother who was a tuberculosis patient. Thomas Mann at the end of his novel *The Magic Mountain* says to his protagonist about the ravages of TB and its almost inevitable excruciating end, "The wicked dance in which you are caught up will last many a sinful year yet, and we would not wager much that you will come out whole." Lawrence too must have felt that he was caught up in its wicked dance. And the only way was to wait to descend into death. Lawrence's poem seduces the reader with the slow dance with blue death using the symbols of the Bavarian gentians.

Bavarian gentians are a rarity. These dark blue flowers are outdoor plants often found in rocky terrain. By taking something decorative and incidental as a flower and turning it into a strong personal symbol which encompasses Lawrencian duality, is a remarkable poetic feat and a triumph of genius. Lawrence is famous for presenting different sides of a single image – he yokes contraries together as metaphysical poets do. Here the Bavarian Gentians symbolize Pluto's gloom of death and darkness and yet they are torches that shed bright blue light of life as a torch, showing the way to death.

"The poem itself is a complex web, a trance like dream that suggests both a gravitation toward death and a transcendence beyond it", says Ferris. The cadence of the poem is haunting in its ruminant mood, made possible by repetition of words and phrases, and its spiraling motion suggesting descent into death. Written in *vers libre* or free verse, with a liberal use of *enjambement* or run-on lines, and extended sentences with appended clauses, the poem captures in its stylistic peculiarities, the slow and inexorable movement towards death.

Now read the poem with the help of the glossary, and see whether you are able to capture the sadly entrancing mood of the poem.

20.7.2 The Text

Bavarian Gentians

Not every man has gentians in his house
in Soft September, at slow, Sad Michaelmas.

Bavarian gentians, big and dark, only dark
darkening the daytime torchlike with the smoking blueness of Pluto's
gloom,
ribbed and torchlike, with their blaze of darkness spread blue
down flattening into points, flattened under the sweep of white day
torch-flower of the blue-smoking darkness, Pluto's dark-blue daze,
black lamps from the halls of Dis, burning dark blue,
giving off darkness, blue darkness, as Demeter's pale lamps give off
light,
lead me then, lead me the way.

Reach me a gentian, give me a torch
let me guide myself with the blue, forked torch of this flower
down the darker and darker stairs, where blue is darkened on blueness.
even where Persephone goes, just now, from the frosted September
to the sightless realm where darkness was awake upon the dark
and Persephone herself is but a voice
or a darkness invisible enfolded in the deeper dark
of the arms Plutonic, and pierced with the passion of dense gloom,
among the splendor of torches of darkness, shedding darkness on the
lost bride and groom.

Glossary:

- Bavarian Gentian** : is a blue tubular flower. It is a typical, personal Lawrencean symbol. [See picture above]
- Michaelmas** : [pron. /mik^hlms/] is a Christian feast that celebrates the Archangel Michael, and is held on September 29th. It is associated with the coming of autumn.
- Pluto** : The Roman God of the underworld. In Greek mythology he is called Hades which is also a name for the underworld.

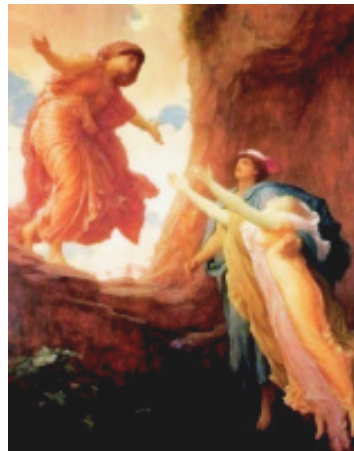
Hades was Zeus' brother. He abducted and forcibly wedded his niece Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, the Goddess of Harvest and Grain. Demeter was devastated and searched for her daughter high and low. But when Demeter finally succeeded in finding Persephone, it was found that she had eaten some pomegranate seeds, the food of the deceased. Hence she was forced to return to the underworld for one third of every year. It is believed that Demeter mourns her separation from her daughter during this time which is considered the reason for autumn and winter on earth. So, in the poem, September, which is the advent of autumnal season, is the time of the descent of Persephone into hell, into the arms of waiting death.

(Persephone is Proserpina in Roman and Demeter is Ceres; while Pluto is Hades in Greek – it is not clear why Lawrence has mixed up the Roman and Greek mythological names.)

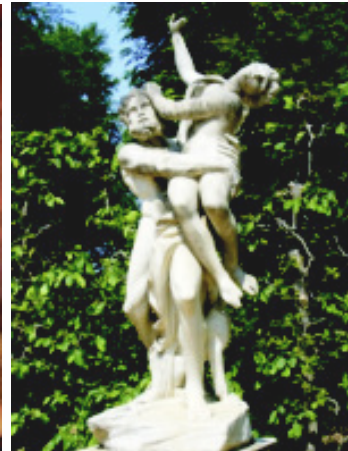
- Ribbed** : with something resembling a rib supporting or strengthening a part; ridged. In this case, the petals are ridged.



Demeter



Demeter- Persephone & Hermes



Pluto & Persephone

- Demeter** : Also called Ceres. Goddess of harvest and grain. Fertility Goddess.
- Dis** : Another name for Hades.
- Persephone** : Also called Kore, daughter of Demeter; Proserpina in Roman mythology, abducted by Pluto or Hades.

20.7.3 Analysis

‘Bavarian Gentians’ is a deep and dense poem invoking darkness of death, loaded with personal symbolism and interwoven with mythological allusions. Lawrence makes use of an extraordinary symbol – that of Bavarian Gentians; one which embodies and reinforces Lawrencian duality of death and life, darkness and light.

The poem begins with a casual yet unusual two line statement by the poet who comments upon the rarity of the flower. It is not found in every house at Michaelmas during ‘soft September’. Michaelmas which falls on the 29th of that month heralds the coming of the autumnal season. The poet defines Michaelmas as slow and sad, underscoring the relentless advent of chilly frost of September as determined as death making steady progress on him. His use of “frosted September” later in the poem testifies to the chill. The adjectives “soft”, “slow” and “sad” that the poet uses in the line, beautifully and poignantly convey the feeling of the silent, inexorable and dismal creeping of death.

Gentians are big and dark. Their blue darkness is brilliant like torchlight, evoking the blueness of Pluto’s darkness. Contrarily, their intense blue darkens the daytime during which they flower. Lawrence uses an oxymoron ‘blaze of darkness’ to convey this contradictory nature. His sharp powers of observation capture every single feature of the flower, from its ribbed, tubular torchlike shape, to its blue petals flattened to a point, making it blaze forth like a torch, spreading blue darkness, invoking the trance of Pluto’s underworld. He calls them black lamps from the halls of Dis, burning dark blue, which contrary to Demeter’s pale lamps of the day, give off only darkness. It is then that the poet openly states about the journey he himself is about to undertake into Pluto’s dark realms. All these minutely detailed descriptions from the beginning were leading to this imperative “Lead me then, lead me the way” making clear the function of the Bavarian Gentians for him. The task of the gentian is to show him the way, blazing forth as a torch, lighting his descent to the halls of Dis.

The poet clearly equates the gentian with a torch. He wants to be guided by this blue forked torch down the dark stairs, getting darker still as he descends. Just as Persephone goes to visit her bridegroom in the Hades at the advent of autumn, after spending her time on the earth during spring and summer seasons, he is ready to make his fated journey during the “first-frosted September”, which is a phrase that Lawrence uses in another version of the poem. He wants to go into those dismal and sightless realms where darkness is awake upon the dark. Like Persephone, the lost bride, who is nothing but a voice in the darkness, is enveloped and pierced with the passion of dense gloom by Pluto, Lord of the underworld and the king of darkness, lying awake and waiting to enfold her in his strong arms and celebrate their nuptials in the chamber lit with torches of darkness, the poet too envisages being enveloped in the eternal arms of darkness.

Death turns celebratory. While life on the earth is painful, eternal repose in the enveloping darkness of death is like being in the hands of one's lover. Lawrence's identity fuses with that of Persephone who celebrates her nuptials with her eternal lover. Lawrence seems to say that we are all brides to death, virgins to be pierced with the passion of dense gloom, to be enveloped in "the arms Plutonic". Using the symbolism of the phantasmal underworld of classic mythology, Lawrence invokes the transcendental nature of death. The blue gentian is the body of man, lit with living flame. It is with the help of this flame that one can seek eternal repose in the arms of death. And the reason why everyone has not "gentians in his house in soft September" is because not everyone knows how to be truly alive in the flesh.

Written in free verse, the continuous enjambement or run-on lines spilling from one to another, to the end of each stanza, invokes the feel of a meandering and spiraling movement of a descent downwards, keeping in tune with the motif of a journey. As Milton describes it in *Paradise Lost*, Bavarian Gentians makes "darkness visible". Lawrence has been able to capture the intensity and density of a palpable darkness through the reiteration of words "blue" and "blueness" and "dark" and "darkness" throughout the poem. The use of soft sibilants and liquid sounds creates a feel of being lovingly cocooned in the "embalmed darkness". Heavily alliterative and reiterative, the poem is able to conjure up a trance-like mood, slowly and hypnotically gravitating towards the vortex of death. The pathos of the final line inherent in the expression "the lost bride" is reverted by the reference of her conjoining with her groom. Though Persephone is lost to the earth, as man is at death, she reaches the safe haven of the arms of her Plutonic lover, suggesting that 'heaven' lies in the warm embrace of death for man too, thus emphasizing the transcendental nature of death.

Self-check Exercise V

- 1) What is the significance of the statement that "not every man has gentians in his house"?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 2) Why does the poet refer to "slow, sad Michaelmas"?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3) Why does the poet compare Bavarian gentians to a torch?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4) What does the poet wish to do with the gentian?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5) Describe the nuptial imagery in the poem.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

6) What are the stylistic beauties of the poem?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

20.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you were introduced to two poets – Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence – both of them remarkable and controversial novelists, but consummate poets nonetheless.

Two poems of Hardy, both as different from each other as chalk and cheese, introduced you to the varied moods and themes of this great poet. The first one pessimistic, tender, exhortatory, fatalistic and brooding, speaks to an unborn pauper child, while the next one celebrates and glorifies pleasurable activities

such as drinking cider, candle-lit dancing and amorous trysts, as great things. The poem by Lawrence uses the symbol of Bavarian Gentians and the classical mythology of Pluto and Persephone to convey the duality of life and death. You were introduced to the stylistic features of each poem and were taught to analyse them critically. The introductory notes on the age as well as the poets, we hope, must have given you an exhaustive background knowledge as well as whetted your appetite to learn more about them. You may refer to encyclopaedias and critical works available in your study centres and local libraries as well as check out for on-line reference material available.

20.9 ANSWERS TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

Self-check Exercise I

- 1) That of an Architect. His home Max Gate.
- 2) Wessex. After the old Anglo-Saxon kingdom.
- 3) *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*.
- 4) *Wessex Poems*
Poems of the Past and the Present
Moments of Vision or any others mentioned in the Introduction
- 5) *The Dynasts*. The Napoleonic Wars.
- 6) Fatalism & Pessimism

Self-check Exercise II

- 1) Not to breathe, cease silently, sleep the long sleep, though the birth hour is near.
- 2) The doomsters heap troubles and pains, time-wraiths turn pleasant moments to fearful ones. It is a world where laughter fails, greetings die, hope dwindles, faiths waste away, affections and enthusiasms numb.
- 3) The vow that if he had the capacity to reach out to souls still in their mothers' wombs, that he would inform them of all the trouble that awaits them in this world, which is "Life's pending plan".
- 4) The poem wavers between sympathy, despair and hopelessness and ends on a note of resignation and hope.
- 5) Since the child will be born contrary to the poet's wishes, he should come and live on this earth. And being happy and optimistic in disposition, he hopes that the child attains full health, love, friends and possibilities on earth and finds joys which are seldom attained by mankind.

Self-check Exercise III

- a) abcbabab
- b) The presence of these ladies conveys a local flavour and creates a feel of the English pub atmosphere.

- c) It is a great thing because it is night-long revelry with suitable partners in candle-lit ambience, returning only at daybreak.
- d) Love is full of romantic interludes in the darkness, where the lover clandestinely awaits his lady-love in the garden, when she flits towards his side silently like a bird.
- e) The final stanza posits the question whether the things mentioned in the previous stanza such as cider, dance and love would remain great things to him. He says that when the inevitable Death calls upon him, these things would still have remained great things to him.

Self-check Exercise IV

- 1) The mining town of Eastwood in Nottinghamshire
- 2) *Sons and Lovers*
- 3) *Kangaroo*
- 4) 'The Savage Pilgrimage'
- 5) Walt Whitman, the American Poet
- 6) He says that, the flesh is wiser than the intellect. We may go wrong in our minds, but what the blood feels, believes and says, is true.
- 7) *Look, We have come through!*
- 8) *Pansies and Nettles*
- 9) 'Bavarian Gentians' and 'The Ship of Death'

Self-check Exercise V

- 1) It means that not everyone knows how to be truly alive in the flesh
- 2) Michaelmas refers to the advent of the autumnal season, and symbolically points out to the commencement of man's slow journey towards death.
- 3) Because of their shape of the flower and its petals and also its colour. The dark blue blaze of the flattened petals, converging to a point like a flame of the torch, the tubular shape of the flower, reminiscent of a torch, and the dark blue colour of the flowers make this imagery apt.
- 4) He wishes to use the flower as a torch to guide him and lead him down to the netherworld of darkness, to show him the way taken by Persephone to reach her dismal lover.
- 5) Persephone descends to the sightless world of the dark into the enveloping arms of her lover who is waiting for her in the chambers lit with the splendour of torches of darkness to celebrate the nuptials and be pierced with the passion of dense gloom.
- 6) *Enjambement*, use of sibilants and liquid sounds, alliteration and reiteration etc. (refer to the last paragraph of the analysis)

