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Institute of Distance and Open Learning

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18th Century Poetry and Prose

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18th CENTURY POETRY AND PROSE

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Unit 1

Literary Genres/Types in the Eighteenth Century

1.1 Objectives After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Obtain a working knowledge of the characteristics of various genres of the eighteenth century fiction, its subgenres and its contribution to the development of the modern novel
- Understand the crucial socio-cultural, philosophical and scientific factors that contributed to the escalation of the English novels
- Study travel writing and understand the eighteenth century characteristics of factual information with artistic literary content
- Understand the vigorous role of the women writers and active women readers in the developmet of the eighteenth century fiction.

1.2 Introduction

Augustanism in English literary history referred to the governing condition predominant in the area of cultural production in the first half of the 18th century. It was poet Oliver Goldsmith who first entitled the early 18th century as the Augustan Age. Politically Augustanism referred to the parallels drawn amongst the developing structures of English society and those that existed in the period of Emperor Augustus in 27BC-14AD ancient Rome. And in terms of culture and literature the name Augustan Age was designated by intellectuals who saw in Pope, Johnson, Addison, Swift and Burke the modern parallels to Horace, Virgil and Cicero, and all the bright minds who made Roman literature famous in the day of Augustus.

The Enlightenment of the 18th century appeared in English literature in the form of neoclassicism, which literally, meant new classicism which emphasized order, symmetry, sophistication and structure in the arts and literature. As evident from the term neoclassicism, neoclassical writers, artists, and architects looked back to ancient Greece and Rome seeking inspiration from classical forms featuring symmetry and geometrical precision in everything from architecture to literature.The 18th century society observed a persistent obsession with decorum, a façade of established traditions and vanities as well as an innate sense of moral and political supremacy underneath the enlightenment ideals of rationality order and knowledge society

1.3 Poetry in the Neo-classical Age

1.3.1. Satire

"Satire is a literary technique in which behaviours or institutions are ridiculed for thepurpose of improving society. What sets satire apart from other forms of social andpolitical protest is humour. Satirists use irony and exaggeration to poke fun at humanfaults and foolishness in order to correct human behaviour." (Applebee 584)

In the 18th century while the realism of the novels and the newspapers delighted the middle class readersanother literary style which was witter, more polished in nature with a formal tone was aimed at the elite of the society.This was because of their adherence to neoclassicism. The neo-classicist often used satire to specify aspects of society that they felt required change. In the English society the exaltation of wit and reason came to the fore front of literature in the

form of both Horatianand Juvenalian satires. Horatian satire was "playfully amusing" and tried to make change gently and with understanding while the Juvenalian satire "provokes a darker kind of laughter. It is often bitter and criticizes corruption or incompetence with scorn and outrage." (Applebee 584)

Satireaimed to expose the superficial follies and immoralities of the English society during the neoclassical period through acute observation and sharp nimbleness of thought. The duty of the satirist according to Bloom was "to reproach the bad or praise the good, to correct or reconcile the inequilibrium between flaws and virtues. He must persuade a third party, the reader, that a case
for justice or against injustice has been made beyond all doubt" (Bloom, E. 99)

The Age of Enlightenment was also known as the age of satire or the age of Pope. Satires during that time period often aimed at ridiculing accepted standards of thought of the society, chastising the hypocrisy of the time and exposing Britain's ebbs and flaws. During this period the British politics was characterised by the two major political parties, they were the Tories and Whigs. Their conflict contributed to its most active usage in literature. 'Satire, a mode of writing that exposes the failings of individuals, institutions, or societies to ridicule and scorn. Its tone may vary from tolerant amusement…to bitter indignation, as in the verse of Juvenal and the prose of Jonathan Swift' (Baldick 2001). Writers such as Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope found much in their society that required improvement, such as the political and military leaders, philosophers and scientists of his time and satire wastheir weapon of choice.The Golden Age of satire included Pope's 'Rape of the Lock', 'Dunciad', 'Essay on criticism' and Swift's 'A Modest Proposal', *Gulliver's Travel* and many more.

Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" and *Gulliver's Travel*

Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal for preventing the Children of Poor people from being a Burthen to their Parents or Country, and making them Beneficial to the Publik" commonly referred to as "Modest Proposal" was aJuvenalian satire published anonymously in 1729.Swift turned to satire after serious proposals failed to effect any changes in the Irish economic situation. He tried hard to help the Irish poor by proposing and pushing for reforms. In doing so he was considered an opponent of the British government and of the Irish aristocracy, and warrants were issued for his arrest for his efforts.

Swift wrote a number of proposals which were repeatedly ignored, it was then that he turned to satire in an effort to shock his audience into considering the problem he addressed. He was so sickened with the ruling upper classes who refused to consider any of his grave proposals that he wrote his “Modest Proposal,” a work designed to be so outrageous that it would shock his audience into action. The essence of Swift’s essay, suggested that the impoverished Irish people might ease their financial troubles by selling their children off as food to the rich. This satirical essay mocked the cruelapproach of the British policy as well as the Irish Catholics towards the poor of the society.

In the history of the English language Swift's essay was extensively held as one of the greatest instances of sustained irony . “A Modest Proposal’s” shock value derived from the fact that the beginning of the essay described the plight of starving beggars in Ireland, so that the readers were not prepared for the ironic solution Swift provided when he stated that,"A young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee, or a ragout.”(Swift)

In his essay, “A Modest Proposal” Swift drew on his apprehensive outlook about modern science to couch his suggestion in terms of a ‘scientific’ study. During the Age of Reason when science and rational thought dominated sentimental feeling, Swift created ‘the projector’ a fictional persona who was supposedly the speaker or the anonymous writer of “A Modest Proposal.” The projector was portrayed as a logistician, a scientifically minded person who belong to the Royal Society, an organizationdedicated to the conducting of and writing about empirical study in the 18th century. In fabricating the persona of the projector Swift achieved two purposes. Firstly science became an object of satire. The projector’s “modest proposal” was so outrageous that no rational and enlightened person could probably consider it. Secondly, the use of the projector as the author of the piece provided an ounce of protection for its author from legal actions.

Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* was a remarkable incisive commentary on human nature. It was written in the form of a Menippean satire, a form of satire whose name came from Menippus, who was a Greek philosopher and a cynic of the 3rd BCE. This kind of satire satirized different attitudes and postures rather than people; it addressedthe abstract ideas and theories embodied in characters who serve as mouthpieces to all

the ideas. “The humor in these works is more cheerfully intellectual and less aggressive than in those works which we would

usually call satires, although it holds up contemporary intellectual life to gentle ridicule.”(Baldick 2001).

Alexender Pope’s Essay on criticism and Dunciad

The first version of the "three-book" *Dunciad* was published anonymously in 1728. The second version, the *Dunciad Variorum* appeared in 1729. The *New Dunciad*, in a new fourth book conceived as a sequel to the previous three, appeared in 1742, and *The Dunciad in Four Books*, a revised version of the original three books and a slightly revised version of the fourth book with revised commentary was published in 1743 with a new character, Bays, replacing Theobald as the "hero". Dunciad was s satire political and cultural in very specific ways. Rather than merely lambasting "vice" and "corruption," Pope attacks very particular degradations of political discourse and particular degradations of the arts. In Dunciad Pope heaves the sharp shaft of his parody on contemporary artsts, pundits abs improves who have caused his rage by or unfair analysis of his composition, actual short coming, religion, gently and needs too. Pope’s satiric net even takes in creator’s who were dead and who were not yet to be brought into the world. For he portrays finally the rule of writers, past, present and future.

An Essay on Criticism was one of the first major poems written by Pope, published in 1711. Pope contends in the poem's opening couplets that bad criticism does greater harm than bad writing. Despite the harmful effects of bad criticism, literature requires worthy criticism. In *Essay on Criticism Pope* has two comments one of which was to set a test to contemporary culture by asking ‘where’s the one’ who can join all vital compassionate and scholarly capabilities for the critic, and be kind of strolling interesting expression, ‘unassumingly intense and humanly serious’ in his decisions. The other answer was ‘intimateof the ancients’ such as Virgil, Homer, Aristotle and Longinus. Pope offered deft characterisations of pundits from Aristotle to Pope who accomplished the important autonomy from outrageous positions: Aristotle’s essentials compositions were compared to creative journey into the place where there was Homer which turned into the wellspring of beautiful model for agreeable conversational guidance.

STOP TO CONSIDER
THE SCRIBLERUS CLUB

In the early 18th century a group of authors based in London came together and formed an informal association of authors called The Scriblerus Club. They were prominent figures of English letters Augustan Age. The nucleus of the club included the satirists Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope. Other members were John Gay, John Arbuthnot, Henry St. John and Thomas Parnell. Swift wrote satires aimed at many aspects of modernity, including religion: the *Scriblerians*satirized Epicurean atomism (denied the divine design of the universe) and Deism (a belief that reason was a more certain guide to moral behaviour than the teaching of the Christian Church).

1.3.2 Mock epics

Mock-epic was also known as mock-heroic epic, a form of satire that adapts the elevated heroic style of the classical epic poem to a trivial subject."The essential purpose of mock-epic, as the name implies, is to point up the contrast between the true epic values celebrated by Homer and Virgil, and the false or at least less admirable codes followed by contemporary society…Pope uses the epic tradition to accuse his society of being unable to distinguish between appearance and reality" ("Pope," St. Andrews 6).

Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" was a mock epic,a poem that used the characteristics and conventions of an epic but for a humorous and satirical purpose rather than a serious purpose. Even the title ironically suggests a grave crime when the offense was actually as trivial as cutting a lock of hair.He wrote the poem in order to satirize the English aristocracy in general and a specific event between two prominent Catholic families. John Caryll asked Pope to write something to make peace between the Fermor's and the Baron's family. "Pope's solution was to make much ado about nothing" (Hammond 37).

Pope's mock epic satirized the idle rich in the poetic form of ancient epics (Applebee 584). The traditional epic were extensively long but Pope presented only five cantos, fewer than six hundred lines in the poem. Such diminishing of the form helped Pope demonstrate the smallness or pettiness of the behaviour exhibited by the main

characters in the poem. Belinda and The Baron were the caricature of Arabella Fermor and Lord Petre. Pope used the traditional high stature of classical epics to emphasise the triviality of the incident in the narrative poem. Here the abduction of Helen of Troy became the theft of a lock of hair; the gods become tiny sylphs; the description of Achilles' shield became an excursus on one of Belinda's petticoats. He also used the epic style of lamentations, invocation, similes, exclamations and parody of Homer's speech in *Iliad.* Along with Humour Pope kept a sense that beauty is fragile, and emphasized that the loss of a lock of hair touched Belinda deeply."The world of Belinda is a world of triviality measured against the epic scale; it is also a world of grace and delicacy, a second-best world but not at all a contemptible one. Here Pope has built upon a theme that plays against epic tradition." (Price 7).

Fairer stated that, "'The Rape of the Lock' explores so many aspects of the imagination: its kinship withbeauty and pride, its opposition to judgment and truth; its insubstantiality, physicality, anarchy, and self-deception; its functioning as dream, nightmare, madness and (finally) divine vision. The humorously transcendent ending, however, is a tactical flight from the challenge delivered to the imagination by the rest of the poem." (Fairer 117)

Pope used the highly complex closed heroic couplet in 'The Rape of the Lock', a rigidly structured verse form consisting of two lines, each iambic pentameter, which rhyme and which form a complete thought. Another technique that Pope employed to convey his satirical point was the literary device called zeugma which was the use of a word to apply to two disparate situations

STOP TO CONSIDER

EPIC AND MOCK EPIC

• The mock epic treated the trivial subject as if it were of great importance. In contrast to the epic *Paradise Lost*, in which the theme was the creation and fall of the human race, Pope's mock epic highlighted human superficiality and vanity.
• An epic invoked a *muse* but Pope's muse was not a Greek god or the Holy Spirit like Milton's muse rather his muse was another human, John Caryll who asked him to write the poem.
• The *supernatural forces* were not God, angels, and demons of

Paradise Lost
but the sylphs whose duties were to guard Belinda's hair and jewellery.
• The *epic battles* were reduced to card games
• The valiant *feats of courage* become clipping a lock of hair, threatening
the Baron with a hairpin, and making him sneeze with a pinch of snuff.

1.3.3 Epistles

Epistles were letter in verse, usually addressed to a person close to the writer. Its themes may be moral and philosophical, or intimate and sentimental. Alexander Pope favoured the form; see his "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," in which the poet addresses a physician in his social circle. The epistle peaked in popularity in the 18th century, though Lord Byron and Robert Browning composed several in the next century; see Byron's "Epistle to Augusta." Less formal, more conversational versions of the epistle can be found in contemporary lyric poetry; see Hayden Carruth's "The Afterlife: Letter to Sam Hamill" or "Dear Mr.Fanelli" by Charles Bernstein

1.3.4 Graveyard school of poetry

The Graveyard School of poetry, also known as the Churchyard School, was a group of British poets in the early to mid-eighteenth who were united by their choice of subject matter, humanity's mortality**.** Poets of this school wrote melancholy, meditative poetry about death.Thisgenre of 18th-century British poetry that focused on death and bereavement. The graveyard school consisted largely of imitations of Robert Blair's popular long poem of morbid appeal, *The Grave* (1743), and of Edward Young's celebrated blank-verse dramatic rhapsody *Night Thoughts* (1742–45). These poems expressed the sorrow and pain of bereavement, evoke the horror of death's physical manifestations, and suggest the transitory nature of human life. The meditative, philosophical tendencies of graveyard poetry found their fullest expression in Thomas Gray's "An Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard" (1751). The poem was a dignified, gently melancholy elegy that celebrated the graves of humble and unknown villagers and suggesting that the lives of rich and poor alike

"lead but to the grave." The works of the graveyard school were significant as early precursors of the Romantic Movement.
As part of the graveyard school, Gray writes a melancholy lament for the ordinary people who lie buried in this tiny, obscure location. Gray's "Elegy" also was an example of topographical poetry, poetry inspired by a geographical setting. British churchyards were typically graveyards, Christians at that time believing they should be buried in hallowed ground. The poem begins with a description of the location, the narrator noting specific details that allow the reader to imagine the scene and at the same time establishing the melancholy mood.
Because of these characteristics, Gray's "Elegy" is important as a precursor of the Romantic Movement which began in the late 18th century. Neoclassical poetry emphasized symmetry, reason, and rational thought—the life of the mind. Gray's poem marked the beginning of a trend to emphasize organic form, sentiment, and emotion—the life of the heart. The Elegy's description of nature, its sensitivity to emotion rather than emphasis on reason, and its elevation of common people all intimate important characteristics of 19th century Romanticism.

1.4Prose in the 18th Century

1.4.1 Diary writing

Diaries derived from the Latin word dies for 'day' recordedevents of daily life and opinions organized chronologically. The art of diary writing became widespread in the 18th century, and reached its pinnacle during the Victorian era.While diaries were habitually meant to record the private thoughts of the diarist, it provided important insights into historical proceedings, culture in which the diarist livedand the process of living anordinary life.Events which usually seemed mundane in our day to day life could be a valuable source of information for people who doesn't belong to the same place or time. Similarly the people in the 18th century who recorded their lives in diaries, now provide information and insight into the events of that time period. Some of the more well-known English diarists of the 18th century were Samuel Pepys, John Evelyn,DanielDeFoe,Celia Fiennes and Fanny Burney.

Pepys provided detailed descriptions of London during the plague and the fire as well as daily life in the Restoration era.Covering a much longer period of time, John Evelyn wrote a more formal diaryfrom the perspective of a conservative supporter of the monarchy and of

theChurch of England. Although actually a fictional account of the plague, Daniel DeFoe's *A Journal of thePlague Year* parallels Pepys' accounts of the plague while giving even more detail. DeFoe's*A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* described several journeys DeFoe made early in his life, providing a comprehensive picture of pre-Industrial Revolution England.

In a similar fashion but a much more daring endeavour, Celia Fiennes, the daughter and granddaughter of Puritan supporters, wrote what was perhaps the most unusual and interesting of the 18th century diaries. Not published until 1888, her journalsdocument trips she made through every county in England as well as into parts of Scotland and Wales. Riding side saddle, Fiennes travelled most of the time with onlyone or two servants as companions. For a woman to travel without a father or husband as escort was extraordinary in this time period and dangerous as well. Fiennes records encounters with highwaymen and falls from her horse as she forded rivers and traveled England's rough roads. Ostensibly traveling for her health, Fiennes observed local industries and described the landscape, both natural and manmade. Her family's Puritan views are apparent in her comments about thechurches, clergymen, and local religious conventions.Burney kept a diary and one of the most chilling passages of any of the diaries was her account of undergoing a mastectomy without anaesthesia in her home. Amazingly, she recovered from the surgery, but she could not bring herself to write about the agonizing ordeal until nine years later when she described it in a letter to her sister.

1.4.2 Periodical essays

The beginning of the 18th century saw the prolific production of periodicals. Two major figures that stood out in the history and development of periodical essay was Richard Steel and Joseph Addison. In length the periodicals were typically one or two pages, these essays appeared in cost-effective publications twice or thrice a week. They were called 'periodical' due to their publication in journals and magazines and not in book form after a certain period of time.

The two major periodicals were *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, and their major contributors were Richard Steele and Addison. Richard Steele, an ingenious mind inspired by Defoe's *The Review*, founded *The Tatler* in 1709. *The Tatler* was an overarching publication containing accounts of gallantry, entertainment, poetry, foreign and domestic news. As a social humourist during the reign of Queen Anne,

Steele treats the very streets and drawing rooms of Old London. He documents not only the political and literary disputes but also the beaux and belles, prevalent characters, social mannerisms, the new books and new plays. *The Tatler*, published thrice weekly, was initially run by Steele alone under the pseudonym 'Mr Bickerstaff'(borrowed from Swift). By 1711, he had contributed one hundred and seventy papers to *The Tatler*. Later, he became a coadjutor of *The Spectator* along with Addison in 1711. As opposed to *The Tatler's* crude machinery of coffee houses, *The Spectator*, along with characters absorbed from the various strata of society (like Sir Roger, Sir Andrew, Will Honeycomb) offered a kind of unity.

Addison pro-actively used his apparatus of literature to correct the shallow license of Restoration manners. He noted the absurdity and hypocrisy of the party system and calibrated himself to a position of "exact neutrality between the Whigs and the Tories". Addison unmasked the trifles and fatuities of the fashionable belles. He claimed that "the right enjoyment of their hair" was their principal concern. Wifely extravagances were reprimanded, giggling damsels in the church were reproved, and feminine violence in party politics was ridiculed. Addison's didactic social criticism in *The Spectator* is the mainstay of the modern social novel. He was a genial humourist, and his humour is humane, serene and impartial, reflecting the nobility of his temperament; the great satirist looked on the feeling of benevolence tinctured with contempt. He had a unique sense of the ludicrous as exhibited in Sir Roger De Coverly and Will Honeycomb. Macaulay writes of Addison as one who has "blackened no man's character".

Addison almost created and wholly perfected English prose as an instrument for the expression of social thought. Addison's prose was lucid and his rhythm perfect. His style was not abstruse or unmelodious as per Dr. Johnson. Furthermore, he used metaphors to impart clarity. Steele was a passionate man of romantic mind-set, whose novelty was inventive. Addison, a finished writer, was correct, scholarly and subtly humorous. He was more dignified, classical and as per several critics, superior to Steele. *The Spectator* was regarded as the forerunner of the novel. Addison and Steele brought about a sense of characterization in the simplicity of Sir Roger and Will Honeycomb, and the publication put forth a vivid picture of contemporary society. According to Raleigh, the great novelist should primarily be a humourist and by this extension, *The Spectator* is suffused with generous humour.

1.4.3 Letter writing

During the rise of letter-writing in the 18th century a tension grew between two courses of development. First is that the letter-writing conventions became less formal with their subject-matter including private as well as public matters andsecondly letters became an moral, artistic and intellectual literary form and an accomplishment to be shown off.Letter writing as an instrument for women to communicate with one another was also demonstrated in Richardson's *Clarissa*, in which the constant, uninterrupted friendship – along with most of the letters – was between Clarissa and her confidante Anna Howe. Richardson's fictional heroines were repeatedly praised for their talents in letter-writing and it appeared that the host seemed quiet offended if a lady refuses to read her own correspondence in the same way she might exhibit her ability on the piano forte.But letter-writing was not only a superficial social talent, as Richardson wrote to one of his female correspondents, Sophia Westcomb, in 1746:

"the Pen is almost the *only Means* a very modest and diffident Lady (who in Company will not attempt to glare) has to show herself, and that she has a *Mind*. … her Closet her Paradise … there she can distinguish Her Self: By this means she can assert and vindicate her Claim to Sense and Meaning." (*Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*)

Women such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu used letter-writing to assert their intelligence and enter the public domain. Montagu's *Letters* from Turkey, written between 1716 and 1718 and published in 1762, were influential both as models of epistolary style as well as anthropological works. Several women published letters describing the political or moral arguments of the time. Mary Masters' '*Familiar Letters'* (1755) discussed women's education and domestic abuse, and Hester Chapone published her '*Letters on the Improvement of the Mind'* in 1773. She and Elizabeth Carter, whose letters to Catherine Talbot were published in 1809, are referred to by Elizabeth Gaskell in '*Cranford'* as epistolary models. Evidently, the implication of Richardson's correspondence was that the letter itself was crucial in a society where women were expected to be 'modest and diffident' and to shy away from articulating themselves 'in company'.

The rise in letter-writing and in women's writing in the 18th century were inseparablyassociated. In its private capacity, the letter allowed a woman confined to the home to communicate outside the home with

both men and women, while in the form of published letters it was a valuable platform from which publicly to assert women's intellectual capabilities. Nevertheless these letters between correspondents were not free from suspicion, and the novels demonstrate an uncertainty as to whether women's letters ought to be public or private. Because of these reasons letter writing somewhat aroused contemporary criticism but it was the suspicion aroused by private, domestic letters which inspired novels of the period, as they exploited the potential scandals and secrets in letters, even while making use of the generally-accepted decorum of letter writing. Women continued writing letters in the 19th century but the epistolary novel dropped in popularity, as male and female writers were discovering new authorial voices. But in their heyday, letters both public and private, real and fictional, played a vital part in the expansion of women's writing.

Questions

1. Why is the title "A Modest Proposal" ironic?
2. Swift's "A Modest Proposal" is often anthologized as an illustration of a persuasive essay. Analyze the essay's argumentative structure.

3. Define satire and apply the definition to Pope's "The Rape of the Lock."

4. Trace the historical events that led to the writing of "The Rape of the
Lock."

5. Evaluate Pope's use of satire in "The Rape of the Lock."

6. Review the list of epic characteristics and conventions in theinformation about Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In addition to the examplesgiven, identify instances in "The Rape of the Lock" in which Popetrivializes epic conventions to create a mock epic.

7. Pope writes about aristocratic society in "The Rape of the Lock." Howwould you compare/contrast the families involved in this situation withthe aristocratic ?British and Irish people Swift alludes to in "A ModestProposal"

8. What parallels do you find in Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* and Pope's mockepic?

1.5 Summing Up

Eighteenth century is generally called the great age of prose and reason. Certain forms such as satire were popular during this period, and practice of writing satire took place in prose and poetry alike. On the other hand, various kinds of prose such as letter and essay contributed towards the emergence of novel in this period. In this unit we have discussed these genres and their practitioners as well as their key texts. I hope this unit will give you necessary scaffolding to explore the literature of the eighteenth century.

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Unit 2

Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man: Epistle II*

2.1 Objectives:

This unit is intended to acquaint you with Alexander Pope, an eighteenth-century English poet. A brief but adequate biographical account of his life is detailed, along with certain historical and cultural aspects of his time which will provide you with the required information to proceed with the study.

The purpose of this design is to achieve the following objectives-

- To help you understand the historical and social background of the poet
- To discuss the literary, social and political influences on the author
- To analyze the corpus of his poetic output, and its reception through time
- To broadly discuss the select text, and evaluate the concepts and philosophy delineated by the poet

2.2 Introduction

Alexander Pope was born on May 21, 1688 to Catholic parents in London. His father, Alexander Pope, was an affluent linen merchant, while his mother, Edith Turner, was the daughter of the Esquire of York. This was the year when the Glorious Revolution had erupted, culminating in the deposition of James II, who was replaced by

William III of Orange and his wife, Mary II. Consequently, the Protestant Church of England issued a series of laws, known as the Test Acts which restricted the civil rights of Roman Catholics and minor religious orders. As a result, Pope was among those who could not attend publics schools or universities, and had to be educated mostly at home, by priests, private tutors or even relatives. Few Catholic schools functioned, although unlawfully, and Pope managed to go to a couple of such schools. Not only were Catholics denied formal education, they weren't allowed to reside within London as well. The Pope family thereby relocated to Binfield in Windsor Forest.

Even as a young boy, Pope was inclined to learning, and self-taught himself several languages, such as French, Italian, Latin and Greek. He profusely read the works of various authors and began writing verses at a very tender age. However, he was about twelve years when he suffered from Pott's disease, a form of spinal tuberculosis, which contributed to his physical deformities, asthmatic problems and lifelong ill health. His stature remained at a height of four feet six inches, with a hunched back, although he was able to perform certain physical activities, like horse riding, travelling, and possessed excellent calligraphy.

It is probably due to such infirmities that Pope became more engrossed in reading and writing, while challenging his mental capacities. Against all odds, he soon gained recognition among the intellectual circles, the likes of whom included William Wycherley, William Congreve, John Caryll, Samuel Garth, Henry Cromwell and William Marsh. Pope contributed writing for his Whig friends, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele in their magazine *The Spectator* (1711). Along with his Tory friends- Jonathan Swift, Thomas Parnell, John Gay, and John Arbuthnot, he formed the*Scriblerus Club* (1714), a satirical literary group which mocked inept writing through the fictitious identity of MartinusScriblerus. Although they began working on the *Memoirs of MartinusScriblerus* in 1713, the completed book was finally published in 1741. Parts of the invented biography considerably influenced Pope's "Dunciad", as well as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

Stop to consider

As outlined earlier, you would be required to have some basic knowledge of the historical context during the late seventeenth century and the eighteenth century that followed. Significant socio-political, and cultural events that took place around this time period constitute of the Bubonic Plague of 1665-66, also called 'The Great Plague of London', the Third Dutch War (1672-

74) which ended with the Treaty of Westminster, the Glorious Revolution (1688-89), and the Treaty of Union (1707). Both Charles II and his brother James II, who were Catholic converts, tried to usher in religious equality in their monarchy by passing the Royal Declaration of Indulgence (1672) and Declaration of Indulgence (1687) respectively. They were both withdrawn and replaced by the repressively intolerant Test Acts (1673-1828). To take refuge from the anti-Papist laws, Pope's family moved to Binfield (and later to Chiswick), which inspired his interest in gardens, landscape, and where he wrote his first poems. Pope's Meadow, a park near his manor, is named after him.

Despite having a number of prominent friends, Pope also had several adversaries and criticizers. He was targeted for his satires, public feuds, his disfigured appearance, his belonging to a minority religion, and his informal education. He also remained unmarried though he was acquainted with many women, like the Blount sisters, of who Martha Blount is favorably addressed in his poem, "Epistle to a Lady". As a writer, Pope quickly advanced from his initial poems which includes "Ode on Solitude", "Pastorals" to his more famous works, like "Essay on Criticism", "Rape of the Lock" and the "Epistles". He developed the heroic couplet drawing inspiration from John Dryden, and both are regarded as the foremost Neoclassical poets of the Augustan age. Pope placed emphasis on traditional, moral values and reasoning as could be seen in the works of ancient Greek and Roman poets, such as Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and Homer.

His writing focused on virtues, intellect and realism rather than the romantic notions of fancy, idealism or passions. His witty yet vilifying satires were more often objective, aimed at human evils and falsity of the society at large. His caricatures of particular individuals were cleverly renamed with some exaggeration, but were not blatantly informative. Nevertheless, the recipients of his opprobrium threatened him to the point where he had to be accompanied by pistols and his Great Dane on walks. Pope also ventured in scholastic work, adeptly translating Homer's *Iliad* and Odyssey, and publishing editions of Shakespeare. Upon the success of his translations, Popeacquired a magnificent villa at Twickenham, where he flourished at landscape gardening. Here, with a few of his friends beside him,Pope breathed his last on May 30, 1744.

SAQ

Pope was highly attuned to the rivers and gardens around his countryside residence, besides his taste for Greco-Roman pastoral poetry. Explore this idea in the context of some of his poems. (100 words)

How does the religious sentiments of the age figure in Pope's poetry? Do you find him taking a stance on it through his poetry? (100 words)

What political comments can be found in Pope's poetry, given that he was familiar with people of rival political groups? (80 words)

2.3 His works:

Pope was a precocious child and began reading the classics, Homer, Quintilian, Juvenal, and Longinus, as early as age six, which largely inspired him to write. He started composing poems in the manner of the masters, and by the age of twelve had written a proper verse, "Ode on Solitude". The poem exudes a budding simplicity, although bearing the structural soundness of established poetry. He attempted paraphrasing Thomas à Kempis around the same age, and later worked on his "Imitations of English Poets". By 1704, Pope was engaged in circulating the manuscript of his "Pastorals", a quartet of poems emulating the style of Virgil, among the London literati. This attributed to his growing popularity in the next few years. He was soon noticed by the book seller, Jacob Tonson who published the collection in his *Poetical Miscellanies* in 1709.

It was followed by Pope's first major work "An Essay on Criticism" (1711), written in heroic couplets and anonymously published. The poem reflects the young author's mature thoughts on the purpose and obligation of the ideal critic while judging poetry. Pope claimed that such critics should have true taste and virtue, and should abide by the poetical norms and standards founded by the classical writers. Even more successful was his next publication, "Rape of the Lock" (1712) dedicated to his good friend, John Caryll. It was a heroi-comical poem (a term first used by Pope) in five cantos, which takes up a commonplace argument between two noble families and portrays it in the epic tradition. Pope based this on a real dispute between two Catholic families over a stolen lock of hair, thus mocking the trivialities and shallowness of high society.

Although started around 1704, the later part of Pope's first political poem, "Windsor-Forest", was completed and published in 1703. Similar to Virgil's panegyric on Augustus, this patriotic poem was a tribute to the rule of Queen Anne, celebrating the Peace of Utrecht which ended the War of Spanish Succession. Around that time, Pope had also written the poem "Ode for Music on St. Cecilia's Day", which appeared in1713, at the request of Richard Steele. His ode to the Roman patroness of music is often mentioned alongside Dryden's "A

Song for St. Cecilia's Day" and "Alexander's Feast". A number of poems were composed during 1713- 1717 which include "Prologue to Mr. Addison's Cato", "Epilogue to Mr. Rowe's Jane Shore", "The Temple of Fame: A Vision", "Epistle to Mrs. Teresa Blount", and "The Challenge: A Court Ballad". His other memorable poem, "Eloisa to Abelard" (1717) was framed upon the medieval legend of Heloise-Abelard of France, and written in the genre of Ovid's heroic epistles. Pope ascribed the ending of the poem to the grief he felt upon being separated from his friend, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. In the same Ovidian conventions, he composed the melancholy lyric "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate lady" (1717), where the speaker exalts the deceased lady who had been wronged by her family. Both these poems consist of intense, emotional rhetoric which is usually not characteristic of the satirist.

By this time, Pope had resumed his translation of Homer's *The Iliad*, a task he began around 1714 upon the insistence of Swift; the complete version was published between 1717- 1720. The grand success of this work extended his readership and popularity, providing him the impetus to translate the *Odyssey* as well in 1726. His six volumed editions of Shakespeare (1723-1725) were also well-received despite certain criticism. He very famously responded to such critics and the people he despised in his four books of *The Dunciad* (1728-1743). First published anonymously, there was no mistaking that the scathing remarks set in mock-heroic narrative were the words of Pope. Lettered men like Lewis Theobald and Colley Cibber were not spared the smite of Pope's ingenuity. He also expressed his dismay in the deteriorating art, literature and culture of the contemporary society, signifying that it was gradually turning into a land of 'dunces'. Pope additionally published a manual on how to write terrible poetry, as a way of scorning contemporaneous versifiers of the time. "Peri Bathous, Or The Art of Sinking in Poetry" (1727) is a short treatise parodying "Peri Hopsous" (*On the Sublime*) by Longinus. Pope introduced the term 'bathos' to connote how writers in their attempt at sublimity absurdly fall short of the very purpose.

Stop to consider

Look up the trends in the contemporary literature and society that prevailed just before and during the time of Pope. The Cavalier poets and the Metaphysicals lost their popularity which then moved on to a new classical revival. Pope however used the style of Cowley and Donne, and the theme of metaphysics for some of his poems.Some Restoration age writers also had a significant influence on Pope, such as Milton and Dryden. The philosophy of

the scientific revolution was developed further by the Enlightenment thinkers like Hume, Locke, Kant, Rousseau and Montesquieu. They have a bearing on Pope's writing; Leibniz, in particular, in "Essay on Man". The tradition of court poetry was replaced by coffeehouse culture; it invited larger social intermingling, debates and discussions. Pope's "Rape of the Lock" is a response to such gatherings as popular but uncultured, and not a place for learning.The middle class had begun to strengthen as a social group and comprised much of the reading public. They were also becoming indignant of the rakish behavior of the fashionable elite, and sought the moral and noble values of the golden days. Pope's satires ridiculed the lack of decorum and dignity in the society, and the poor writing which catered to the masses, while using classical literary genre. The intentions behind his works may be debatable, but they clearly represent the conditions of his era.

Pope's "Epistles to Several Persons", better known as "Moral essays" as they discuss ethical issues, were written at different times to select individuals. Four of the epistles were published from 1731 to1735, the fifth poem addressed to Addison in 1715 was decidedly added by William Warburton in the posthumous edition of his friend's works. Around 1733 appeared Pope's brilliant philosophical work "An Essay on Man", in four epistles to the Viscount of Bolingbroke. This was followed by his collection of the Satires, "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" and "Imitations of Horace". With Arbuthnot, Pope also contributed in writing John Gay's comedy *Three Hours After Marriage* (1717). Alexander Pope was a prolific author; the works mentioned thus far are some of the prominent ones from his vast oeuvre. His fame had declined with the rise of Romanticism, but the twentieth century renewed interest in him, and rightly termed the early eighteenth century- the 'Age of Pope'.

2.4 Critical Reception:

Pope being the child prodigy that he was, did not let the lack of mainstream education obstruct his foray into language and literature. Free to read what he liked, he chose the great classics of Homer, Ovid, Virgil, Statius, and so on. He looked up to the older writers of his time such as Waller, Dryden and Boileau, and had a propensity for writing satires and odes from a very young age. The milieu of the forested lands at Binfield facilitated his writing as much as the scholarly books surrounding him did. Some of his *Juvenile Poems*, which include his "Pastorals", "Windsor Forest" and the "Odes", bear the idyllic imagery and setting of the countryside scenes. The poems succeeded in

introducing Pope to the literary elite, and rapidly secured him the position of a burgeoning writer.

His "Imitations" of Chaucer, Spencer, Cowley, John Wilmot and Charles Sackville put his artistic style at par with the renowned English poets around him. The invalid Pope, soon became a recognized figure in the thriving coffee houses of London, engaging in discourse with popular writers, scientists, philosophers, Whigs and Tories. With the publication of "The Rape of the Lock", Pope put forth his commentary as a social critic in the form of a burlesque. It was enjoyed by the readers, and soon translations in different European languages began to be published. However, like the rest of his works, the poem also had its share of criticism and parodies. Pope vindictively retaliated against his detractors by means of his masterly crafted epistles, of which "The Dunciad" and "Epistle to Arbuthnot" are considered prime specimens of his intrinsic wit and sarcasm.

In the year 1717, Warburton published *The Works of Alexander Pope* in nine volumes, which further fortified his legacy. Wycherley, Fenton, Harcourt, Broome and Lyttelton wrote favourably on him in the edition. His translation of Homer, and the "Essays", were praised by the likes of Dr. Johnson and Voltaire. Pope's success however, began to decline posthumously as traditional neo-classical values gave way to romantic standards. The literary movement that followed found the didacticism of the former rather unsuitable to the emergent nineteenth century sensibilities. The Victorian society went on reading the genre initiated by Wordsworth and Coleridge, but overall disregarded the works of Pope. This was the era of the novelists- Dickens, the Brontes, George Eliot, Carroll, Hardy- and essayists like Ruskin, J. S. Mill, Darwin, and Arnold, while the major poets included Alfred Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett, Robert Browning, and the Rossettis. Literary critics like Matthew Arnold, De Quincey, and Lord Jeffrey considered Pope's prose and critical writings better than his poetry, whereas Oscar Wilde expressed a strong aversion to his versification.

In this way, a century passed before the wave of Modernism washed over the Romantic sublime and rekindled interest in Pope's writings. Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) mentions the notable writer several times as one of the great wits of his age. He was critically assessed in Austin Warren's *Alexander Pope as Critic and Humanist* (1929), which led to further re-evaluations. In the 1930s, the New Critics- F. R. Leavis, William Empson, W.K. Wimsatt, Cleanth Brooks- with their advocacy of close reading, found Pope's texts, and his use of

poetic diction rather compelling. Similar opinions were voiced by other twentieth century poets, like Edith Sitwell, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and W. H. Auden. Scholars of Pope began editing compilations and detailed biographies of the author, of which George Sherman's *Early Career of Alexander Pope* (1934), and *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope* (1939-69) by John Butt and Maynard Mack are most significant. Firmly established as one of the greatest eighteenth-century poets, Pope's life and genius continue to be reevaluated by readers and academics till date.

Stop to Consider

Critical reception of literature implies the opinions and reviews accorded by critics or scholarly individuals to any literary work. Such appraisals vary among critics and across time. Pope's poetry and translations had gained immense popularity during his time. The common readers enjoyed his polished words and their contextual import, but the critics who gave their professional views differed on various points. Some, like John Dennis and Lytton Strachey found him inconsistent and lacking true poetic sense, while others appreciated his genius, such as Byron and Geoffrey Tillotson. Compare this variety of perception with the current criticism on Pope.

2.5 Context of the poem:

In 1733, Pope namelessly began to publish a series of three epistles, with the fourth one appearing in 1734, to redress the defamation that his castigators had provoked. To evade being recognized, "An Essay on Man" was written in heroic couplets with certain alterations in his distinctive style. The poem, addressed "to a friend" (later Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke), deliberates on aesthetics, moral and ethical philosophy. Pope had envisioned to develop it into a larger volume comprising the separate epistles of "Moral Essays" (1735). In the poem, he referred to his patron as St. John to shield his identity while he discoursed on contentious subjects- theodicy, deism, alleged unorthodoxy and other religious matters. Such themes were apparently unconducive to the age of science and Enlightenment. However, the readers were all praise for the anonymous poet; his critics unwittingly applauded the verse in their reviews. It was only in 1735 that the master who penned this critically acclaimed work was revealed to be Alexander Pope.

Check Your Progress

1. How do you situate Pope as a proponent of neoclassism?

(Hint: His use of epic, elegiac, heroic forms and classical standards)

2. To what extend did Pope succeed or fail as a satirist?

(Hint: He was famous for his satirical works)

3. What were the major themes of his some of his well-known poetry?

(Hint: Critique of society and pedantry)

2.6 Reading the Poem:

(A basic review of Epistle I, III, and IV, followed by a reading of Epistle II).

Following the earlier publication of "The Dunciad", Pope was attacked for his vituperative travesty of several renamed literary and political personages. As such, he felt that since most readers were aware of his repute and connections, his poems would be judged cursorily, and not for their form and merit. In his exchanges with Swift, he discussed the values of anonymity for the sake of their works, and thereby devised a scheme to trick his rival poetasters and critics. "An Essay on Man" was published without accreditation, under a different bookseller, while at the same time he had brought out his "Epistle to Bathurst" and "First Satire of Horace" which bore his authorship. The "Essay" was hailed for it dealt intelligently with universal precepts and contemporary thoughts of the Enlightenment. Suspicions of the author arose because of the dedication to Lord Bolingbroke, who was a friend of Pope, but by then the poem was well-received and celebrated. To the utter infuriation of his criticizers, Pope eventually acknowledged writing the poem, which is considered among his best works on a philosophical premise.

The Design: In the 1734 edition, a prefatory passage was added to the collection wherein the poet claims to attempt writing on 'human life and manners'. Taking Baconian *Essays* as his model, Pope enquires

about the role and function of man in the natural order of life. He stresses on being aware of one's moral purpose and definitive end. He compares the nature of human to the scientific truths and presents this essay as a 'system of ethics', probably alluding to the magnus opus he had in mind. He further clarifies his reasons for choosing verse over prose, and informs the readers of the 'general map' of mankind, which can be explored in depth in the following epistles.

Epistle I: Of the Nature and the State of Man, with respect to the Universe – Each of the Epistles is headed by an argument which states the ambition of the verse. Here the speaker lays out certain points regarding the universal attributes of man which he intends to broadly versify. He declares ten such ideas, some of which are: man's ability to judge based on his own system, while being ignorant of its relations to others; his appropriate position in the general order of things unknown to him; his ignorance of and hope for future which makes him enjoy the present; striving for perfection and excessive knowledge would end in misery and worse if he mistakes himself as God. He recalls the Chain of Being where one creature is subordinate to the other, where man is located near the top; yet he should be wary of his pride and desires lest he breaks this order and ends in madness. His rank is below Providence, to whom he must thus submit. The speaker proceeds to awaken St. John and proposes, inspired by Milton, to 'vindicate the ways of God to Man'.

Epistle III: Of the Nature and State of Man with respect to Society – The argument here begins with the affirmation that the universe is a single social system, where nothing is wholly for itself or another. The speaker mentions that animals live in mutual happiness in such systems. Reason or instinct also function for the good of each individual and animal in all societies. Instincts can move a society forward but reason can advance it farther. The speaker refers to the unity among man and animals, as was deemed by God to be the state of nature; using reason and instincts, man created the arts and social structures, which lead to formation of politics, monarchy and patriarchal systems. Religion and government originated from love, while superstition and tyranny from fear. Self-love works for social and public good, can restore true religion and harmonize the mixed government. Finally, the speaker discusses the forms of government, and their true end as framed by God and Nature.

Epistle IV: Of the Nature and State of Man with respect to Happiness – Pope discusses happiness, the false, philosophical and popular ideas around it. God wishes happiness to be equal and attainable by all, so it

must be governed by social and general laws. For a peaceful and orderly society, happiness must be balanced between hope and fear, where the good man has the advantage. Providence balances this happiness in keeping with the general world, so no bias is shown to particulars, nor should it be expected. We are not judges of the good but they must be the happiest lot. External goods, like riches, greatness, fame, talents etc., are unequal and can't provide happiness or rewards; they damage needed virtues. Only universal virtues can give eternal happiness, for which we need to conform and resign to the order of God.

In the eighteenth century, anonymous publications were fairly common. Pope himself sent out some of his works without disclosing his authorship at first, like "Essay on Criticism", "The Dunciad" "Essay on Man" and poems in the Grub Street Journal. Other members of his intellectual group, Dryden, Swift, Gay and Johnson also write anonymously at times. The trend wasn't new at the time, it can be seen as early as the Middle Ages - the Gawain poet, Beowulf. The reasons ranged from personal, socio-political to religious conditions. There were licensing acts, copyright laws and printing rules which caused many writers to hide their identities. Women writers had a more difficult time due to gender discrimination. Aphra Behn had written a number of anonymous works; on her death an unknown writer even dedicated an elegy to her. Fanney Burney, Ellenor Fenn, Maria Edgeworth and Charlotte Lennox were some of the women who wrote without their names. Such writers either mentioned themselves as 'Anonymous' or chose a nom de plume. Interestingly, Pope's writing was so idiosyncratic and notable at the time that even if he hid his name, regular readers would often recognize his style.

Epistle II: Of the Nature and State of Man with respect to Himself, as an Individual –As in the argument, the poem is divided in the following sections:

i. Here Pope asserts that man should not try to pry into God's work, rather he should study himself. The Epistle begins with the well-known line, "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan", declaring that it is man's nature, powers, limitations, and weaknesses that should be properly surveyed. Man is in a middle state; he can be wise and great, yet have doubts and ignorance. Certain things are beyond his reasoning, which even his vast knowledge of science cannot fathom. He should be aware of the extent of his capacities, check his pride and vanity, and not attempt to imitate God.

ii. This section is about the two crucial principles of man- self-love and reason. Passions are innate and urges the person to act or create, while reason restrains him from being excessive and balances his nature. One can't be called good and the other bad as both are essential to governing mankind. Self-love is stronger because its objective of gratification is more easily attained; reason can sedate such impulses but it requires foresight, so the result may not appear presently. Experience and habit can strengthen reason which can aid self-fulfillment, not stifle it. The ultimate purpose of self-love and reason is the same, to get pleasure without pain, "This taste the honey, and not wound the flower (90)".

iii. In keeping with reason, passions can have different functions. They are elements of nature, sometimes like storms. Along with a balanced mind, they give strength and colour to life. Pleasures of the body and mind are not alike for all; they appeal differently to different people. Much depends on how one responds to its charms. There is the ruling passion, predominant in one's mind, which can overtake the body and soul. It determines how imagination and faculties are used, while reason only empowers it. Reason can still guard this passion and correct it by treating it as a friend. Like the winds, it drives men into different directions, with the will to choose virtue from vice.

iv. Light and darkness are mixed attributes of mankind. Every person possesses both traits which are opposite by nature, but together they serve to achieve similar goals. Often, they are so finely blended that it becomes difficult to tell virtue from vice. Reason must be exercised to right the mistake of thinking there are no different aspects.

v. Pope observes that people generally abhor vice yet they end up deceiving themselves into it. It prevails everywhere, and each person thinks the other worse, barely realizing how much he possesses the trait himself.

vi. Men can be virtuous and vicious in varying degrees, as such passions and imperfections have been ascertained by Providence. These features are befittingly spread across all orders of men in the society. Individually a person may have diverse ambitions, but the divine plan is one for all. They may be kings or the subjects, statesmen or chiefs, master or servant, or friends, Heaven intends for them to depend on each other. They have a social purpose in general and individual interests in particular. They are answerable to these passions in 'every state, and every age of life'; they may be foolish, learned, rich, poor, crippled or heroic, from their childhood and youth till their death by old age, they are prone to self-love which gives them comfort

and hope. Such social interrelations evince man's imprudence and God's wisdom.

SAQ

Many of Pope's poetical quotes have gained proverbial status. What makes them so resistant to time? (80 marks)

Comment on Pope's usage of the epistle mode for writing. (80 marks)

What kind of criticism was raised against Pope in the later part of the eighteenth century? (70 marks)

Discuss Pope's wit and creativity as seen in his poems. (100 marks)

Pope continues to draw upon his concept of the ideal nature of man from Epistle I. This implies that he will be wise to acknowledge beforehand that he is rather ignorant of the ways of God, who has supreme yet mysterious authority over every aspect of the universe. His philosophy verges on fatalism in the first epistle, which moves on to an optimistic approach in the second poem. Pope discusses ideas from human science to correct the position of man in the natural order of life, in other terms, the 'Great Chain of Being'. Man may give in to vices and trespass on areas he should not tread upon, particularly in their zeal to achieve greatness equal to Providence. To prevent this iniquity, he has to maintain control over his self by following his reason and developing the strength of his will. Self-love, as Pope asserts, is another means of achieving this sense of equilibrium between good and evil. While habit and experience can guide his reasoning, his instincts will have the inherent freedom to spur man into creative activity. Without instincts, which is most natural and God given, no creature can exist as a sentient being.

The contradictions to such a doctrine,as Pope proposes, lie in his affirmation of man having to look within himself, and using this intrinsic knowledge to judge other systems of nature. At the same time, he expounds on man's social purpose, and self-love as being social, which will evidently weigh upon his outlook on life. Like Locke, he dwells on the philosophy of empiricism which refers to man gaining knowledge through the senses. He further goes on to argue that all this ultimately pans out according to the whims of God. The verse ends with the sudden lines:

"See! and confess, one comfort still must rise,

Tis this, though Man's a fool, yet GOD is WISE." (293-94)

which still leaves the readers unclear about the intent of Pope as he doesn't discuss it more than this, and shifts to the aspects of man and society in Epistle III.

"An Essay on Man" has been disapproved for having been written possibly on the behest of Lord Bolingbroke and influenced by his ideologies. However, it contains some of Pope's inventive concepts of nature and universal system, and his attemptatoptimist theodicy. It is likely he was inspired by the works of thinkers like, Locke, Lord Shaftsbury and Leibniz. The "Essay" may not be a genuine work on theology or even philosophy, nevertheless it shows Pope's craft of the heroic couplets, his insight and range as a poet.

Check your progress

1. Why is the first part of the 'Augustan Age' called the 'Age of Pope'?

   (Hint: Because Pope was the most prominent literary figure at that time.)

2. What were the significance of and purpose behind Pope's writing of *AnEssay on Man*?

   (Hint: It was his attempt at philosophyto describe man's place in the universe.)

3. Can his works be studied without drawing factual and historical inferences from his life?

   (Hint: He can be read in the light of new criticism)

2.7 Summing Up:

Pope was one of the greatest minds of his age, and no study of eighteenth-century literature can be complete without his mention. The corpus of his works shows his keen observance of contemporary society, its virtues and flaws, substantiated by his profound learning of classical and modern literature. The influence of natural science and European philosophy also manifest in his writings, so the themes of his

works are often varied, and help him endure as a critic too. He is best known for his satires, which some regard as superficial vendetta, deficient of complex ideas, but cannot deny his rhetoric and felicity. The motifs he chose to compose upon have more to deal with humanity in general and less with particular agendas. His writing had a moral bent; he judged and criticized all that he deemed unethical. Despite structural defects in his work, Pope's intellectual and epigrammatic prowess continue to intrigue and expand Popean scholarship.

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Unit 3

Alexander Pope

Supplementary Unit

3.1 Objectives After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Learn how to read Alexander Pope
- Evaluate various aspects of Pope's poetry
- Learn about major poems by Pope

3.2 Introduction

Alexander Pope was born in the year 1688 in London, and lived till the age of 56, finally resting in 1744.The year of his birth is significant as it was the time of "The Glorious Revolution", also known as the "Bloodless Revolution" of 1688-1689. This revolution confirmed the rule of Protestant monarchy and removed the possibility of Catholic power in England, apart from other political changes in the government. This historical piece of information is relevant to

understanding Pope as it was crucial in molding his childhood. Pope's father, Alexander Pope, was a wealthy linen draper residing in Plough Court, London with his second wife, Edith Pope (née Turner) who had her only child at the age of forty-four. Both of Pope's parents adhered to Roman Catholicism and were therefore subjected to the anti-papist laws of the time, reinforced by the Test Acts. These laws prevented Catholics from partaking in most public and governmental activities; they were denied the rights to attend schools, universities, or teach there, nor could they live anywhere in the premises of London. Pope's family therefore moved to Whitehill House at Binfield, few years after he was born. There Pope got acquainted with other Catholics living nearby, some of whom were prominent figures and later influenced his writing. John Caryll, Teresa and Martha Blount were his closest friends from this region. Pope began writing from an early age and his works began to garner the attention of the London literary circle. He constantly travelled to and fro between London and Berkshire till 1715, after which his family relocated to Mawson Row at Chiswick. Under the aegis of the nobleman, Richard Boyle, Third Earl of Burlington, Pope secured a residence for himself and his aging parents at Chiswick in 1716 which was nearer to London for his work affairs. Because of the penal laws, he still couldn't live in the city though he regularly frequented it. Other than the grief upon his father's death in 1717, Pope led a busy social life there for three years. From 1719 to the rest of his life, Pope lived in his villa, styled after Palladian architecture, in Twickenham, a rural but fashionable place for wealthy people. He therefore earned the title the 'Wasp of Twickenham' for his well-known, acerbic remarks on individuals he disliked

3.3 How to approach the poet:

Aside from this basic introduction, the following points need to be kept in mind for an over-all understanding of the writings of Pope.

Religion: Since good public schools and universities were inaccessible for the Catholic community, Pope got educated through the efforts of priests like John Taverner, Thomas Deane, William Mannock, and his aunt Elizabeth Turner. Pope's early education at Twyford and John Bromley's, among other small Catholic schools, seem negligible compared to the immense learning he taught himself. His self-taught education was free from doctrinal restrictions and covered a wide range of books, manuscripts, languages, and so on. However, Christian faith was pervasive throughout his life and manifested in certain forms, seldom overtly, in his works. He had read a number of

controversial books from his father's library collection, despite the latter's demurralon it. Unlike his parents, Pope had thus grown to be an "Occasional Conformist", not devoutly Catholic, "taking the sacrament just sufficiently often to avoid any of the prescribed penalties as a Recusant" (Willson 2). Scholars have found Pope's Catholicism shapedaround that of the Dutch humanist and Catholic priest, Erasmus and the French Renaissance philosopher, Montaigne. Pope's religious commentary was never vituperativetowards Protestantism or the Anglican church, which would have been disastrous for him during the time of the reigning monarchs; nor was it a denunciation of Catholic beliefs. Rather he criticized the more general failings of both sects, human tendencies of going overboard in the name of their faith. Such ideas and other sectarian observations can be found in his works like *An Essay on Criticism*, *Messiah: A Sacred Eclogue*, *The Rape of the Lock*, *The Dunciad*, *Essay on Man*,and in some of his Epistles and translations.

The Enlightenment: Pope lived during the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment, a philosophical movement which spread across Europe between the 17th century. And 18th century. It carried forward the analytical thinking of the Scientific Revolution, stressed on intellectual reasoning, empiricism and rationalism as the foundations of learning and knowledge. It ushered in the ideas of scientific progress, reductionism, liberty, fraternity, individualism, tolerance, and changes in the society and government. It challenged religious orthodoxy, advocated skepticism, and endeavored to separate the church from the state. Pope and his contemporaries, like Addison Swift, and Dryden before them, were undoubtedly influenced by much of the Enlightenment thoughts. Pope's writings show that he was quite familiar with the works of several thinkers of the era- John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, George Berkeley,Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, andDavid Hume among others. His emphasis on reason, human mind and nature, goodness and personal freedom evokes the spirit of the Enlightenment; it is best exemplified in his epistolary *Essay on Man* which states that "The proper study of mankind is Man" (EM, II: 2), and is summed up in the final lines, "That VIRTUE only makes our bliss below; And all our knowledge is, OURSELVES TO KNOW"(EM, IV: 397-98). His work was similarly appreciated by philosophers like Voltaire, Hume, Condillac, and Kant.

Milton and Dryden's Influence: While Pope certainly emulated the poets of antiquity, namely Ovid, Aristotle, Martial, Homer, among others, he also well-read in the verses of Chaucer, Spencer and Shakespeare, Donne and Vaughan. Pope was quite familiar with the

works of the Restoration Age writers- Wentworth Dillon, John Oldham, Earl of Rochester,Charles Sackville and Mathew Prior.Apart from the French writers of the time, like Nicolas Boileau, Pope was greatly influenced by the works of Milton and Dryden. Milton has been hailed as one the greatest poets of his age. His influence can be seen in the works of many succeeding writers, including Pope, who writes of him as one of the "great landmarks"[1]in the history of English poetry. He used the standards of epic, pastorals, elegy, and wrote contentious poetry on Christianity, paganism and political matters. The themes and style of his epic, *Paradise Lost*, can be seen in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, *The Dunciad*, and *Essay on Man*. Both poets also draw upon Ramism, the rhetoric of Petrus Ramus: from Milton's *Comus*,*Lycidas*, and *Art of Logic* to Pope's *Pastorals, Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* and *Essay on Criticism*.Next to Milton, Pope ardently admired the writings of John Dryden, whom he regarded not only a foremost poet but also a distinguished critic. He praised Dryden in his poetry, such as *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* and *Horace Imitated: Epistle I*. In his letter to Joseph Spence, he wrote of the Poet Laureate, "I learned versification wholly from Dryden's works, who had improved it much beyond any of our former poets, and would probably have brought it to perfection, had not he been unhappily obliged to write so often in haste"[2]. They were the purveyors of the neo-classical values, glorifying the Augustan writers and principles, with their heroic-couplets and mock-heroic satires. Several works and translations of Dryden, including *Absalom and Achitophel*, *Mac Flecknoe*, *ReligioLaici*, *The Hind and the Panther, Palamon and Arcite*, are praised or echoed by Pope in his own literary output.

Society and Neoclassicism: English society by the late 17th century seemed to have taken a turn for the worse. Inclined towards material greed with rapid industrial growth and changing economy, the morality of the aristocratic society had degenerated while emerging working class were on the rise, either imitating the manners of the upper society or deriding them.In place of the court and universities, coffeehouses were largelyfavouredby people to assemble at, dispersing every kind of news, from gossip, trade, and daily affairs, to literary, philosophical, and scientific discussions; the common folks could be seated next to the academicians and politicians. While on one side

[1] From "Conversations with Joseph Spence" in *Alexander Pope: The Major Works* edited by Pat Rogers, pp.574.

[2] Letter to Joseph Spence, a good friend of Pope, dated March 1743; from "Conversations with Joseph Spence" in *Alexander Pope: The Major Works* edited by Pat Rogers, pp. 573.

there was the Enlightenment and intellectual progress, on the other there was a steady decline in scruples, as the Puritan age, which had enforced high moral ideals and righteousness, also receded. Corruption and licentious behavior pervaded in most corners of the royal courts, palaces and households of the nobility. The upper society was preoccupied with fashion, wine-drinking and indulged in scandalous activities. All this was mocked by playwrights like Wycherley and Congreve, both of whom were well acquainted with Alexander Pope. In poetry, Pope carried forward and strengthened the neoclassical values like his idol, Dryden. They felt that along with the society, art and literature had also degraded in quality. To them, the ancient Greek and Roman writers were paradigmatic of superior aesthetics, cultural and ethical values. The neoclassical poets took up the traditional mediums of the classical authors, such as the satires of Horace, Juvenal and Seneca, to reflect on mankind, reason, and order in contemporary society with a sense of decorum and righteousness. Pope was a master in this field; most of his works like *An Essay on Criticism*, *The Rape of the Lock*, *The Dunciad*, *Eloisa to Abelard*, and the *Epistles*, demonstrate his skilled adaptation of the epic forms, along with his impressive wit and moral standing.

3.4 Important Poems

An Essay on Criticism: Pope had started working on this poem since 1707 and it was published anonymously in 1711, becoming his first independently appearing work. Its title professed the basic intent of the poem- to offer directives on how to engage in literary criticism and become an efficient critic. The Essay is composed of three parts, wherein he lays down the rules and conditions that writers and critics should follow to produce good qualityliterature. In the first part, he writes:

'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill
Appear in writing or in judging ill;
But, of the two, less dangerous is th' offence
To tire our patience, than mislead our sense. (*Essay on Criticism*: I, 1-4)

The poet states that is an offence, both to write in incompetent, hackneyed way, and to praise such kind of works while not recognizing the worth of better writing. Since “true genius” and “true taste” are virtues that people are rarely gifted with, they should strive sincerely to achieve such requirements. Aspiring poets should follow

the exemplary works of the Ancients, like Homer and Virgil and learn from them. Critics should look for such values while judging works of art, and only commend them only if they are almost as good as the classics. Most people are born with good taste, but outside factors, "false education' and misguided opinions obstruct their path to meritable work. The proper way is to first study one's own abilities and shortcomings, before looking for it elsewhere and fostering irrationality. One has to only let "unerring Nature" decide how to cultivate the qualities to pursue being a good poet or judge of poetry:

First follow Nature, and your judgment frame
By her just standard, which is still the same: (EC:I, 68-69)

The ancient poets possessed such wit and genius and therefore should be studied thoroughly, along with understanding the rules bestowed by Nature before taking up any critical exercise.

In the second part, Pope addresses the critics further by citing the various reasons their judgment can become impaired and constrained. The critic will need to recognize and acknowledge these issues, and fortify his ideals before deliberating on any piece of work.

A perfect judge will read each work of wit
With the same spirit that its author writ:
Survey the WHOLE, nor seek slight faults to find
Where nature moves, and rapture warms the mind; (233-236)

Pride, inadequate learning, partial surmises instead of whole study, limited perception, difficult to please but quick to pass judgement, preference to certain genres, inconstancy, and envy are some of the causes of poor and indecorous critical judgement.It is most important that readers first educate themselves and learn to sharpen their own wits, rather than thoughtlessly relying on false critiques and inferior versifiers. Otherwise, such pretentious and unworthy works can be detrimental to the health of the society, "For each ill author is as bad a friend" (EC 519).This passage contains some of Pope's famous lines which have now reached axiomatic status:

A little learning is a dangerous thing (215)

To err is human, to forgive, divine. (525)

In the final part, Pope discusses what the ideals of a sound critic and proper poet should be, and the ways in which these can be attained and conducted. He mentions truthfulness, humility, and openness as the main virtues writers should possess; he should not claim to know

things he doesn't and remain reticent if his knowledge is insufficient. This comes with a sense "good breeding" and sincere behavior:

LEARN then what MORALS critics ought to show,
For 'tis but half a judge's task, to know.
'Tis not enough, taste, judgment, learning, join;
In all you speak, let truth and candourshine:
That not alone what to your sense is due
All may allow; but seek your friendship too.
Be silent always when you doubt your sense;
And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence: (560-67)

Pope however goes on to say that not all poets or critics can be just and true, some are inherently dull and will remain so without improving. Pope advises the reader to leave such vain people alone as there is no point in wasting time denigrating them; they will never learn to be wise.

Such shameless bards we have, and yet 'tis true
There are as mad, abandoned critics too.
The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,
With loads of learned lumber in his head, (610-13)

Such foolish people are often bold and remorseless, without much thought they will "rush in where angels fear to tread" (EC 625). Only those individuals who are impartial, genuinely erudite, have good culture and decent upbringing, who are humble and considerate yet can be bold and severe when needed, can be regarded as true critics or poets. Such poets once lived in ancient Athens and Rome, like Aristotle, Horace, Homer, Petronius, Quintilian and Longinus. In the golden days of Europe as well there were such geniuses, namely Erasmus, Raphael and M. Hieronymus Vida. He attributes similar noble and learned qualities to his precursors, apart from Dryden, like Boileau, John Sheffield, Wentworth Dillon, and William Walsh. Such poets/critic stood firm despite criticism, didn't chase after fame and appreciated justified praise. They didn't worry if their truths offended some, nor did they yield to flattery; as such they were aware of their flaws but willing to correct themselves. Critics thus served anethical purpose towards literature and society as their honorable judgement would foster a good reading community and inspire deserving poetical works.

Windsor-Forest: Pope drew inspiration from the rural backdrop of his home at the Berkshire vicinage of Windsor Forest to write this verse around 1704. However, it was completed and published only in 1713,

when the Peace of Utrecht was being signed. The poem may have begun in similar tropes as his *Pastorals*, with the idea of the Forest suggested by William Trumbull, a diplomat and statesman who also resided in Berkshire, and was influential in Pope's early career. The poem was modeled after Virgil's *Georgics* and William Camden's *Brittannia*, along with John Denham's Cooper's *Hill* and Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (Baines 15). With time, Pope developed it with a more political theme: celebrating the success of the Tory government, nationwide peace and prosperity under the reign of Queen Anne.

The poem is dedicated to George Granville, a Tory politician, poet and playwright, who was introduced to a young Pope through William Wycherley. He became a patron of Pope and encouraged the publication of his works;

GRANVILLE commands; your aid, O muses, bring!
What muse for GRANVILLE can refuse to sing? (Windsor-Forest, 5-6)

The poem celebrates the forest retreats of Windsor, with its verdant surroundings, water springs, woods, plains and valleys. They resemble the garden of Eden, where earth and water exist harmoniously and is visited by sylvan spirits and wood nymphs. The majestic lawns and open glades are interspersed with lush trees, bountiful crops and enveloped with blue hills. Even the gods would agree that the forest is indeed a sight to behold:

Not proud Olympus yields a nobler sight,
Though Gods assembled grace his towering height,
Than what more humble mountains offer here,
Where, in their blessings, all those Gods appear. (WF, 33-36)

The poet envisions that forest is frequented by divine beings of rustic nature, agriculture, fruits and gardens, like Pan and the goddesses Pomona and Ceres. Here, the harvests are full and plenty and the industries flourish, all under the peaceful rule of Queen Anne, the last Stuart monarch. But it took a long time for the land to reach its pinnacle; ages ago the country was rendered a wasteland of barren fields, wild beasts and savage forests. Despotic kings and tyrants ravaged the lands, spilling blood everywhere. The poet alludes to William the Conqueror in these lines, a barbaric hunter who caused a lot of destruction while creating the New Forest for his blood sports. The "heroes" of Windsor, the succeeding kings and queens, and their warriors, however, waged wars against tyranny to bring stability and

progress to the nation of England. Similar references are made to wars and battles fought in the past, along with current ones like the Dutch Wars and War of Spanish Succession. Under capable leadership, the forests could once again become a bounteous region, well known for its rich hunting and fishing grounds.

The shady empire shall retain no trace
Of war or blood, but in the sylvan chase;
The trumpets sleep, while cheerful horns are blown,
And arms employed on birds and beasts alone. (WF, 371-374)

The poem is in many ways an encomium to the reigning Queen for instilling peace in the nation after years of expensive warfare. The Windsor Castle and the Forest poetically represent the monarchy and the nation of England, symbolizing harmony and economic prosperity in the present as well in the future.

Thy trees, fair Windsor! now shall leave their woods,
And half thy forests rush into my floods,
Bear Britain's thunder, and her cross display,
To the bright regions of the rising day; (385-388)

The poet glorifies the rustic landscape of the countryside, which when entwined with the waters of Thames becomes an abode that can be graced by the gods and deities. After all the battles, travels, and exertions, one should then retire in tranquility, like Scipiodid in Campania, Atticus in Athens and Trumbull in Windsor. The stanzas are replete with allusions from myths and legends to the historical realities of Britain, and of Windsor Forest, in particular. Such idyllic beauty gets ruined when the nation is engaged in lengthy wars, but since peace has prevailed, England can regain her fortunes and rise again as a great nation.

Behold! Augusta's[3] glittering spires increase,
And temples rise, the beauteous works of peace. (377-378)

Framed within an Arcadian setting, the loco-descriptive poem extols the political process which brought concord to a historic land, and ensured the prospect of greater expansions. Pope ends the poem with a eulogy on peace, hoping to spend his "careless days" pleasantly in the quiet, green fields of Windsor.

The Rape of the Lock: Pope's friend and a senior poet, John Caryll narrated to him the incident where two Catholic aristocratic families

[3]A Roman term for ancient London, from 'Augusta Trinobantia', named after the tribe Trinobantes who lived there.

turned against each other over a trivial matter; Robert Petre, his friend, had shorn a lock of Arabella Fermor's hair. Caryll suggested Pope to write a reconciliatory poem to appease the disputing families, and thus Pope composed his heroi-comical verse in 1712, published anonymously. It was altered and republished with the inclusion of a Rosicrucian "machinery" in 1714. Having received the approval of Mrs. Fermor, Pope proceeded to write the poem in witty heroic-couplets, imitating the epic traditions, in five cantos.

The first canto states that a "dire offence" has occurred because of a trivial matter over love. For a strange reason a nobleman harmed a "gentle belle", who for obscure reasons, had rejected him as a suitor. Belinda is a wealthy lady, watched over by her guardian, the chief sylph Ariel, for the duty of sylphs was to protect and guide virtuous women. Ariel warns her in a morning dream of a probable threat from a man:

But heaven reveals not what, or how, or where:
Warned by the sylph, oh pious maid, beware!
This to disclose is all thy guardian can:
Beware of all, but most beware of man (RL: I, 111-114)

After being awakened by her dog, Shock, Belinda begins reading a love letter and soon forgets about the foreboding dream. She becomes busy with her extravagant toilette, groomed both by her maid, Betty and the invisible sylphs.

In the next canto, Belinda's beauty and exquisite ornaments are described as she goes aboard a boat admired by many young suitors. She rejects them gracefully, without offending anyone, and if she were at fault her loveliness would cover for it. She wore a beautiful pair of ringlets on her hair which fell down to her fair neckline. These locks attracted the Baron who schemed to attain them by all means. He prays upon his alter of love that he may possess those strands, while sacrificing his collection of trophies- items of his "former loves". The gods decided to fulfil half of his prayer. Meanwhile, Ariel, aware of the impending peril, summons the sylphs and sylphids to look after the chastity, possessions and appearance of the ladies, particularly Belinda. Himself guarding Shock, he selects fifty sylphs for the meticulous task of "tending to the fair".

Some thread the mazy ringlets of her hair,
Some hang upon the pendants of her ear;
With beating hearts the dire event they wait,
Anxious, and trembling for the birth of fate. (139-142)

The third canto praises the "glory of the British Queen" Anne, describing the ballroom scene at Hampton Court Palace. Belinda,

accompanied by a couple of knights, starts playing a card game called ombre. She is nearly defeated in the game by none other than the Baron but secures a win with a final trick. Soon refreshments are served in silverware and China cups with hot coffee fuming in them. Its vapours remind the Baron of Belinda's curls; he receives a pair of sharp scissors from Clarissa and makes several attempts to snip off the lock of hair. Several sylphs try to thwart his efforts, one even gets sliced in the process but heals as it's made of air. Ariel, in the meantime, reaches Belinda's thoughts and discovers "an earthly lover lurking at her heart". His power fades and here signs to the fate of the tresses.

The meeting points the sacred hair dissever
From the fair head, for ever, and for ever! (III, 153-154)

Belinda screams in horror while the Baron rejoices, 'the glorious prize is mine!".

In the fourth canto, Belinda is in a state of "rage, resentment, and despair" after the fateful event, left alone by a mournful Ariel and sad sylphs. It is then that a dark sprite visits the "gloomy Cave of Spleen" at earth's centre. The Cave is described as a depressing, morbid place of feminine afflictions wherein dwells the "wayward Queen", flanked on both sides by her hand maids, Ill-nature and Affectation. Umbriel expresses his desire to further torment Belinda as he had done to other women under the Queen of Spleen's orders. The Queen seems displeased, but concedes his request and gives him a bag and ampule of melancholia;

There she collects the force of female lungs,
Sighs, sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues.
A vial next she fills with fainting fears,
Soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears. (83-86)

The gnome finds Belinda being consoled by her friend, Thalestris and dispenses the bag's contents over them. Both become enraged and decide to avenge the loss. Thalestris asks her lover, Sir Plume to retrieve the "precious hairs" from the Baron. With his adorned snuff-box and fancy cane, Sir Plume demands the lock from the Baron who refuses, swearing never to return it. Umbriel then breaks the vial upon Belinda and sends her spiraling in sorrow. She curses the ominous day, remorseful of the unheeded dream and contemplates ripping the forlorn "sister-lock".

The final canto depicts how Belinda and her supporters struggle against the Baron's repudiation.

She said: the pitying audience melt in tears.

But Fate and Jove had stopped the Baron's ears.
In vain Thalestris with reproach assails,
For who can move when fair Belinda fails? (V, 1-4)

Clarissa takes a moral stance, discoursing on the futility of female beauty and exaltation of the same. Without "good-sense" and virtues, transient good looks serve no purpose. Women can dress up and dance all they want, but that won't keep diseases and dotage at bay. More valuable is to have a sense of duty and "good-humour", to rather do useful things as decay is unavoidable.

Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll;
Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul. (33-34)

The reasoned speech has no impact on the listeners, and Belinda gives a call to arms. A confusing fight ensues between groups of gentlemen and ladies; Thalestris kills with her glare, and Chloe with her frown, while her smile revives the slain. Umbriel gloats over the ruckus; other sprites watch while some join in. Belinda attacks the Baron with snuff powder, placing him at the point of her "deadly bodkin". The Baron pleads to be left alive and burn in love, while Belinda shouts at him to return her hair. The lock disappears from earth and ascends to heaven like a star, observed by the happy sylphs. It can now boast of being an object of envy across the skies forever.

This lock, the Muse shall consecrate to fame,
And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name. (149-150)

Pope uses principles of epic poetry to ridicule the vanities of high society and make its members realize their foibles. The characters in the mock-epic are far from heroic; they are parodies of the heroes and heroines of classical writs. Pope satirizes the wasteful indulgences, courtship rituals and frivolity of such people, also their petty quarrels and fixation with showy objects. The poem has the usual invocation to the Muse, themes of love, battles and adventures narrated in elevated style of epic tradition, but not meant to be taken as seriously: "it was intended only to divert a few young ladies, who have good sense and good humour enough to laugh not only at their sex's little unguarded follies, but at their own" (Dedication). It's more of an appraisal of the social conditioning among the nobility and of human inclinations at large.

The Dunciad: Pope and other members of the Scriblerus Club were already engaged in denouncing hack writers and inferior mass publications, when Swift further motivated Pope to devise the form of *The Dunciad*, which he first published as three books in 1728. It was amended with extensive prolegomena in *The Dunciad Variorum*, and the fourth book was added in 1742.In his letter to the publisher,

William Cleland justifies why his friend morally censures “obscure” and “poor” writers who create bad writing, “…we find that in all ages, all vain pretenders, were they ever so poor or ever so dull, have been constantly the topics of the most candid satirists, from the Codrus of Juvenal to the Damon of Boileau”. This explanatory note is followed by the fictional, Martin Scriblerus’s prelusive piece, stating how Homer’s Margites was ‘Dunce the First’ and Pope was dutifully imitating his manner. He reasoned how Pope was living in a time when printing was cheap and profuse, resulting in deplorable productions. So, he formed this allegory of Dulness “to dissuade the dull, and punish the wicked, the only way that was left”, thereby undertaking a great public service. Lewis Theobald, a Shakespearean editor, was placed as Tibbald, the hero of the first editions of this mock-heroic, and later replaced by Colley Cibber, playwright and Poet Laureate of the time in the New Dunciad.

Book I: In epic tradition, the verse begins with an invocation to the “Mighty Mother” called by “Dulness, Jove and Fate”. Britain is overtaken by Goddess Dulnesswho rules in eternal anarchy of the mind. Few good writers like Cervantes, Rabelais and Swift are mentioned while the goddess plans to “hatch a new Saturnian age of lead” (20) with her disciples like Heywood, Curll, Lintot, Defoe, Prynne, Blackmore, Phillips and Tate. She has to find a successor for the old Poet laureate, Laurence Eusden, and of all the writers, she prefers Bays (Cibber) the most.

In each she marks her image full expressed,
But chief in BAYS'S monster-breeding breast;
Bays, formed by nature stage and town to bless,
And act, and be, a coxcomb with success. (7-10)

Cibber is in despair with lots of unfinished works, incomplete poems and plays; he cursed his gambling and his fate, searching for sense but he had none. Then he looked at his plagiarized collection fondly, scenes “plundered” from Fletcher, Molière and Shakespeare; his other books were merely for display, the greatest of which were at the top shelves, unread by him and thus unharmed. Cibber gets inspired suddenly and grabs twelve voluminous book to build an altar with all his works forming the base, asserting his loyalty to Dulness. He considers joining the clergy, becoming a “gamester”, a writer of political parties, or a gazetteer, before he tearfully sets ablaze the structure. The light rouses the goddess who extinguishes the fire with a wet page from Thulè, an unfinished poem. She takes him to her “sacred dome”, from where she resides over the fools and Cibber calls it home.

Here to her chosen all her works she shows;

Prose swelled to verse, verse loitering into prose:
How random thoughts now meaning chance to find,
Now leave all memory of sense behind: (73-76)
Cibber gets anointed with opium, a monstrous fowl perches on his crown and he is hailed as King Colley of the Dunces amidst a cacophony of roars and croaks.

Book II: The verse opens with King Cibber proudly seated on a high, "gorgeous seat" gazed upon by the Dunces who shine with renewed dullness. Goddess Dulness calls for a celebration with "heroic games"; authors, stationers, clerics, bards, critics and courtiers, "all true dunces" appear before her.
They summon all her race: an endless band
Pours forth, and leaves unpeopled half the land.
A motley mixture! in long wigs, in bags,
In silks, in crapes, in garters, and in rags (19-22)
As a mock form of the Greco-Roman public sports, games are held where the dunces are to catch the figures of foolish poets placed before them. One is plump, well-bodied successful poet who is really just a "copy of wit" with 'a brain of feathers'. Lintot and Curll are top contenders in this race, eager to claim the prize and publish his works. Curll dashes forward but falls into his wife's morning filth and the crowd begins to cheer for Bernard Lintot. The former then prays to Jove for divine assistance but receives none from him. However, the Goddess Cloacina hears him and provides him with magical juices, giving him the speed to surpass Lintot. But the game is not yet won; each time Curll approaches the poets they disappear. Atlast, the teasing Dullness gifts him a shaggy tapestry which exhibits the works of her disciples like Norton Defoe, Tutchin, Ritpath and Roper. Next was a urinating competition, for the scandalous authoress Eliza Haywood. Osbourne ,Curll and Eridanus participate and Osbourne emerges victorious. In the tickling contest for authors, a young Welsted becomes the winner. The Goddess then announces a sport of loud noises which includes the braying of donkeys. The loudest of them all is Richard Blackmore. This is followed by a diving competition at Fleet Ditch in which the diver who enjoys the dirty sluice best will win the *Weekly Journals* and a leaden pig. The gazetteer, William Arnall dives to the depths of Styx and Lethe and resurfaces to win the game. The final game is for the critics to resist snoozing during readings of certain verse and prose:
To him we grant our amplest powers to sit
Judge of all present, past, and future wit;
To cavil, censure, dictate, right or wrong,

Full and eternal privilege of tongue. (75-78)
The listeners and readers eventually doze off due to the boring quality of the works being read and the games conclude.

Book III: While the rest of the dunces slumber in their respective places, King Cibber is taken by the Goddess to her temple where he sleeps with his head on her lap. In that ideal position , the king begins to have fanciful dreams , carried by a mad poetic sybil to the realm of 'Elysian shade'. On the banks of Lethe, Bavius can be seen dipping the poets' souls into the river of oblivion so that they lose their senses and become "impenetrably dull". Several writers, printers, booksellers abound these waters of Hades awaiting their reentry to earth. Cibber then sees a sage, who is Elkanah Settle, a rival of Dryden, just as bland as he was in life. Settle raves about the glory of Dulness and the nonsense, 'old and modern', that prevails in her kingdom which will now be circulated through Cibber. He takes him atop the Mount of Vision where Dulness' "boundless empire over seas and lands" can be observed, from the past and present to the future. The light of science partially threatened the Goddess' dominion, but those regions too got engulfed in the dark shade. Settle expounds how Great Britain will soon become part of Dulness' empire, with her army of 'poets, antiquaries, critics, divines, and freethinkers' (Rogers, 498):
And see, my son! die hour is on its way,
That lifts our Goddess to imperial sway;
This favourite isle, long severed from her reign,
Dovelike, she gathers to her wings again. (123-126)
Some people are reviewed for their usefulness and future services to the King, when suddenly the vision changes; miracles and prodigies appear before Cibber along with gorgons, dragons, fiends, giants, imps and monsters. They dance in mirth, representing the commencement of the King's rule, while Settle congratulates him with some worry as he faced such situation in his own time. Prophesies are made about farces, operas, and shows taking over the nation, with Dulness extending her reach towards theatres and even the court. Her sons will spread her glory in the fields of arts and sciences under Cibber who gets anointed again:
Now Bavius take the poppy from thy brow,
And place it here! here all ye heroes bow!
This, this is he, foretold by ancient rhymes:
Th' Augustus born to bring Saturnian times (317-320)
The prophesies, where learning diminishes, enrapture the King till he cries "Enough! enough!" and the vision fades away.

Book IV: The fourth book which is the longest of them, moves to the future where all the former prophesies have been fulfilled, and a new invocation is made to Dulness as the 'dread Chaos and eternal Night'. Disorder is seen prevailing over the landscape as the Goddess take her seat on the throne with her laureate son on her lap. At her feet are personified, enslaved figures of the sciences, the arts, and the muses with 'tenfold bonds':

Beneath her footstool, Science groans in chains,
And Witdreads exile, penalties and pains.
There foamed rebellious Logic, gagged and bound,
There, stripped, fair Rhetoric languished on the ground; (21-24)

Morality is killed at the order of Dulness but the mad mathematician is spared. Tragedy and Comedy are weakened by the events, but History and Satire, in particular, vow to avenge them. A harlot appears, singing praise to Chaos and scorning at the chained nine Muses saying that they will be tortured to submission. Chaos can begin its true reign but music aided by sense still stands in her way, upheld by Hendel, a renowned music composer. Likewise some great poets and publishers, unaffected by dullness are to be revived, murdered and minced to pieces. Her servants jostle for her favour, proclaiming how they will infiltrate schools and universities, and disrupt progress of science and arts. The Goddess then gets the lazy, indolent people around her employed in the study of 'butterflies, shells, birds' nests, moss, etc' but not anything useful to nature. She is assured of it by a representative of minute philosophers and freethinkers. The youth and others like him are ushered by Silenus to drink oblivion potion from the cup of the high priest Magus. The Goddess confers degrees and titles upon the priests, attendants, florists, botanists, freemasons, and instructs them of their obligations before her yawn of 'extraordinary virtue' shrouds over the realm and ends the verse.

Lo! thy dread empire, CHAOS! is restored;
Light dies before thy uncreating word:
Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
And universal darkness buries all. (653-656)

Alluding to Homeric traditions, *The Dunciad* is a vilification of the culture of England during Pope's times when he felt no genuine progresses were being made in arts and sciences, due to moral decline, false knowledge and education spread by mass productions. Satire, he believed, could be the way of thus challenging such 'dullness' to reinstall order and propriety in society.

3.5 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

3.5.1 Discuss how Alexander Pope's writing evolved from his early works to his final edition of *The Dunciad*.

Suggestions: Pope's early poems were regarding his forested surroundings and their rivers in the villages of Binfield. In the style of ancient bards, he wrote on themes of solitude, nature and tranquiltity as reflected in *Ode on Solitude*, *Pastorals*, and *Messiah*, while working on his Imitations and translations. He moved on to his other 'juvenile poems' such as *Ode for Musick* and *The Temple of Fame:A Vision*, however, the ideaof rest and retirement was further developed in *The Winsor Forest*. Addressing the standards and issues of good critical writing, he wrote *Essay on Criticism* and later, *Peri Bathous*. He took up the mock-heroic form for his satire *The Rape of the Lock* and the heroic epistle for *Eloisa to Ebelard*. His mature works discuss morality, virtues and ethics, as in the *Moral Essays* and *An Essay on Man*, and the condemnation of the deteriorating literary society in *The Dunciad*.(Use these points, while also discussing his other poems and translations, to elaborate your answer.).

3.5.2 .How was Pope representative of his age, the Augustan period? Elucidate.

Suggestions: Through Pope's works readers could observe the culture and society of the early eighteenth-century London. His versified political remarks reflect the situation in England, the conflicts between the Whigs and Tories, the wars, and the administration of the monarchy, particularly during the rule of Queen Anne. Pope mentioned the coffeehouse influence of the time, the scandals, philosophical thoughts, the rise of the reading middle class, advancement made in the arts and sciences in his poetical works. He also denounced the depravity and self-obsession of the fashionable aristocrats as can be seen in *The Rape of the Lock*. At the peak of his career, he attacked pedantic writings, pretentious and profligate authors, poetasters and critics, cheap booksellers and publishing houses which mass produced mediocre works; the apogee of such criticism is *The Dunciad*.

3.5.3 Broadly explain how you would situate Pope as a satirist.

Suggestion: Satire was Pope's most vindictive weapon which he wielded with an expertise that was unparalleled at his time. Influenced by Horace, Ovid, and Chaucer, Pope took to writing satires much like his idol, Dryden. Pope mastered the art not only to castigate his enemies but also to grapple with various societal and philosophical issues. His social, political and ethical satires were aimed at correcting human absurdities, immorality and vices through their disclosure and ridicule. Among his best satires (other than the popular ones), mention must also be made of his *Moral Essays*, *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, and *Satires and Epistles of Horace, Imitated*, and *Epilogue to the Satires*.

3.5.4. Describe Pope as a neoclassical writer.

Suggestion: Neoclassical poetry flourished in the eighteenth century under the capable leadership of Dryden and Pope. This epoch is also called the Augustan age with reference to the Roman Emperor Augustus whose reign oversaw some of the greatest writers of antiquity. Neoclassicism is therefore a revival of the spirit and standards of the classical Greek and Roman writers. Such poetry emphasized on reason, objectivity, and decorum, using the classical forms of satire, epic, pastoral, epistolary verse and so on. Biblical allusions, ancient myths and legends appeared frequently in neoclassical poetry, adding to its moral and often didactic nature. Pope emulated the great scholars and thinkers of classical times, and proficiently utilized the heroic couplet exhibiting his intellect and rationality. (Make a note of how it differed from the passionate poetry of the Romantics).

3.6 Summing Up

Pope's work is a rich mine of myriad observations on the contemporary society and culture, its follies and foibles, its conflicts and loopholes. He enriched himself through learning of classical and contemporary literature, and his writings show influences of natural sciences and conteinetal philosophy. He is essentially a man of satire which is characterized by its power and facility. The motifs he chose to compose upon have more to deal with humanity in general and less with particular agendas. His writing had a moral bent; he judged and criticized all that he deemed unethical. Despite structural defects in his

work, Pope's intellectual and epigrammatic prowess continue to intrigue and expand Popean scholarship

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Unit 4

Thomas Gray : Elegy Written In A Country Churchyard

4.1 Objectives

In this unit we shall read in detail Thomas Gray's widely known poem Elegy Written In A Country Churchyard. The poem was written during the second half of the 18th century and as such the poem is a transitional in nature. It marks the movement from the neoclassical poetry to that of the romantic poetry of the 19th century. At the end of the unit you should be able to

Understand the chief preoccupations of the Thomas Gray's poetry

- The socio-political milieu in which Gray wrote his poetry.
- Critically appreciate the poem Elegy Written Upon A Country Churchyard.
- Explore the poetic devices used in the poem.

- Appreciate the features of Classicism and Romanticism in Gray's poetry.

4.2 Introduction

This unit introduces you to the life and literary endeavours of Thomas Gray. While engaging with the works of the poet we shall also delve into the socio-cultural context of mid-eighteenth century England. The socio-cultural context in our understanding of the poetry of Gray is pertinent because it allows us to gain deeper insights the themes that the poet strives to convey in his poems. This should also us to understand the poet's over engagement with classic poetic stance as wrought out in his choice of formal styles against the literary practices of his times. This unit so as to understand the literary characteristics of the Gray's poetry we shall analyse one of his widely read poem '*Elegy Written Upon A Country Churchyard'*. As we progress with the reading of the poem we shall notice how the poem as an elegy is different from the other poems of the genre. Unlike other elegies that mourn the death or loss of a specific person, Gray's elegy partakes the characters of elegy through its deep exploration of universal human frailty. The unit apart from the themes elucidated above would also take into consideration the natural landscape through which the poet emphasises themes of death, loss, human frailty and the doomed nature our existence.

4.3 Thomas Gray: The Poet and His Times

Thomas Gray was born in Cornhill in 1716, London to economically struggling middle class parents. He was the son of an exchange broker and a milliner. He was the fifth of 12 children, and the only child of

Philip and Dorothy Gray who succeeded in surviving from diseases that usually surrounded infants during those times. The abusive nature of his father forced his mother to leave his father and as such he spent his childhood under the care of his mother. He received his education at Eton College. Gray happily recalls his schooldays in his poems. For instance, in his "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton" College Gray remembers the bittersweet memories of his schooldays. In terms of his physical built Gray was delicate in nature, however his intellectual abilities surpassed his delicate physique and as a young boy Gray spent his time reading and mostly abstaining from tasks involving physical strenght. He lived in his uncle's household rather than at college. His close friends at Eton were Horace Walpole, son of the Prime Minister Robert Walpole; Thomas Ashton, and Richard West, later to be appointed as Lord Chancellor of Ireland. The four prided themselves on their lively sensibilities, humour, and appreciation of beauty. In 1734 Gray went to Peterhouse, Cambridge. He found the curriculum dull. He wrote letters to friends listing all the things he disliked: the masters whom he described in his poem as being overtly proud and his classmates as sleepy, drunken, dull, illiterate. Intended by his family for the law, he spent most of his time as an undergraduate reading classical and modern literature, and playing Vivaldi and Scarlatti on the harpsichord for relaxation. In 1738 he accompanied his old school-friend Walpole on his Grand Tour of Europe, possibly at Walpole's expense. The two fell out and parted in Tuscany yet the tour gave Gray a new impetus in his literary pursuits and also enhanced his understanding of the mid 18th century English society.

On his return to England, Gray lived for a short time at Stoke Poges, where he wrote his "Ode on Eton," and probably sketched his "Elegy," which, however, was not finished till 1750, eight years later. During the latter years of his shy and scholarly life he was Professor of

Modern History and Languages at Cambridge, without any troublesome work of lecturing to students. Here he gave himself up to study and to poetry, varying his work by "prowlings" among the manuscripts of the new British Museum, and by his "Lilliputian" travels in England and Scotland. He died in his rooms at Pembroke College in 1771, and was buried in the little churchyard of Stoke Poges (Long 416).

The period within which we can contextualise the poetry of Thomas Gray has often been referred in the English literary tradition as "Pre-Romantic Poetry", "Age of Sensibility", "Mid Eighteenth Century Poetry", etc. Such nomenclature of the mid 18th century brings forth a gross dilemma of associating the poets of the age with established literary schools. While the literary trends emerging during this period had certain affinities with the classical Augustan age yet the very plurality of the issues that surrounded the age justifies its non associative tendencies with the works of the poets like earlier poets of the age like John Dryden, Alexander Pope or Jonathan Swift from the works of the poets of the mid 18th century like Samuel Jonson, Thomas Gray, William Collins. The reason being the writings of the latter poets assert the distinct culture and the socio-political scenario of the age.

The change in literary themes during later the mid eighteenth century may be attributed to the changing trajectories of the socio-political order, Unlike the poetry of Dryden and Pope which belonged to the early eighteenth century were sanctioned at times by the establishment, the poetry during this period moved away from propagandist themes and acutely reflected the broader social, political and even personal issues with a deep reflective tone. This transformation began roughly with the death of the Whig minister Robert Walpole in 1742 which led to a decline in the association of poetry with politics. This event also brought with it a steep change in

writing poetry. Poets now broke free the fetters of propagandist writings and engaged with elemental human themes in the literary endeavours. Therefore in the context of our study of Gray's elegy it becomes pertinent to examine the poetic preoccupations of the mid eighteenth century, its continuity and discontinuity with the writings of early eighteenth century writers like Dryden and Pope.

The age of Dryden, Pope and Jonson saw the established classical principles in the genre of poetry where the use of the heroic couplet set the tone of poetry and was considered to be the most dignified of all poetic metres. These poets favoured the classical style of Virgil (70 BCE- 19 CE), Horace (65 BCE-8 BCE), and Ovid (43 BCE- 17 BCE). They used satire as a poetic medium to critique the inadequacies of their contemporaries by drawing from the poetic models of these classical poets. However with the coming of the mid eighteenth century which in the context of our study is the specific time frame of Gray's Elegy as well as his other poems and also the works of other writers like Collins, Cowper, Goldsmith, Thomas Warton etc we identify a shift from the engagement with classical tradition to a more emotional and humane tone reflected in the poems of the medieval period. Poetry now moved away from the metropolitan spaces and cultures in search of an alternative setting – the countryside and the regions located in the periphery of England like Ireland, Scotland and Wales etc. This interest in the ancient poems of the English literary tradition led to the use of the old forms of poetry like the ballad and the revival of the past in the peoms of poets like Gray, Burns and Chatterton etc. A change in poetic sensibilities thereby followed where poetry came closer to human emotions, become more crude and coarse in form and favoured romantic free spirit in stark opposition to the elegance privileged by the early eighteenth century poets like Pope and Dryden.

Check Your Progress

1) Discuss the chief traits of the early 18th century poems?

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2) How is the poetry of Augustan Poets like Pope and Dryden different from the poems of mid eighteenth century poets like Gray, Collins and Copper etc ?

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3) Discuss the term 'Neo- Classical age' ?

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4.4. Thomas Gray and His Literary Works

Thomas Gray's Letters which appeared in 1775, reveal a creative mind at work as well as provide an excellent reading. However his fame as a poet can be attributed to a single small volume of poems that he owes his fame and his place in literature. These poems can be divided into three periods, in which we may trace the progress of Gray's emancipation from the classic rules which had so long governed English literature. In the first period he wrote several minor poems, of which the best are his "Hymn to Adversity" and the odes "To Spring" and "On a Distant Prospect of Eton College." These early poems reveal two suggestive things: first, the appearance of that melancholy which characterizes all the poetry of the period; and second, the study

of nature, not for its own beauty or truth, but rather as a suitable background for the play of human emotions (Long 396).

The second period shows the same tendencies more strongly developed. The “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1750), the most perfect poem of the age, belongs to this period. To read Milton’s “Il Penseroso” and Gray’s “Elegy” is to see the beginning and the perfection of that “literature of melancholy” which largely occupied English poets for more than a century. Two other well-known poems ofthis second period are the Pindaric odes, “The Progress ofPoesy” and “The Bard.” The first is strongly suggestive of Dryden’s “Alexander’s Feast,” but shows Milton’s influence in a greater melody and variety of expression. “The Bard” is, in every way, more romantic and original. An old minstrel, the last of the Welsh singers, halts King Edward and his army in a wild mountain pass, and with fine poetic frenzy prophesies the terror and desolation which must ever follow the tyrant. From its first line, “Ruin seize thee,ruthless King!”

to the end, when the old bard plunges fromhis lofty crag and disappears in the river’s flood, the poem thrills with the fire of an ancient and noble race of men. It breaks absolutely with the classical school and proclaims a literary declaration of independence (Long 396).

In the third period Gray turns momentarily from his Welsh material and reveals a new field of romantic interest in two Norse poems, “The Fatal Sisters” and “The Descent of Odin” (1761). Gray translated his material from the Latin,and though these two poems lack much of the

elemental strength and grandeur of the Norse sagas, they are remarkable for calling attention to the unused wealth of literary material that was hidden in Northern mythology. To Gray and to Percy

(who published his Northern Antiquities in 1770) is due in large measure the profound interest in the old Norse sagas which has continued to our own day. Taken together, Gray's works form a most interesting commentary on the varied life of the eighteenth century. He was a scholar, familiar with all the intellectual interests of his age, and his work has much of the precision and polish of the classical school; but he shares also the reawakened interest in nature, in common man, and in mediaeval culture, and his work is generally romantic both in style and in spirit. The same conflict between the classic and romantic schools, and the triumph of Romanticism,is shown clearly in the most versatile of Gray's contemporaries, Oliver Goldsmith (Long 397).

4.5

4.5.1 An Elegy Written Upon a Country Churchyard (1751)

An Elegy Written Upon a Country Churchyard is meditative poem written in the memory of humble rustic country folks who lie neglected in the graves of time after a life of hardship and sacrifice and at times brilliance that go unnoticed. The poem draws its popularity not only by dwelling on elemental human themes but also by exhibiting in language the melancholic nature of human beings. The poem contains some of the most quoted lines in English literature notably; "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen" and "Far from the madding Crowd's ignoble Strife." Let us now read the poem stanza wise and critically appreciate it.

4.5.2. Summary and Analysis

Lines 1-4: The poem begins with the speaker observing the day coming to a close: a curfew bell is being heard in the distance, a herd of cattle is moving across the grassland in a bid to return home, and labourers working in the farm are returning home. Amidst such a setting the speaker contemplates the village scenes and dwells on life in the countryside. The poem begins in a somewhat somber tone: the curfew bell as such do not merely rings; it "knells" signifying the mortal nature of human beings. The term "knells" usually refers to bells rung at funeral. Gray begins his poem by reminding us of the rather frail nature of our existence. **Lines 5-8**: Here the speakers tone is not mournful as such but rather pensive. The speaker in a very emotional manner dwells in the beautiful landscape that surrounds him. Even the flowing air according to the poet "solemn stillness." **Lines 9-12:** The sound of an owl hooting intrudes upon the evening quiet. We are told that the owl "complains"; in this context, the word does not mean "to whine" or "grumble," but "to express sorrow." The owl's call, then, is suggestive of grief. It should be noted here that at no pint does the poet refers directly to death but rather creates an atmosphere of sorrow and grief by using words that signify an atmosphere of gloom. This atmosphere at times appear symbolic of a funeral . **Lines 13-16:** It is in these lines that the poet directly draws our attention to the graves in the country churchyard. The readers are presented with two starkly contrasting images of death. There are heaps of earth surrounding the graves; the earth must be dug and its natural form disrupted so as to dig the graves. Note here that the form of the line here is slightly perplexing . It perhaps should be "Where the turf heaves"—not "where heaves the turf": Gray has played with the word order. The disruption of the organic pattern of words symbolically reflects the disruption of the earth so as to dig graves.

But by the same token, the "rude Forefathers" buried beneath the earth seem entirely at peace: we are told that they are laid in "cells," a term which reminds us of the quiet of a monastery, and that they "sleep." **Lines 17-20**: If the "Forefathers" are sleeping, however, the speaker reminds us that they will never again rise from their "beds" to hear the pleasurable sounds of country life that the living do. The term "lowly beds" describes not only the unpretentious graves in which the forefathers are buried, but the humble conditions that they endured when they were alive. **Lines 21-24**: The speaker then moves on to consider some of the other pleasures the dead will no longer enjoy: the happiness of home, wife, and children. Lines **25-28**: The dead will also no longer be able to enjoy the pleasures of work, of plowing the fields each day. This stanza points to the way in which the "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" contains elements of both Augustan and Romantic poetry. Poetry that describes agriculture—as this one does—is called georgic. Georgic verse was extremely popular in the eighteenth century. Note, however, that Gray closely identifies the farmers with the land that they work. This association of man and nature is suggestive of a romantic attitude. The georgic elements of the stanza almost demand that we characterize it as typical of the eighteenth century, but its tone looks forward to the Romantic period. **Lines 29-32**: The next four stanzas caution those who are wealthy and powerful not to look down on the poor. These lines warn the reader not to slight the "obscure" "destiny" of the poor—the fact that they will never be famous or have long histories, or "annals," written about them. **Lines 33-36**: These lines bring makes the readers realise the momentary nature of human beings. All living beings regardless of whatever materialistic possession they hold must one day surrender to the cold embrace of death. **Lines 37-40**: The poet in a tone of warnings tells the reader not to look down upon the modest graves of the village folks. According to the poet the rather sophisticated and elaborate

graves of the "Proud" beings are futile in face of the realization that all human beings must one day cease to live. In this context, the word "fretted" in line 39 brings forward two important connotations: on the one hand, it perhaps refers to an elaborate, sophisticated material design such as a cathedral ceiling; on the other hand, it also symbolizes that there is something "fretful," or troublesome about extravagant memorials of the rich people. **Lines 41-44**: The speaker observes that nothing can bring the dead back to life, and that all the advantages that the wealthy had in life are useless in the face of death. Neither elaborate funeral monuments nor impressive honors can restore life. Nor can flattery in some way be used to change the mind of death. Note here Gray's use of personification in characterizing both "flattery" and "death"—as though death has a will or mind of its own. **Lines 45-48**: The poet then looks into the lives of the poor country folks buried in the churchyard. He wonders what great deeds they might have accomplished had they been given the opportunity: for instance one of the farmer who lies buried in the grave could have become an emperor, and other fellows buried in the graves if given the opportunity could prove his worth as a musician. **Lines 49-52**: The poet while contemplating the potentials of the village folks comes upon a stark realization that the poor village folks would never be able to fulfill their artistic and political aspirations because their sight about the state of affairs of the world has been blighted by ignorance and lack of knowledge have forced these folks to a life of toil and penury. The poet articulates; "Penury," or poverty, "froze the genial current of their soul." **Lines 53-56**: In a series of analogies, Gray observes that the unutilized talents and passions of the poor are like gem in the sea or like flowers blooming in the desert which are far away from the center of things and are thereby unnoticeable. **Lines 57-60**: The speaker then compares these poor, uneducated people to three of the most famous and powerful people of the previous century: John

Hampden, a parliamentary leader who defended the people against the abuses of Charles I; John Milton, the great poet who wrote Paradise Lost and who also opposed Charles I; and Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England from 1653 to 1658. The speaker suggests that buried in this churchyard might be someone who—like Hampden, Milton, or Cromwell—had the innate ability to oppose tyranny, but never had the opportunity to exercise that ability. **Lines 61-64**: The poet reasons that with the proper education and resources, the poor might have "commanded" the government in the manner of any great leader. However, the poet is quite cautions while talking about power and he views power as a double edged sword. He argues that while a great ruler can receive applause and can ignore "threats of pain and ruin." A great leader can "scatter plenty," can offer prosperity, to a grateful nation. But on the other hand great power is often accompanied by diverse threats and the fettering of the individuality of the spirit that helps one live a free spirited existence . He also argues that simply governing to receive "applause" is a rather shallow and selfish motive motive. Moreover, "scattering plenty" implies that the wealth of a nation can be squandered by its rulers. Gray therefore adopts a very cautious stance while delving into the issue of power and its consequences once it intrudes the hearts and minds of the simple village folks. **Lines 65-68:** Here again reminds us that the lack of basic needs a have forced the poor to live in an impoverished condition and have "forbade" them from gaining access to the spaces of power. Gray, however while talking about the lack of access of the poor to the spaces of power adopts at this juncture a very dichotomous stand. He argues that if lack of basic needs and education have prevented these folks from gaining access to power, it has also prevented them from becoming corrupt and power hungry. **Lines 69-72**: Because these farm laborers were not in positions of power, the speaker reasons, they never had to ignore their own consciences. Nor did they sacrifice their

artistic talents (the gift of the "Muse") to "Luxury" or "Pride." **Lines 73-76**: In these lines the ppet continues his praise for the village folks. He argues that these folks are "far from the madding crowd" signifying that their existence is untainted by the mad rush for materialistic pleasure that accompanies life in the city. Gray here compares the city to a space which is grossly tainted by hate, scorn and mad pursuit for power and recognition. **Lines 77-80**: The poet notes that even if these common country folks were not powerful or great, and even if they do not have an elaborate memorial engraved they still deserve homage or tribute for the purity of spirit that they display. As such onlookers "passing" by their graves should "sigh" on seeing their graves. The word "passing" here is used very tactfully by the poet. It on the one hand perhaps refers to the onlooker, who "passing by" these graves and on the other hand it perhaps mean "in passing"—that someone seeing these graves should take just a moment out of their busy lives to remember the dead. And "passing" itself is a euphemism for death. As such there is no difference between the person who is passing by these un-ceremonial graves and the persons who is long buried in these graves because all living beings must one day succumb to the cold embrace of death. **Lines 81-84**: The poet clarifies that since the village folks have lived a simple life far removed from the pleasures of the materialistic society their tombstones too are very sober mentioning only their name , date of birth and the date of their death. Since these people lived a life far removed from the sophistication of the city no one wrote memorable verses or elegies to mark their death. Yet Gray argues that the simple tombstones with minimal information about the dead surpasses the extravagant elegies and poetic verses that are written in memory of famous personalities. Their tombstones in fact are elegies that bear in them testimonies of humble life, a life uncorrupted by materialistic pursuits and thereby attain a universal significance of a life lived with

humility and led by core human values. **Lines 85-88**: The poet argues that most people, faced with the prospect of dying and ultimately being forgotten, cling to life. Gray's use of paradox "this pleasing anxious being" suggests that "being" or living can be "anxious," filled with worries. But being alive is itself "pleasing" or pleasant when compared to death. **Lines 89-92**: The dead live in the very process of remembering and mourning. The poet suggests that this need so elemental in living beings that even from the grave the buried dead seem to ask for remembrance. The dead continues their existence in the memory of the living. **Lines 93-96**: Here the poet addresses himself. He reasons that since he himself has been mindful of the dead, and has remembered and praised them in this poem, perhaps when he is dead someone will remember him. **Lines 97-100**: The poet imagines how an old farmer would remember him after he is no more. The poet speculates, if the farmer that is "kindred Spirit" passes by the poet's grave perhaps the old man might spend some time describing the poet. The old man perhaps would say that the poet spent his time often wandering about the countryside at dawn. **Lines 101-104**: The old man would say that at noon the poet sat under the shade of the tress and enjoyed the natural beauty of the brook adjoining the forest. Lines 105-108: The old man would also according to the poet perhaps describe the mood swings that the poet experienced. Sometimes the poet smiled in scorn; "smiling scornfully" and talked alone in vain; and at other times, he would appear depressed; then again, sometimes he would look as though he were in deep pain seeing the state of affairs of the society that was standing in the crossroads of transformation in all spheres of life. The old farmer would according to the poet seeing the anguished state of the poet and also because of simplicities of his ideas about the world would perhaps come to the conclusion that the poet was "crossed in hopeless love." **Lines 109-117**: The poet continues his imagination about the old farmer

remembering him after his death. The old farmer who everyday saw the poet wandering around the country would one morning find the poet absent from his the spots which he frequented. The next day too, the old farmer would fail to notice the poet. However on the third day, however, the old man and his friends see the speaker's body being carried to the churchyard for burial. The poet here is imagining his own death and his subsequent burial in the same graveyard which he frequented. **Lines 118-120**: The last three stanzas refer to the poets epitaph; the way in which the poet imagines his epitaph will read. Through the epitaph, the poet prays the readers not to remember him as wealthy, famous, or brilliantly educated, but as one who was "melancholic" or deeply thoughtful and sad. **Lines 121-124:** The poet wants us to remember him for his elemental human qualities and not for the fame that he has achieved. The readers should remember him as a generous being; someone who had the generosity to remember in his poems the unnamed country folks buried in at a so prominent place. Because he was so generous, the speaker reasons, heaven gave him a "friend" — someone who would, in turn, mourn for him after his death. This friend is unnamed, but we can deduce that it is any "kindred Spirit" — including the reader — who reads the speaker's epitaph and remembers him. **Lines 125-128**: The speaker concludes by cautioning the reader not to praise him any further. He also asks that his "frailties," his flaws or personal weaknesses, not be considered; rather, they should be left to the care of God, with whom the speaker now resides. Thus the poem as an elegy not only remembers the struggles and hardships the surrounds the lives of the common human being living in some not so prominent country side and whose siber grave testifies the simple nature of such an existence but it also brings out the desire of the poet to be identified with the simple village folk and his wish not to remembered for his fame as a poet but for the generous life he had lived among the common people.

Check Your Progress

1) What is the purpose of Gray's poem? Discuss.

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2) How is Gray's Elegy different from the other poem of the genre? Explain.

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3) Describe the setting of the poem?

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4) How does the poet want his readers to remember him after his death?

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5) Discuss Gray's treatment of the theme of memorials in the poem?

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6) Discuss the significance of the epitaph in the poem?

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7) In what way do the memorials of the poor differ from those of rich city folks?

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1.6 Summing Up:

1.7 References and Suggested Reading

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Unit 5

Thomas Gray

Supplementary Unit

5.1 Objectives:

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Learn about important poems of Thomas Gray
- Answer probable questions relating to the poet and his text
- Critically Appreciate the themes in the poem

5.2 Introduction

Thomas Gray had a rather strained relationship to the social-cultural world which he inhabited. The strained nature with the society he inhabited is perhaps rooted in his own experience of the class

system. As such the figure of the poet in his poems often appears to be someone who is lonely, marginalized and rather alienated from the materialistic state of affairs that surround the society he inhabits. A sense of anxiety about world he had evaded permeates the poetry of Gray. Samuel Johnson described Gray as the son of a 'scrivener of London' and further describes Gray as: 'though without birth, or fortune, or station, his desire was to be looked upon as a private independent gentleman, who read for his amusement ' (Johnson).

Samuel Johnson who was a contemporary of Gray emerged as an important critic of Gray's poetry. As a neo-classicist Johnson highly valued regularity and smoothness of verse which he found lacking in the poetry of Gray, more particularly in his odes. However by the time Gray had established himself as transitional poet with his 'Elegy' Johnson in his work The Lives of Poet (1779) warmly praised Gray, Johnson in his work praised the universal appeal that the poem carried in its folds and argued that the poem echoes the sentiments of a large section of the society and thereby mirrors in a rather sentimental manner the societal realities those times.

In the last section we have already engaged in great detail with one of Thomas Gray's most anthologized poems. We have also explored the rather varied thematic preoccupations of the poem as well as delved into other note worthy poems of Thomas Gray. We have also specifically taken into account the socio-political and historical backdrop of the poem.

In this supplementary unit we shall explore some of the important poems of Gray and also delve into some important questions for your academic assessments. This should allow you all to gain a deeper insight into the literary endeavours of the poet and also enable you all to substantiate your answers in a better manner.

5.3 PRINCIPAL POETIC WORKS

1. Ode on Spring
2. Sonnet on the Death of Richard West.
3. Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.
4. Hymn to Adversity.
5. Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.
6. A Long Story.
7. Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat.
8. The Progress of Poesy-a Pindaric Ode.
9. The Bard— Pindaric ode.
10. Ode on the Installation of the Duke of Grafton.

5.4 Important Poems of Thomas gray

5.4.1 Hymn to Adversity

The word "hymn" generally signifies a song in praise of God; but in the poem the word hymn is appropriated by the poet to praise Adversity which has been personified in the poem. In this particular poem adversity has been attributed with certain divine qualities by Gray. Here Adversity here is regarded as a daughter of Jove (or Jupiter) , the supreme god in both Greek and Roman mythology. The first four stanzas of this poem are impersonal and objective, while the last two stanzas are personal and subjective. Adversity in the poem is the daughter of the supreme god Jove (or Jupiter). She is endowed with the power to reign the heart and mind of human beings. Adversity is very unforgiving in wielding her authority wields. She spares none from the noblest of beings to the evil minded people. She exercises her power on whosoever commits wrong deeds. The proud people at the hands of adversity are made to suffer acute pain, so that their pride is

eroded and they face the harsh realities of life. In other words, Adversity awakens the conscience of a human being who had ceased to listen to the voice of his/her conscience in his well off days. "Iron scourge", "torturing hour", and "adamantine chain" are examples of emphatic, forceful, and rhetorical expression.

5.4.2 Sonnet on the Death of Mr. Richard West

The theme of the poem “Sonnet on the Death of Mr Richard West” by Thomas Gray is definitely related to death and subsequent loss of someone who is close to our heart and soul . In this particular sonnet the emotions of loss and sorrow are used by the poet as the basis and inspiration of this sonnet. The poem begings with the descritption of a new morning; “ In vain to me the smiling Mornings shines”. However the smiling morning sharply contrasts with the emotional trauma that the poet is undergoing owing to the death of his friend. Similarly the description of the sun beginning to attain full glow and thereby brightening the universe also starkly opposes the darkness that the poet has found himself on the death of his friend. The poet because of the psychological trauma that he is undergoing at the death of his friend is unable to appreciate the lively landscape which he is inhabiting. Numerous gloomy adjectives are used to personify sorrow and it makes the reader feel sympathy for the narrator as he is the only one that feels this intense pain. “These ears alas! for other notes repine”. The pain of the poet aptly emerges in lines such as the above. The words “alas” and “repine” articulate the dejection of the poet. There is nothing in the outside world which can console his thwarted spirit.

The poet continues to explain that the past memories of his friendship with Mr. West induces in him a deep sense of sorrow. The fact that his eyes “require” a new object to gaze upon shows how desperate the narrator is. “My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine”. The melting

of the heart is a very typical way to convey pain or a loss of love. Again strong words like “anguish”, which means suffering or being distressed, are used to give the poem the mourning feel. “Melts no heart but mine” means that he is the only one who understands and feels this pain, he can feel no joy and he is all alone in this situation.

As the poem progresses the poet realizes the futility of the ritual of mourning. He argues that his cries cannot be heard by his dear friend, “I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear”. His loneliness is further aggravated by his realization that there is no one to console him and that his dearest friend has left him to fend for himself. His anguish as his tears have no meaning, no matter how much he cries, the narrator believes that his actions are useless.

5.5 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

a) Gray is regarded as a precursor of the Romantic Movement in poetry. Examine some of his more important poems to show the validity of this view.

Or

Bring out the romantic elements in Gray's poetry with special reference to some of his poems?

Answer : Thomas Gray's poetry divides itself naturally into periods in which it is possible to trace the progress of his liberation from the classic rules which had so long governed English literature into themes which appeal to the emotional nature of human beings. His early poems—Hymn to Adversity, Ode on the Spring, and On a Distant Prospect of Eton College are suggestive of two important strains which we find in his poetry. These poems are melancholic in nature and second these poems use nature as a backdrop in which the force of life exhibits itself. These two strains are further developed in poems such as The Elegy, The Progress of Poesy, and the Bard belong

to this period. In the later period of his poetic career his two Norse poems, The Fatal Sisters and The Descent of Odin establish him as a true pioneer of the romantic movement in poetry. In fact, his last poems show him as a true pioneer of romanticism. Gray's work as has much of the precision and polish of the classical school; but he shares also the re-awakened interest in Nature, in common man, and in medieval culture, and his work is generally romantic both in style and in spirit."

For instance the poem "The Progress" of Poetry" has several characteristics which inevitably link it with the romantic movement in poetry. The poem is steeped in imagination and emotional portrayal of the subject matter. For instance imaginative rendition of Helicon's harmonious springs; a thousand rills; the laughing flowers; the rich stream of music; the vales; the steep; the rocks; the nodding groves—all these conjure up a pleasing scene, suggestive of the abundance and fertility of Nature all are suggestive of Gray's affinity to romantic elements. Moreover, Gray in the poem in a very sensual manner brings out the image of the young lovers dancing around Venus, the goddess of love and beauty.

The glorious tributes which Gray pays to the various poets: Shakespeare, Milton, and Dryden also use symbols which in the 19th century would be the hallmark of poetry. The tribute to Dryden's "bright-eyed Fancy" bring out the appeal of Gray's poetry to universal human sensibilities.

Similarly the poem "The Bard" is not wanting in romantic characteristics. The poem, with its imaginative rekindling of an ancient and perished people, shows that reversion to the Middle Ages for inspiration which soon became the leading feature of romantic art. The subject matter of the poem is rendition of a 13th century Welsh bard in a situation where terror and wilderness are the order of the day. The poem is set in the mountains of Snowdon and there is also a river

called Conway which is flowing. The setting of the poem evoke romantic elements. The Bard referred to in the poem undergoes diverse emotional experiences. At the beginning of the poem the bard is anguished, which is followed by sorrow at the death of his companions. He is also overjoyed to see the ghosts of his dead friends. He greets the visions of his dead companions with a sense of triumph. , The Bard who speaks in the poem exhibits a spiritual power which tyranny cannot annihilate, and is superior in the end till death. This heroic quality is truly romantic.

The "Elegy" too abounds in romantic elements. The crowning glory og the poem lies in Gray's personal and rather sentimental approach to the mortal nature of human beings. The setting of the poem in a country church yard with signs of approaching nightfall and the twilight musing and the poet reflecting on the gloomy nature of human existence, and upon the eternal questions of life and death sets the tone of the poem.The whole poem is pervaded by an atmosphere of melancholy. The mortal nature of human beings nature of death, the impending extinction of one's abilities and the inabilities to sustains one's choices and dislikes as well as a gross awareness on the part of the poet about his impending death are full of pathos . The elegiac and reflective tone is sustained throughout a variety of turns in the thought. The very first stanza: "The ploughman homeward plods his weary way, And leaves the world to darkness and to me" evoke a sense of gloom and a separation on the part of the poet from the material world to a world of where fancy and imagination reigns supreme. The poem with its emphasis on both the personal and impersonal delves into the fate of common country folks. In its recognition of the dignity of simple lives that lived closely to the soil, and in its sympathy with their fate, the Elegy looks forward to the humanitarian enthusiasm which marked the later phases of romantic poetry. The sights and sounds described in the opening stanzas create a rural atmosphere and suggest

that interest in Nature, which in a highly developed form became one of the most striking features of romanticism.

Gray's poems therefore are an early indication of discontent with the Augustan (or neo-classical) orthodoxy. They are an early attempt to establish a freer and wider use of poetic language (despite Wordsworth's criticism of it). They offer in a sense is the starting-point for the Wordsworthian revolution.

(Note : This is an outline of the answer to the question. Students are expected to add to the outline of the answer from the study materials provided to them).

SAQ

a) Explain briefly the following lines:

"Oft did their harvest to the sickle yield,
Their furrows oft the stubborn glebe has broke".

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b) Comment critically on these lines:

"Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure."

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c) Explain briefly the importance of the following lines:

"Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth A Youth,
to Fortune and to Fame unknown"

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Note : The answers to these questions can be found in the line by line analysis of the poem An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard which has been undertaken in the previous unit

5.6 Summing up

We have discussed important poetic works of the poet. These enable you to gave soe understanding of the peculiar aura of Gray's poetic world. We have also discussed some of the important questions relating to the poet and the poem under discussion. From these, you will have clues to develop your own responses to the issues raised. We have noticed that the poem as an elegy is different from the other poems of the genre. Unlike other elegies that mourn the death or loss of a specific person, Gray's elegy partakes of the characters of elegy through its deep exploration of universal human frailty. The unit apart from the themes elucidated above would also take into consideration the natural landscape through which the poet emphasizes themes of death, loss, human frailty and the doomed nature our existence.

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Unit 6

JONATHAN SWIFT: 'A DESCRIPTION OF THE MORNING', ' THE LADY'S DRESSING ROOM'

6.1 Objectives

After a reading of this unit, you will be able to

- Make connections between Swift's poetry and his personal life
- Form an idea of his poetic output
- Assess swift as a poet
- Gain an understanding of the poems prescribed in the course
- Evaluate the above poems

6.2 Introduction

Jonathan Swift is a known figure in the scenario of the 18th century English poetry. It is true that Swift the writer of *Gulliver's Travels* has

, down the ages, overpowered Swift the poet. But if you want to familiarize yourself with the various trajectories of English poetry, you will see that Swift represents a distinctive trend, a particular poetic temperament. More specifically, a survey of the 18th century scene of poetic writing should invariably include Swift. In the general stream of English poetry from the anglo Saxon times till today numerous currents and countercurrents have flowed, various theories and practices of poetry have contested and coexisted. The poetic tradition is always a series of continuation and contrast. It is by identifying these continuities and contrasts that we can situate a poet of a particular historical time. For instance, the distinctiveness of Jonathan Swift can be immediately brought in sharp focus by placing him in contrast to the romantics. Swift's poetic practice is not detached from the socio-political contexts of the time nor does he create a 'poetic universe' of his own. He wrote vigorously but his poems are rooted in specific occasions of his life or the life of society and they hardly veer towards some sort of a philosophical pursuit. The peculiar romantic sensibility of Keats or Coleridge, their pursuit of the inner world of sensibility through visions of external, natural world is alien to Swift. Swift is clear, prosaic, witty, and patently anti-romantic.

6.3 Swift the Person

We have already discussed Swift's life in Block ** Unit ** of the paper "18th Century Fiction". You can refer to the relevant section of the said unit to understand Swift the person. Swift was born in Ireland, and for a considerable part of his life, he shuttled between London and Dublin. He saw the glorious Revolution, and the subsequent changes of regimes, and himself became part of the rivalry between the Tory and Whig party. He was an important public figure of the time, so crucial as to effect policy withdrawal at the British parliament solely by writing. His championing of the cause of Ireland is a known fact today. And the force of his satirical writing comes from his unrelenting criticism of the authorities and some of the ruling ideologies of the time. And it is in the midst of his involvement in public affairs that he wrote poems. It is true that his poems are more personal than his satirical prose writings, and that scholars have opined that if one

intends to reconstruct the personal history of swift, his poetry would serve as a valuable document.

In this section, I shall present before you some of the important facts of his life and offer a hint of their bearing in his poetry. These should help you further explore these links between Swift the person and Swift the poet.

During the time of the glorious Revolution Swift came back to England from Ireland and started living in Moor Park. This is when he developed dizziness, deafness, nausea , symptoms of what was called called Meniere's disease. He returned to Ireland to regain his health. His woman friend Stella who loved him all her life started suffering seriously from ill-health from 1826 onwards, and he was concerned for her. It was also a time when he too suffered ill-health. Despite these health issues he never ceased to write. Even some of his significant poems such as "Verses on the death of Dr. Swift", "The Lady's Dressing Room", "A Beautiful Young nymph going to bed", Strephon and Chloe" etc were written during his illness. It is no accident that idea and images of sickness and disease figure in many of his poems.

Swift wrote quite a few poems on women, and these reveal varying notes from that of friendship, loveand care, hstred, even disgust. Therefore, his relationship with women has attratced critical attention among scholars. As you know from Block ** Unit ** , Swift started his career as secretary to Sir William Temple in 1689. There, he was also entrusted with the task of tutoring a small girl named Esther Johnson, who is later known in his poems as Stella. Swift and Stella loved each other. In 1701 Stella with her friend Rebbeca Dingley travelled to Ireland only to stay close to the poet. Swift exchanged letters and even poems with Stella when he was working with the tories. Swift's personal relationship with women thrived parallel to his intensely active public life. At the time when Swift was busy propagating to have the English clergy exempted from the 'first fruit' publishing the "Bickerstaff Papers", he met another young woman named Esther Vanhomrigh, he calls "Vanessa". A few words about his relationship is quite in order. Before he joined St. Patrick's Cathedral as Dean, he wrote to her suggesting he was not going to stay in Ireland for long. Two months after he departed to Ireland Vanessa followed him there, hoping they might be married one day. Swift dismissed Vanessa silently, in fact, as said in the Critical Companion, he was in a precarious condition having to choose between the Stella and Vanessa

(6). Swift is also said to have secretly married Stella in 1716, although whether he married her or not is still a matter of debate.

Swift was open to friendship, and his association with Pope, Dr. Arbuthnot, John Gay, Matthew Prior, Lord Oxford and Lord Boiling is well-known. It is true that some of his poems about women have aroused controversy and he was also accused of mysogyny, yet he has good friendship with women, as I have hinted at.

The personality and the mental disposition of Swift is still a subject that arouses interest. Even as he was an important public figure of the time, a 'public intellectual', if you will, he also earned a bad name because of his supposed 'misanthrophy'. The accusation largely stems from *Gulliver's Travels* more than his poems per se. in a letter to Pope he states that he loved individuals but believed that man is an animal capable of reason. In other words, reason is not human being's intrinsic property. If, for instance, have read Gulliver's Travels, just look at the Yahoos and their disgusting beastiality. It is this utter abhorence of ugly beastiality of man that finally ailenates Gulliver from the human society even as he returns home. This aspect of Swift's mentality resonates well with his anti-romanticism. We shall discuss, in relevant context, how anti-romanticism constitituted an important strain of his poetry.

Stop to Consider:

Swift's poems about women are largely based on his personal relationship with women. "Cadenus and Vanessa" is a case in point. It is borne out of his attempt to negotiate his relationship with Esther Vanhomrigh. Swift was growing anxious of this relationship and feared that it could affect his love for Stella to whom he was devoted. You can see how this poem resolves this issue by tactfully upholding his friendship with the lady in a way that would not hurt her. Venessa, the 'ideal woman' in the poem, eventually expresses her love for a clergyman Cadenus, offers to teach him love, and the undertaking fails. Reason behind her rejection is not elaborated but it is suggested that 'dignity' and 'age' are two factores that refrailns the clergyman from reciprocating her love. What is preferred to love , finally, is the virtue of friendship and its moral stature:

"Friendship in its greatest height
A constant rational delight
On virtues basis fix'd to last
When Love's allurements long are past
Which gently warm but cannot burn."

6.4 Swift's Poetic Works:

Swift did not any separate anthology of poetry in his lifetime. However, various miscellanies were published at various times that included both prose and poetry. The Miscellanies in Prose and Verse was printed in 1711, and its second edition was published by Morphew in 1714. Along with Alexander Pope, the poet brought out Miscellanies of 1727-32 in four volumes. Faulkner edited Swift's Works and published in 1735. Bathurst brought out Miscellanies in four volumes in which the third volume was an anthology of poetry. (xviii)

Miscellanies in Prose and Verse contained thirteenth poems such as Verses Wrote in a Lady's Ivory Table Book", "Mrs. Harriot's Petition", "To the tune of the Cutpurse", "Vanbrug's House", " The Description of a Salamander", "baucis and Philemon", "To mrs Biddy Floyd", "The History of Vanbrug's House", "elegy on Patridge", "Apollo Outwitted", "A Description of the morning", "a Description of a City Shower", "Sid Hamlet".

On the other hand, of the *Miscellanies of 1727-32* the third volume contained such poems as "Cadenus and Vanessa", the stella poems, "Phyllis: On the Progress of love", "The Progress of Beauty, "The Progress of poetry" etc. apart from these a fourth volume was planned by Pope and eventually published in 1732, which contained the following poems—"The Journal of a modern lady", "The Country Life", "On Cutting down the Old Thorn at Market hill", "A Pastoral Dialogue", "Mary the cook-maid's Letter to Dr. Sheridan", "A Dialogue Between Mad Mullinix and Timothy", "Epigram on Seeing a Worthy Prelate Go out of Church", Dr. Sw—to Mr. P---c while he was writing the Dunciad", "a Soldier and A Scholar, "To Doctor D—l—y on the Libels Writ against Him".

In 1735 George Faulkner published The Works of Jonathan Swift whose second volume includes poems more than twice the number published in the Miscellanies. This volume of faulkner's edition has such poems as "The fable of midas", To the Earl of peterborough", "The Description of an Irish Feast", "stella at an Wood-Park", "A Receipt to Restore Stella's Youth", "A Pastoral Dialogue between

Richmond Lodge and Marble-Hill", the Market Hill poems, and ""A Libel on Dr. Delany and Lord Carteret" etc.

Here, I present a list of some of the important poems by Swift. You may go through them to gain a sense of his poetry. The list , never an exhaustive one for those who want to delve deeper, includes "A Description of the Morning", 'a Description of a City Shower", "Cadenus and Vanessa", "Mary the Cook-Maid's Letter to Dr. Sheridan", the birthday poems, "Strephon and Chloe", "verses on the Death of Dr. Swift", "On Poetry: A Rhapsody", "The Lady's Dressing Room".

Check your Progress: How does Swift's perosonal note expresses itself in his poems? Have a look at the birthday poems. And try to write down your response. (in 200 words)

6.5 Swift as Poet:

History of english literature offers you a good many poet's name. not all of them are equally great. At times idea of 'greatness' is less important than the notion of a poet's significance at a historical time. You must remember that Swift the poet inhabited a world which was far too different from the twentieth century in sensibility, frame of mind as well as literary-cultural conventions. Swift shared a certain mental atmosphere with poets like Pope and other Augustans. Even a sensible reader with discrimination of mind will have no qualms in admititing that Swift was less gifted as a poet than Pope. Swift was, unlike what happened to John Donne, not revived in the modern period. A renewed interest in Swift the poet in the later twentieth century is a fact, but it has to do with critic-scholar's renewed curiosity about his personality. In a way, Swift's poems are a sort of projection of the self through various persona. A renewed interest in his poems is caused by the fact that his poems are largely occasional and grounded in facts of his personal life. His Stella poems (look at the 'birthday poems' that I mentioned in the previous section) are a case in point.

Dryden, his distant cousin, once asked him to abandon his poetic vocation in response one of his immature juvenalia. Dryden's discouragement , however, turned out to be ill-founded. Poet Swift eventually became, and we have at least a few poems that reflect his poetic power and temperament. Yet, as Williams argues, his poetry suffers relative critical neglect because of his extraordinary achievement as a writer of prose and satire. Now, in what sense can we assess that Swift the poet was somewhat underestimated? Is it because he was seen to have little to appeal to schiolarly minds? Or is it because he was seen as a great eccentric?

Whatever the answer, the issue is worth exploring. For one thing, the idea of poetry as imaginative and creative writing is largely a legacy of romanticism. As argued by Derek Mahon, Swift's poems are not imaginative, and ideals of poetry in Houyhnhnmland in Gulliver's Travels are exactitue and precision of similes. (*Essential Writings*, 796) Reading his poems is not essentially different from reading his prose pieces, because what prevails in both is a kind of 'prosaic' consciousness. His poetry, as written in The Norton Anthology: English Literature, "shocks us with its hard look at the facts of life and the body.", Further, "It is unpoetic poetry, devoid of indeed as often as nt mocking at , inspiration, romantic love, cosmetic beauty, easily assumed literary attitudes, and conventional poetic language." (2303)

As mentioned earlier, Swift's poems are occasional. He continued writing poems as part of , or in parallel with his public-polotical engagements. This partly explains the fact that Swift does not have a soverein poetic universe or an independent poetic career. He uses masks and persona right, yet marks of his personal experience are at times all too evident even in some of his poems other than those on women. The perosonal in Swift never get transmuted into a sovereign poetic unity or expression of a general truth. It is naught for nothing that scholars suggest that a biography of Swift should consider many of his poems as documents of his personal life. What was, by the way, the poet's view of poetry? In the first place, he was against the view that poetry has a sublime effect on the reader. Many of his poems would testify to his resistenc eto the notion of poetic sublimity. Let us consider "On Poetry: A Rhapsody". It is a satire on young practicing poets. In the last section the speaker addresses the new poets and advises the to learn the art of flattery in order to woo the public and the rich patrons. The second section offers a few positive views on poetry

sayign poetry should issue forth out of some powerful impulse of the mindand the poet must judiciously choose the type of poetry that he intends to write. Further, the speaker contends that poetic creation involves an exercise in selfcorrecting, and is opposed to spontaneous outburst. The speaker, which is Swift's mouthpience here, advises the poets to publish anonymously because anonymity would incite impersonal criticism and review. And the poet would have no option but to bear whatever criticism his poem triggers, and should subsequently negotiate his weakness. As for the poet's weakness, Swift mentions the following: trivial turn, borrowed wit, inexact, vague similes, flat and dry description. In the poem Swift also endorses satire and lampoon as a legitimate mode of poetic expression. In fact, the political climate of england was conducive to this particular subgenre of poetry. Between 1720s and 1740s the Whigs reigned, and a body of writers affiliated to the Whigs emerged in the literary scence, and panegyrics was a favoured mode of expression. On the other hand, Swift and figures associated with the Scriblerous Club who had allegiance to the Tory party denounced such celebratory pubic poetry and wrote satire, instead. (*Eighteenth Century Poetry*, 446-447) thus, England's political climate and the Tory-Whig rivalry also had great bearing on Swift's poetry as on the work of his contemporaries. In "A Satirical Eegy on the Death of Late Famous General" Swift castigates John Churchil a Whig General by putting the form of elegy t satirical use. He uses the form of elegy here to articulate a rationale for the death of the General. It is stated that no widows or orphans wept at the funeral of this "famous General" because "he made them weep before he dyid".

Lavish use of simile and picturesque figures of speech, romantic obsession or yearning for beauty or pangs of separation from beloved—these go against the very timbre of Swift's poems. He resolutely avoids this self-consciously poetic style. In fact, a strain of anti-romanticism is a noticeable trait in Swift. Some of his remarkable anti-romantic poems include "The Furniture of a Woman's mind", "a Description of the morning", "The Progress of beauty", "The Progress of love", "The Progress of Poetry", "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed", "Cassinus and Peter", "strephon and Chloe", "Ode to the Athenian Society". What characterises this peculiar anti-romantic disposition is a perception of oddities, imperfection, disorder and crudity beneath the outward veneer of order, beauty and grace. The poems are not saddled with a typical monotonous tonelity: there are

variations in expressed attitudes to this perceived disorder from quiet acceptance, to bitter acrimony and disgust.

Look, for instance, at the birthday poems. The poet wrote seven birthday poems, all addressed to Stella. These are not steeped in conventional, Petrarchan tradition of love poetry. In "Stella's Birthday" written in 1721 there is a peculiar way in which he ofeers her complements. Thus he argument goes : like the sign of an inn fding over timme does not deter the traveller from making a visit , the fact of Stella's growing old and waning beauty does not make her less attractive to those who know her. But imagery built up and simile conjured carry laconic suggestions: linking Stella metaphoriclally to an inn, a commercial place, he dehumanizes her be it unintended or not. In "To Stella, On Her Birthday" the poet expresses his increasing inability for poetic expression, and hence his inability to pay a befitting tribute to Stella. Towards the end, he hands over the poetic responsibility of singing praises to Stella, to Patrick Delany (Companion, 560)

6.6 A Description of the Morning

6.6.1 **Context of the Poem**

6.6.2 **Reading the Poem**: The poem presents a scene so obvious that it usually escapes notice. An everyday scene of the city is presented with no prelude. This picture of the city comes alives through snippets of activities of people from various walks of life. It starts with a city street with hardly any visible except for occasional glimpse of some horse-ridden cart. A house-maid is seen to steal quietly away from her master bedroom , enter hers and untidy her bed to give an impression of having slept there. A careless apprentice removes dirt from his master's door but without disposing them off throws them around the floor, which won't now be visible to his master. Another woman Moll , however, works sincerely, mopping the floor and planning to clean the entry and the stairs, thus moving from task to task. Outdoors, a young man is seen cleaning tracks near the gutter in quite an off-handed manner. The tracks are carved out because of the continual coming and going of the carriages and the cleaner seems to be stripped of any motivation. Then the coal seller passing through the street with a low voice contrasts himself with the simney sweeper who advertises his trade with high-pitched scream. Off to the gate of some Lord, we

see the debt collectors gather to receive payment, while a seller of brick dust cries and the voice reverberates in the street. Now focus shifts to a a jail-keeper who is looking for prisoner thieves to return. They are let out at nightfor a fee, while indignation of their return is understandable. The concluding image is that of the schoolboys who are dragged along their way to school.

Apparently , this is a simple poem. Images are clear. The apparent meaning not very difficult to get. Upon closer scrutiny, you will notice that Swift here is unveiling a world of deception beneath the apparent spontaneity of everyday life of the city dwellers. As the name itself suggests, the poem does not offer any explicit commentary nor expresses strong emotions beyond the limits of description. But the putatively 'neutral' description turns out, insubtle ways, to be a sort fo revelation of the natue of humans, of a way of life. The first instance of deception if sexual corruption : and this deception lives not so much in her stealing away from her master's room as in her act of untidying her own bed. The use of rhyme in this scene (flown/own) and the economy of expression is instrumental in highlighting this deception. Betty is natually 'intelligent' enough to cover up her sexual infidelity, but put this whole story in succint way is suggestive of Swift's brilliant wit. The same act of deception recurs in the subsequent activities. The apprentice deceives his master in a way that evokes bemused smile. Moll is a lone exception here. Account of her 'dexterity' and imagined sincerity off-sets the critical tone of the poem. Even the youth's pointless job at the mouth of the gutter hardly evokes embittered reaction from the speaker.

Swift now shifts from the account of the visible to that of the auditory. The everyday struggle of livelihood has begun, the coal seller and the chimney sweeper set out to sell their goods and serivices. The contasting musicality of their call ('deep cadence' of the coal man is overpowered by the high-pitched note from the young chimney sweeper.) breathes life into the dull mechanical air of the everyday .

The theme of deception and corruption is further illustrated in the scene of the jail-keeper waiting the prisoners.

The turn-keys now his flock returning sees,
Duly let out a-nights to steal for fees.

Obviously this is a bit shocking. Like the description of Betty, these two lines reveals a more serious story about corruption seeping into the machienery of the state. What is important is the speaker's apparent lack of indignation at the enormity of the situation described.

The ‘returning sees’ of the first line fits well with ‘steal fo Fees’ of the next. The rhyming sound ‘s’ and the alliteration of ‘f’ create an air of coherence and easiness, and the practice of leting people steal’ for fees’ assumes an obvious factuality. Now the epithet “Watchful” in “watchful baillif” in the subsequent line is ironic. The bailifs are never wathful but utterly corrupt.

The poem concludes with the image of walking on to school. They carry school bags and fall far behind. they are probably a bit weighed down by the weight of the bag they carry. Or probably they lack enthusiasm to go to school. Whiever way we think, their journey to school is not up to normal expectation. And this image fits well into the preceding images of people at work because all of them exemplify a dichotomy between ideality and reality, the norm and the everyday practice. But the image of children heading for school also carries some other resonance. To explain this, we need to delve into the social world depicted in the poem.

Mostly, Swift focuses on lower- and lower-middle class life. Pretension, deceit and corruption permeates their life. True that there is a somewhat bemused glance at these petty shows of everyday work, but there is a harsh worls outdoors. The musical calling of the coal seller and the chimney sweeper also suggest a hard struggle for survival which is played out in the terrain of everyday life. Particularly, the fact that the chimney sweepers were young boys (remember the Simney Sweeper poems of William Blake) would strip out of the ‘shriller notes’ of any musical aesthetics. Also see the varying notes of the young and the adult on the London street as as a marker of ruthless ‘tonal’ competition in this struggle for making a living. Not that the lower classes alone suffer: the debt collectors hover at the gates of some Lord. There is an overall context of economic crisis. Education and prosperity fails to rebuild society on the basis of sincerity, honesty and truthfulness. Given this state of moral crisis lying beheath the venner of the everyday, schoolboys lagging behind because of the supposed weight of the bags prepares us to think anew about what is in story in the future of these children.

Check your Progress:

1. Do you think that the formal structure of the poem hinders the poet from articulating his ideas? Write a note on the connections between the form and the theme of “a Description of the Morning”

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2. How does the poet describe the everyday life of the city? Is it a neutral description or does it carry some attitude to the thing described?

6.7 The Lady's Dressing Room:

6.7.1 Context of the Poem: Context of the Poem: Written around 1730, the poem was published in 1732. It appeared in many editions in Swift's lifetime, and was one of the popular poems eliciting many responses. Much of the responses to this poem revealed something of a moral shock at a view of excremental reality which denigrates lofty, idealized view of women.

6.7.2 Reading the Poem:

Strephon undertakes a surprise visit at his beloved Celia's in her absence to learn about the actual reality of her private, domestic life. What he eventually learns about the real atmosphere of her intimate, private life is a shocking contrast to her public face. He closely observes her dressing, cosmetics, basin and the toilette and comes up with a realization that Celia, revered as a Goddess in public, is none but a mortal being subject to the bodily process of excretion and a woman who requires elaborate make-up to cover up her real physical self. In utter shock and revulsion at this discovery, he quits the dressing room.

However, this is a mere summary. Reading of 'The Lady's Dressing Room' would usher you into a different kind of human reality, dark and disgustingly laconic condition of dirt, filth, stench and excrement. The theme of the sharp contrast between the public image and private life, appearance and reality, presents itself right at the beginning. A 'haughty Celia' emerges from her dressing room after hours of meticulous preparation to dress herself up to sustain her self-image. Strephon sneaks into her room in the line of investigative enquiry, propelled by a will to know the true condition of her beauty and

nature. Whatever he experiences inside the room he meticulously describes, and wherever his discovery is too shocking to be put into language, the speaker steps in to articulate what is the same. The poem, thus, is organized through the threadbare narrative of a male visitor visiting a woman's dressing room, around a series of 'descriptions'. However, instead of insinuating any ordering principle, Swift juxtaposes items discovered in the room which resonates well with the shock and disturbance of the discoverer.

Of course, the descriptions have a design; they entail Strephon's movement in the room culminating in the discovery of the commode. Sequencing of these descriptions follow a principle of juxtaposition; there is no reason why the towels figure next to an account of the cosmetics; as the items are scattered all around the room's space, the inventory itself creates this sense of disorder. Entry into the dressing room of Celia enables Strephon not just to speculate but to experience this dirt, filth and disorder.

Strephon spreads the discarded dress of Celia soaked with sweat beneath the armpit, something that belies all protestations of romantic love- evidence of actual reality behind lofty, airy romance which does not require further linguistic description. As the speaker says, "In such a case, few words are best". Swift makes a distinction between Strephon and the speaker in the poem—a difference that keeps the reader from complete identification with the male protagonist. Strephon's discovery is not focused on any specific item but spreads across a plethora of things, and the descriptions conjure up a laconic reality. Strephon sees the various combs, instruments of the lady's self-fashioning, and the combs are "fill'd up with Dirt so closely fixt,

No Brush cou'd force a Way betwixt;

A paste of composition rare

Sweat, Dandriff, Powder, Lead and Hair"

Instrumental in the creation of the real condition of the lady's room is the choice of words to emulate a sensory experience. Just look at the word 'paste' and how it effectively represents filth as an experiential entity, and hence disgusting. Even this tactile and olfactory image of the 'paste' is meticulously, almost with a cruel scientificity, analyzed into the components-"sweat, dandruff, Powder, Lead and Hair". An elaborate description of the entire cosmetic items and devices characterizes the third stanza to illustrate the painstakingly elaborate process of making up. (In T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" we have a line that resonates well this:

“To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet”
Eliot sums up a reality of modern life where self-fashioning always covers up true identity and motive of people, through masking)
Next to the description of Celia’s cosmetics is that of the basin (“filthy Bason”). The theme of deception through self-fashioning suddenly gives way to the abominable sight of dirt in the basin: the ‘filthy Bason”, an immediate perception is confirmed, even aggravated by nominalised verbs such as ‘scraping’ and ‘scow’ring’, and discovery of acts in the concluding lines:
“A nasty Compound of all Hues
For here she spits, and here she spues.”
grotesque imagery of filth and dirt pervades the poem.
Strephon is no dispassionate observer of the interior of Celia’s room. Coarse remnants and filth evoke even a bodily response from him (“But O! it turn’d poor Strephon’s Bowels”) with their tactile, visual, and olfactory effects and their pervasive presence. Strephon finds himself surrounded by objects, while the objects are not devices used for beautification alone but also signifiers of the actual condition of Celia’s private life. Bristles on her chest, moisture of her toes, smell of her hat, -these deconstruct the image of a graceful, beautiful lady.
Strephon’s investigation culminates in the discovery of the toilette. It is the central object of representation in the text and occupies a considerable textual space. It starts with the silence of the investigator, which prompts the speaker to step in and say:
“Why Strephon, will you tell the rest?
And must you needs describe the chest?”
Strephon’s silence allows us to see that the protagonist is deeply shocked and disrobed by his discovery, and the tone of exasperation and anger at the reckless Celia’s exhibition of the commode can be discerned:
That careless Wench! No creature warn her,
To move it out from yonder Corner
But leave it standing in full Sight.
The speaker is angry not because of supposedly gross aspects of her living) but because of her lack of concern to hide these aspects from her enamoured visitor. The artisan’s craft to give it the look of a cabinet does not work, as Strephon “ventur’d to look in”.
the peculiar effect of this poem also comes from a tendency to almost halt the narrative pace to focus on the details of things and acts. Now, the act of opening the lid is a crucial action, and it fids its equivalence

in the Greek myth of Pandora's Box. Look at the two stanzas (lines 83-88 and 89-94). The coarse act of peeping into a commode finds a heroic allegory in the Greek myth—a patently mock-heroic style.

The speaker's frustration with Celia's recklessness is rueful, as the act of this disgusting discovery is already done. The dark, sublime dimension of "secrets of hoary deep" from Milton's Paradise Lost is transfigured into a coarse, laconic reference to excrement. For Swift the focus is on the body of Celia. It is a sexual, erotic body that attracts Strephon to her, but this erotic body, upon sharper scrutiny turns out to be an object of utter repulsion. Why her body repels is the fact of the natural bodily processes which Strephon fails to reconcile himself. Eroticism transfigures into an overwhelming sense of disgust; the sexual body, in turn, repels the suitor. Celia is reduced to her bodily process. The elaborate metaphor of mutton cutlet is worked up even as the mutton chops is grilled over clean fire, when a drop of grease falls into the fire, it turns into a stinking smoke making the meat smell bad. Similarly, Celia's droppings pollute the whole air.

Strephon's departure is curt, but his verbal lamentations of "Oh! Celia, Celia, Celia shits!" reveal the horror of her mortal, corporeal reality.

Strephon's lofty, romantic notion of the Goddess Celia is violently, almost disastrously frustrated by the sickening sight of her in her bodily functions.

But the experience does not make him any better or wiser. Before he enters the lady's dressing room he was trapped in a purist notion of beauty and gracefulness, an airy romanticism; after he departs from the same he is disillusioned with this romanticism, but the speaker notices another psychological trap-the excremental vision. His imagination is defiled now, linking every woman he comes across with this coarse excremental reality, and this anti-romanticism has turned out to be even more torturous:

"His foul imagination links
Each Dame he sees with all her Stinks;
And if unsavoury Odours fly
Conceived a Lady standing by"

All women are now reduced to this obnoxious bodily functions, and at its logical extreme, any occasional experience of stench becomes a veritable signifier of the physical presence of a woman. But this extreme denigration and imagined perversion of woman is not the view endorsed by the speaker. This is only posited by the speker as the

perversion of Strephon himself. He pities the protagonist for his gross partiality of human reality and his dark view.

"I pity wretched Styrephon, blind
To all the Charms of Women-Kind."

The poem ends with a note of optimism. The speaker hopes that Strephon one day gets rid of his dark view of women and restore his wonder-filled gaze. This time the wonder is all the more profound because of the realization that beauty can even spring from its antithesis:

"And bless his ravish'd Eyes to see
Such Order from Confusion sprung,
Such gaudy tulips rais'd from Dung."

6.8 Summing Up

In this unit you have learned about the personality as well as the poetry of Jonathan Swift. Besides, we present an estimate of Swift as a poet and provide an analysis of the poems prescribed in your course. the analysis offered here are not a substitute for actual reading of the texts. I urge upon you to go through the poems in the light of the comments made in 'Reading the Poem' sections. As I suggested, Swift is less poetic of you understand by the term poetic the lyrical, romantic strain prevalent in the early nineteenth century poetry. Yet, Swift is endowed with a different kind of poetic power. To fully understand the power of Swift the poet, you will have to read a few more poems apart from the ones prescribed. In what follows, we offer you some clues to how to read this Augustan poet, and some analysis of few poems as well as summary of some critical writings on him.

6.9 Reference and Suggested Reading:

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Mahon, Derek. "On Swift's Poems". *The Essential Writings of Jonathan Swift.* Edited by Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins.W.W.Norton & Company, 2010.

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Unit 7
Jonathan Swift: "A Description of the Morning", "The Lady's Dressing Room"

Supplementary Unit

7.1 Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Have an orientation towards Swift's poems and learn how to approach him
- Learn the content and style of some of the key poems by Swift
- Look at his poems from various critical angles
- Discern various aspects of Swift's poetry

7.2 Introduction

Swift was an important poet in the eighteenth century. He uses simple and clear expression, avoids extravagant rhetorical ornaments and bombastic style, nor was is poetry characterized by imaginative quality and a sublime poetic sensibility. In other words, he is not a 'great' poet of English literature. Yet, Swift has his distinctive place in the history of English poetry. Historians of English poetry can exclude Swift only to remain innocent of certain fascinating dimensions of English poetry which the Augustan poet so glaringly represents. William Wordsworth states in the second edition of lyrical Ballads that there should not be

any great distinction between the language of prose and poetry. In Swift we see an interesting continuity between his prose and his poetry in terms of language, style and sensibility. There is a sort of prosaic consciousness running through his poetic compositions, and the gift of irony and satire is reflected in both media. His poetry may lack the ability to transport the reader to a far-off realm of imagination, but always provides her a reassurance of meaning. His poems are readable, have immediate effect, and display colloquial vigour. As you go through some of his poems, besides the ones included in the syllabus, you will feel the brilliant effect of Swift's art and learn about the poet's preoccupations with body, anality, sexuality, everyday life of the city, and a propensity to explore the ugly, grotesque and the laconic that is often covered up through an external gloss.

7.3 How to Read Jonathan Swift

As I already mentioned, Swift's poetry is not obscure. Apparently simple and clear language might provide you some reassurance, and you might be clear about the denotative meaning of the lines, yet to be a good reader of poetry you must have a feel of the peculiar poetic effect. Poetic effect in Keats would be radically different from that in Pope or Swift. You must evolve or orient your reading of the poems under discussion so that you become perceptive enough to see the poetic effect within the economy of the poetic texture. Poetic effect is an elusive quality, especially when the reader does not orient her reading in an appropriate way. (For instance, can you enjoy a Shakespeare sonnet while you read it off-handedly, as though you are reading a brief news report?) To understand a poem means to grasp this poetic effect, not merely to ask: what does it mean? In fact, meaning and intent are all part of this poetic effect. As for Swift, while you read, you need to equip yourself with these two questions primarily: 1. What are the poetic forms that the poet negotiates to express his meaning? What is Swift's poetic style? What is his poetic language? 2. What are Swift's ideas? Does he have certain preoccupations? Once you enrich yourself with some answers to these questions, you will intuitively develop an orientation towards his poems.

You can read "A Lady's Dressing Room" as an example of Swift's attitude to woman, or as an instance of his characteristic representation of woman. From an anachronistic modern point of view, Swift's poetic treatment of woman will definitely invite disapproval and criticism. But it should not deter us from seeing the larger issues of Swift's link to a literary tradition which is responsible for such representation. As you have by now learned, the poem figures a man who enters the bourdoir of a fashionable lady in her absence and discovers the entire paraphernalia of her cosmetics and dressing. But the dressing room scene also figures in works of some other British writers in the late 17th and early 18th centuries such as Thomas Killigrew's Parson's Wedding (1639), Mary Evelyn's Mundus Muliebris (1690), Roger L' Estrange's translation of Visions of Quevedo (1702), Joseph Thurston's The Toilette (1730) and Richard Ames's Folly of Love (1691) (Nekrassovski 3) As discussed by critics, the theme of voyeuristic visit to women's dressing room and discovery of cosmetic aids as a way to critique the vanity of high society and debunk preconceived sexual idealism goes back to Ovid and Juvenal. In his Six Satire, Juvenal presents the woman's dressing room as a site for her self-worship before she meets her lover and indulges in adultery. Her deliberate and painstaking self-fashioning might inflate her self-image but, as one Nekrassovski notes, Juvenal states that it is as easy to "disarm" such women. (2)Ovid's Remedia Amoris recommends men measures and ways to overcome the madness of love, one of them being visiting one's beloved way before she has time to present herself to any visitor.(3) Swift's poem responds to this long cultural tradition of anti-romanticism; whether his anti-romanticism is patently mysogynistic or not is an issue you can think about as you go through the poem.

7.4 Some of the traits of Swift's poetry

- In Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift the peculiar force emanates from the hard healization that one's death does not create any stirring in the life of the fellow beings. This harsh truth does not lead him towards any existential crisis or to the verge of the absurd.
- The urban Eclogues replicate the theme of classical pastoral. Only the action is transferred to the city. "A Description of the Morning" and "A Description of the City Shower' are urban pastorals, that draw on the pastoral tradition William Harrison

, John Gay also wrote urban eclogues. But the tradition of the serious pastoral is kept unhampered. In City Shower the language and its plosive force convey a peculiar distaste which go beyond a normal reaction. It was a commonplace sight among the city dwellers (Cambridge 188)but Swift does not overlook these drab, laconic commonplace. Diction is suited to expressions of this ugly commonpace, and departs from the vocabulary of the pastoral convention. Thus, criticism of the present is linked to departures from the literary convention which was the norm. the pastoral convention is used, but not repudiated.it is pertinent to mention that Swift's parody echoes, updates, trnasposes but never creates a radically new form nor attacks the model which Is transposed. He only attacks some external target.

- In prose we have assumed speakers, masks. In poems few beyond Death of Dr. Swift have such persona. In 'Frances Harris" it is not the persona, and Swift does not have any ironic distance with her. In fact, the self projected in the poems is coherent, the author presented as "sensible , but bossy, good-humoured but mistreated, driven by noble ideals but fated to encounter ingratitude and neglect." (Cambridge Companion 185)
- There is subtle but important distinction in the way Swift uses some devices than Pope. Pope uses parataxis but he insinuates some ordering principle among the items listed. But Swift avoids hierarchy and discrimination; the items are juxtaposed, as in the inventory of items found in the lady's dressing room. It is all a composite paste. It resonates well with the mental disposition of the horrified observer.
- Swift borrowed from a few preceding poets. And his poems are replete with intertexual references. But as for the case of borrowing and imitation, the preceding text is posited as host text upon which the new one stands as parasites. For instance, when Swift borrowed from Abraham Cowley, the latter's seventen century model is kept at a distance and not metamorphosed.
- Swift's public engagement is more intimately tied to his prose satire than poetry. However, there is a group of poems relating

to Ireland. It is said that the Drapier's letters played the key role in the controversy over coinage of William Wood. But, as Cambridge argues, he wrote some ten poems relating to the controversy. An important one is "A Serious Poem Upon William Wood". Furher , he has a poem on the Atterbury affair. " The Virtues of Sid Hamlet the magician's Rod".

- Swift delights in word play. He loves to stage incongruities. In mock-herioc fashion.Choice of words is careful , its effect is funny, humorous, derived many a times from the epic tradition, but applied to a rather laconic, even vulgar sphere. Sometimes cast in heroic couplets, draws on language of epic, the poem's subject is vulgar. Description of City Shower has its precedent in the Aeneid, Book I, and the flood in Aeneid, Book IV. The poem ends in a deluge that alludes to Genesis and Virgil's text. The extra syllabus in the lst line makes the line an alexandrine, elongated because of the force of the tide of refuge carried in its wake.

7.5 A Few poems by Swift: An Outline

7.5.1 **A Description of a City Shower**: It is a poem you can read in conjunction with "A Description of a Morning"—both of them are major description poems by Swift. The first stanza strings togther vivid everyday scenes to evoke a mood which is depressing and unromantic with city life as the background. A cat stops her tail in anticipation of rain, and a city dweller plans to dine somewhere nearby to rid himself of the trouble of the impending rain. One named Dulman—note the imagined mental disposition implicit in the name itself—gets stuck in the coffee house. The rain, as you may see, is stripped of any romantic import, and creates something of an impasse all around. Rain also entails the return of pain, of problems with 'hollow tooth'.

The antiromantic import of rain is enhanced and amplified through a very unusual and grotesque metaphoric association of shower with a scence of a gigantic drunkard vomiting. In this metaphoric palne, rain is a working maid's coquetry, while the second person ("you") haplessly pleas to heaven too get rid of the dirt (both physical and mental). Look at the association Swift sets up between 'aslant rain' and the maid's uninhibited flirtation. The second person's

comic trouble here is no less interesting. Rain has not washed off the dirt but leaves a coating of it all over the garment of the subject.

Rain's havoc is conspicuous in the third stanza when women dash off to the shops and save themselves from rain with the pretension to bargain. The law student pretends illness and gives an air of calling a coach, when all discourses run in excess. A seamstress walks hastily with an umbrella while steams run down the umbrella. Rain also impels people of all classes, professions and ideologies to shelter in a shade. It also creates opportunities to resolve political and ideological conflicts among Tories and Whigs. (You may , however, look at how this political affiliations had an important bearing in his life and work). Rich young man sits impatiently as rain is falling.

Images of filth and dirt proliferate in the fourth part of the poem, with rain water overflowing in all netwroks of city canals and streaming together in great gusto only to show the filth—dung, rots, dead fish, blood and so on. The description of the routes of various streams across London becomes a ploy to expose the uglier aspects of the city. While people of all strata come together under a shed, dead animals and stinking rots come together to be part of an exhibition of dirt and ugliness.

7.5.2 **A Beautiful Nymph Going to Bed**: the poe was first published in 1734 in a pamphlet which also contained "Strephon and Chloe" and "Cassinus and Peter". The source text used by Swift contains a moral agenda of advising young men from being deceived by the outward beauty of a woman, but the poem pushes to an extremety the contrast between the outward beauty and actuality. You may also read John Donne's poem "To His Mistress Going to Bed" whose parody it is.

We can relate it to the two description poems ("Morning", City Shower") already discussed. It pertains to the same London life whose seamy side is explored. An attractive woman prepares for bed, she removes cosmetics, unravelling the ugly truth beneath the veneer of beauty. The "beautiful young nymph", an epitome of ethereal beauty, turns out to be a prostitute who has contracted syphilis. To be sure, it militates against the representation of woman as in the cavalier love poems where love finds a hyperbolic expression. Two aspects of the

woman's dismantling are in sight: a catalogue is presented of the ornaments that adorned her body and items that covered her ugliness, and a description is offered of her nightmares. The fear and anxiety of the prostitute over deportation to Jamaica as punishment meted out to prostitutes or of being brought to prison lends some amount of sympathy to the protagonist. On the other hand, the self-righteous church is satirized because of the liaisons its officials maintain with the prostitute.

7.5..3 **Strephon and Chloe**: This is another popular poem by Swift published in 1734 with "The Lady's Dressing Room" and "Cassinus and Peter". Like in other scatological poems, here Strephon realizes that his romantic , idealistic image of his beloved Chloe is unfounded as she is a mere mortal being with all bodily functions. She, Strephon thinks, is 'faultless' in her beauty, "so nice", and "so genteel" , a "divine creature" living in an ethereal realm beyond the gross and earthly terrain of natural , bodily functions. He also develops an anxiety over approaching her on the wedding night anticipating her reaction to his physical grossness. He fears the risk of physical intimacy with such an ethereal being, pondering on whether "a Nymph so chaste as Chloe" would allow a "brutish man" to touch her. His real experience of sighting the woman frustrates all his expectations, as he discovers his beloved in her gross natural function. However, Strephon and Chloe differ from "The Lady's Dressing Room" in that it does not end in a note of utter frustration and revulsion. Though disillusioned, Strephon is enlightened to control passion through wit, prudence and good nature.

7.6 Other Study Suggestions:

7.6.1 "The Comedy of Swift's Scatological Poems" by Thomas B. Gilmore, Jr. is an important critical text on Swift's poetry which focuses on the comic aspects of the poems dealing with scatological themes. Scatological poems were largely ignored or neglected, as mentioned by Gilmore, and whenever they are read , embarrassment and outrage were usual responses. Critics like Herbert Davies opine that Swift satirized fornication as a Christian moralist. It is true that Swift explodes the ethereal romanticism of the pastoral romances, but Gilmore's contention is to explain away his scatological obsessions

from the singular perspective of moralism would undermine the comc dimensions of the poems concerned. Criticism of beastiality beneath the surface of the polite society or exposition of ugliness covered up through the veneer of sophistication and beauty is a cetral thought in these poems, but there is , as Gilmore says, much critical reticence "in the face of the comic aspects"( ). Especially you may note the way Gilmore teases out the comic aspects in 'the lady's Dressing Room" and asserts that Strephon's compulsive search itself is the springhead of the comic. Associated with it is the incongruity between high expectations and "squalid actualities" ( ) or ugly realizations. Gilmore in this essay offer a reading of the five scatological poems, viz. "Cassinus and Peter", Strephon and Chloe", 'The Lady's Dressing Room", 'A Beautiful

7.6.2 Derek Mahon's "On Swift's Poems" is a valuable essay on aspects of Swift's poems. We learn , from Mahon's essay, that Swift's poems are not mere exercise of wit but are offshoot of some compelling emotions and register intense mental turmoil. However, the self expressed is not necessarily authorial self; very often it is a dramatic self or persona with distinctive voice and mental habits. Mahon connects Swift the poet with Swift the person, one who had admirers , nurtured political thought and was also connected to two women, a checkered life. An assessment of the effect of his poems cannot be detached from an understanding of his peculiar identity in the contemporary society. In other words, Swift did not develop his poetic idea into some sublime, impersonal vision. he did not transmute his poetic material into some grand, impersonal art work, and the aesthetics of his poems are intrinsically linked to his concrete situations of life and personal relations. It is only natural that most of his poems are occasional.

Mahon also opines that Swift was averse to the notion of serious, sublime, or heroic art. He deflates these ideas, and as we learn by reading some of his poems, he repudiates these ideas by linking them to the grotesque, laconic or the sordid. (You can apply this notion of Mahon's to your reading of "The Lady's Dressing Room" especially to figure out exactly what Swift does in his use of the myth of Pandora's box. Hasn't the heroic imagery from a classical tradition been used to describe a repulsively grotesque scene?)

Another significant fact is mentioned in the essay. Swift is called a narrative painter of the early eighteenth century life. You can

see how his poems basically describe the domestic and public spaces and represent disparate and innumerable objects and scenes of everyday life that elude the so called 'sublime' literature. As for the characters or personas that figure in his poems, many of them are largely drawn from the lower strata.

7.6.3 You may also read D.H.Lawrence's excerpts on an aspect of Swift's poem in "On Swift's Celia". Oleg Nekrassovski's "A Historical Look at Swift's Representation of Women in "The lady's Dressing Room" is another important study of the subject. Sarah Crouch's "surface Tensions: Representations of Skin in the long Eighteenth Century" will provide you with important insights into issues of Swift's obsessions with body as a nauseatingly ugly and grotesque thing. Crouch talks about how invention andpopular use of Microscope in the early eighteenth century dispelled the myth about the idea of body as a seamless whole, because it discovered the pores. Existence of pores brought new challenge in the wake of disease and epidemic. Plague brooke out in Marcellis in 17720. Fear of contagion and body's vlulnerability to invasive agents because of the porosity of the body was a great cause of anxiety.

Points to Ponder

Was Swift's aversion to the body partly conditioned by the historical time, the extent of development of science and technology and inventions? Was it, rather, at heart, a fear for some physical, physiological kind of catastrophe rather than a moral thought?

7.7 Summing Up

In conclusion, a few words about the historical significance of Swift as a poet and the use of satire as a popular medium would be in order.

In the early eighteenth century London emerged as a major prosperous European city. Poets set up analogy between Roe and London. In the beginning London housed about half a million

inhabitants, and was known for abundant diversions it afforded, such as the coffee-houses and chocolate houses. London'd wealth was derived fro commerce. One finds in this city not just whatever is found in Europe but things availed through overseas explorations and travels. London afforded a new urban experience, the experience of modernity. City , thus, became a poetic theme. It was also a space for poetic activity and experimentation in the eighteenth century. Mock-georgic, mock-heroic, mock-pastoral are such new experimentations. Yet these forms also had to negotiate the excesses and follies in urban life. A crucial aspect of this urban experience is new forms of socialization taking place through the public spaces of the coffee houses, clubs. From the late seventeenth century , as Raymond Williams, a new perception of the city developed which hinges on the new interactions that eventually generated literary activities. The society of the city is more heterogeneous and hybrid, allowing more specialized life roles and adopt diverse forms of cultural life. This urban sociability also loosened traditional social bonds and gave rise to a feeling of alienation and rootlessness. How poetry responded to or captured this changed situation? (532, 18th century poetry)Verse satire was one form. The seventeenth century verse satire provided the form for such representation. Verse satire was a key literary form which was engaged in the battle of words in the revolutions of 1640s and 1650s. in the 18th century poets like Ned Ward exploited potential of such form. He inherited from Samuel Butler (Hudibras) the verse form but also burlesque mode of vulgar travesty. In coffee houses men from lower classes read poems, pamphlets, newspapers, engaged in debates about church and states. Habit of reading transformed the politics of common people.

7.8 Reference and Suggested Reading

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Unit 8

Anne Ingram (1696-1764)

8.1 Objectives

At the end of this unit you all should be able to understand the following critical issues;

a). The socio-political issues that surrounds Ingram's poem.

b). Critically appreciate the poem "Epistle to Pope".

c). Understand the issues that surrounded the female in the 17th -18th century English society.

8.2 Introduction

This unit shall introduce you one of the life and literary endeavours of one of the leading female literary figures of 17th century England, Anne Ingram, Viscountess Irvine. In this unit we shall discuss in details the literary concerns which get reflected in the works of Anne Ingram. More particularly we shall analyse her famous poem "An Epistle to Mr. Pope" . While reading the poem our focus shall

chiefly pertain to how Anne Ingram's poem dismantles the stereotypical and rather straitjacket portrayal of female in the works of famous male writers of the age. The poem as such in its engagement with the "women question" emerges as a symbol of the feminine strength against a male dominated society. This poem was written in response to Alexander Pope's stereotypical and rather straitjacketed portrayal of women characters in his poem "Epistle II. To A Lady". Pope's poem is written in the form of a letter and is addressed to one of his close female friend Mary Blount. Pope's Epistle is pervaded with patriarchal overtones and is a satire on what Pope believes to be the weaknesses that are inherent in the physical as well as psychological sensibilities of a woman. The poem strives to establish a patriarchal understanding of an ideal woman. Anne Ingram's poem on the other hand strives to contest the patriarchal understanding of the female persona and argues that it is the male dominated society that has since time immemorial fettered the feminine spirit to the dictates of patriarchy and has deprived them of the rights enjoyed by the males.

8.3 The Poet : Biographical Details

Anne was born in the year 1696 to Charles Howard, the third earl of Carlisle and Anne Capel members of the high society. Her grandparents too had aristocratic affiliations. Her maternal grandparents were Arthur Capell, the first earl of Essex and her grandmother was Lady Elizabeth Percy. Anne spent most of her childhood in Yorkshire. By 1712, her parents were separated. However Anne remained close to her father and wrote a number of letters addressed to him. Her poem "Castle Howard" written in 1732 was a tribute to her father.

In December 1717, Anne was married to Rich Ingram who was her peer as well as a renowned politician. He served in the capacity of the

5th Viscount of Irvine. Four years after their marriage Anne's husband died of small pox in 1721. Their marriage was a childless one. After her husband's death Anne travelled all by herself to countries like Netherlands and France and also served in the capacity of an attendant to the Princess of Wales and also served the mother of King Geroge III.

After sixteen years of widowhood Anne married Colonel William Douglas, an MP from Kinross-shire against the wishes of her family. Ten years after her second marriage Douglas died on 5th August 1747. Anne Ingram spent rest of her life in loneliness and died on 2nd December 1764 and was buried near the grave of her second husband at Kew.

8.4 The Text : " An Epistle to Mr. Pope. By a Lady. Occasioned by his Characters of Women"

"An Epistle to Mr POPE. By a Lady. Occasioned by his Characters of Women."

Nec rude quid profit video ingenium.

By custom doom'd to folly, sloth and ease,
No wonder, *Pope* such female triflers sees:
But would the satyrist confess the truth,
Nothing so like as male and female youth;
Nothing so like as man and woman old;
Their joys, their loves, their hates, if truly told:
Tho' different acts seem different sex's growth,
'Tis the same principle impels them both.
View daring man stung with ambition's fire,
The conquering hero, or the youthful 'squire,

By diff'rent deeds aspire to deathless fame,
One murthers man, the other murthers game:
View a fair nymph blest with superior charms,
Whose tempting form the coldest bosom warms,
No eastern monarch more despotick reigns,
Than this fair tyrant of the *Cyprian* plains.
Whether a crown or bawble we desire,
Whether to learning or to dress aspire;
Whether we wait with joy the trumpet's call,
Or wish to shine the fairest at a
ball:
In either sex the appetite's the same,
For love of power is still the love of fame.
Women must in a narrow orbit move,
But power alike both males and females love.
What makes ye diff'rence then, you may enquire,
Between the hero, and the rural 'squire;
Between the maid bred up with courtly care,
Or she who earns by toil her daily fare:
Their power is stinted, but not so their will;
Ambitious thoughts the humblest cottage fill;
Far as they can they push their little fame,
And try to leave behind a deathless name.
In education all the diff'rence lies;
Women, if taught, would be as bold and wise
As haughty man, improv'd by art and
rules;
Where God makes one, neglect makes twenty fools.
And tho' *Nugatrixes* are daily found,
Flutt'ring *Nugators* equally abound;
Such heads are toyshops, fill'd with trifling ware,

And can each folly with each female
share.
A female mind like a rude fallow lies;
No seed is sown, but weeds spontaneous rise.
As well might we expect, in winter, spring,
As land untill'd a fruitful crop shou'd bring:
As well might we
expect *Peruvian* ore
We shou'd possess, yet dig not for the store:

Culture improves all fruits, all sorts we find,
Wit, judgment, sense—fruits of the human mind.
Ask the rich merchant, conversant in trade,
How nature operates in the growing blade;
Ask the philosopher the price of stocks,
Ask the gay courtier how to manage flocks;
Inquire the dogmas of the learned schools,
(From *Aristotle* down to *Newton*'s rules;)
Of the rough soldier, bred to boisterous war,
Of one still rougher, a true *British* tar;
They'll all reply, unpractis'd in such laws,
Th' effect they know, tho' ignorant of the cause.
The sailor may perhaps have equal parts,
With him bred up to sciences and arts;
And he who at the helm or stern is seen,
Philosopher or hero might have been.
The whole in application is compris'd,
Reason's not reason, if not exercis'd;
Use, not possession, real good affords;
No miser's rich that dares not touch his hoards.
Can female youth, left to weak woman's care,

Misled by custom (folly's fruitful heir);
Told that their charms a monarch may enslave,
That beauty like the gods can kill or
save;
Taught the arcanas, the mysterious arts,
By ambush dress to catch unwary hearts;
If wealthy born, taught to lisp *French* and dance,
Their morals left (*Lucretius* like) to chance;
Strangers to reason and reflection made,
Left to their passions, and by them betray'd;
Untaught the noble end of glorious truth,
Bred to deceive even from their earliest youth;
Unus'd to books, nor virtue taught to prize;
Whose mind a savage waste unpeopled lies;
Which to supply, trifles fill up the void,
And idly busy, to no end employ'd:
Can these, from such a school, more virtue show,
Or tempting vice treat like a common foe?
Can they resist, when soothing pleasure wooes;
Preserve their virtue, when their fame they lose?
Can they on other themes converse or write,
Than what they hear all day, & dream all night?
Not so the *Roman* female fame was spread;
Not so
was *Clelia,* or *Lucretia* bred;
Not so such heroines true glory sought;
Not so was *Portia*, or *Cornelia* taught;
Portia! the glory of the female race;
Portia! more lovely by her mind than face.
Early inform'd by truth's unerring
beam,

What to reject, what justly to esteem;
Taught by philosophy all moral good,
How to repel in youth th' impetuous blood;
How her most favourite passions to subdue,
And fame thro' virtue's avenues
pursue;
She tries herself, and finds even dolorous pain
Can't the close secret from her breast obtain.
To *Cato* born, to noble *Brutus* join'd,
She shines invincible in form and mind.
No more such generous sentiments we trace
In the gay moderns of the female race;
No more, alas! heroic virtue's shown,

Since knowledge ceas'd, philosophy's unknown.
No more can we expect our modern wives
Heroes shou'd breed, who lead such useless
lives.
Wou'd you, who know th' arcana of the soul,
The secret springs which move and guide the whole;
Wou'd you, who can instruct as well as please,

Bestow some moments of your darling ease,
To rescue woman from
this *Gothic* state,
New passions raise, their minds anew create:
Then for the *Spartan* virtue we might hope;
For who stands convinc'd by generous *Pope*?
Then wou'd the *British* fair perpetual bloom,
And vie in fame with
ancient *Greece* and *Rome*.

NOTES:

Title Alexander Pope (1688-1744), poet and translator, was one of the most influential literary figures of his era. His poem, "Of the Characters of Women: An Epistle to a Lady," was first published in 1735.

Epigraph *Nec rude quid profit video ingenium* Nor can I see what benefit can come from untrained talent (Horace, *Art of Poetry*, l. 410).

1 *custom* Traditional social practice or habitual behavior.

16 *this fair tyrant of the Cyprian plains* Reference to a woman whose power is derived from beauty and sex appeal; associated in classical mythology with Cyprus and the cult of Aphrodite.

17 *bawble* Variation of "bauble," a trinket.

19 *the trumpet's call* A reference to the Biblical tradition that a trumpet will sound preceding the last judgement (I Corinthians 15:52).

22 *For love of power is still the love of fame* Cf. Pope, "Of the Characters of Women, ll. 207-214. Irwin's line echoes Pope's l. 210.

37 *Nugatrixes* Female triflers; apparently made up by Irwin from the Latin "nugator" ("trifler").

38 *Nugators* Male triflers.

41 *fallow* Land left uncultivated.

45 *Peruvian ore* Gold.

47 *Culture* Cultivation.

50 *the growing Blade* The botanical world of plants.

54 *Aristotle* (384-322 BC) Greek philosopher and natural scientist; *Newton* Sir Isaac Newton(1642-1727), influential English physicist, mathematician, and natural philosopher.

56 *tar* Sailor.

61 *he who at the helm or stern is seen* The captain of a ship.

68 *heir;)* Printer's error; corrected to "heir);"

71 *arcanas* Mysteries, or secrets; *art* Printer's error; corrected to "arts."

72 *ambush dress* Dressing to entrap men.

73 *lisp* Speak.

74 *Lucretius like* Titus Lucretius Carus (c. 99-c. 55 BC), Roman poet and philosopher, best known in the eighteenth century for his poem, *De rerum natura* ("On the Nature of Things") which popularized Epicurean ideas regarding science and ethics. Irwin here references a central principle of Epicurean/Lucretian atomism: the random swerve ("clinamen") of atoms from their natural downward course.

86 *fame* Reputation.

90 *Clelia* Cloelia, Roman maiden famous for her bravery and courage; *Lucretia* Legendary heroine of ancient Rome, raped by

Sextus Tarquinius and committed suicide after her father and husband promised revenge on the Tarquins, eventually driving them from Rome and laying the foundations of the Republic.

92 *Portia* Porcia Catonis (70-43 BC); *Cornelia* Cornelia Africana, an example of virtuous womanhood.

101 *dolorous pain* Severe physical pain; Porcia is said to have lacerated her own thigh and endured the pain to prove to Brutus that he could trust her with his secrets.

102 *the close secret* Brutus's role in the plot to assassinate Julius Caesar.

103 *Cato* (95-46 BC), Roman statesman, father of Porcia Catonis; *Brutus* (85-42 BC), Roman politician, divorced his first wife to marry Porcia Catonis.

106 *gay moderns of the female race* Contemporary women dedicated to their social pleasures.

115 *Gothic* "Barbarous, rude, uncouth" (*OED*).

117 *Spartan* "Distinguished by simplicity, frugality, courage, or brevity of speech" (*OED*).

Source: *The Gentleman's Magazine* (December, 1736), p. 745.

Edited by Bill Christmas

8.5 Analysis of the Poem

Anne Ingram's " An Epistle to Mr. Pope" was written as a response to a poem titled Epistle II. To a Lady" by Alexander Pope. In the poem written by Pope women are portrayed in a rather misogynistic manner. Pope's poem is symbolic of the patriarchal nature of the 17th -18th century English society were women were ordained conventional roles and the feminine spirit was fettered to the dictates of a patriarchal society. In the poem Pope accuses women to be fickle minded, filled with amorous passions, hypocritical, illogical and having an unpredictable temperament. Ingram in her poem rebuts the misogynistic views of Pope and talks back through her poem to the institutuion of patriarchy. She argues that the dominating nature of the patriarchal English society have since time immemorial hindered the full flowering of the feminine spirit and have confined her to meek submissive roles that suits the ideology of the patriarchal society. She argues that the patriarchal society has prevented the female from attaining proper education and thereby have prevented the females from rebelling against the subjugation that has been normalized in the society. She posits that both the male and the female sex have the same elemental human traits. She further adds that there are many empty headed and illogical male; She uses the latin terms "Nugators… and nugatrixes" meaning frivolous and trifling to refers to such males. She further argues "women if taught would be as bold and as wise". So as to bring home her arguments She turns Pope's attention to the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome where illustrious taught women are of steady character, virtuous, learnt and hold high values. Women such as Cleolia (Clelia), a young Roman maiden held captive, swims the river Tiber to liberty and liberates her compatriots. Such women characters are symbolic of the courage of the feminine spirit and exemplify noble ideals. Lucretia another female character from Rome

Ingram argues can be taken as a symbol moral superiority. The physical and emotional abuse that she at the hands of the patriarchal Roman and her subsequent suicide acts as a catalyst towards Romans attaining a republican setup. Similarly Cornelia too in the poem emerges as a female character whose sensibilities are filled with dedication to her family. She also goes on to help the Gracchus brothers in defending the rights of the poor and landless Roman citizens. Portia the daughter of renowned Roman statesman Cato is also invoked in the poem by Ingram. Ingram argues that Portia is a symbol of reason and learning. She was not only well versed in the Roman philosophical tradition but also selflessly aided her husband Brutus. A visible symbol of her trustworthiness towards her husband was the very act of stabbing herself in the thigh so as to prove her fidelity towards her husband.

Therefore it can be well concluded that Ingram's Epistle more than a poem is a manifesto that argues for the need to understand the feminine spirit and also to view women not as individuals who are inferior to men but as individuals who are to be given equal rights that they have been denied at the hands of a male dominated society. Ingram counterattacks Pope's accusation on female incompetence and immorality presenting exceptional figures of women who are courageous in character, with immaculate virtue and who develop qualities by dint of education. Ingram as an egalitarian feminist who believes that men and women carry essential similarities as she argues in the poem "in either sex, the appetite's the same".

Poetic Form

Both Ingram's and Pope's Epistle uses the iambic pentameter and the rhyming couplet. The same poetic form is maintained throughout the

poem. The uses of Pope's poetic style and form is a tactical strategy employed by Ingram so as to reinforce her integral belief in the sameness of man and woman.

8.6 Suggested Readings/ References

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Unit 9

Anne Ingram

Supplementary Unit

9.1 Objectives: After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Learn how to read Anne Ingram
- Answer probable questions based on the text

9.2 Approaching Anne Ingram as a Poet

Anne Ingram (born Anne Howard) was born in 1696. Her father Charles Howard was the third earl of Carlisle and her mother Anne Capel too belonged to an aristocratic family and was the daughter of the Eral of Essex. Anne's parents did not appear to have a happy marriage and separated in 1712. Howver Anne remained close to her father because of similar intellectual interests and wrote numerous letters to him. The correspondence between Anne and her father reveal a woman of creative genius and a sharp intellect. Anne was interested in diverse intellectual pursuits which included theatre, politics, history

etc. She was acutely interested in the plight of the depressed sections of the English society which also included the plight of the women in a male dominated English society. Anne since her childhood enjoyed reading literature and was very fond of reading the classics and conservative pieces. She was brought up in castle Howard and was very fond of her home. Towards the latter part of her life she wrote a pome as a tribute to her home in Howard as well as to her father. The poem brings out the memories of her childhood and takes the reader on a mnemonic tour of the sate at Howard. The pome also brings out her affections towards her father. She writes

> "Carlisle, to thee I dedicate these lays,
> Reject them not because they sing thy praise
> ……
>
> Your children, servants, friends, these blessings share
> And feel the bounty of your constant care" (Kennedy, 121).

Anne was married to Richard the 5th viscount of Irvin in 1717. However her first marriage did not last long because of the death of Richard due to small pox in the year 1721. After the death of her husband Anne became deeply engaged with the social and political life of London and lived an independent life. Perhaps this phase of her life made her aware of her strengths as a woman and also imbibed in her a zeal to vo/ice the grievances that the women suffered at the hand of the patriarchal society. During thus phase of her life she made acquaintances with famous literary as well as political personalities of the age like Lady Mary Montagu, Horace Walpole and Alexander Pope. She travelled alone to different countries of Europe like France. Her explorations of the socio-cultural setup of other European countries made her realise that in comparison to England women in

countries like France enjoyed a more independent status. Anne earned her livelihood by working in different noble positions for the English royalty. She was chosen to be lady of the Bedchamber for Augusta, the Princess of Wales. In 1737 Anne against the disapproval of her family went on to marry Colonel Williams. Her second marriage too was childless and she was once more widowed after the death of Williams in 1748.

Her most famous poem entitled " An Epistle to Pope" was written in response to Pope's misogynistic views which he expressed in his poem "Epistle II. To a Lady". In the poem Pope argued that most women were amorous and lacked intellect. He wrote ; "Nothing so true as what you once let fall/ "Most Women have no Characters at all". In the poem Ingraam calls for the urgent need to educate women and open avenues for the full flowering of their elemental human spirit. Her poem mimics much of Pope's style and calls him out for not providing any suggestions on how to "ameliorate women's vapid minds and lives" (Thomas, 149). She ends her argument by calling for the "rescue of women from this Gothic state" .

9.3 Probable Questions

a). On the basis of your reading of Poem " An Epistle to Pope" bring out Anne Ingram's ideas about the status of woman in 17-18th century English society ? 10 marks

b) To whom does Ingram address the poem and what were the immediate circumstances that paved the way for Ingram to voice her concerns with regard to the status of the female ?10 marks

c) Comment on the poetic form that Ingram uses in her poem ? 10 marks

d) “But would the satirist confess the truth,
Nothing so like as male and female youth;
Nothing so like as man and woman old;
Their joys, their loves, their hates, if truly told:
Tho’ different acts seem different sex’s growth,
‘Tis the same principle impels them both.
View daring man stung with ambition’s fire,
The conquering hero, or the youthful ‘squire,

i. Who is the satirist referred to in these lines extracted from the poem ?
ii. What is Anne Ingram argument in the above quoted lines?

9.4 Further Readings

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Unit 10

ANNA LETITIA BARBAULD:

'The Rights of Woman', 'To a Little Invisible Being", 'The Caterpillar"

10.1. Objectives

This unit is an attempt to look at the prescribed poems of Barbauld. After going through this unit you will be able to—

- see Barbauld's stand on patriarchy and women's place in it
- see her ideas on motherhood
- understand her political views
- understand the unique character of her poetry

10.2. Introduction

Born in 1743, Anna Letitia Barbauld was one of those rare people who earned immediate literary fame and recognition with the

publication of her first collection of poetry titled *Poems* (1773). Besides being a poet, Barbauld was also a teacher, a literary critic, an essayist and a writer of children's literature. While she taught at the Palgrave Academy she wrote a number of books for children that were explicitly didactic in intent. As an essayist, she emphasised the fact that women have much potential to contribute significantly to the public sphere. As a literary critic, her anthology of eighteenth-century novels helped in consolidating the cannon. Her life spans both the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries and her work displays sensibilities of both the ages. Barbauld's poetry evinces strains of enlightenment thought as well as the celebration of nature and the individual which was predominant in nineteenth-century poetry. In fact, her poetry is recognised as proto-Romantic as it facilitated the development of British Romanticism.

As is well-known, the precocious and intelligent Anna Letitia Aikin was born to a family of Dissenters. This is noteworthy as the religious background of her family served as a very important influence in her creative enterprises. She drew a lot from her Dissent philosophy in her works which is confirmed by even a casual reading of the same. Her poetry takes up a lot of social and political concerns and they are informed by the Dissenter's stance of wariness towards all social structures and political endeavours. She does not endorse radicalism and mere disruption of order as the solution to all the endemic ills and evils, but she does provoke questions in the minds of readers that are aimed at a careful re-evaluation of prejudices and a questioning of the status quo. Among her radical and liberal views is her denouncement of the system of slavery and support for abolitionism. She was also supportive of the French Revolutionaries, but the consequent 'Reign of Terror' and France's declaration of war on England made her withdraw her support. Barbauld's radicalism is therefore a cautious or a prudent brand of radicalism, inflected with a certain amount of conservatism—resulting in a dialectical thought that shatters complacency.

10.3. Overview of Barbauld's poetic oeuvre

Barbauld covers a diverse range of topics in her poetry. Her first poetry collection simply titled as *Poems* (1773) show this diversity. She attends to political and national issues while also addressing the personal or domestic and the religious or spiritual. Her poem "Corsica" is a celebration of the spirit of revolution and the struggle for independence. But it also carries a caveat about the way justified revolutions may go awry. In her next poem "Invitation" she therefore retreats to a pastoral setting and from that location, she reckons the troubled world outside—hoping for a transformation. The series of hymns towards the end of the volume focus on appreciating the divinity and the humanity of Christ. Barbauld's dexterity in employing different poetic strategies is proven with some other poems like "The Groans of the Tankard", "On the Backwardness of the Spring 1771", "Verses Written in an Alcove", "A Mouse's Petition", etc., where she changes tack—but to serve the same purpose of promoting a visionary goal. In these poems she uses the satirical and the anti-pastoral mode to forward her critique. In her more personal poems such as "To Mrs P.—", "Characters", "On a Lady's Writing", "To Wisdom", "Hymn to Content", Barbauld addresses specific people or specific episodes in her life and deal with issues such as personhood, imagination, friendship, desire, etc. Other poems like "Songs", "Delia", "The Origin of Song-writing", "Ovid to His wife", etc., are self-reflexive in that they engage with the problem of writing and creativity, literary taste and sensibility, usefulness of artifice and what constitutes visionary poetry. Barbauld is also regarded as a major figure in children's literature. Although disparaged by Samuel Johnson for wasting her literary talent by putting out works for children, Barbauld's *Lessons for Children* and *Hymns in Prose* which were massively popular are hailed for making a considerable impact on the tradition of children's

literature. With these expressly didactic and pedagogic works, Barbauld infused a much-needed seriousness into juvenile literature.

10.4. Critical reception

Barbauld's literary career did not enjoy a steady reputation. Her work has also suffered from a lack of critical attention and it is only in the recent years with the rise of feminist literary criticism in the 1980's that her poems and other writings saw a revived interest and restoration in the cannon. Some of the reasons why Barbauld's works suffered from critical disrepute were because of the negative comments that she received from revered literary giants like Samuel Johnson and the Romantics. Johnson lamented Anna Letitia Aikin's marriage to the schoolmaster Rochemont Barbauld for the promising poet will now be primarily occupied with writing trivial poems for children. Wordsworth and Coleridge, who were initially effusive in their praise for Barbauld, changed their opinion about her and condemned some of her views. The Victorians were also not sympathetic to the poet as they saw her as a sentimental poet whose ambiguous and ambivalent poetry did not offer much value. Barbauld's works were thus dismissed even before they were taken up for a serious consideration and the poet thus gradually lost her footing and presence in the literary world. Many have attributed the beginning of this unfortunate and regrettable turn of events to the publication of her infamous poem "Eighteen Hundred and Eleven" in 1812 which drew severe flak. The poem which is considered as responsible for her literary downfall is critical of England's political condition. It is written in the manner of a prophecy about the nation's ruin due to its many hypocrisies and errors of judgement. This did not sit well with the nationalists of the day and both the poem and the poet were doomed to ignominy. However, when Barbauld died in 1825, she was recognised as one of the most important female poets of her time. And with the advent of feminist literary criticism, she finally recovered her

lost honour and place in literary tradition. Recent studies have discovered the importance of Barbauld's poetry which is, as already mentioned, marked by ambiguity, irony, ambivalence and open-endedness. These qualities have emerged as the strengths of her creative endeavour as they contribute to a richer meaning. Her poems continue to spawn engaging discussions on many concepts that are treated with subtlety and great nuance. Daniel P. Watkins says in his *Anna Letitia Barbauld and Eighteenth-Century Visionary Poetics* that feminist criticism has contributed a lot to uncover and underscore "the thematic gravity, subtlety of thought, stylistic range, and cultural awareness of her poetic output" [29]. But besides feminist scholars, other critics like William Keach, John Guillory, and Stephen Behrendt have looked at the ways in which Barbauld's thought and writing deal with pertinent social, economic and political issues of her age. They have discovered the "seriousness of her intellectual interest and the reach of her historical imagination" and "these various threads of Barbauld criticism reflect the richness of her mind and the range and substance of her poetic interest" [29]. Watkins observes that Daniel E. White's *Early Romanticism And Religious Dissent*, wherein White situates Barbauld in the British Dissenting community in the eighteenth century, is another sustained critical effort to emphasise Barbauld's background and the importance of her poetry. William McCarthy's autobiography *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Voice of the Enlightenment,* is another seminal work which highlights the significance of Barbauld as a creative artist as well as a social critic. This "magisterial biography"—as Watkins calls it— "not only recounts the particulars of the poet's life; it is also an astonishingly detailed intellectual and critical history of Barbauld's literary output" [30]. This book thus serves as one of the most important sources of information on the poet and her creative or literary journey.

10.5. Reading the poems

10.5.1. "The Rights of Woman"

"The Rights of Woman" is one of Anna Letitia Barbauld's most significant poems as it gives a clue about her stand on 'the woman question'. Believed to have been composed around 1793, the poem was posthumously published in the 1825 collection of poems, *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld—With a Memoir by Lucy Aikin*, *Volume 1*. This poem is structured as a dramatic recount and overview of the preliminary debates concerning women that gained traction with the stirrings of proto-feminist thought in the eighteenth-century. The title of the poem is a clear reference to Mary Wollstonecraft's seminal feminist text "Vindication of the Rights of Woman" which was published a year earlier in 1792. It is therefore believed that the poem is in dialogue with Wollstonecraft's essay—a literary continuation of the proto-feminist manifesto.

The speaker of the poem assumes a decidedly militant tone. She addresses the "Injured Woman" all over the world to rise up from the ashes of their victimhood under patriarchy. The initial lines of the poem read like a typical call to arms or a call to action which is ubiquitous in macho patriotic lyrics. Women have been "degraded, scorned, opprest" for too long. It is therefore the need of the hour to overthrow the undeserved yoke of oppression put on them in a patriarchal society. The speaker exhorts women to begin to assert their confiscated authority and resume control over their "native empire" which was theirs to rule anyway. This empire, however, is "o'er the breast" which indicates that women's stronghold is over the heart and feelings—a clear allusion to the dominant image of women as opposed to the more rational and logical men in the eighteenth-century. This allusion and the manner of battle or warfare that the speaker lays out for women, lends a considerable degree of ambiguity to the poem. The speaker describes the battle gear with which women are to fight or stake their claim to the empire. They should go out clothed in

"panoply divine" in imitation of the revered goddesses of ancient mythological stories. The choice of the word "panoply" is interesting here as it refers not only to a wide collection of relevant material but also a complete suit of armour. Women coming out to right the wrongs they suffered should also have an "angel pureness" about them which will keep them above reproach. For if they are stained or their purity is sullied in any way, men will not take her claim seriously and women's cause will suffer. This insistence on a flawless and respectable character has to do with the emphasis on chastity that was prioritised for women in the society. With gravity and strength of character, women are to go forth to "proud Man" and command him to abdicate or relinquish his privileged position of power and authority unto her. This men will do—and irresistibly so—seeing women's dignified bearing and goddess-like aura. Men will reluctantly "kiss the golden sceptre" of her reign and a new age will begin with women in power—occupying positions of influence which were either snatched from them or unrecognised by misogynistic patriarchs. The manner of confrontation with which women are to battle it out with men is very interesting. As the speaker enjoins, women should go out to the battle arena clad with grace and a whole motley of devious feminine charms. So women are to exploit and use as weapons and tools the very qualities with which they were suppressed and exploited in a patriarchal society. They should have a store of "bright artillery" as they engage in battle in order to stun and dazzle men into defeat. Women's "soft melting tones" will be like or equivalent to "thundering cannon's roar". This is another interesting analogy which again infuses typical and weak, passive feminine traits with exceptional power and converts them into weapons of war. Moreover, women's "blushes and fears" will contribute to work as "magazine of war". Thus even women's shyness will serve as a steady supply of cartridges with which men can be brought down to their knees. Her artillery does not consist of swords, spears and arrows but the dainty and delicate quirks that are already in her possession and also her field of expertise. With the martial metaphors, the speaker turns derogatory patriarchal

associations of women on its head. For as mentioned, the very qualities which patriarchy assigned to women for their subservience and degradation, is used here for women's liberation. Women will thus regain her "native empire" with a complete reversal of roles with themselves as leaders now and men as the subjugated subject.

When women assert their rights before patriarchy, they are to assert their right to empire or right to power which has so long been denied to them. Settling for smaller claims will not serve her purpose as she will still be unable to overthrow the yoke of oppression. So as women struggle for self-definition and access to power with patriarchs, they must not waver in the slightest. And they are to make a case for the cause of their struggle by not explaining anything at all. For if they go on to explain the reasons for which they have come out to charge against men, they will definitely lose. Their key to success in fact lies with them keeping their mysterious aura intact—that is what will win them the day. Well-argued statements with rational logic and oratory skills are predominantly masculine traits and therefore women must not try to engage these qualities as they fight for the throne. If women try to use "wit and art" in a debate to persuade and convince her "imperial foe" to give up the empire, they will lose. Relegated as women are to the plane of emotions, their claims are to be "felt, not defined". And therefore "shunning discussion" or any other form of intellectual sparring and negotiation with men is the best course for women to adopt in this contest. Women should only use what they have become good at. They should cause men to surrender by earning their admiration with their beauty and feminine charms. Deprived as women have been from an education which would have polished their buried mental talents and capacities, they should use their arsenal of beguiling and enchanting feminine accomplishments to seduce men to yield unto them. And when men finally submit, women should not succumb to feelings of mercy and relent; they must keep the battle lines drawn and clear and not do the mistake of making "treacherous Man" a friend. The speaker now highlights how women, when they secure their empire, will rule differently from men. As queens of their

empire, women will reign will softness, tact and diplomacy—features which are very radically different from the reign of men which is characterised by coercion and brute force. Women too will coerce her subjects into submission—not with violence but rather with skilful manipulation. In her kingdom, a woman should awe the licentious subjects unto wilful submission. The rude and disrespectful will be promptly restrained; the sulky and morose would be softened with her fascinating charms; and the worried subjects will find their worries dispelled. This successful state of affairs will be threatened if women who are pleased with their reign become complacent and let their guard down. The speaker therefore warns women to not give in to men's flattery and be more than "princes' gifts". They should learn to exercise discretion and discernment when they grant favours to men. If she is not wary enough, she will find that she has hazarded her losing empire and hard-earned authority with her carelessness. In a prophetic style, the speaker then relays to women the unwelcome news that her empire will in fact not last long. This is so because women, as "the courted idol of mankind" will become too secure in her power—only to find herself losing hold on the empire. As this happens, women who have been subduing men for sometime now, will suddenly find herself subdued once again. They themselves will be the cause of their undoing and downfall as their proneness for love and weakness for admiration will keep them from maintaining a haughty stance. As women's coldness softens and their pride gives way, they will revert back to their former state of powerlessness. Therefore, the speaker tells at the end that women, instead of going about achieving a short-lived supremacy over men, should consider the less savoury, but nonetheless viable option of "mutual love" which may help in securing gender parity to a satisfactory degree. If women go for "mutual love", she will risk losing her "separate rights" as it will be subsumed under the male authority. Still, given the prospect of how her reign will come to an end, "mutual love" offer women a more durable security.

It is evident that a sense of sarcasm pervades throughout the poem as the speaker, who initially seems to be supporting a kind of

feminism based on misguided ideals, is actually making a case against it. Women should assert their agency, but in a constructive manner which aims towards gender equality, and not a simplistic reversal of order. The latter in fact is destructive and detrimental to women's cause. So achieving liberation of women should not be inspired by vengeful or vindictive impulses, but informed by principles of equality.

Stop to consider

The "separate rights" mentioned in the poem is a reference to women's rights as it was called back then.

Self-assessment questions

1. Why does Barbauld employ military metaphors in the poem?

2. Why are women asked to shun discussions as they go out to present their case before men?

3. How will women lose her hold on her newly-earned authority?

10.5.2. "To a Little Invisible Being"

Composed around 1795, Barbauld's "To a Little Invisible Being Who is Expected Soon to become Visible" has a foetus for its subject and the curious experience of pregnancy. It is believed that the expecting mother that Barbauld describes in the poem is her neighbour who is in the last stages of pregnancy. Barbauld never gave birth so she could not have written this poem out of a personal experience. However, as a woman and a bystander observing the mysterious processes of conception and birth, she is able to capture the intimate and intricate details of the whole experience which is unique to women. The poem has nine quatrains in total which is suggestive of the fact that the

period of gestation has run its full course and the birth of the "invisible being" is now imminent. Barbauld addresses the foetus as the "germ of new life" who is filled with powers that will reveal themselves with time. Infants are usually seen as weak and dependent beings who will go on to achieve power or agency though education as they grow up. But the first line of the poem suggests that infants are already infused with incredible power and innate capacities even as foetuses. This idea is repeated in the following quatrain when Barbauld writes, "What powers lie folded in thy curious frame". It is interesting that the foetus is not addressed with pronouns such as 'he' or 'she' and stays ungendered throughout the poem. And the poet keeps repeating her request to the foetus to hurry and come forth into the world. This lends the foetus a considerable degree of power in realising its own birth. The poet asks the perfectly formed baby to make haste and be ushered into the world through "life's mysterious gate"—a euphemism or metaphor for the mother's reproductive organ. She then lays out the charms that the world has to offer in an effort to entice the reluctant foetus to come out and thereby speed up the hour of the birth. The foetus is told that it cannot yet fathom its own immense power to understand and admire "all the worlds that the Almighty wrought". The impending birth of the foetus is compared to the season of spring when nature itself gets a new birth and flora and fauna are young and fresh. In the genial season of spring, the "swarms of new life exulting fill the air" as flowers and plants of every kind bud and blossom. The speaker urges the baby, the "infant bud of being", to "haste forth" and enjoy the charms of spring and blossom just like the flowers. She tells how the world is eagerly waiting for its arrival. The nurse has already prepared a list of lullabies to sing to it; the matrons are counting the long run of days until the due date. The most anxious and excited is the would-be mother herself who longs to hold the baby in her arms and kiss it. It is interesting to note here that the father-figure is not mentioned. Besides the reference to the Almighty, there is a peculiar absence of male or masculine figures in the poem which reinforces the fact that pregnancy and birth are experiences unique to women and so

is motherhood or maternity. The speaker here explains to the foetus as to why she is insisting on hastening its birth. This is because the expected birth will relieve the mother of the load she has been carrying for nine months. It is as if the foetus will be kind to the mother if it cooperates with her to come out into the world. As for the mother, it is not as if she is eager to give birth only to rid of the baby who is conjoined to her body; she rather desires to transfer the literal and figurative burden of her womb to her "glad arms". Her wish to do that is granted by "nature's sharpest pangs" in the form of labour pain. And all the pain that she undergoes in the process of delivery is worthwhile because it would free or release the foetus from its "living tomb". The curious analogy of the womb as the "living tomb" is suggestive of the fact that the womb, while it is a protective space that harbours the infant for a period of time, is also a space wherein the immense or unlimited potential of the foetus will never be realized. That is why nature has devised this separation of the infant from the mother in the form of birth so that the former can grow up to become a strong individual in his/ her own right and reach his/her full potential. The speaker then focuses on the mother who is yearning and aching to hug the baby. For the mother, the whole experience of pregnancy and birth is surreal in many ways. The foetus, though a "part of herself", remains unknown to her. It is a being who is both familiar and unfamiliar to the mother—making for an uncanny experience. But this unknown being is already the object of the mother's love and care and for over nine months of gestation period, she feeds the "stranger guest" in her womb without hesitation with her very own life. This is another incentive for the foetus to haste forth—to meet and experience the unconditional love of the mother at the other end of the womb. It is only after birth that the infant will palpably experience "the rich inheritance of love" as it basks in the mother's fond attention. As for the mother, nothing can move her heart as intensely as the first feeble cries of the baby when it is born. The speaker therefore resumes her request to the foetus to make haste to come out into the world and enjoy all the love and the attractions. She in fact addresses the unborn

foetus as a “little captive” who needs to burst out of its “prison doors”. If it fails to do that—if it fails to escape from imprisonment—it will miss out on the various pleasures and the “thousand inlets of delight” that nature has to offer. The speaker’s own anxiety regarding the upcoming birth is at its peak at this point and she says that if she can do anything to speed up the delivery of the baby, she will. She thinks of praying to God, asking for a speedy and safe delivery. The successful birth of the baby will be like an adequate compensation unto the mother for all her labour pangs and the care that she had been putting into nursing the foetus in her womb for nine months.

Though the poem is clearly about pregnancy and the vast potential of the unborn baby, it has also been read as an extended metaphor in which the painful process of birth is symbolic of a great socio-political revolution and the baby who is born is symbolic of a new egalitarian era or order of limitless possibilities. The historical background of the French Revolution lends credence to this reading. The whole process of birth is also similar to the creative process wherein an author desires that the ideas locked inside the mind ideas gush out to be realised through writing on paper.

Stop to consider

The poet by addressing the unborn foetus in her poem is already attributing consciousness to the foetus—in fact believing that the foetus is already endowed with consciousness. However, as per the popular ‘tabula rasa’ theory of the day, this belief that a foetus always already possesses a consciousness is questionable. As for the mother, Kipp says in *Romanticism, Maternity and the Body Politic*, the poem tells a lot about her ‘captivation’ by the child; during pregnancy, a woman feels distant and alienated from herself as the child in her womb, while mirroring her own subjectivity, is also a completely different and separate individual.

Self-Assessment Questions

4. What are some of the incentives that the speaker relays to the reluctant foetus in the womb to come out into the world?

5. How is maternal love portrayed in the poem?

10.5.3. "The Caterpillar"

Barbauld's poem "The Caterpillar" is thought to have been composed around 1816 and it was published posthumously in 1825 in the collection of poems, *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld—With a Memoir by Lucy Aikin*, *Volume 1.* It is another interesting and multi-layered poem full of ambiguity. As evident from the title itself, this is a poem in which an animal or a non-human other gets featured prominently. It can be read as representative of the eighteenth-century burlesque convention of addressing animals in poetry, for instance, Thomas Gray's "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat", or Robert Fergusson's "The Sow of Feeling". The titular caterpillar is the subject of the poem, but as the poem progresses it becomes clear that it serves more as an opportunity for self-reflection for the speaker, than a discussion about the creature itself. The poem begins in medias-res with the speaker passionately addressing the captive caterpillar wriggling in her arms. We are made to understand that preceding the scene presented to us in the beginning, the speaker had violently wiped out the entire caterpillar community living in her garden in a furious frenzy. She vividly recalls and recounts the scenes of the mass slaughter before the titular caterpillar who is the lone survivor of this terrible attack. This caterpillar escapes death because the speaker is suddenly overcome by feelings of pity and sympathy at the sight of this poor and "helpless thing". She feels as if the desperate movements of the caterpillar signify a request for mercy and protection. She is also mildly awed by the beauty of the caterpillar whose colourful patterns fascinate her. The close physical contact with the caterpillar seems to intensify her sympathy for the critter. This response is a marked deviation from the stereotypical Victorian reflex of fright or disgust towards reviled insects which can be seen in nursery rhymes like

"Little Miss Muffet". In an act symbolic of great mercy, the speaker releases the caterpillar—not into the wild—but back into her garden. She thus allows the critter to remain in her garden and eat away the fruit of her trees. This mercy curiously, had not been extended to the whole brood of caterpillars that were ruthlessly killed off. Mercy for the titular caterpillar therefore seems like a momentary suspension of judgement on the part of the speaker that allows her to spare the life of one from the decimated tribe.

The speaker gets very animated when she describes the scenes of death and destruction to the caterpillar in her hands. She reveals in a graphic manner her "persecuting zeal" against the hated pests. "Thriving and happy" caterpillars were exterminated as whole families were either crushed under the weight of her foot or burnt alive by her "vials of destruction". She didn't feel any guilt or qualms of conscience while exterminating them en masse. But when she comes upon the sole survivor, she curiously finds herself relenting and forgoes the idea of killing it. Moved by the critter's plight and its desperate movements, her mood changes dramatically and she goes from her murderous fit of rage to endearing compassion. By sparing its life, she goes from being a destroyer to becoming a hero-saviour of sorts. In an epiphany-like moment, the speaker is able to identify with the caterpillar and realise that its "individual existence" is akin to her own and all other living beings. That is why she is unable to kill it off with the ease that she killed the others.

The kindness of the speaker however comes across as duplicitous. While she did not hesitate to kill the entire caterpillar community, she relents in the case of this single caterpillar—may be because she knows that it cannot harm her garden as a legion of the same would. She says to the caterpillar that she cannot hurt its weakness The defenceless caterpillar gives her an opportunity to exercise kindness and magnanimity—qualities that are prized and glorified in her society by her contemporaries. It would be beneath her

if she were to hurt this individual caterpillar who is no more posing itself as an offensive opponent. She compares her act of mercy to the way a victorious soldier spares the life of one vanquished foe in the battlefield—an instance found in many war accounts. Finding a clear analogy in a soldier whose aggression is melted away by the sight of a helpless enemy, the speaker goes on to re-imagine the entire carnage in her garden in extended battle metaphor. She tells to the caterpillar that is as if she had made "horrid war" against the caterpillar community who were living in their "peaceful villages". As a soldier "enjoys/The roar of cannon and the clang of arms", the speaker too is thrilled and enjoys launching an attack upon the unsuspecting community. She explains her persecuting zeal to the caterpillar and says that she is like any other soldier in a battle who fights heroically to defend his nation and in the process remorselessly kills people by the thousands. But the same soldier—given a unique circumstance—is also open to feeling pity towards a defeated enemy. As the speaker narrates, this soldier in fact begins to "grow human" and weep for the captive soldier pleading for life. Sympathy and empathy—emotions which are kept at bay during moments of confrontation—helps the soldier to relent and he goes from a barbaric rage to humane compassion. The speaker similarly identifies with the helpless caterpillar at her mercy and in spite of herself, lets it go free.

It must be noted here that this analogy which involves picturing the speaker as a magnanimous warrior, is undercut by the speaker with the self-deprecatory tone employed towards the end. She acknowledges before the caterpillar that her act of pity towards it is a singular instance. While executing the caterpillar population some time back, she did not extend pity towards the thousands of innocent civilians that she slew. It is therefore doubtful whether her magnanimous act is truly praiseworthy of not. As with the soldier, the "sympathy spontaneous" is actually an emotional lapse on her part which makes her take an irrational decision. She calls her pity "capricious" because it does not "stir for thousands" but "melts for

one". Pity is one quality which makes up "Virtue". But in this case, the pity extended cannot be considered as virtuous, but rather "the weakness of a virtuous mind". This is so because the pity felt in this case was based on whim—inspired by a weaker being who stokes her ego and tugs at her heart. This was not the case when she dealt with the caterpillar's relatives. Even after her deed of destruction—as she confesses to the caterpillar in her hand—she does not feel apologetic for her cruelty. Her pity is therefore somewhat hypocritical and extremely partial.

The ending of the poem is therefore somewhat anti-climactic. It raises more questions than it answers by showing a complicated and conflicted character who feels a varied range of emotions upon encounter with the survivor of a hated species. The morality of the speaker is also made questionable as her pity is shown to be an act of misplaced sentimentality. This contributes to the open-ended quality of the poem as it leaves to the readers to make sense of its ambiguity. In a different light, the poem can also be read as a statement on the way men destroys nature and disturbs or harms other living beings. It may be a nod to the contemporary agricultural practices which did not tolerate weeds or pests of any kind—even though the latter have an equal right to the planet. Her Dissent background is a significant influence here as it is known to disparage cruelty towards animals. Throughout much of her career, Barbauld wrote for children and in many of those works aimed towards a juvenile readership, she incorporated animals. They are didactic in nature and seem to be an attempt to steer children who are prone to committing mindless atrocities against weaker life-forms. The poem has also been read along political lines with the suggestion that the released pest or the caterpillar is Britain's enemy. Therefore granting mercy to such pests becomes a complex issue as one cannot readily deem it as the right course of action for it may turn out to be injurious to the nation in the long run.

Stop to consider

Otter says that the pest-control motif in "The Caterpillar" might be an allusion to the agricultural practices of the 18th and 19th centuries. The agricultural propaganda of the day declared that the elimination of pests and parasites is a morally justified course of action as it is simply a removal of the hindrances to profit. Insecticides and pesticides therefore saw a proliferation in the agricultural revolution of a society which prized productivity and profit. The speaker's lack of regret for annihilating "tribes and embryo nations" in her garden may be inspired by this attitude prevalent in the society.

Self-Assessment Questions

6. Why does the speaker compare herself to a soldier?

7. Describe how the speaker phrases her destruction of the caterpillar community

8. What is the speaker's conclusion on arbitrary pity?

10.6. Summing up

The poetry of Anna Letitia Barbauld's is informed, nuanced and characterised by multiple layers of meaning and plurality of perspectives. She takes into consideration various topical issues in her poems which speak of her involvement and engagement with contemporary discourses. Her Dissent background with its allegiance to non-conformist tradition is a strong influence in her poetry. Her poetry, as remarked by Alice G. D. Otter is characterised by "barbed endings"—especially pronounced in the case of "The Rights of Woman" and "The Caterpillar" where readers are left with inconclusive arguments to grapple with. This is not a weakness on the part of Barbauld as a poet because her plural perspectives and

ambiguities only serve to lend richer meaning to her works. “The Rights of Woman” shows how Barbauld, while identifying with women’s cause, critically dissects the popular but misdirected feminist enterprise to examine its pros and cons and suggests a way out of extremely polarised reactions to patriarchal domination. “To a Little Invisible Being” is again multi-layered, suggestive of not only a very laborious process of pregnancy and anticipated birth, but also the birth of a work of art by a creative artist after painful mental toil, or the birth of a new era or polity based on equality and meritocracy after a violent but much-needed revolution. Barbauld’s “The Caterpillar” is one level a simple story about a gardener who while killing off the entire population of detestable and destructive pests in her garden, shows a touch of magnanimity in releasing a stray caterpillar who survived the massacre. Pity extended by the speaker thus looks grand and laudable. But we cannot come to straightforward conclusion as the speaker makes the whole thing profoundly ambiguous by questioning the validity and morality of pity when extended arbitrarily. From the political perspective as well, the ambiguity of the act of pitying a dangerous adversary is emphasised. Thus, Barbauld’s poem yield to complex readings and interpretations and serve as important repositories of contemporary concerns and attitudes of a nation and society undergoing huge transformations.

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Unit 11

Anna Letitia Barbauld's poems

Supplementary Unit

11.1 Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Learn how to approach the poet
- Learn about other poems by the poet
- Answer questions that might be asked based on the poet and texts prescibed

11.2 How to approach the poet and read her poems

While reading Anna Letitia Barbauld's poetry, it is important to remind oneself of her Dissent background. The progressive-radical and also somewhat conservative views found in her poetry have much to do with the Dissent philosophy which recognises that power structures in a society are not perfect and therefore prone to many wrongs and

evils. The desire to subvert arbitrary authorities is thus a justifiable one but it may be dangerous for the one who tries to do it. However, the disruption of hierarchies and constructed roles of gender and class in society is a necessary intervention. But such interventions must come with a lot of caution as they may lead to the same hypocrisies and grievances that was sought to be resisted and opposed. The conservatism towards the radical impulse is evident in this cautiousness. The Dissent philosophy is thus a sort of juggling of both pragmatism and idealism. Barbauld's poems are thereby riddled with profound ambiguities and ambivalences. Her poem "The Rights of Woman" is a good example of the Dissent bent as we see an interplay of the radical and the conservative. The Dissent thought also encouraged sensitivity of humans towards nature and other living beings. Seen from this perspective, the poem "The Caterpillar" is an instance of the Dissent kindness towards other creatures. It also encapsulates the Romantic inclination to favour the individual over the crowd. However, this poem is also full of ambiguities as Barbauld makes readers re-think their views on what makes for true virtue as against the weaknesses of a sentimentally virtuous mind. The multi-layered poem is also read as a political allegory of England's sentimentally virtuous treatment of a political enemy. The Dissent background similarly informs Barbauld's "To A Little Invisible Being" wherein an unborn baby is looked upon as a cherished creation with unbridled potential endowed by the Almighty that is waiting to be realised after its birth. The religious background of the poet thus serves as both creative and critical well-spring for her works. One therefore needs to take into account the various beliefs attached to the Dissent tradition when studying Barbauld's works.

11.3 Other important poems by the poet

- Barbauld's "The Rights of Woman" can be considered as a kind of follow-up to her other poem "To a Lady, with some Painted

Flowers". In both the poems we find allusions to soft feminine charms which serve as a woman's asset. In the latter poem, Barbauld had written that a woman's job is to please people by being beautiful like flowers. In "The Rights of Woman" we similarly find that a woman may accede to a position of power with her delicate feminine graces that is powerful enough to not only please men, but also enthral or enchant him unto surrender.

- A reading of Barbauld's poem "The Mouse's Petition" and "Eighteen Hundred and Eleven" will contribute to a better understanding of the prescribed poem "The Caterpillar". "The Mouse's Petition" is written from the perspective of a lab-mouse who is fated to be experimented upon. The poem had been praised for dealing with the neglected issue of animal-experimentation and has been seen as an ethical intervention on the aspect of animal cruelty. The other poem "Eighteen Hundred and Eleven" in which Barbauld criticised England's war with France and imagined the nation's future as dark and inglorious will shed some light on the political undertones of "The Caterpillar" wherein the action of releasing the caterpillar, though apparently kind, is symbolic of England's sentimental oversight in important national matters.
- "To the Little Invisible Being" is addressed to a yet-to-be born baby who will go on to become a brilliant person in his or her own right. In its address, didactic bent and a sense of optimism, it is similar to the verses found in her *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781). In these hymns we see a celebration of the beautiful natural world and the reverence for God Almighty who is the Creator—reflections echoed in "To the Little Invisible Being". While in the prescribed poem, Barbauld tries to ease the foetus' fear to come out into the world, in the hymns we find the poet dealing with childhood fears of darkness and death.

11.4 Important essays on the poet and the prescribed poems

- Barbauld's dissent background finds a sustained study in Brad Sullivan's "Cultivating a 'Dissenting Frame of Mind': Radical Education, the Rhetoric of Inquiry, and Anna Barbauld's Poetry". In it the author looks at the ways in which Barbauld's opinions were informed by the Dissent views and how she integrated or incorporated those views into her poetry and non-fiction. The poet often employs the Dissent "rhetoric of inquiry" as she engages with important social or personal issues. The Protestant Dissenting faith stood for free thought and nonconformity. It was also visionary as it believed that if the principles of love taught in the *Bible* were thoroughly followed—informed by intellectual earnestness and historical understanding, the world will change for the better. Barbauld's creative enterprise can therefore be characterised as visionary poetics. A utopian impulse is evident in her poems as she comes to terms with the ugly realities of this world and asserts hope for change by emphasising that the practice of good values will truly make an impact and a difference. This idealism however is not atavistic and does not espouse unrealistic expectations; as Watkins says (in his *Anna Letitia Barbauld and Eighteenth-Century Visionary Poetics*), Barbauld forwards utopian principles that are "neither rooted in nostalgia nor derived from or constrained by the rational discourses and political struggles that define the modern world" [Watkins 9]. Watkins observes that Barbauld's *Poems* is a "carefully constructed visionary statement" [xi] wherein the poet addresses a range of topics which are philosophical, political, domestic, pastoral, biblical, secular, etc. Her visionary idealism has a unique quality in that it is sober and checked by self-reflection. The "*Poems* follow this course of expression consistently, giving voice to the dream of what might be and checking that voice against the realities of circumstance that would stifle it" [xi]. Taking cue from other critics, Watkins elaborates on the common

characteristics of eighteenth-century visionary poetry and writes that such poetry is marked by a restlessness rather than calmness; it is not static or fixed but transformative and dynamic; it is marked by intense engagement rather than mere expression. Barbauld's poems evince all these features or qualities of visionary poetics. The visionary ethos in much of eighteenth-century poetry is inspired by the *Bible*. As Watkins writes, "the debt that British poetry owes to the Bible, both as a source of formal experimentation and idealistic hope, and shows the importance of thinking systematically and historically about the British visionary imagination... intertextual and corrective strategies of visionary writing" [xii]. Besides Barbauld, many other women writers who were her contemporaries, such as Elizabeth Hands, Ann Yearsley, Anna Seward, Ann Batten Cristall, and Ann Bannerman, show the characteristic visionary stance in their works. They used the "strategies of poetic engagement to contest dominant and more culturally conservative modes of literary expression" [xii]. Their visionary poetics thus questioned the status quo and the complacent attitudes of society. Referring to Wittreich's views on the subject, Watkins writes that these women poets show that they kept disruptive and idealistic thought alive in "a period dominated by writers who form a line of wit' " [xiii]. Barbauld's visionary practice involves engagement with other texts—sometimes to get inspired; at other times to correct or revise certain ideas. Her poetic oeuvre reveals the fact that she was always enthused with an informed idealism and like Blake, another visionary poet, she desires to bring about a transformed and renovated world of peace and stability. Although she is heavily reliant on the *Bible* for her visionary spirit and poetic strategies, she also draws from other sources "classical and contemporary, religious and secular— to guide her visionary spirit" [xiii]. Watkins therefore says that Barbauld does not belong to just one "line of vision" but rather to a "kaleidoscopic collection of visionary influences, drawing her interests from a broad and diverse range of literary source materials and using them to shape a vision that brings her idealism directly to bear on the modern age" [xiii]. Barbauld's visionary enterprise has been

characterised as radical because of her "corrective intervention into the tradition of British thought and poetry" [1]. She wrote careful and cautious poetry which intended to "trouble passive understanding or acceptance of convention and thereby to create imaginative spaces for remaking reality" [3]. The great political events of the day—the American and French revolutions—actually facilitated and encouraged an atmosphere of visionary idealism and imagination which began to dominate the cultural space as "rigid formalisms" began to give way. The variety of poetic strategies that Barbauld uses to project her visionary interest in ushering a utopian world built along humane lines include the pastoral, satire, poetic epistle, prophecy, hymns, songs, lyrics, etc. It must also be noted that her idealistic and "transformative poetic vision" is oftentimes undercut by a reflexive critical attitude—making for "barbed endings" or open-endedness as marked by Otter. Barbauld's visionary poetics and idealism is therefore one which curiously accommodates an amount of scepticism which in effect serves as a veiled critique of society's reluctance to revolutionary change.

- In an essay titled "The Stranger Guest: The Literature of Pregnancy and New Motherhood", Lily Gurton-Wachter writes that Barbauld's "To the Little Invisible Being" is actually very ambivalent about the experience of pregnancy and motherhood. The poem emphasises that pregnancy is an uncanny experience for most women. While the foetus is imagined as imprisoned in the "living tomb" of the womb, the mother is shown as feeding the foetus with "her own life" which may be a reference to the ominous end of pregnancy for most mothers in death. The poem also underscores the strangeness of the foetus inside the mother which, though a part of the mother's body, is wholly different and separate from her. Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic approach to motherhood may shed some light on the paradoxical nature of pregnancy as hinted in Barbauld's poem which is as much about the mother as about the foetus within her. The gestating mother both loses and confirms her identity as she begins to harbour another

being inside herself. The strange two-in-oneness is pronounced as the foetus is the "graft" or the "other" inside the mother and it may signify different things to different people. As one writes, "For Kristeva, the pregnant woman...is a figure of the doubling of self into other, and the eventual splitting of the self into the other, a figure that bespeaks both the identification of the self with the other, and the negation of self in the other that makes the recognition of the other possible." [Covino 22]. So there are splits or ruptures involved in the liminal realm of female reproduction. In psychoanalytic theories, the unavoidable ruptures are not welcome. But Kristeva sees ruptures of pregnancy positively by highlighting female agency during gestation. The mother is a strong figure, a "place or space of significant activity, rather than an empty receptacle. The child's early intimacy with the mother's body is not only itself a kind of language, defined as it is by patterns of sound and movement, but it is the ground of all symbolic, or social language; it is what makes language acquisition possible" [Kristeva 19]. Unlike Lacan, who in his focus on the infant neglected the importance of the mother's role in the subject-object formation of the infant, Kristeva re-asserts the importance of the mother or the maternal body in infant development. The Enlightenment philosophies presciently observed that the proper development of human subjectivity is inextricably tied up with female reproduction. In Barbauld's poem, we see that the father-figure is not mentioned—not even alluded to indirectly. The godmother appeals unto the baby to step out and enter a fascinating and beautiful world and go straight to the arms of the loving mother who will bring him or her up. With the mother in attendance, the foetus will grow up to be a diligent person who will realize his or her full or true potential and in his or her own turn, usher in a world of peace. It is thus clear that Barbauld puts a great importance on mothers—especially in their capacity to mould the future by educating their children. Donelle Ruwe says in "Barbauld and the Body-Part Game—Maternal Pedagogy in the Long Eighteenth-Century" that Barbauld's view on mothering is about "intimate and immediate" associations—especially evident in her "Lessons for

Children" (1778-79). The poet seems to be very sensitive towards mother-child interactions; Ruwe writes, "Barbauld captures the language of real-life mothers and their toddlers, and her simple, lucid prose in a natural idiom is compelling" [29]. Unlike the godmother figure who appeals to the foetus in "To a Little Invisible Being", we see an engaging conversation between a mother and a child in the "Lessons". Ruwe notes that the "*Lessons* was inspired by actual parent-child interactions between Barbauld and her adopted son, Charles Aikin". Through her works for children, Barbauld has in fact become a moral mother of the nation. Mitzi Myers says in her "Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books" that a new type of protagonist arose in the eighteenth-century—the educating mother. This moral mother stood for the "heroic potential available in ordinary female" [Myers 50]. Barbauld thus came to adopt "the powerful position of a moral mother who addresses the nation" and this "rise of the moral mother as a literary hero type was a reflection of the increasing visibility of parenting in the long eighteenth century [Ruwe 27]. "To a Little Invisible Being"—though from the perspective of a godmother than a mother—reaffirms Barbauld's role as a moral mother of the nation as she already begins to exhort the foetus to be born and live a virtuous and blessed life, reaching his or her full potential and realizing destiny.

- Barbauld's "The Rights of Woman" has been deemed as anti-feminist as it was seen as a reply to Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in which the latter criticised Barbauld's poem "To a Lady". But Elizabeth Raisanen in her study titled "Mary Wollstonecraft, Anna Barbauld, and Equality Feminism" argues that Barbauld's poem is in fact an espousal of Wollstonecraft's view on the way to achieve true and lasting liberation for women. Raisanen writes that, "Barbauld's poem does not mock Wollstonecraft's reason-based equality feminism but rather an irrational, emotionally-based difference feminism whose goal is to dominate men". The poem has

unfortunately suffered from a long tradition of homogenous interpretation which see it as a counter-attack to Wollstonecraft's comment on the treatise. But a close reading of the poem will reveal the fact that Barbauld actually endorses many of the key concepts in Wollstonecraft's book. In *Vindication,* the kind of feminism that Wollstonecraft envisions is an equality feminism which is based on reason and not an emotional feminism which is impulsive and inarticulate. Barbauld's poem is an oblique critique of the latter. Women's lack of education is responsible for the emotionally-driven feminism. It has handicapped them from using rational arguments or redoubtable reason-based framework to present their case for equality. In fact, emotion-based feminism is counter-productive in many ways. It simply tends to topple the existing order and hierarchy with women taking the position of authority as men are relegated to a subservient position. Wollstonecraft had similarly derided difference feminism when she complained in *Rights of Woman* that women gain power by "unjust means" (such as exploiting their physical beauty) and then become "capricious tyrants" "[27]. However, she strays from Wollstonecraft's view somewhat as the dominant mood of the poem towards the end is suggestive of the fact that for the moment, women should opt for a compromise of sorts that is available to them in the form of "mutual love". But overall, Barbauld's take on rational education for women from her commentaries and other writings beside this poem, will show that her brand of feminism is completely in agreement with Wollstonecraft's feminism. Her borrowing of key phrases and concepts, such as "mutual love" from *Vindication* proves that. Wollstonecraft had said in her book that the solution to ending endemic misogyny or sexism is not by snatching power and privilege from men, for with this arrogation women will be repeating the same history of gender inequality. Women's short-lived domination over men will be as tyrannical, oppressive, objectionable and as unjust. A mere reversal of roles is therefore not enough. Wollstonecraft never asked for such a skewed feminism. She was more for gender parity, which unfortunately might be too long in coming as women have been

denied education that could have facilitated a world of reason-based equality and friendship between both the sexes. This is worsened by the fact that girls are instilled with a desire of conquest over men through their physical beauty, which serves as her "sceptre". This erroneous notion cultivated among women lead them to develop the idea that they can rule over men or exact men's attention, indulgence and favours with their looks. They therefore choose to "rather to be short-lived queens than labour to obtain the sober pleasures that arise from equality" [30]. This power is therefore a sham—as the poem also shows. The same women who are objects of admiration, will be shunned and repelled once they lose their "sceptre"—their secret weapon of beauty because of old age. That is why an emotion-based solution to gender inequality is misdirected as it will make tyrants and despots out of women who want to hold on to their power.

- Regarding the explicit war analogy and imagery in the poem "The Caterpillar", Alice G. D. Otter puts forth an interesting observation in her essay, "Pests, Parasites and Positionality". Otter says that the poem works like a sequel to the poet's other poem, "Eighteen Hundred and Eleven". Published four years before, "Eighteen Hundred and Eleven" is infamous for the bitter criticism it brought to the otherwise favoured poet. It is a political poem wherein Barbauld boldly condemns Britain's foreign affairs. Otter says that the sentimental sympathy displayed by the speaker in "The Caterpillar" towards a potentially destructive pest is a covert allusion to the British public's changed stand on the captured Napolean Bonaparte. She writes that Barbauld's "fellow Britons had begun to soften towards Napolean Bonaparte...Seeming to echo this softening atmosphere, "The Caterpillar" moves from sympathy for a little insect to pity for a defeated enemy, employing a conventional analogy between garden pests and political adversaries" (212). This reading is validated by the battle motif in the poem as it lifts the poem from its mere domestic setting. Besides its obvious domesticity therefore, the poem is also very political in nature. As Otter says, "More is at stake than caterpillars and defeated soldiers" (213). While "Eighteen Hundred

and Eleven" was a harsh political diatribe, "The Caterpillar" is a much softer censure cloaked in an allegory. The latter is a veiled critique and a "more subtle tirade against the vanity of British sympathies" (222). Barbauld adopts a "gentle and maternal" approach in the poem in order to win the "emotional acquiescence of her audience, only to challenge their morality from the inside out" (213). Why the helpless caterpillar which was released is a potentially dangerous or harmful creature is given away by its patterns. Its streaks and colouring which earn the admiration of the speaker actually reveals the fact that it is a Lackey caterpillar which "has the potential to be a very severe pest...this worm metaphorically is strong enough to destroy a great nation" (214). The beauty of the caterpillar belies its innocence. The same is the case with a nation's sworn enemy who is shown mercy on a sentimental whim. Britain pardoning and withholding the execution of its political prisoner Napolean Bonaparte was seen as sentimental weakness by the Prussians. The heroism of the speaker who releases the pest is thus deflated as she is not a saviour per se but a gullible Romantic who gives in to excessive sentimentality and flattery and is manipulated into letting her guard down. The escaped caterpillar or the enemy thereby "resumes his pest status" and is a "potential destroyer, like the Trojan Horse" (224). Referring to the self-deprecatory note of the speaker, Otter says that, "Excessive sensibility is too responsive to changing circumstance, whereas Virtue remains constant. Thus it is not Virtue to make exceptions for one 'single sufferer', although the intent may be virtuous" (224). The noble quality of pity, when it is excess, might be exploited to condone immoral behaviour. It leads to the corruption of character, the sense of good judgement and spawns a lack of integrity. It is therefore not very virtuous of the speaker to harbour pity for the caterpillar—just as it was not very virtuous of Britain to pardon Bonaparte. Read in this light, the poem is a "judgement about British sensibility" as it is suggestive of the fact that "the sympathies and caprices of the nineteenth-century middle-class audience lack Virtue, despite virtuous intentions" (227). With the poem, Barbauld makes her readers re-examine their cherished notions

of sympathy and pity. True virtue is displayed by the strength of resolve and that is why "isolated and selective excesses of pity are not desirable" (229). Oftentimes, the excesses of sentimentally virtuous minds hinder the enactments of truly virtuous acts. And the ambiguous ending makes us wonder if it is "virtuous to protect pests and parasites as necessary parts of this system or is such protection merely an indulgent weakness of a virtuous mind" (211).

10.5 Probable questions and suggested answers

I) Would you consider Barbauld's poem "The Rights of Woman" as a feminist poem or as an anti-feminist poem? Explain why.

Answer: For a long time Barbauld's "The Rights of Woman" had been considered as a decidedly anti-feminist poem as it seems to question and doubt if women's liberation from their oppression under patriarchy is even an achievable goal. It was also considered to be anti-feminist as it seemed like a counter-attack of Wollstonecraft's criticism of Barbauld's "To a Lady" in *Vindication on the Rights of Woman.* But a closer reading of the poem shows that the poem which makes a clear allusion to Wollstonecraft's treatise actually works in tandem with many of the views presented in the seminal text. Like *Vindication* it is in fact critical of an emotional and impulsive sort of feminism which only seeks to do a role-reversal and does not want to eradicate arbitrary hierarchy. The poem is therefore feminist in spirit while being critical of the dangers and uselessness of a misguided brand of feminism.

II) In what way does the experience of pregnancy become uncanny for women?

Answer: In "To the Little Invisible Being", Barbauld subtly highlights that the cherished and prized experience of pregnancy might become uncanny for the would-be mother as she is essentially hosting a stranger in her body who remains "unknown" to her throughout the

entire period of gestation. Though the baby is a part of her and comes out of her, it is not herself but a different and separate individual altogether in his or her own right.

III) What is the political subtext of "The Caterpillar"

Answer: Barbauld's "The Caterpillar", while being a poem plainly addressed to a caterpillar, also alludes to a contemporary political situation. According to one critical interpretation, the freeing of the caterpillar or the pest in the poem serves as a metaphor of the way England freed its political enemy Napolean Bonaparte. The distinct battle imagery of the poem also adds to the political dimension of the poem as it shows confrontation and conflict caused by territorial issues.

10.6 Summing Up

However, the disruption of hierarchies and constructed roles of gender and class in society is a necessary intervention. But such interventions must come with a lot of caution as they may lead to the same hypocrisies and grievances that was sought to be resisted and opposed. The conservatism towards the radical impulse is evident in this cautiousness. The Dissent philosophy is thus a sort of juggling of both pragmatism and idealism. Barbauld's poems are thereby riddled with profound ambiguities and ambivalences. I hope that you have learned about these complexities around her work.

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Unit 1
Samuel Johnson: "Life of Milton"

1.1 Objectives

The Lives of the English Poets, by Samuel Johnson is regarded as one of the best examples of biographical writing. After going through this unit you should be able to

- *define* 'biography'
- *list* the important features of a 'biography'
- *trace* the growth of Johnson as a major prose writer of English literature
- *read* Johnson's *Lives* in the context of the biographical writings of the eighteenth century
- *summarise* the basic arguments and criticism of the "Lives of Milton" and "Cowley"

1.2 Introducing the Author

Dr. Samuel Johnson, often referred to as Dr. Johnson, was one of the prominent literary figures of the eighteenth century. He was also a key figure of the Neo-Classical tradition and was famous for his great wit and prose style as is exemplified by his *Lives of the English Poets*. He was one of the most influential critics of English literary history.

Johnson, the son of a bookseller was born at Lichfield, Staffordshire on September 18, 1709. He attended Lichfield Grammar School. But his education depended largely on the perusal of the volumes in his father's bookshop. He entered Pembroke College, Oxford on October 31, 1728, a few weeks after he turned nineteen, and remained there only for one year to discontinue his education due to financial difficulty. Although he was a

formidable student, poverty caused by the early death of his father, forced him to leave Oxford without taking a degree. He attempted to work as a teacher and schoolmaster, but these ventures were not successful. He was an intense and voracious reader and the economist Adam Smith recalled, "Johnson knew more books than any man alive." At the age of twenty-five, he married Elizabeth "Tetty" Porter, a widow twenty-one years older and the mother of three children. He shifted to London along with his wife, opened a school taking ,money from her, began his literary enterprise by working on his historical tragedy *Irene* and started writing for the *Gentleman's Magazine*. The first years in London were hard, and Johnson wasted his efforts on hack-writing for magazines. It was only in 1745, after the publication of his pamphlet on *Macbeth,* namely, *Miscellaneous observations on the tragedy of Macbeth,* that he was recognized in the literary world of London. For the next three decades, Johnson concentrated on writing biographies, poetry, essays, pamphlets, parliamentary reports and so on . The poem "*London*" (1738) and the *Life of Savage* (1745), a biography of Johnson's poet-friend and fellow-writer Richard Savage, who stood by Johnson during the days of eternal poverty, and died in 1744, are important works of this period. During the same period his tragedy *Irene* was staged in London. One of his major satirical works *The Vanity of Human Wishes* was also published in the same period.

Johnson began to work on *A Dictionary of the English Language* in 1747 and completed it in two volumes in 1755. It took nine years and consisted of 40,000 defined words and 14,000 quotations to illustrate the meaning. The *Dictionary* was widely praised and enormously influential but Johnson did not profit from it financially. While working on his dictionary, Johnson was also writing a series of periodical essays under the title *The Rambler*. These essays, often on moral and religious topics, tended to be graver than the title of the series would suggest. *The Rambler* was not published until 1752. Although not originally popular, the essays found a large audience once they were collected in a volume. Johnson's wife died shortly after the final essay appeared.

Johnson and the periodicals

It will be useful to compare Johnson's *The Rambler* and Addison's *Spectator.* Both of them were periodicals of the time when the genre was still flourishing. Equally concerned with the cause of the society, both adopted a different style of presentation. While Johnson adopted a more serious style, Addison's style was easy and colloquial. Their style of presentation also reflected their views on the ideals of the society.

Johnson also contributed essays to his friends John Hawksworth's periodical essay *The Adventurer*. But from 1758-60, Johnson began another series of essays titled *The Idler*, in 1758. This weekly remained in circulation for two years and the essays were mostly published in a weekly newspaper *The Universal Chronicle*. These essays were shorter and lighter than *The Rambler* essays. In 1759, Johnson published his satirical novel *Rasselas, or The Prince of Abyssinia* which is said to have been written in two weeks to pay for his mother's funeral. In 1762, Johnson was awarded

a government pension of three hundred pounds a year, from King George III, largely through the efforts of Thomas Sheridan and the Earl of Bute. Johnson met the Scotsman James Boswell, his future biographer, in 1763. Around the same time, Johnson formed "The Club", a social group that included his friends Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke, David Garrick and Oliver Goldsmith. By now, Johnson was a celebrated figure. He received an honorary doctorate from Trinity College, Dublin in 1765. His eight volumes edition of Shakespeare was published in October, 1765. Although he ignored the sonnets and poems, he treats the plays not as works to be enacted but to be read. He celebrates Shakespeare's gifts in portraying characters and revealing truths about human nature and most importantly defends the playwright against charges of violating rules of dramatic unities and mixing the genres of comedy and tragedy.

In 1765, Johnson met Henry Thrale, a wealthy brewer and Member of Parliament and stayed with him for fifteen years until Henry's death in 1781. In 1773, ten years after he met Boswell, the two set out on a journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, and two years later Johnson's account of their travels was published under the title *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (Boswell's *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* was published in 1786). Johnson spent considerable time in Edinburgh in the 1770s, where he enjoyed an ultimate relationship with Boswell and Lord Monboddo and conducted extensive correspondence and mutual literary reviews.

Johnson's final major work was the *Lives of the English Poets (1783)*, a project commissioned by a group of London booksellers. *The Lives*, which were critical as well as biographical studies, appeared as prefaces to selections of poet and their work.

Johnson died on December 13, 1784 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

1.3 The Context

In 1777, Johnson was approached by a group of London booksellers to contribute brief prefaces to a multivolume edition of English poets. Although the original text was supposed to be inclusive of all the reputed poets since the time of Chaucer, the survey began with the 17th century poets like Cowley. But Johnson's plan was to do much more by producing almost 400,000 words of biographical and interpretative text on the 52 poets. Each preface followed a three part plan, as the writer first refers to the author's biography, then summarize the main features of the chosen figure, and then critically examine his writings. It is in this framework that we have to locate the two prescribed texts and contextualize them in terms of his reading and understanding of the poets and their works.

Neo classicism

The rise of Neo-classicism in England was a direct result of the French culture that was introduced

into the court by Charles II and his courtiers who returned from France. In the courtly culture of Restoration England, the most effective external influence was contemporary French classicism. The French Academy**,** which advocated rigid rules and regulations for literary creation influenced the English literary scene as well. The emergence of the scientific spirit and the new philosophy with its emphasis on rationalism, reason, clarity and simplicity in thought and expression also favoured the rise of neo-classicism. The most acclaimed precept of neo-classicism was "follow nature", which meant following the ancient masters who based their works on nature. Emphasis was laid on correctness, reason and good sense. The artist must follow the rules correctly and any exuberance of fancy or emotion must be controlled by reason or sense. The function of literature was to instruct and delight. The didactic purpose of literature was considered to be more important than the aesthetic one.

SAQ

1. What were the chief principles of neo-classicism?(40 words)

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2. To what extent should we relate Johnson with neo classicism? (60 words)

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1.4 Form of The Biography

The word biography has its origins in the Greek words 'bios', meaning 'life' and 'graphy', meaning 'writing'. So, etymologically the term 'biography' means 'writing about life'. Hence, we can see that the term more or less encapsulates the nature and scope of the genre. Biography is that branch of literature, which is about the life of a human being.

In post-classical Europe the literary recording of the peoples lives begin with the “Lives of the Saints” (hagiographies) and stories of the rise and fall of the princes. Medieval historians like Geoffrey of Monmouth, Mathew Prince and others, brought a concern with human failings and strengths often overriding their objectivity. But it is not until the sixteenth

century that the first recognizable biographies appeared. Cardinal Norton's *Life of Richard III* (1513), Roper's *Life of More* (1535) and Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey* (1554-7) are regarded by many as the first instances of true biography.

The seventeenth century saw Bacon's *Life of Henry VIII*, Walton's *Lives* (1640-78)
and Aubrey's *Minutes of Lives.* It is in Aubrey that we first hear a 'real' human voice commenting with a smugness, gossipy humour and a delight in the oddity of human nature. But it is in the 18th century and with Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* (1779-81) that the form is finally established. This was followed by James Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1791).

In the nineteenth century, with Lockhart's *Life of Scott* (1837, 1838), Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* (1863), biographical writings continued to flourish but showing a potential influence on the structure of fiction. Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Dickens' novels along with that of the Bronte sisters, show the various ways of intimacy between experience and invention during or after the Romantic period. Finally, the modern biography was established by Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918).

Biography as a genre
The main claim of the modern biographies is a subjectivity towards the subject. This is directly related to the question of the selection and presentation of the material. Recently, another interest has been shown in the interchangeability of fictional and documentary techniques. The traditional distinction between biography, personal history (diary/ confessions) and novels (especially the first person narratives) are coming to be questioned. You should notice how this changing nature of biography has brought about certain necessary changes in the very genre of biography itself.

It is important to note that unlike history, biography is artistic and has a personal and psychological touch. Biography records the life of one person and this life is not necessarily of general importance. Historical narratives record the incidents of general importance and its focus is also general. But biography is concerned with the particular life and its focus also centers on the life that it attempts to narrate. Another criterion of distinguishing biography is that it is realistic but may also contain the element of fictionality. While the novel is fictional, biography is realistic. Its primary concern is the truth of life that it represents.

The autobiography, which is an account of the writer's own life, is different from biography in terms of orientation. Whereas biographies are objective, autobiographies are subjective. So, a biography is the account of the life of a 'real' individual by which the writer tries to recreate the personality of that individual.

1.5 Introducing Lives Of The English Poets

Dr. Johnson is one of the chief exponents of the form of biography and his fame as a biographer rests mainly on the *Lives of the English Poets.*

Johnson was always interested in biographies. His curiosity about people was related to his views of the function of literature as the rendering of universal human experience. For Johnson biography stood between the falsehood of fiction and the useless truth of history. Johnson was uncompromising in his belief that truth was the objective of biography and that is why, “he refused to let sympathy for his subject cloud his judgment.” The unrivalled knowledge that he commanded over his subject led to the success of Johnson as biographer. His shrewdness, powerful intellect and common sense made his remarks interesting and penetrating. One remarkable aspect of Johnson's biographical writing is that he juxtaposes a criticism of the life and works of his subject with the biographical description. He takes pains to record every detail of the person whose life he is writing. His description of Milton's clothes is a remarkable example in this context. He makes no attempt to idealize the men whose lives he is narrating. He does not conceal their failings or their follies. His *Lives of the English Poets* has a colloquial ease which was missing in most of his formal writings.

The Lives of English Poets appeared from 1779 as *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets*. Johnson provides fifty-two such prefaces, all but two of which deal with the late 17th century poets. *The Lives* was started when Johnson was 68. Presumably, Johnson was not happy with the contemporary practice in biographical writings. He expresses his distrust in the early part of his *Life of Cowley:* "Dr. Sprat has produced a funeral oration rather than history". To Johnson, to be interested in the man's work was to be interested in his character.

Out of the fifty-two lives, more than thirty deal with obscure and minor poets in whom no one is interested today. Today the worth of the book does not lie in the value of the poets that were included but in Johnson's brilliant biographical and critical prefaces. Although Johnson initially planned to finish the book by providing some dates and information to introduce the poets, the work expanded to become one of the most remarkable monuments of English biographical writing. In *Lives Of The English Poets,* Johnson provides literary criticism, biographical information, and in a limited sense, a view of the cultural context the poet was writing in. It is noteworthy that he originally proposed to begin with Chaucer, but later resolved to start with Abraham Cowley. The lives of Cowley, Milton, Dryden, Addition, Pope and Gray also gave Johnson an opportunity of developing and illustrating his own views on poetry. For this, he had to undergo a lifetime of research.

SAQ

What is your opinions of Johnson’s of poets? (60 words)

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The biographies have two distinct parts – biographical information of the poet and a criticism of his works. However, the characteristic method of the text is to provide first a narrative of the poet's life , then a presentation of his character and an account of the quality of his mind, and then a critical assessment of his main poems. Apart from Johnson's mastery of the language, the prefaces are remarkable for their details and shrewd judgments. Johnson's comments exhibit the marks of a powerful intellect and common sense. He never attempts to idealize the person whose life he is writing, nor does he elide over their follies. Yet, Johnson is not free from accusations, he is often castigated for his idiosyncrasies and his adherence to a particular ideology and a neoclassicism that colours his assessments of all the poets and their works.

Stop to Consider:

Johnson's Method

Johnson adopted a particular method in his *Lives* not because he failed to conceptualize a relationship between a poet's life and his works but because he did not think that a good poet was necessarily a good man. This method enabled him to recognize the fact that 'a manifest and striking contrariety between the life of an author and his writings' can very well exist and to assign different purposes to his analysis of his subjects' lives and their writings.

1.5.1 Reading The Text: "Life Of Milton"

Johnson provides a comprehensive account of Milton's life by incorporating every possible detail of his life. John Milton was by birth a gentleman. His grand father was the keeper of the forest of Shotover who had disinherited his father for not following Roman Catholicism, the religion of the forefathers. Milton's father then took up the profession of a scrivener. His liking for music brought success and reputation and soon he grew rich and retired to an estate. He married Caston, a gentlewoman from Welsh family. John Milton, the poet was born in his father's house at the Spread Eagle in Bread-street on December 9, 1608.

Milton started his education privately under the care of Thomas Young, as his father appeared to be very solicitous about his education. Then he was sent to St. Paul's School under the care of Mr. Gill. At the age of sixteen, he left St. Paul's School and joined Christ College, Cambridge as a sizar on February 12, 1624. By this time he had composed some Latin poems

and translated two Psalms but without any great success. In his eighteenth year he composed some Latin elegies.

While reading Milton's life we cannot but refer to his contemporary Abraham Cowley. Johnson refers to the extraordinary quality of Cowley's Latin poetry in which he excelled over his contemporaries including Milton. Talking of Milton's poems Johnson says, " the products of his vernal fertility have been surpassed by many, and particularly by his contemporary Cowley." So, a meaningful comparison between the two can consist of several points: their individual competencies in Latin, their stylistic differences and allegiances and so on. This may lead to an understanding of the practices of poetical writings of the period itself.

Milton entered the University with the intention of joining the church but very soon he was disillusioned because for Milton "whoever became a clergyman must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a conscience that could retch, he must straight perjure himself." He completed his Bachelor's Degree in 1628 and Masters Degree in 1632 and left Cambridge, "with no kindness for its institution, alienated either by the injudicious severity of the governors or his own captious perverseness" to live in his father's house in Horton, near Buckinghamshire. During these five years he read most of the Greek and Latin literature and produced the *Masque of Comus* which was presented at Ludlow, the residence of the Lord President of Wales, 1634. His *Lycidas,* a pastoral elegy on the death of his friend Edward King, was written in 1637. In the same period he also produced the *Arcades* making a part of dramatic entertainment

After the death of his mother Milton traveled towards Paris and Italy which gave him a chance to study intensely. From Florence he went to Sienna and then to Rome. He got acquainted with Holstenius, the keeper of the Vatican Library who in turn introduced him to Cardinal Barberini. He stayed at Rome for two months and then moved to Naples. His experiences were expressed in certain Latin poems. He intended to visit Sicily and Greece, but hearing the growing tension between the king and the parliament in England, he returned home to take part in the cause of the people. Milton made many enemies because of his radical and somewhat 'open' remarks on issues of religion.

SAQ
Attempt a connection between the facts of Milton's life and your reading of *Paradise Lost?* (60 words)
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Milton came back to England to start his career as a schoolteacher. Johnson criticizes other biographers for not being faithful in depicting this phase of Milton's life. Milton's career as an educationist was not very successful. In 1641, Milton published a pamphlet named *Treatise on Reformation* in two books against the Established Church and began to participate actively in religious and political controversies. In his thirty fifth year, Milton married Mary Powell, the daughter of a Justice of the Peace in Oxfordshire. They divorced within a month but were subsequently reunited. In 1644, Milton published *Areopagitica*, *A Speech of Mr. John Milton for the liberty of unlicensed printing,* his most important prose work. About the same time he published a collection of his Latin and English poems, which included *L'Allegro* and *Il* Penseroso. Then in 1945, after the Death of Charles I, he moved to Holborn and wrote a pamphlet justifying the murder of the king. After Cromwell assumed power, the Puritan authorities appointed Milton as the Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth. But he was *suspected of having interpolated the book called Icon Basilike*. Then, he published another pamphlet named *Defensio Populi,* which was answered by the renowned scholar Salmasius with *Defensuio Regis*. This triggered a controversy with Salmasius and himself. Then he continued as Latin Secretary even after Cromwell dismissed the Parliament by the authority by which he had destroyed monarchy and assumed dictatorial power under the title of Protector. In this context, Johnson writes, "He had now been blind for some years; but his vigour of intellect was such that he was not disabled to discharge his office of Latin Secretary, or continue his controversies. His mind was too eager to be diverted, and too strong to be subdued." His first wife died in the meantime and within a short time he married Catherine Woodcock, "a woman doubtless educated in opinions like his own", but who too died within a year of their marriage.

Free form external disturbances, Milton now planned three great works for his future employment - an epic poem, a history of his country and a dictionary of the Latin language. After the death of Oliver Cromwell, Milton continued publishing pamphlets and his *A Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Commonwealth* was published only a week before the Restoration of 1660. When Charles II assumed power Milton was compelled to go into hiding, but the King pardoned him with the Act of Oblivion. He was, however arrested by the Sergeant of the House of Commons for the non-payment of certain dues and was released very soon. Milton now turned blind and moved to Jewin Street, near Aldersgate- street. At this time, being blind but wealthy, he once again got married and this time to Elizabeth Minshul. Johsson's criticism of Milton and his notion on marriage is pertinent to discuss here, 'All his wives were

virgins; for he has declared that he thought it gross and indelicate to be a second husband.*"* But this marriage turned out to be disastrous. Charles II offered Milton the post of Latin Secretary once again but he declined. He started composing *Paradise Lost* in the face of his blindness and other obstacles. He employed his daughters and a number of other people in this project as scribes. In 1665, when plague raged in London , Milton sought shelter at Chalfont in Bucks and finished *Paradise Lost*. He returned to London in 1666 and finished *Paradise Lost*. In 1667, he published the book .After three years, in 1670, he published his *History of England*, which was followed by *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. In 1672, he published *A New Scheme of Logic According to the Method of Ramus* and wrote *A Treatise of True Religion.*

Milton died on 10th November, 1674 at the age of sixty-six and was buried in the chancel of St. Giles at Cripplegate.

Stop to consider
Johnson's portrayal of Milton's character is not free from prejudice. It is useful to study the various influences at work in this portrayal. Many critics find autobiographical instances in a number of his works. A comparison between the life and the works of the poet along with a study of the influences of the society would be profitable.

Johnson's *Life of Milton* can be regarded as one of the best sources of his views on poetry. In *Life of Milton,* he defines poetry as "the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by taking imagination to the help of reason." Invention for him is different from imagination and produces something unexpected, surprising and delightful. For Johnson, the function of poetry is to please and instruct. As a result of his subscription to the classical ideals Johnson held that the imagination of the poet must be controlled by reason. Johnson held truth in higher esteem than beauty. That is why he denounced *Lycidas* and the allegory of Sin and Death in *Paradise Lost*.

For Johnson, inspiration was unimportant for the process of poetic creation. Poetry, he believed was solely the result of art, and by art he meant - *correction, revision and constant use of the file till perfection has been attained*. For him an epic poet must have a moral outlook which must be conveyed in an elevated and dignified manner, and which would be appropriate for the expression of lofty ideal and profound sentiments. He should gather the material from history and should improve on that by means of noble art. One cannot be a poet until he has attained the whole extension of his language, distinguished all the delicate phrases, and all the colours of words and learned to adjust their different sounds to all the varieties of metrical moderation.

Johnson's critical standards

A neo-classicist to the core, Johnson thought that the epic was the highest form of poetry, and he subscribed to the principles of Aristotle. He also advocated the purity of diction and denounced blank verse as unmusical and odd for the English language. He criticized Milton for using the English language with a foreign idiom. In Johnson's opinion the

music and independence of the heroic couplet cannot be achieved by any other method.

But the importance of the *Life of Milton* is seen in his shrewd judgment of the works. But it is also a fact that most of his criticism abounds in many literary, personal and political prejudices. Johnson criticizes Milton' s Republicanism like this, "Milton's republicanism was , I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of control, and pride disdainful of superiority." Of Milton's other works, Johnson's critical attention is attracted mainly towards *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Lycidas* and *Comus*. The criticism of these works is not completely free of his extra-literary prejudices and consequently most of them are subjective in nature. In *L'Allegro,* Milton talks about the cheerful, carefree man who leads his life accepting all the pleasures. *Il Pensoroso,* on the other hand, is about the man in whom the tendency to reflect has paralyzed the desire or ability to act. Both poems together represent two sides of life as if they are the two sections of the same poem. Critics point out that Milton's sympathy lies with *Il Penseroso*, since it is the kind of life he was himself leading during his stay at Horton. *Il Penseroso* represents the Puritan ideals of life. Johnson's comment that "there is no mirth in his melancholy but some melancholy in his mirth" leads the reader to reflect on the poet's attitude to life. The plots of both the poems consist in a simple progression of time. Johnson appreciates the beauty and music of these poems but disapproves of their mode of versification.

Johnson also denounced *Lycidas*. With his neo-classical tendencies Johnson was always against the pastoral form. He felt that the pastoral form of *Lycidas* was easy, vulgar and therefore disgusting. He failed to appreciate the melody of *Lycidas* and he maintained that it was a poem *of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and numbers unpleasing.* The passion of the poem, according to Johnson, was also artificial. Johnson says, "what beauty there is we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion,; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions." Johnson is against the use of blank verse and regards Milton's use of blank verse in *Lycidas* as a fault of the poem. Johnson may be right in warning against the misuse of the pastoral form but one can not agree with him when he says that the form is artificial and unnatural. The grossest fault, according to Johnson, is the mingling of heathen mythologies with Christian saints and sacred truth. Criticism of *Lycidas* is vitiated by classical dogma, insensibility to imagination and extra-literary prejudices. For Johnson, the *Masque of Comus* is the best of Milton's juvenile writing. He found the language, power of description and the vigour of sentiment of *Comus* remarkable. According to Johnson, the masque was truly poetical with its allusions, images and descriptive epithets. But he found it deficient as drama. The action of the play for him is unconvincing and unreasonable. He found fault with the prologue, because it was contrary to the spirit of the drama. The soliloquies of Comus and the Lady are considered by Johnson to be elegant but tedious.

The characters are bold but the language is too luxuriant for dialogues. Johnson concludes by saying that *Comus* as drama is "inelegantly splendid and tediously instructive."

Check Your Progress:

1. Highlight Johnson's assumption by explaining his preferences? Attempt an outline of his neo-classical conceptions?

2. How does Johnson compare Lycidas and Comus? In what way does Johnson assess Milton's achievement? Support your answer textually?

3. Attempt a review of Johnson's evaluation of Milton's literary abilities?

4. Explore the neo-classical principles that shape Johnson's assessment of Milton?

The criticism of *Paradise Lost* is relatively free from Johnson's prejudices. Johnson appreciates the characters, the sentiments and the grandeur of the epic as the best and the most mature of Milton's writings. The expression of the moral in *Paradise Lost* is attractive and surprising. According to Johnson, an epic should have a great subject and Milton has chosen the best possible subject. His purpose "is to vindicate the ways of God to men." Johnson distinguishes two parts in an epic- the probable and the marvelous. In Milton he observes that these two are merged into one. While talking about *Paradise Lost* he says that here "the probable has been made marvelous and the marvelous probable." Johnson points out two main episodes in the epic- Raphael's reference to the war in heaven and Michael's prophecy of the changes about to happen in the world. Both episodes have been incorporated into the main action of the epic, thereby conforming to the unity of action with a definite beginning, middle and end. Johnson does not agree with Dryden's view that Adam could not be the hero of the epic because he is crushed and debased. Johnson argues that Adam's deceiver is crushed in the end and he is restored to the favour of God. The sentiments of the epic, according to Johnson, are just and proper. As a poet Milton can please when pleasure is required, but his peculiar power is to astonish. The whole poem is characterized by sublimity in different forms.

But Johnson is not blind towards the faults of the epic and this is what makes him recognized as a biographer. He identifies three central defects in the epic, "the lack of human interest, the faulty personification of Sin and Death, and the inconsistent presentation of the spiritual beings." The epic, according to Johnson, "comprises neither human action nor human manners." The allegory of Sin and Death also shows the lack of the poet's skill. The presentation of the spiritual beings is also confusing; there is no clear distinction between spirit and matter. Apart from these, Johnson is

also critical about the language and versification of *Paradise Lost*. As a neoclassicist Johnson judged everything from a classical point of view and had denounced everything that had not conformed to Aristotlelian principles.

SAQ

1. How biased is Johnson's criticism of *Paradise Lost* ?(50 words)
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2.What does Johnson appreciate about *Paradise Lost?* (50 words)
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Regarding *Paradise Regained* Johnson pointed out that though it had many elegant passages and was always instructive it was deficient in dialogues and action. The poem, in the long run, according to Johnson, was dull and tedious and failed to please. *Samson Agonistes wa*s for him a failure as drama. It had some beautiful passages and single lines, but its plot was loose, construction faulty and its characters lacked unity.

Towards the end of the *Life of Milton,* Johnson gives a balanced and judicious estimate of Milton as poet. He praises Milton as an epic poet and discusses his art of versification along with a study of the comparative merits of rhymed and blank verse. He says that Milton is not the greatest of the epic poets simply because he is not the first. Milton's language is peculiarly his own. It has no resemblance to any earlier writer or the language in common use. This peculiarity arises from his effort to use words suited to the grandeur of his subject. But Milton's language is sometimes highly Latinised. Johnson regards this as a fault and comments that Milton "writ no language but effected a Babylonish jargon." Johnson, however, felt that this defect was compensated by his extensive learning, and resulted in a 'grace in deformity'. He praises Milton's diction for its

copiousness and variety. He credits Milton' use of blank verse to the influence of the Italian writers. But his blank verse has neither the ease of prose nor the melody of poetry. While admitting that rhyme is not an essential adjunct of poetry he maintains that poets in other languages might have dispensed with the rhyme, but it is essential for the English language. Johnson praises Milton's skill in handling the blank verse but warns that Milton is a poet to be admired but not imitated. Milton's genius is apparent in his art of narration, in the texture of his plot, and the immense variety of dialogues and incidents. Although he is not free from Homeric influences, he shows originality in every page of his best works. He wrote according to his own light, fearless, confident and undeterred by difficulties

Comments on the personality and character of Milton are scattered throughout the pages of *Life of Milton.* Like the criticism of Milton's works, the evaluation of his character is also not free from prejudices. Johnson points out that as a young man Milton was active and vigorous and his domestic habits were those of a devoted scholar. Although he was a disciplinarian in his daily routines, he was not much of an expert in financial matters and ended his days in near poverty. Johnson felt that Milton was not really interested in the established forms of religion. Milton's political views were Republican and the expression of his views was almost always violent. While appreciating Milton's independent mind at a time when there was strong domination of sectarianism, Johnson condemns it by saying that it is not development but changing one's principles according to one's convenience. Johnson had doubts regarding Milton's political beliefs. Johnson writes, "he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than to establish, and he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority." However, Johnson praises Milton for his strong determination and capability to work in adverse circumstances. Johnson made no attempt to idealize the character of Milton. He does not hesitate to ridicule Milton at certain times and maintains the poet was unnecessarily fond of controversies and an opportunist at times. The minute details of Milton's habits and character makes the work more interesting and realistic at the same time.

Stop to consider:

Milton's Politics & Johnson's Assessment

From the accounts that we get of Milton's social and political life, as in the account by Stephen B.Dobranski, what we get to see of Milton's personality is the struggle waged within his consciousness between getting involved in the hurly-burly of politics and remaining aloof from it. Dobranski is of the opinion that "working for the Commonwealth gave Milton the kind of firsthand experience that complemented his studies and enabled him to produce his later masterpieces, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regain'd*, and *Samson Agonistes*. These publications are not the work of an independent, reclusive poet and pedant; rather, they benefit from a combination of scholarship, inspiration, and the

experiences of an author who knew both failure and compromise, and who would witness the censure and execution of many of his collaborators."

Our own question here should be, does Dr.Johnson recognize such political undertones in Milton's writings? Milton was an actively political poet and scholar so no estimation of him can be complete which leaves out this integral dimension. If Johnson does so, the reason that can be cited is that he was concerned with classical aesthetic principles and the readership which would take up the *Lives of the Poets* finally. We also have to propose that English criticism in Johnson's age was guided by its own principles.

1.6 Johnson's Prose Style :

Johnson is mostly remembered for his aphoristic style, ultimately ,making him the most frequently quoted of the English writers after Shakespeare. Many of them are actually recorded by James Boswell in his biography on Johnson, like -*Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel* ; *Marriage has many pains* , *but celibacy has no pleasures and so on*. He possessed a peculiar gift of contracting *the great rules of life into short sentences*. In Johnson, there is a discernible development from the formality and mannerism of his early works like *Rasselas* and the essays in *The Rambler*, *The Adventurer* and *The Idler*, to the ease, lucidity and colloquialism of his later and mature works like *Preface to Shakespeare* and *The Lives Of The English Poets*. Yet his style is remarkable for its directness, force and trenchancy. His writing expresses his depth and sincerity but he fails when he tries to indulge in the allegorical mode. He is often criticized for verbosity, but he seldom used words that does not contribute to the content. His writing is weighty in thought; it is the concentrated expression of a mind well stocked. Johnson's criticism is perhaps the most interesting part of his writings. Although some have criticized him as a 'literary dictator', he rejected this role for himself as he always endeavoured to speak for truthfulness of representation and morality. Many have praised Johnson for his common sense, but the flexibility and coherence of his response to literary activities were even more important. The elements in the literary mind of Johnson were more supple, balanced and sometimes contradictory. Looking at his performance as a writer, the use of language, the turns and tones of his subtle and complex sentences , we can really claim him to be an accomplished writer. The final two paragraphs of the *Life of Cowley*, in which Johnson sums up the literary achievements of the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, illustrate his quality and flexibility of the mind. For today's readers, Johnson's style and viewpoints may need some more response.

1.7 Critical Reception :

Mathew Arnold concluded in his *Johnson's Lives* (1878) that the appropriation of Johnson in modern times can be summarized as, "The more we study Johnson, the higher will be our esteem for the power of his

mind, the width of his interests, the largeness of his knowledge , the freshness, fearlessness, and strength of his judgments." While a modern scholarly biography seeks to provide a more accurate and comprehensive account of its subject's life, Johnson's work in the eighteenth century is of enduring value. *The Lives of the English Poets*

(1783) cannot be regarded as a great work of personalized canon making. While Johnson proposed several additions, the choices generally were not his own. Johnson, of course, believed in maintaining an English literary cannon surpassing the literature of the other nations but that cannon was not supposed to be determined by any single critic. Unlike modern critics like T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and Harold Bloom who believed in a certain kind of reordering of the English tradition, Johnson did something else in deciding to write on the lives of 'his' chosen poets. It intermixes extended passages of literary criticism, biographical information, and a limited delineation of cultural context. The authority with which Johnson expresses himself actually reveals his ability to observe. Johnson had been received with much acclamation by his contemporary critics as well as readers. James Boswell even made him the subject of what is often called the greatest biography in English, *The Life of Samuel Johnson , L.L. D*. (1791). Johnson was one of those writers to propose a kind of freedom from classical rules and prescriptions for literary composition. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Hazlitt, and the other critics of the eighteenth century criticized Johnson's neoclassical principles and disputed his evaluations of authors, yet his support for rule-breaking innovation, in the preface to Shakespeare and elsewhere, prepared the literary and cultural ground for the Romantic revolution. His scope of writings made him what we may now call a public intellectual. In the nineteenth century, interest in Johnson was centered on his personality, which was also the subject matter of Boswell's biography. But it was only in the twentieth century that his writings regained their prominence.

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Unit 2

Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* ('Introduction', Part II and Part IV)

2.1 Objectives

This unit is an attempt to understand the concepts of the sublime and the beautiful as forwarded by Burke. After going through this unit you will be able to—

- recognize the nature and salient features of the sublime

- see what causes and catalyses the sublime
- understand the nature and function of beauty
- see the antithetical orientations of the sublime and the beautiful

2.2. Introducing the author

Born in Dublin, Ireland, Edmund Burke is a preeminent Irish philosopher and statesman who, after settling in London in 1750, served as a Member of Parliament between 1766 and 1794 in the House of Commons. Though a Whig, the political and philosophical views spread across his writings have earned him the title of the founder or father of modern conservatism. His brand of conservatism had religious roots and he stressed on the importance of religious institutions for a stable state and society. He famously critiqued the British government for its unjust taxation policies in the American colonies. And though he didn't support the idea of American independence, he did side with the Americans when it came to opposing absolute authority of the British Government. His seminal *Reflections on the Revolution in France* forwards the idea that revolutions do more harm than good as they damage the social fabric and topple beneficial religious and traditional authorities in a curiously self-detrimental move. Burke also opposed the slave trade; Africans, as he saw them, were not sub-humans but equally humans who were merely barbaric and needed civilising in a Christian nation. Burke is also noted for his impeachment efforts against Warren Hastings, Governor-General of Bengal, who was accused of misconduct and corruption. His liberal-conservative stand and religious views become apparent in these instances and they have had a great influence on his opinions, decisions and arguments throughout his life.

Published in 1757, Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* is an important and influential philosophical treatise wherein the confused subjects of the sublime and the beautiful find a thorough exposition. As an

empiricist, Burke places more importance on the sensory in perceiving and understanding the world, rather than rationality—as we see in the treatise. He classifies the sublime and the beautiful into two separate and opposed categories. While the sublime engages our dread and awe, beauty slackens and pacifies us. With this framework of a systematic and aesthetic explanation, Burke became one of the first writers to offer a psycho-somatic effect of these opposing tendencies on humans in general.

2.3. The Context

The sublime had always been associated with a quality of greatness, grandeur or excess. It began to get a slightly different aesthetic interpretation in the late 17th century and 18th century Britain with the views of Anthony Ashley-Cooper and John Dennis who were of the opinion that the sublime is something distinct from beauty. It has more to do with awesome fear than mild appreciation. Joseph Addison, one of the cultural giants of the 18th century who defined 'taste', similarly saw the sublime as a state higher than beauty when man experiences horror that may be mingled with fascination and glee. While the sublime almost always caused an amount of despair that threatened to override reason, beauty was always ebullient and conformed to reason. In Burke's exposition, Addison's notion of greatness might have been crucial in defining the sublime. Addison had opined that an object could be beautiful, but lack greatness which is necessary to produce the sublime. Burke seems to have subscribed to this notion throughout his treatise as he outlines the fundamentals that build up the sublime and the beautiful—the sublime can also include the beautiful or delightful along with the terrible, but beauty cannot conversely appropriate the dreadful or awful. He is also being innovative in a way with the treatise as he attempts to emphasise psychology over metaphysics and overturn the Platonic tradition in aesthetics.

2.4.

2.4.1 Part II (Introduction)

The Part II of the 'Introduction' in the *Inquiry* is dedicated to defining the fundamental characteristics of the sublime.

The sublime according to Burke, springs from our instinct of self-preservation and hence it is "the most affecting" emotion that we experience. Its strongest manifestation is chiefly as an "emotion of distress". And though there may be an element of delight in the sublime, it does not arise or generate from pleasure or a positive cause.

Sections I-IV

I- OF THE PASSION CAUSED BY THE SUBLIME

In their most powerful manifestations, the great and the sublime in nature causes astonishment in those affected. In this state of astonishment, man freezes so to say and the sublime he experiences is tinged with horror. The object engendering this completely occupies the mind of the affected—therein the power of the sublime is apparent. He cannot explain reason to explain away the sublime. In fact, the emotion of sublime comes before reasoning; it leads men to reason about this inexplicable emotion. And while astonishment is the strongest emotional corollary of the sublime, the lesser (in intensity) effects are "admiration, reverence, and respect".

II- TERROR

Things which strike or induce terror are, as Burke says sublime because it displays the same power of temporarily arresting the mind from the habit of reasoning. With regard to the sense of sight, objects which put fear in the hearts of the beholders are sublime. These objects may be huge or tiny in scale or size, but they are entities which are powerful enough to induce fear. Not only great animals, but also

smaller ones, such as a snake or any poisonous animal is sublime because of the fear they strike due to the dangers it poses. “Indeed terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently, the ruling principle of the sublime”. Objects of vast dimensions like an ocean which causes fear due to the manifold dangers it carries is sublime (unlike a vast level plain which though great, causes no fear). The different languages themselves testify of the fact that sublime has to do with terror which awes. ‘Thambos’ in Greek which signifies amazement has both fear and wonder as the meanings; the Roman verb ‘stupeo’ likewise signifies a state of arrest caused by fear or extreme amazement; and the French and English words like ‘etonnement’ and ‘astonishment’ have to do with emotions allied to both fear and wonder. Thus language itself clearly highlights that the sublime has not only to do with the awesome, but also the awful and the terrible for the most part.

III- OBSCURITY

How can things be rendered terrible so as to create the sublime effect? Burke observes that most things, beings or phenomena acknowledged as sublime has to do with obscurity. And obscurity contributes a lot to generating fear. “When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes”. Night is sublime because it strikes terror due to its obscurity. Many despotic governments exploit this principle/characteristic of the sublime to command fear and respect and they rule by keeping the passion of fear alive in man. Most heathen temples had dark interior and surroundings which amplified its sublime aspect; the native Americans are known to keep the idols they worship in dark parts of their houses which adds to the sublime aspect. “the Druids performed all their ceremonies in the bosom of the darkest woods”. Milton also used “judicious obscurity” of awesome or terrible figures as explicit description of the same would rob it of its

sublime feel. The obscure description which is “dark, uncertain, confused, terrible” is “sublime to the last degree”.

IV- OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CLEARNESS AND OBSCURITY WITH REGARD TO THE PASSIONS

Continuing in the same vent, Burke says that clearness and obscurity produce very different emotions in the heart. This gets evident when one compares a realistic painting of an object, being or phenomena with the verbal or written description of the same. In the first case, drawing of a landscape for instance has lesser impact on the passions or emotions because it is directly conveyed to us. But in the second case, a lively and spirited description of the same would have a bigger impact on the emotions as they are more obscure. As Burke says, “the most lively and spirited verbal description I can give raises a very obscure and imperfect *idea* of such objects; but then it is in my power to raise a stronger *emotion* by the description than I could do by the best painting. This experience constantly evinces”.

Burke brings in the case of Abbe Du Bos who had famously remarked that he prefers painting over poetry as it can move the passions or affect the emotions more strongly. According to him, painting can move so because of its greater clearness. But Burke argues that this view was mistaken as it was premised on pre-set system of judgement. There are a lot of instances wherein professed lovers of painting admire art pieces with “coolness” while admiring poetry or rhetoric with effusive warmth—suggesting a greater affect on the passions/emotions. When compared to poetry, painting falls short time and again when it comes to inciting the emotions. As Burke says, “passions are very strongly roused by a fanatic preacher, or by the ballads of Chevy Chase, or the Children in the Wood, and by other little popular poems and tales that are current in that rank of life. I do not know of any paintings, bad or good, that produce the same effect”. And this power of poetry on the emotions springs from its greater obscurity—as opposed to the greater clearness of paintings. Obscurity

of things create ignorance regarding them and this ignorance causes a greater excitement of our passions and achieves our admiration. A complete knowledge and familiarity with even the most striking and mysterious phenomena cannot affect or excite the emotions. Grand cosmic ideas of eternity or infinity are great because we know so little about them.

Burke brings up Milton's description of Satan which is rendered with subtle obscurity that creates the sublime effect with a series of unfinished images—"great and confused images". The excess of images which create obscurity crowds the mind. In painting, even when a "judicious obscurity" is used, cannot achieve the sublime as poetry does. Nature itself is testament of this power of the obscure. Burke writes, "in nature, dark, confused, uncertain images have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passions, than those have which are more clear and determinate". Clarity means that we perceive an object with the bounds in sight. But obscurity, wherein the bounds are not clearly defined, there is an approach to infinity and it is this which lends it the sublime effect. In fact, as Burke says, "A clear idea is therefore another name for a little idea". The book of Job is sublime because of the uncertainty or obscurity of its descriptions. The grandest poetic instances of the terrible and the awesome in the book can never be rendered equally well in painting. Attempts to transfer terrible and fanciful ideas in painting have almost always failed. Images of hell in painting are in Burke's opinion ridiculous. The temptation of St. Anthony rendered in painting has likewise been wild grotesques. This just goes to show that painting cannot effectively portray obscurity that is a core quality of the sublime.

Sections V-IX

V- POWER

Any thing or phenomena with power has the potential to create the sublime effect. This is so because power imparts terror in the beholders and terror is one of the fundamental principles of the

sublime. Power which causes pain is superior in intensity than power which causes pleasure. So when compared, suffering rather than pleasure caused by powerful object or being is more memorable and prevalent. Burke says, “the ideas of pain, and, above all, of death, are so very affecting, that whilst we remain in the presence of whatever is supposed to have the power of inflicting either, it is impossible to be perfectly free from terror”. Burke goes on to distinguish between different kinds of power and says that power causing pleasure is inferior because they do not need to be forced on us-we accept it with our own will. But powers causing pain are inflicted or imposed on someone—it is forced and not accepted. As Burke says, “pain is always inflicted by a power in some way superior, because we never submit to pain willingly”. When confronted with an animal or even a man known for prodigious strength, the first thoughts are not if the powerful being will work to give one pleasure but if the powerful being uses its strength to wreak destruction and havoc. But in cases where one confronts a powerful being whose power could be used or manipulated, the sublime effect gets greatly reduced. For eg., an ox—animal of vast strength but hardly sublime as it is put to man’s service. But a bull on the other hand who is known for its fierce, raw power and is not tameable and prone to destructive fits, does fit the category of powerful sublime beings who induce terror. Bulls have therefore been alluded to in “sublime descriptions and elevating comparisons”. The horse, again an animal of immense strength is not considered sublime because of its usefulness. But in descriptions where the horse is lifted form from its usual useful associations and given terrific and hyperbolic characters, it draws near the sublime. Animals of strength whose power is not pernicious is not sublime as such animals are employed for our use, benefit and pleasure—according to our will—and this greatly reduces its sublime potential as the sublime is not something which is directed by man or under man’s will. Burke says, “Whenever strength is only useful, and employed for our benefit or our pleasure, then it is never sublime; for nothing can act agreeably to us, that does not act in conformity to our will; but to act agreeably to our

will, it must be subject to us, and therefore can never be the cause of a grand and commanding conception". Biblical descriptions of great beasts of power like the leviathan or even the unicorn are sublime precisely because they override human will (or cannot be pinned down by human will). So examples of strength associated with terror results in the sublime while instances of strength which is subservient results in, more often than not, contempt. To clarify this further, Burke brings in the example of dogs and wolves. Dogs are animals that are just as swift and strong like the wolves. But unlike the latter, dogs are not candidates for the sublime effect as they are used for our "convenience and pleasure". The way we do not have a high regard for dogs in spite of their prized qualities gets reflected in the way we hurl the noun 'dog' upon people who we despise. Wolves on the other hand, because of "their unmanageable fierceness...[are] not excluded from grand descriptions and similitudes". Powerful kingdoms across the world are seen to exercise power in the same way—by affiliating it with the terrible more than the serviceable. Kings are observed to be addressed with titles such as "dread majesty" to convey the terrible power that he wields. In the presence of people of great power, the average man is struck with awe and in some cases, even loses the free will of his faculties. The idea of God however is another form of power which is both serviceable and terrible at the same time and sublime in the highest degree. While contemplating the Almighty God, "we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a manner, annihilated before him". His love, justice and mercy can in no way lessen or relieve the terror we associate with such a supreme Being whose force we cannot withstand. Even Lucretius who is not given to religious ideas, finds himself overcome with the sublime when he contemplates the workings of nature and the universe and the grand Designer behind them. As a result, his poetry is "overcast with a shade of secret dread and horror". In the Bible, whenever God is tangibly manifested, nature is "called up to heighten the awe and solemnity of the Divine presence". We see earthquakes, storms, fires, smokes, dropping heavens, whenever God's awesome presence manifests on

earth. His presence is thus marked by power and power is therefore one of the primary sources of the sublime.

VI- PRIVATION

Privations like "*vacuity*, *darkness*, *solitude*, and *silence"* can be sublime because they are terrible. Virgil, in his descriptions of hell, uses such privations to evoke the sublime aura of the underworld. These qualities add to the dark and oppressive grandeur of the sublime.

VII- VASTNESS

Vastness or greatness of dimension is another trigger or cause of the sublime. However, vastness needs to be qualified before it can be admitted into the sublime category as not all vast things have the sublime effect. When it comes to the three axes of height, length and depth, it will be observed that height and depth contribute more to the sublime than a supreme length which is only monotonous. And when it comes to height and depth, the latter has more affinity with the sublime than the former. Burke says, "height is less grand than depth; and that we are more struck at looking down from a precipice, than looking up at an object of equal height". And in the case of height, a right angle perpendicular line has more of a sublime effect than an inclined line or plane. When it comes to the texture of objects, those which are rugged and broken are more sublime than those whose surfaces are smooth and polished. Burke here adds that just as vast objects are sublime, small or microscopic objects also have the sublime effect because of their very smallness. While tracing animal lives down to their excessively small secrets and quirks, we "become amazed and confounded at the wonders of minuteness". And this effect is the same as when we behold a vast object of sublime order. This is because the mind is overwhelmed as well as terrorised while contemplating the infinite divisibility of matter.

VIII- INFINITY

Infinity is another source of the sublime as it fills the mind with a sort of "delightful horror" when the same is considered. We stand powerless and weak before the grand concepts of infinity. Burke considers it the "most genuine effect, and truest test of the sublime". When we behold objects whose bounds elude us, it seems infinite to us—even though it may be an optical illusion—but it contributes to achieving the sublime effect in our emotions. Infinity is also marked by repetition. Burke gives examples such as when we continue to hear dripping water or beating of forge-hammers long after the action has actually ceased. Lunatics are often seen repeating same old phrases which is suggestive of the power of the infinite to thrall the mind.

IX- SUCCESSION AND UNIFORMITY

Just like repetition, succession and uniformity make up the artificial infinite. Succession involves the idea of continuation of parts in a particular direction so as to convey the impression that it stretches on beyond its actual limits. Uniformity is central to this series of succession for if parts are altered, the imagination gets checked and this keeps it from giving an infinite impression. Interrupted progression thus cannot give the impression of infinity. Architecture is a good example of this principle. Ancient heathen temples give the impression of the infinite with their oblong forms and uniform pillars and thus have a sublime air about it. The aisles of old cathedrals and colonnades of Greek temples with their succession and uniformity of parts make for the sublime. Buildings lose their sublime character and grandeur when they "abound in angles" instead of succession and uniformity and this is indicative of "an inordinate thirst for variety" which when overdone displays "very little true taste".

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What, according to Burke, is the ruling principle of the sublime?

2. Why does Burke say that poetry or rhetoric is more sublime than painting?

3. What kind of power is productive of the sublime?

4. How is infinity sublime?

Sections X-XV

X- MAGNITUDE IN BUILDING

Greatness of dimensions in buildings is necessary to achieve the sublime effect. But most buildings, while going to achieve greatness, suffer from the "want of proper dimension". Men are always drawn to "extravagant designs" which defeats their purpose of greatness which they intended to promote. The idea of infinity and magnitude in buildings can also be achieved through generous deception or optical illusion involving succession and uniformity. Burke says that he found "colonnades and avenues of trees of a moderate length were...far grander than when they were suffered to run to immense distances". Vast designs which aim for infinity or great magnitudes but are not informed by succession and uniformity are "sign of a common and low imagination".

XI- INFINITY IN PLEASING OBJECTS

Infinity of a different kind which pleases more than it overwhelms is a source of the sublime. The season of spring which is the pleasantest season of the year is sublime. Even the young of animals—even though they are far from reaching maturity—is pregnant with the sublime due to their very young versions as they seem to be promises of something more. Likewise, Burke adds, that "unfinished sketches of drawing" are more sublime and pleasing than the best of the finished drawings.

XII- DIFFICULTY

Difficulty is often another source of greatness or the sublime. Any task requiring or demanding immense force or labour is grand.

Stonehenge with its huge blocks of stone piled atop each other is sublime—not because it is beautiful or admirable in any way—but because those rough blocks of stone gives the idea of immense force required to prop them up. In this case, "the rudeness of the work increases this cause of grandeur". So there are instances when difficulty, instead of "art and contrivance", can instil the sublime in its beholders.

XIII- MAGNIFICENCE

Magnificence as in "a great profusion of things, which are splendid or valuable in themselves" is another source of the sublime. The starry skies which fit this description of the magnificent is sublime as it never ceases to amaze us and always imparts a sense of grandeur. This is only because the stars are considered together in their totality, not separately. If every star is separately considered, then the sublime effect will be greatly diminished. Burke therefore says, "the number is certainly the cause". Along with the number or profusion, the disordered spread of the stars in the canvas of the sky adds to its magnificence. Burke writes, "the apparent disorder augments the grandeur, for the appearance of care is highly contrary to our ideas of magnificence". Their confused profusion also makes it impossible to reckon them, giving them a quality of the infinite—which is another primary source of the infinite. This is true for nature but in man-made articles, especially works of art, one has to be careful in admitting the great and confused profusion of multitudinous objects. If dealt without the greatest care, this attempt would only destroy the work of art. Fireworks however, have been seen to be successful in this experiment. The careful descriptions of any poets and orators have likewise attained the sublime through a great profusion of carefully selected images. Their descriptions arrest and dazzle the mind and one fails to account for each and every allusion or image or grasp their coherence as one is overwhelmed with the magnificence. Burke quotes from a portion in *Henry IV* which is a good example of the sublime in

magnificence. This quote is about the king's army who are described with rich allusions and apt metaphors. Similarly, the description of the Jewish High-Priest Simon in the play is another instance of the magnificent sublime as the personage is depicted with series of similes that attempt to capture the greatness of Simon.

XIV- LIGHT

Burke then turns to colour and thereby light as possible sources of the sublime. As the manifestation of colour is dependent on light, Burke looks at the phenomena of light first. He says that light can be a source of the sublime, but under certain circumstances only. "Mere light" cannot be sublime as it is too ubiquitous and banal. It does not make a strong impression which a necessary pre-condition of the sublime. Intense light such as sunlight when directly viewed can be considered as sublime as it "overpowers the sense". Light of lesser intensities or "inferior strength" can be sublime if they move at a great speed or swiftness, such as flashes of lightning which "is certainly productive of grandeur". A quick movement from light to darkness or vice-versa also produces an effect which nears the sublime due to its disturbing capacity of disorientation. Darkness in fact, has more affinity for the sublime than light. Milton, the "great poet", seemed to realise the sublime valency of darkness and used a "well-managed darkness" in his descriptions of God, besides tapping into the magnificence of a profusion of images to achieve the sublime effect. Darkness yields more to the sublime as its chief characteristic is obscurity which is again, another factor to enhance the sublime. While using light for a sublime end, Milton has it in excess—"a light which by its very excess is converted into a species of darkness". According to Burke, extreme light is not only poetical, but also philosophical to the highest degree. Excess light overwhelms our sense of sight and blurs our vision—resembling darkness. Thus light and darkness—opposites are reconciled in their extremes as they produce the sublime.

Sublime which “abhors mediocrity” is therefore especially evident in the extreme instances of these natural opposites.

XV- LIGHT IN BUILDING

Light can be used to achieve the sublime effect in architecture when the principle of excess or extreme of contrasts is applied. However, as Burke observes, if a building or edifice aims to achieve the sublime effect, the architects should invest more in the “dark and gloomy” rather than brightness. This is because darkness has a greater and near-sublime effect on the emotions/passions. Secondly, darkness helps in achieving a contrast effect which greatly adds to the sublime. When one enters a building, he should not enter into a greater light than he had in the outside; for a most striking the architects should design and use light in such a way that one passes from the greatest light to the greatest darkness achievable indoors. At night, the contrary will apply when one passes from a considerable darkness outside to a magnificent light or brilliance inside in a highly illuminated room—achieving the sublime effect by affecting the passions.

4.7. Sections XVI-XXII

XVI- COLOR CONSIDERED AS PRODUCTIVE OF THE SUBLIME

Colours also tend to produce a sublime effect on the mind and the heart. However as Burke says, soft, bright or cheerful colours are not amenable to a sublime effect. In fact, drab and dark colours are the ones which accomplish the sublime upon its beholders. As example he says that a dark and gloomy mountain is far more sublime when compared to a mountain covered with shiny green turf. Also, a dark, cloudy sky has more of a sublime effect on the observers rather than a clear, plain blue sky. It seems that historical paintings apply this principle when it comes to the choice of colours. Even the use of “gay” or “gaudy” colours cannot achieve a happy effect. When it comes to

buildings, Burke suggests from his observations that the sublime effect can be achieved through the use of "sad and fuscous colours, as black, or brown, or deep purple, and the like". Bright colours or colours of cheerful tones are to be avoided meticulously in this respect. But this advice need not be applied for every building that is being built. Only the kind of buildings where "uniform degree of the most striking sublimity is to be produced" are good candidates for this choice of colours. But one thing that holds is that buildings aiming for the sublime should stay away from lighter colours as they rob an edifice of its sublime potential.

XVII- SOUND AND LOUDNESS

According to Burke, just as sights, sounds also have the power to effect the sublime in our emotions or passions. Burke clarifies his statement and says that when he is talking about sounds, he is not referring to words. "Excessive loudness" has the capacity to terrorise us and temporarily paralyse our movements. The "noise of vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or artillery, awakes a great and awful sensation in the mind"—even though these sounds lack the careful artifice which sometimes creates the sublime effect, and by themselves may not be pleasing to the ears. The shouting of a great assembly or a mob in unison has a similarly terrifying effect on our hearts as it confounds our imagination. Even the most imperturbable and nonchalant person cannot help but be affected immensely by such stupendous noise. This therefore, is another instance of the sublime and its power upon the mind and the passions.

XVIII- SUDDENNESS

Pertaining to sounds, a sudden beginning or an ending of the same has a sublime result. This is due to the fact that a sudden beginning or ending of a sound arouses or arrests the attention of a distracted person—all the faculties alert and on guard. Even when it comes to sights, the principle applies as a quick or sudden transition

from one extreme to the other is always seen to be cause of greatness because of the reason described. Suddenness is thus sublime as it has the capacity to terrorise and demand the full and inordinate amount of attention from a person. As Burke writes, “in everything sudden and unexpected, we are apt to start; that is, we have a perception of danger, and our nature rouses us to guard against it”. There are also instances when a single sound when repeated at regular intervals can have a “grand effect”. While suddenness is sublime because we do not expect it, a monotonous repetition of sounds at decided and expected points of time can also be sublime. This because such expected sounds are also attended by a measure of suddenness and they surprise every time we hear them. For eg., “the striking of a great clock”, “a single stroke on a drum, repeated with pauses” and “the successive firing of cannon at a distance”.

XIX- INTERMITTING

Unlike loud and terrific sounds, “low, tremulous, intermitting sound” are also observed to be “productive of the sublime” in some cases. Especially during night hours when man’s uncertainties seem to peak as his subconscious plays out his fears in the dark atmosphere, “some low, confused, uncertain sounds” which are repeated intermittently and whose source cannot be discerned, cause a good deal of fright and anxiety in the heart of a man and due to this, they are sublime. These sounds are similar to the shifting or “uncertain lights” in the dark which can terrorise man out of his wits. Quoting a section from Spenser’s poetry, Burke demonstrates that light which appear and leave continually is “even more terrible than total darkness”. In the same way “uncertain sounds” are sublime as they cause more alarm and fear than total silence.

XX- THE CRIES OF ANIMALS

Unless it is an easily identifiable cry of a particular animal we hold in low regard, sounds which seem to convey pain or danger suffered by an animal is again, productive of the sublime effect. Likewise, "the angry tones of wild beasts are equally capable of causing a great and awful sensation"—capable of leading to a sublime transport. There are numerous instances wherein the cries of animals wild or unfamiliar to human society have the sublime character.

XXI- SMELL AND TASTE—BITTERS AND STENCHES

The sense of smell and taste are also productive of the sublime but only in a few instances or occasionally. For these senses which are inclined to the pleasurable and delightful, the same principle of extreme triggers is applicable. Burke says that the experience of "excessive bitters, and intolerable stenches" can produce a grand sensation which is indicative of the sublime effect on the passions/emotions. But this is only true when they are moderated or relayed and not experienced directly which is merely painful and odious and cause/yield no delight whatsoever. Literary expressions such as "A cup of bitterness" or "bitter apples of Sodom" are sublime descriptions employing taste. Likewise, with the olfactory, descriptions of poisonous fumes such as the one by Virgil quoted in the text about the acrid and poisonous exhalation of Acheron is sublime. Burke then adds that "excessive bitters, and intolerable stenches" have always had degrading or derogatory associations. He admits that these, if taken in and of by itself and presented as sublime, would indeed be subject to burlesque and ridicule. But this is because bitterness and stench have been traditionally associated with contemptible ideas. However, when associated with images of grandeur, bitterness and stench can add to the dignity of the whole

composition—then they must be recognised as sublime. If not, they will be merely odious. Burke writes, "things which are terrible are always great; but when things possess disagreeable qualities, or such as have indeed some degree of danger, but of a danger easily overcome, they are merely *odious*; as toads and spiders".

XXII- FEELING—PAIN

Pain is something that we fear and tend to avoid. But pain, particularly physical or bodily pain—have been observed to achieve the sublime effect. All modes of pain and the degrees and intensities related to them—be it low, medium or high—accomplished through labour, anguish or torment, is productive of the sublime.

Self-Assessment Questions

5. Why can difficulty be considered as a source of the sublime?
6. What kind of colours achieve the sublime effect?
7. What sounds qualify as sublime?
8. Why is suddenness sublime?

Stop to consider

Burke opines that the sublime has the capacity to overwhelm us. Longinus had similarly written of a sublime transport long back. He mentioned "great thoughts" and "strong emotions" as results of a sublime experience. Sublime as he saw it, leads to a loss of rationality and creates a somewhat mixed emotion of ecstasy and dismay. Burke re-phrases this ecstatic element of the sublime as "delight" or "negative pain". And in his view, the sublime is not only compelling, but also potentially destructive. Immanuel Kant also had a similar opinion on the sublime. However, according to him, the sublime can inspire fear without being fearful or destructive. Largeness, smallness,

extreme height or great depth stirs the terror and the awesome of the sublime alternately.

2.4.2 Part IV (Introduction)

In Part IV of the 'Introduction' in the *Inquiry,* Burke lays out the differences between the sublime and the beautiful as the two are often conflated and confused for each other when they are very distinct.

Sections I-VI

I- OF THE EFFICIENT CAUSE OF THE SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL

Burke investigates the efficient causes that make for the sublime and the beautiful; he adds that they should not be considered as the ultimate causes of the same. He says that he will not be able to explain the mysterious ways in which the body and the mind affect each other profoundly. However, discoveries related to the way the mind and the body are fused and dependent on each other would be useful to ascertain "a distinct knowledge of our passions". One has to be careful while philosophising on these great topics. Overreaching in this matter would do more harm than good for then we would "go out of our depth". Burke reiterates limiting and focussing his investigation by pointing to his use of the word "efficient" by which he says that he only means "certain affections of the mind, that cause certain changes in the body; or certain powers and properties in bodies, that work a change in the mind". His attempt is to show the manner in which efficient causes worked or operated, not how or why they did.

II- ASSOCIATION

Associations embedded deep into our subconscious since our childhood or even adolescence have a great role to play in our judgement of things as either beautiful or sublime. In our innumerable daily encounters, we often do not have the time or capacity to reflect on the ceaseless external stimuli properly. But associations that we inculcated from our learning or experiences—which can be hardly distinguished from natural effects or response—helps us in arriving at a judgement on them. We often feel "unaccountable antipathies" upon meeting certain sorts of people; or the potentially dangerous fire and water becomes more dangerous than a harmless clod of the earth. It must therefore be acknowledged that "many things affect us after a certain manner, not by any natural powers they have for that purpose, but by association". Our judgements are therefore coloured by such emotions and are inescapably emotional. However, one must not generalise as not all things affect us by associations alone—for a lot of things are "originally and naturally agreeable or disagreeable"—and we reckon them likewise.

III- CAUSE OF PAIN AND FEAR

Terror has been established as the chief cause of the sublime. Even things which are not dangerous but nevertheless able to terrify are sublime. On the other hand, things which give pleasure are beautiful; they have "beauty engrafted on it". The sublime and the beautiful therefore spring from contradictory impulses.

As the sublime has to do with pain instead of pleasure, a mere "apprehension of pain or death", instead of actual pain or death, is enough to have the same effects when extreme physical discomfort is actually experienced. Burke describes the physical contortions and expressions of a man under some pain; he writes, "a man in great pain has his teeth set, his eyebrows are violently contracted, his forehead is wrinkled, his eyes are dragged inwards, and rolled with great vehemence, his hair stands on end, the voice is forced out in short

shrieks and groans". Similar expressions and bodily movements can be seen when a person is merely thinking about the violence of pain in a sublime thrill. Animals also display a similar behaviour when under the apprehension of punishment dogs "have writhed their bodies, and yelped, and howled, as if they had actually felt the blows". Likewise, fear and the expectation of pain have a physical effect on man which manifest as "an unnatural tension of the nerves" which either lead to spurts of "unnatural strength or "extraordinary weakness". And there is a fundamental difference between pain and terror-both of which are causes of the sublime. Pain originates in the body working its way to affecting the mind; whereas terror originates in the mind, eventually affecting the body. But both share a common ground as they produce "a tension, contraction, or violent emotion of the nerves".

IV- CONTINUED

Burke refers to the story of the famous physiognomist Campanella in Spon's *Récherches d'Antiquité* to corroborate his argument that the mind and the body affect each other greatly. Campanella who studied human faces, was an expert in mimicking various expressions. Whenever he wanted to find the state of the mind or emotions experienced by a person, he would assume the expression that the other person's face is wearing at the moment and thereby arrive at an understanding of the person's inner thoughts and dispositions. Burke says about himself that "on mimicking the looks and gestures of angry, or placid, or frighted, or daring men, I have involuntarily found my mind turned to that passion, whose appearance I endeavoured to imitate". This shows the close connection between our minds and our bodies; they always work in tandem—the body cannot be experiencing pain while the mind is contemplating pleasure and vice-versa. In fact Campanella is known to have endured physical pain by deliberately choosing to focus on lighter and happier subjects.

Similarly, consumption of opiates and alcohols which is physical, drowns grief, anger or sadness of the mind. Thus the intimate workings of the mind and the body are incontrovertible.

V- HOW THE SUBLIME IS PRODUCED

Terror is one of the chief emotions of the sublime which result in an "unnatural tension and certain violent emotions of the nerves". As such, other emotions with physical manifestations of unnatural agitation of the nerves are productive of the sublime. Pain as mentioned, is closely related to it. Nature is a storehouse/reservoir of objects, beings and phenomena that cause the sublime—attaining it through the mind or the body. What makes sublime unique is that a particular kind of delight—"a species of delight"—can be derived or experienced from those contradictory states of terrorised or painful moments.

VI- HOW PAIN CAN BE A CAUSE OF DELIGHT

Nature has designed us in such a way that indolence or inaction—however pleasant—can cause a lot of inconveniences. Uninterrupted rest is soon followed by a host of bodily disorders and one is forced to resort to tasks requiring physical or mental exertion to live a life with "tolerable satisfaction". An idle or torpid lifestyle disables our organs and systems—causing them to perform poorly—and "takes away the vigorous tone of fibre". In such a sluggish state, the nerves are prone to "the most horrid convulsions". The deteriorating condition of the body soon affects the mind and one becomes a prey to "melancholy, dejection, despair, and often self-murder". Burke claims that the only way out of this vicious quicksand is labour; he writes, "The best remedy for all these evils is exercise or *labour*; and labour is a surmounting of *difficulties".* Labour involves pain and difficulty. But it has a beneficial impact on both the

body and the mind. Pain or difficulty—though unpleasant—can have a therapeutic effect on the slothful. It is thus that pain, in an oblique way, becomes a source of delight. However, it must be noted that the exercise of only one's mental powers or faculties can adversely affect the body. Likewise, "great bodily labour, or pain, weakens and sometimes actually destroys the mental faculties". Since the mind and the body are so reliant on each other, it is important that physical and mental exercises should practised in a balanced way that compliment each other.

Sections VII-XIII

VII- EXERCISE NECESSARY FOR THE FINER ORGANS

Burke says occasional exercise of the finer or the delicate parts or organs of our bodies are important. And a "mode of terror" should be the characteristic of this exercise of the finer parts. However, pain and terror exercised on parts like the eye or the ear should be modified considerably so that they are not "actually noxious" and harmful. It must always be kept in mind that the pain or terror should not be carried to extremes of violence and destruction. It is then that the delicate parts will be sufficiently and properly exercised and the person concerned will be able to experience the sublime emotion of delightful horror—not pleasure—but "a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror". This has to do with the sublime as it springs from the impulse or instinct of self-preservation which is the basis of all sublime effects.

VIII- WHY THINGS NOT DANGEROUS SOMETIMES PRODUCE A PASSION LIKE TERROR

Though sublime emerges from pain and terror and has to do with the instinct of self-preservation, it has been observed that in most cases, the sublime emerges from things which may not pose a threat or

immediate danger to the person concerned, but in their own way, they inspire awe and fear—emotions affiliated to the sublime. Visual objects of massive proportions are examples of a source of the sublime which is not dangerous.

IX- WHY VISUAL OBJECTS OF GREAT DIMENSIONS ARE SUBLIME

Objects of great dimensions are sublime as they strain the eye of the person who beholds it. Whether the entire largeness of the object is perceived at once by the eye, or whether only a single point of the huge object is perceived at one point by the eye, the eye has to do a lot of work and its fine membranes undergo tension and feel pain while trying to grasp the object in all its immensity. As Burke writes, "the whole capacity of the eye, vibrating in all its parts, must approach near to the nature of what causes pain, and consequently must produce an idea of the sublime". Seeing big objects can be a sublime experience since it involves pain and agitation of "the fine nerves and muscles" of our eyes. The eye is able to arrive at an idea of the huge object by registering a quick succession of its different parts so "as to make them seem united".

X- UNITY WHY REQUISITE TO VASTNESS

Vastness is an important source of the sublime. But if this vastness is composed of varying parts, instead of uniform and united parts, the actual extent of the vastness of an object is severely compromised. As Burke argues, if we are exposed to a series of different colours or shapes, the eye feels a sort of relaxation due to the interrupted and terminated straining. But this rest does not produce ease, neither does it produce the sublime pain brought on by vigorous labour. A similar thing is noticeable when a person exercises. A strong exercise routine which is filled with varied and not uniform labour

only turns out to be “a teasing, fretful employment, which at once wearies and weakens the body”. The continual alterations and change of directions or momentum in varied labour do not produce strong pain that uniform labour produces and it is thus far from reaching the sublime. The reason behind this, as Burke writes is that, “the mind in reality hardly ever can attend diligently to more than one thing at a time; if this thing be little, the effect is little, and a number of other little objects cannot engage the attention”. Unity and uniformity are thus essential in perceiving vast objects.

XI- THE ARTIFICIAL INFINITE

It has already been pointed out how infinity which is productive of the sublime can be artificially achieved. With visual objects this involves creating a uniform succession of great parts; for the aural sense it involves creation of uniform succession of sounds. Sound enters the ear through the ear-drum and the membranous parts of the ear vibrate according to the strength of the sound. If strokes of sound are repeated, the repetition and the very expectation of another stroke creates tension. Animals frequently display this tension when they “prick up their ears” upon hearing a series of sounds or noises. The effects of sounds are thus amplified by expectation which raises tension in the hearer. It has been noticed that hearers are always a little surprised even if they hear expected sounds repeated at regular intervals. The tension with the “the expectation and the surprise” is “worked up to such a pitch as to be capable of the sublime; it is brought just to the verge of pain”. It is thus that artificial infinite in the matter of sounds yields readily to the sublime.

XII-THE VIBRATIONS MUST BE SIMILAR

As with visual objects of great dimensions, the principle of unity and uniformity applies in the case of sounds as well. If the vibrations are not similar, it will fail to create an illusion of infinity and thereby its mechanisms will fall short in qualifying for the sublime. For better illustration, Burke gives the example of a pendulum. Pendulum is known for its uniform oscillation. But if an external force disturbs the uniform arch of the oscillation by pushing it in another direction, then the pendulum cannot reassume its original path or orbit and its motion will come to a cease quickly. But where a pendulum is allowed to traverse its usual path and force is applied along the direction of the orbit/line, it will achieve "a greater arch, and move a longer time".

XIII-THE EFFECTS OF SUCCESSION IN VISUAL OBJECTS EXPLAINED

Recalling the principle of artificial infinity and attendant uniformity, Burke says that when it comes to visual objects, "a successive disposition of uniform parts in the same right line should be sublime". A careful uniformity can make a small quantity of matter have a grander effect on the passions or emotions than a larger quantity of matter which are not arranged uniformly. "A colonnade of uniform pillars planted in a right line"—such as those seen in Greek temples, are sublime in character. This is because the beholding eye is confronted with an illusion of infinity upon seeing successive pillars stretched uniformly till a distance. This exercise also strains the eye—causing it some amount of pain which makes for the sublime. The line of pillars "repeats impulse after impulse, and stroke after stroke, until the eye, long exercised in one particular way, cannot lose that object immediately, and, being violently roused by this continued agitation, it presents the mind with a grand or sublime conception". This is not true

in the case where pillars of varying shapes succeed one another. The eye does not receive any distinct impression which is built upon or amplified and is obstructed with “rest and relaxation” and such “reliefs prevent that powerful emotion so necessary to produce the sublime”. It is therefore essential that in order to attain perfect grandeur, one must maintain simplicity and “an absolute uniformity in disposition, shape, and colouring”. Burke also points out the difference between the grandness of a long bare wall which does not have the principle of succession and uniformity governing it, and a colonnade of similar height and length. While the grandeur and the sublime of the bare wall derives from its vastness and is based on one idea, the grandeur of colonnades as explained, derives from a repetition of similar ideas.

Self-Assessment Questions

9. Why can pain be a source of delight?

10. What harmless thing inspires terror and the sublime?

11. In what way does the artificial infinite produce the sublime effect?

12. Why is uniformity essential in succession of visual objects that are considered as sublime?

Sections XIV-XVIII

XIV-LOCKE'S OPINION CONCERNING DARKNESS CONSIDERED

Locke had opined that darkness by itself is not a source of terror or trouble. It is only through associations that darkness, especially nights have become “painful and horrible to the imagination”—haunted as men are by tales of ghosts and goblins.

Burke objects to this opinion and reiterates that darkness is a primary source of the sublime and it never fails to induce or impart some degree of pain or terror in people. In his defence he says that when taken universally, the concept of darkness does prove to be terrible. People everywhere have experienced that in darkness, one loses one's bearings. It becomes impossible to discern the surrounding objects and may even strike on a dangerous obstruction. A person will not be able to tell if he is falling down a cliff in darkness, or if an enemy is just behind. Darkness also handicaps people from adequately or properly defending themselves. Strength is not of much help in darkness and "wisdom can only act by guess; the boldest are staggered". Malicious supernatural beings are associated with darkness because darkness, being terrible, was "a fit scene for such terrible representations".

XV-DARKNESS TERRIBLE IN ITS OWN NATURE

Burke further emphasises on the intrinsic capacity of darkness to strike terror. He includes blackness also as something which is "painful by their natural operation". He opines that darkness and blackness are much the same, only blackness is a more "confined" or specific idea. The natural terror innate in blackness is illustrated by an account given by Mr. Cheselden. He tells the story of a congenitally blind boy who had received sight after a cataract operation when he was around 13-14 years old. Among his first judgements on visual objects, there is an instance when the boy, upon looking at a black object, feels uneasy. His subsequent encounter with a black woman struck him with "great horror". This horror, Burke says, is owing to the natural terror in the colour black, and not because of any fearful associations with black as the boy had no prior idea that darkness and blackness are culturally linked with ideas of the terrible and the painful. Cheerful and brighter colours likewise come to be associated with pleasant states by a society only later; they derive the apt associations from the natural operations of the colours.

XVI-WHY DARKNESS IS TERRIBLE

Darkness is terrible because nature has designed our eyes in such a manner that when exposed to darkness, the optical nerves are strained beyond their natural capacity and this causes a painful sensation. The tensed eyes are wide open in darkness as it seeks to receive relief in some form of light. This causes “flashes and luminous appearances” to dance before the eyes which are nothing but optical illusions or “the effect of spasms, produced by its own efforts in pursuit of its object”. Darkness thus has a palpably visceral effect on the eyes. Burke gives the example of people who, having worked for a long time in the dark, find their greatly pained and weakened later. It is also true that darkness or blackness is terrible in that their ill effects are more psychological than physical. Just as bad weather puts one in ill humour, darkness terrifies. In this case of “the mechanical effect of darkness”, the mind is affected after the painful exertions of the body—which again goes to show the intimate relationship between the two.

XVII-THE EFFECTS OF BLACKNESS

It must be readily admitted that blackness is partial darkness. Black bodies, when dispersed amidst objects of other colours, seem to be vacant spaces. When the eye hits on one such vacuities, “it suddenly falls into a relaxation; out of which it as suddenly recovers by a convulsive spring”. This is similar to those moments when a person goes to sit on a chair and belatedly discovers with a shock that the seat is much lower than he expected. Shocks received at times like this are violent and “extremely rude and disagreeable”. Likewise, our sense organs are suddenly and rudely affected upon an unexpected change of course or stimuli. Shocks received thus are marked by relaxation which is immediately followed by convulsion. Blackness shocks by operating in the said manner.

XVIII-THE EFFECTS OF BLACKNESS MODERATED

Custom or habit mitigates the painful effects of blackness. As we get used to seeing black objects around us, the terror of the same dissipates. However, "the nature of the original impression still continues". We therefore see black being associated with melancholy and dejection. And the pain experienced by the eyes when it shifts its focus from lighter colours to black remains.

Sections XIX-XXV

XIX-THE PHYSICAL CAUSE OF LOVE

Just as the sublime with its characteristic terror affects the body, so does "love and complacency" affect the body considerably. Burke says that when one looks at objects that excite love, the familiar bodily responses are as follows:

> the head reclines something on one side; the eyelids are more closed than usual, and the eyes roll gently with an inclination to the object; the mouth is a little opened, and the breath drawn slowly, with now and then a low sigh; the whole body is composed, and the hands fall idly to the sides

These manifestations of bodily relaxations are accompanied by "an inward sense of melting and languor". These reactions are incumbent on the degree of beauty in the object and the sensibility of the observer. Beauty as noted, works a contradictory impulse of relaxing the body—unlike the way sublime contracts or constricts the muscles into tension and pain. Beauty has been universally marked for its "natural tendency to relax the fibres". This relaxation of the body induced by beauty, produces pleasure on some occasions, and in most instances, produces the passion or emotion of love in the mind. Love

can therefore have a physical love. The contrary however, is also true. If the passion of love originates in the mind first, then it leads to a proportional relaxation of the body.

XX-WHY SMOOTHNESS IS BEAUTIFUL

It is generally acknowledged that smoothness is a principal cause of pleasure unto all the five senses. When it comes to sight, this is readily evident as objects with smooth bodies are considered beautiful. They relax the eyes and relaxation is a key function of the beautiful. Smooth bodies allay "violent pains and cramps, and relaxes the suffering parts from their unnatural tension". They impart pleasure and comfort—passions which are affiliated to all things beautiful.

XXI-SWEETNESS, ITS NATURE

While discussing the sublime, Burke said that the smell of something noxious or the taste of something bitter—more often figuratively than literally—has the power to produce the sublime effect as it involves a shock and tension of the nose and the taste buds. But when it comes to beauty, it is sweetness which soothes and gives pleasure that is prevalent on these senses. In the matter of taste, Burke looks at the ubiquitous liquid edibles of water and oil. Water is "insipid, inodorous, colourless, and smooth" and it is used to resolve spasms and relax the fibres. Oil too is "insipid, inodorous, colourless, and smooth to the touch and taste", and in most instances, it is smoother and more relaxing than water. It is also more "pleasant to the eye, the touch, and the taste". The very smoothness of the oil constitutes its sweetness. Even salt with its "distinct, regular, invariable form" is smooth and thereby sweet. Smooth globular bodies like "the marbles with which boys amuse themselves" are sweet due to the pleasure they impart when rolled forward or backward. Sweetness

of things thus lie in their form or shape, in soft and minute variations that does not tire the senses and in plainness and smoothness.

XXII-SWEETNESS RELAXING

Burke reiterates the point that sweetness, like smoothness, is relaxing. Many language in fact conflate sweetness and softness, for eg., the French doux which means both soft and sweet. And "the Latin *dulcis*, and the Italian *dolce*, have in many cases the same double signification". Consumption of oily food is known to relax the stomach. Sweet smells can also relax one considerably; the smell of flowers often relaxes people into drowsiness. Unlike oil or relaxing salt, which are sweet and smooth but not pleasant if taken by themselves, milk is both sweet to the taste and relaxing to the stomach and the body. Made up of water, oil and sweet salt, milk has great smoothness and feels relaxing to the skin. Fruits which are sweet have oil particles in them which adds to the sweetness and smoothness of the same—relaxing the consumer with every bite. All in all, as Burke sums up, smooth things are generally "agreeable to the taste, and are found of a relaxing quality".

XXIII-VARIATION, WHY BEAUTIFUL

Unlike the sublime which demands uniformity of all its parts, beauty allows for variations in objects. But this variation is only a slight deviation, not sharp which would only surprise and cause a convulsion of the optic nerves. Deviations or variations which are gentle and do not weary a person, rather causing one to relax, are beautiful. Even motions can be beautiful in that they are relaxing when it is of the gentle sort. Oscillatory movements or a measured rising and falling are thereby beautiful. And "rocking sets children to sleep better than absolute rest" as the varied motion gives them pleasure. Again, when one travels on coaches and ride over smooth turfs, the "gradual

ascents and declivities" is pleasurable and relaxing. These instances thus show that beauty does consist of variations which are not abrupt but mild and relaxing on the mind and the body.

XXIV-CONCERNING SMALLNESS

Though things of great dimensions in nature may be regarded as beautiful, it is the small objects which display the qualities and characteristic of beauty best. In large bodies which may be "adorned with the spoils of beauty", the beautiful gets subsumed under the greater aspect of the sublime. This because, as Burke says, "there is something so overruling in whatever inspires us with awe, in all things which belong ever so remotely to terror, that nothing else can stand in their presence. There lie the qualities of beauty either dead or unoperative; or at most exerted to mollify the rigor and sternness of the terror". In the contemplation of great objects therefore, beauty becomes secondary to the more powerful passion of the sublime. Smallness or littleness is more amenable to the idea of beauty. The beauty of the hummingbird for instance, is enhanced by its smallness. However, one must also keep in mind that disproportionately small or extremely small objects or beings may not qualify as beautiful. Dwarves are considered as having "a very disagreeable image" which is due to their inordinate smallness and unsymmetrical body parts. People of short stature can be considered beautiful only if their bodies are proportional and symmetrical. Whereas "the large and gigantic" have affinity with the sublime, beauty which inspires love, associates the same with "tyranny, cruelty, injustice, and everything horrid and abominable". Epics and romances are filled with destructive giants like Polyphemus and Cacus. It is their defeat and death that people read with the greatest satisfaction. But beautiful characters of normal statures like Simoisius who is separated from his parents and bride in the "soft bloom of youth" due to war is able to move people in his favour. And when it comes to Achilles and Hector, Homer paints the

latter in a more sympathetic light than the 30-foot tall and near-invincible warrior-giant. The comparatively weaker Hector draws our pity and pity is a core passion of love. It is thus seen that "objects of great dimensions are incompatible with beauty", but objects of smaller proportions are in most cases appealing and beautiful.

XXV-OF COLOR

Colour as well-known is essentially a play of light. When light rays pass through transparent bodies or surfaces like glass or liquor, the light is softened in the passage or refraction and it becomes more agreeable or pleasing to the eyes. Likewise the glass or the liquor through which light passes, affords a more aesthetically pleasing aspect of its colour which gets reflected evenly. It has a relaxing effect on the eyes as smooth bodies have on all the senses. As Burke says, "the pleasure here is compounded of the softness of the transmitted, and the evenness of the reflected light". This pleasure of perceiving colour is heightened when there are slight variations in the glass or the bottle holding the liquor. For this judicious variation would "present the colour gradually and interchangeably, weakened and strengthened"—greatly enhancing its beauty.

Self-Assessment Questions

13. What is Locke's view on darkness? Does Burke agree with his view?

14. How does darkness affect the body?

15. What qualities make for the beautiful?

16. What are some of the physical gestures or responses of a person in love?

Stop to consider

Beauty is generally considered as a consonant experience which reaffirms our reason; sublime on the other hand is dissonant which does otherwise. The contradictory passions of the sublime and the beautiful have thus been compared to the Dionysian and Apollonian drives as forwarded by Nietzsche wherein the former is discordant and the latter is harmonious.

2.5 Critical reception

Burke's *Inquiry* had a mixed reception. David Hume is known to have said to Adam Smith that Burke had written a "pretty treatise" on the sublime. Oliver Goldsmith had written in the *Monthly Review* that he found the whole discourse agreeable and disagreeable by turns. Arthur Murphy similarly wrote in the *Literary Magazine* that though many of the observations and claims in the treatise can be contested, it makes for a pleasurable and informative reading. Mary Wollstonecraft interestingly found Burke's view on beauty and the reason why women are considered beautiful as derogatory and demeaning to women. The legacy and influence of the *Inquiry* in gothic and romantic literature however cannot be refuted. Gothic fiction readily displays the sublime aesthetic in its fascination with mystery, thrill, fear, horror and delight. The concepts of the sublime and the beautiful likewise found a favourable reception among the Romantic poets like Coleridge and Wordsworth who employed the ideas of the treatise, especially the sense of heightened awareness about life and nature in their lyrics.

2.6 Summing up

Burke's philosophical inquiry into the sublime and the beautiful and what brings them about is a seminal study that is still

relevant in many ways. The sublime as we learned has to do with pain and terror. It is an emotion which overwhelms man and rises from the instinct of self-preservation. Sublime is not without its delights; but the delight achieved here is a kind of "delightful horror" that is thrilling. Besides fear and astonishment, the less intense manifestations of the sublime are admiration, reverence and respect.

Beauty affects and operates very differently from the sublime. Rather than inducing pain and terror, it imparts relaxation and contentment or complacency. It is marked by the manifold pleasurable sensations afforded by objects of love and beauty. And when placed together with the sublime, beauty, due to its lesser power and intensity, gets subsumed under the grander and the more terrible concept of the sublime. Though they differ greatly, both passions of the sublime and the beautiful show that the mind and the body cannot be considered separately and they affect each other profoundly, owing to their intimate connection.

2.6 References and Suggested Readings

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Unit 3

Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, 'Introduction', Part II and Part IV

Supplementary Unit

3.1 Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Situate Burke's text in the historical context
- Gain some understanding of the text's critical reception

3.2 Intorduction:

Associated with grandeur, loftiness, greatness, ecstasy, terror and awe, the sublime, as Richard Doran says, is a "literary-aesthetic" concept with "mystical-religious resonances". The first theorisation of the sublime is credited to the Greek thinker Cassius Longinus who is believed to have written *On the Sublime*. The concept began to be reinterpreted and receive a sustained critical interest in the early modern period spanning the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

when there was a "subjective turn" in thought. What makes it unique and exceptional is that it stands for the "paradoxical experience of being at once overwhelmed and exalted" [Doran 4]. Its religious roots explain the element of transcendence; in fact it preserves the "notion of transcendence in the face of the secularization of modern culture" [Doran 4]. It is considered that after a long intermission of Longinus' sublime, Edmund Burke and subsequently Immanuel Kant emerged as the major theorists of the sublime. However, figures like Nicholas Boileau, Shaftesbury, John Dennis and even Joseph Addison did treat the sublime and its functions in their works before Burke and Kant came on the scene. Boileau is acknowledged as having popularized the concept of Longinus' sublime. John Dennis, in his literary criticism, emphasised the primacy of emotions in Longinus theory of sublimity and formulated the notion of "delightful horror"—which is drawn by Burke—as a form of complex pleasure. This was some twenty years before Joseph Addison, who in his views on "taste" drew on Longinus' theory of sublimity in a similar move to an aesthetic appreciation of the same. And thus, "the presence of emotion in art [becomes] the point of departure for the eighteenth-century sublime" [Monk 14]. Dennis' emphasis on violent emotion as core to sublime was in radical opposition to the predominant neoclassical aesthetics of the time. Doran notes that this re-interpretation of the sublime marked the "bifurcation in the theory of the sublime" with one approach which placed more emphasis on the 'pathetic' that involved "terror, the irrational, the sensational" and the other approach highlighted the 'noetic' which is about the "mental, the intellectual, the rational" [Doran 7]. Burke's appraisal of sublimity clearly displays the pathetic bent or approach and owes a lot to Dennis' stress on "sacred terror" or "delightful horror". The Kantian sublimity on the other hand has the 'noetic' accent that associates sublimity with reason and attempts to reframe its element of transcendence along rational terms. Dennis' re-interpretation also preserves the religious quality of the sublime and we see this reflected in Burke's treatise as well. His influence on the Burkean sublime—though not proven—cannot be discounted.

3.3 The Historical Context

Longinus' sublime, as Doran says, can be characterised as "rhetorical sublime", which is somewhat different from the "aesthetic sublime" of Burke and Kant that subsequently emerged. The basic premise of the concept remains the same. It is just that the development of the field of aesthetics and its predominance in the eighteenth-century led to the re-appropriation of the 'sublime' in newer ways. In fact, as Doran sees it, the Longinian insight on the sublime was not entirely devoid of aesthetic appreciation and distinguishes the concept from the merely beautiful or pleasant:

Sublimity [hypsos] is the source of the distinction of the very greatest poets and prose writers and the means by which they have given eternal life to their own fame. For grandeur produces ecstasy (ekstasis) rather than persuasion in the hearer; and the combination of wonder (thaumasion) and astonishment (ekplêxis) always proves superior to the merely persuasive and pleasant. This is because persuasion is on the whole something we can control, whereas amazement (ekplêxis) and wonder (thaumasion) exert invincible power and force and get the better of every hearer [quoted in Doran, 9-10].

Doran says that the subjective import of the 'sublime' in Longinus' definition is easily evident. And therefore Burke's theory of the same is a kind of a continuation of the ancient postulation in modern aesthetics. It is to be noted that the sublime had been distinguished from the beautiful since Longinus' definition, but is still considered as an aesthetic category. Longinus' insistence on the experience of "affective intensity" also gets reiterated in the later approaches. As apparent from his definition, the sublime feeling harbours two contradictory impulses. Doran calls this the paradoxical aspect of the dual nature or structure of sublimity. As he writes, "on the one hand, being overwhelmed/dominated by the encounter with the transcendent in art or nature induces a feeling of inferiority or submission; on the other, it is precisely by being overpowered that a

high-minded feeling of superiority or nobility of soul (mental expansiveness, heroic sensibility) is attained" [Doran 10]. Boileau also defined the sublime as a state which "elevates and ravishes" the soul at the same time. While the elevation of soul can be readily understood, the ravishment is suggestive of violence, whether literal or figurative, upon encounter with a higher, superior or stronger power. Burke similarly sees the sublime as an emotion which imparts an "elevating terror". Kant likewise sees the sublime as inducing a humiliation of sensibility with a simultaneous exaltation of reason. The sublime thus emerges as a complex pleasure which involves both attraction and repulsion or pleasure and pain. Doran writes that the sublime has, "on the one hand, the pain in being overwhelmed/overpowered (imaginative overload, terror), the feeling of being inferior to nature; and, on the other, the pleasure in being elevated" [Doran 11]. The element of awe and elevation in the idea of the sublime is, as Doran points, highlights the fact that the concept is a secular appropriation of religious transcendence. Longinus observation on the sublime with its two-pronged facets and dynamic of "domination-exaltation" is undeniably a transformation of a religious experience into a "protoaesthetic experience of intensity, as indicated by the use of such terms as 'awe,' 'astonishment,' 'wonder,' 'ecstasy,' 'amazement' – terms that apply equally well to both secular-aesthetic and religious contexts" [Doran 12]. It is therefore commonplace to infer religious connotations in the theories of the sublime. John Dennis was of the view that great poetry like Milton's *Paradise Lost* is sublime due to its use of "Religious Ideas". Burke also argued in many places in his *Enquiry* that the sublime effect of awe and terror followed a reflection on God's sovereignty, might and majesty. Adam Phillips wrote in this regard that "in Burke's *Enquiry*, with its relatively cursory references to Christianity, we find the beginnings of a secular language for profound human experience" [Phillips xi]. The Kantian sublime too connects the sublimity of our nature to the sublimity of religion; the sublime effect which is induced by reason leads to a "sacred awe". The specifically Christian experience of the sublime reveals the dual nature

of the same; while one fears God upon getting overwhelmed with the contemplation of His power and greatness, she or he is at the same time exalted and elevated with an experience of His love. Both Burke and Kant emphasise this duality in their respective treatises. The religious slant of sublime is thus very obvious and cannot be denied. However, it must be noted here that the Longinian sublime-which is the basis of all later theories on the subject, is also clearly humanist in orientation, besides being explicitly religious.

The subjective turn in eighteenth-century aesthetics owes a lot to the re-emergence of the concept of the sublime. With the rise of the concept of 'taste' in the period, aesthetics began to signify and emphasise the subjective perspective over the objective one on natural beauty and art in general. Doran says that this "subjective orientation" can be divided into two types: "(1) *reception aesthetics*, the psychological (or even physiological) response to artworks and nature, including questions of taste and judgment (Kant), but also of sensation (Burke); and (2) *creation aesthetics*, the theory of genius (most notably in Edward Young [1683–1765], Alexander Gerard [1728–1795], and Kant)" [Doran 17]. Later critics saw this as the gulf between "rhetorical" and "aesthetic" aspects of sublimity. But David Morris and a few others like him have said that the insistence on a separation between sublimity in nature and sublimity in art or literature is unnecessary as the two are not "unrelated phenomena". It has been found that, "to the integrated vision of many eighteenth-century Englishmen, nature and art did not occupy separate realms but often appeared as aspects of a single object of consciousness" [quoted in Morris, 6]. In fact, the original theory on the sublime by Longinus actually shows how the aesthetics of nature and the aesthetics of art or literary criticism are interconnected; the rhetorical sublime is deeply influenced by the aesthetic sublime in nature. It is nature which instils in our minds an "irresistible desire" for things which are great or supernatural. We are awed, not by "little flames", but by the "great fires of heaven". Later writers like Thomas Burnet highlight this

balance and interplay between the rhetorical sublime and the aesthetic sublime which is apparent in works like the *Paradise Lost* by John Milton. Milton is the "first English poet to practice the 'Aesthetics of the Infinite,' the transfer of vastness from God to interstellar space, then to terrestrial mountains" [Nicolson 273]. It is with views like this that the sublime found its place back as a concept which conflates both rhetorical and aesthetic aspects; it also helped later literary critics like John Dennis, Shaftesbury, Joseph Addison etc., to see and confirm the sublimity in nature in more or less similar terms—as things, beings or phenomena which have to do with the grand and the terrible. About half a century later when Burke came out with his treatise on the sublime, he reiterated some of the observations of these literary critics. In his expositions as well, we see an equal amount of emphasis placed on both the rhetorical sublime in literary works or art and the aesthetic sublime of nature. Though nature seems to guide much of his notion on the sublime, art and literary works—especially those of Milton—have had a lot to contribute in his appraisal of the subject.

In the *Inquiry* we see a clear a line of difference drawn between the sublime and the beautiful—although Burke allows for some overlap at certain points. With the subjective turn in eighteenth-century aesthetics, 'beauty' which was largely treated as an objective quality, began to be interpreted in a new light. However, philosophers of the period like Hume and Kant did emphasise that 'beauty', if seen in absolutely subjective terms, will lose much of its value. They conclude that beauty is inter-subjective—neither entirely objective, nor purely subjective—just like 'taste' which is both objective and subjective. 'Beauty' also began to be associated with pleasure during this time in the sense that pleasure was considered as the source or efficient cause of beauty. The classical conception of beauty is still pervasive in the eighteenth-century notions on beauty which holds that things which have symmetry, proportionality and harmony are beautiful. Order, definiteness, rationality, grace, coherence, balance, etc., are the chief characteristics of 'beauty'. Burke might have been

influenced by the earlier literary critics like Dennis, Shaftesbury and Addison when it came to his views on 'beauty' as an aesthetic category which is separate from the sublime. As the treatise shows, the sublime has more to do with awesome fear while beauty involved mild appreciation. Joseph Addison, one of the cultural giants of the eighteenth-century who, as already mentioned, attempted to define 'taste', similarly saw the sublime as a state higher than beauty when a man experiences horror that may be mingled with fascination and glee. While the sublime almost always caused an amount of despair that threatened to override reason, beauty was always ebullient and conformed to reason. Addison's notion of greatness in particular might have been crucial for Burke in delineating the sublime. Addison had opined that an object could be beautiful, but lack greatness—which is necessary to produce the sublime. Burke seems to have subscribed to this notion throughout his treatise as he outlines the fundamentals that build up the sublime and the beautiful. While the sublime can also include, subsume or accommodate the beautiful or delightful along with the terrible, beauty cannot conversely appropriate the dreadful or the awful. Also, when observing that beauty is the cause of love, Burke was adhering to an ancient tradition which connected beauty with love and longing. It must be noted here Burke was being innovative in a way with the treatise as he attempts to emphasise psychology over metaphysics and overturn the dominant Platonic tradition in aesthetics. One must also recall the fact that empiricism was the dominant philosophical trend in Britain when Burke was writing. Empiricism placed more emphasis and importance on the sensory experience when it comes to having an understanding and knowledge of the natural world and abstract ideas. This mode of philosophising was radically different from the rationalist school of thought that claimed reason as the sole means through which one can arrive at a knowledge of the world and ideas. Burke's *Inquiry* is a good illustration of the empiricist approach which saw senses, perceptions and passions or emotions as the way to comprehend everything. In the typical manner of empiricists, Burke applies a scientific method in his

analyses of the sublime and the beautiful. In his observations, he finds that the sublime is the strongest passion or emotion felt by people as it had to do with fear, pain and terror that spring from the instinct of self-preservation. It is more powerful and compelling than the ideas of pleasure which is associated with beauty. Sublime however, as made clear, is not entirely an unpleasant emotion as it imparts delight on most occasions—a delight which is mingled or tampered with horror. And while beauty adheres to the tenets of reason, sublime overwhelms the same. Rational thought therefore cannot accurately account for or explain the sublime emotion.

3.4 Critical reception of *Inquiry*

Burke's *Inquiry* had a mixed reception. David Hume is known to have said to Adam Smith that Burke had written a "pretty treatise" on the sublime. Arthur Murphy attempted a careful criticism of the text and wrote in the *Literary Magazine* that though many of the observations and claims in the treatise can be contested, it makes for a pleasurable and informative reading. As he writes,

Upon the whole, though we think the author of this piece mistaken in his fundamental principles, and also in his deductions from them, yet we must say we have read his book with pleasure. He has certainly employed much thinking; there are many ingenious and elegant remarks which, though they do not enforce or prove his first position, yet considering them detached from his system, they are new and just. And we cannot dismiss this article without recommending a perusal of the book to all our readers, as we think they will be recompensed by a great deal of sentiment, [and] perspicuous, elegant, and harmonious style, in many passages both sublime and beautiful [189].

Oliver Goldsmith had also written in the *Monthly Review* that he found the whole discourse agreeable and disagreeable by turns. He

found Burke's view on pain or terror as the sole mode of experiencing the sublime, and obscurity as one of the features of the sublime to be objectionable. He also mentioned that Burke's view on beauty as efficient the cause of love is deficient. But on the whole, he gave a largely favourable opinion on the text. Like Goldsmith, Mary Wollstonecraft is known to have found Burke's view on beauty and the reason for which women have been traditionally associated with beauty or considered beautiful, as somewhat defective, and derogatory and demeaning to women.

The ideas of the sublime and the beautiful in the *Inquiry* are generally credited as having made a huge influence in the way gothic and romantic literature developed. Gothic fiction readily displays the sublime aesthetic in its fascination with mystery, thrill, fear, horror and delight. The discourse of the sublime and the beautiful have likewise found a resonance in the personal philosophies of Romantic poets like Coleridge and Wordsworth whose works reflect some of the major ideas of the treatise, especially the sense of a dramatic or heightened awareness about life and nature.

3.5 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

Question No 1:

Answer : According to Burke, terror in all its forms—whether intense and explicit or latent and diluted—is the ruling principal of the sublime. Things which strike or induce terror are, as Burke says sublime because it displays the same power of temporarily arresting the mind from the habit of reasoning. With regard to the sense of sight, objects which put fear in the hearts of the beholders are sublime. These objects may be huge or tiny in scale or size, but they are entities which are powerful enough to induce fear. Not only great animals, but also smaller ones, such as a snake or any poisonous animal is sublime because of the fear they strike due to the dangers it poses. He writes,

"indeed terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently, the ruling principle of the sublime". Objects of vast dimensions like an ocean which causes fear due to the manifold dangers it carries is sublime (unlike a vast level plain which though great, causes no fear). The different languages themselves testify of the fact that sublime has to do with terror which awes.

Question No 2:

Answer: Burke believes that poetry or rhetoric is a more powerful source of the sublime than realistic or even impressionistic painting because of the greater obscurity of the former. Obscurity, as opposed to clarity and knowledge, is a key component that contributes greatly in the making of the sublime. This is because men are terrified of the obscure and the unknown, than of things which are familiar or fully known. As Burke explains, most things, beings or phenomena which are acknowledged as sublime display an amount of obscurity. And obscurity contributes a lot to generating fear. In his creative enterprises Milton used "judicious obscurity" of awesome or terrible figures as explicit description of the same would rob it of its sublime feel. The obscure description which is "dark, uncertain, confused, terrible" is "sublime to the last degree".

Burke says that clearness and obscurity produce very different emotions in the heart. This gets evident when one compares a realistic painting of an object, being or phenomena with the verbal or written description of the same. In the first case, drawing of a landscape for instance has lesser impact on the passions or emotions because it is directly conveyed to us. But in the second case, a lively and spirited description of the same would have a bigger impact on the emotions as they are more obscure. As Burke says, "the most lively and spirited verbal description I can give raises a very obscure and imperfect *idea* of such objects; but then it is in my power to raise a stronger *emotion* by the description than I could do by the best painting. This experience constantly evinces". Burke brings in the case

of Abbe Du Bos who had famously remarked that he prefers painting over poetry as it can move the passions or affect the emotions more strongly. According to him, painting can move so because of its greater clearness. But Burke argues that this view was mistaken as it was premised on a pre-set system of judgement. There are a lot of instances wherein professed lovers of painting admire art pieces with "coolness" while admiring poetry or rhetoric with effusive "warmth"—revealing a greater affect on the passions or emotions. Obscurity creates ignorance and ignorance causes a greater excitement of our passions. A complete knowledge and familiarity with even the most striking and mysterious phenomena cannot affect or excite the emotions. Grand cosmic ideas of eternity or infinity are great because we know so little about them. Clarity means that we perceive an object with the bounds in sight. But obscurity, wherein the bounds are not clearly defined, there is an approach to infinity and it is this which lends it the sublime effect. In fact, as Burke says, "A clear idea is therefore another name for a little idea". The book of Job is sublime because of the uncertainty or obscurity of its descriptions. The grandest poetic instances of the terrible and the awesome in the book can never be rendered equally well in painting. Attempts to transfer terrible and fanciful ideas in painting have almost always failed. Images of hell in painting are in Burke's opinion ridiculous. The temptation of St. Anthony rendered in painting has likewise been wild grotesques. This just goes to show that painting cannot effectively portray obscurity that is a core quality of the sublime.

Question No 3

Answer: Raw, fierce and destructive power which is not under human control and inspires awe and dread is sublime. Power which causes pain is superior in intensity than power which causes pleasure. Burke says, "the ideas of pain, and, above all, of death, are so very affecting, that whilst we remain in the presence of whatever is supposed to have the power of inflicting either, it is impossible to be perfectly free from terror". Burke goes on to distinguish between different kinds of power

and says that power imparting pleasure is inferior because they do not need to be forced on people—it is accepted willingly and readily. But power causing pain is almost always imposed on people—it has to be forced as it does not find ready acceptance. As Burke says, "pain is always inflicted by a power in some way superior, because we never submit to pain willingly". When confronted with an animal or even a man known for prodigious strength, the first thoughts are not if the powerful being will work to give one pleasure but if the powerful being uses its strength to wreak destruction and havoc. But in cases where one confronts a powerful being whose power could be used or manipulated, the sublime effect gets greatly reduced. For eg., an ox—an animal of vast strength but hardly sublime as it is put to man's service. But a bull on the other hand who is known for its fierce, raw power and is not tameable and prone to destructive fits, does fit the category of powerful sublime beings who induce terror. Bulls have therefore been alluded to in "sublime descriptions and elevating comparisons". Examples of pernicious strength associated with terror results in the sublime while instances of strength which is subservient results in, more often than not, contempt.

Question No 4

Answer: Infinity, whether natural or artificial is sublime as it fills the mind with a sort of "delightful horror". Grand concepts of infinity overwhelm men and they feel weak and little before the same—overcome or overawed by the mind-boggling repetition or perpetuity.

Question No 5

Answer: Difficulty is a source of the sublime as any task requiring or demanding immense force or labour is grand and at times terrifying.

Question No 6

Answer: Colours also tend to produce a sublime effect on the mind and the heart. However as Burke says, soft, bright or cheerful colours are not amenable to a sublime effect. In fact, drab and dark colours are the

ones which accomplish the sublime upon its beholders. As example he says that a dark and gloomy mountain is far more sublime when compared to a mountain covered with shiny green turf. Also, a dark, cloudy sky has more of a sublime effect on the observers, than a clear and plain blue sky. When it comes to buildings, Burke suggests from his observations that the sublime effect can be achieved through the use of "sad and fuscous colours, as black, or brown, or deep purple, and the like".

Question No 7

Answer: For the most part, loud sounds with their capacity to stun and terrorise qualify for the sublime. Burke says that the, "noise of vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or artillery, awakes a great and awful sensation in the mind". This is because "excessive loudness" has the capacity to terrorise us and temporarily paralyse our movements.

Question No 8

Answer: Suddenness, especially in the matter of sounds, is sublime as it arouses or arrests the attention of a distracted person—all the faculties become alert and forced to be on guard. Even when it comes to sights, this principle applies as a quick or sudden transition from one extreme to the other is always seen to be cause of greatness because of the reason described. Suddenness is thus sublime as it has the capacity to terrorise and demand the full and inordinate amount of attention from a person. As Burke writes, "in everything sudden and unexpected, we are apt to start; that is, we have a perception of danger, and our nature rouses us to guard against it". There are also instances when a single sound when repeated at regular intervals can have a "grand effect". While suddenness is sublime because we do not expect it, a monotonous repetition of sounds at decided and expected points of time can also be sublime. This because such expected sounds are also attended by a measure of suddenness and they surprise every time we

hear them. For eg., “the striking of a great clock”, “a single stroke on a drum, repeated with pauses” and “the successive firing of cannon at a distance”.

Question No 9

Answer: Pain or difficulty—though unpleasant—can have a therapeutic effect on the body. It is thus that pain, in an oblique way, becomes a source of delight. Nature has designed us in such a way that indolence or inaction—however pleasant—can cause a lot of inconveniences. Uninterrupted rest is soon followed by a host of bodily disorders and one is forced to resort to tasks requiring physical or mental exertion to live a life with “tolerable satisfaction”. An idle or torpid lifestyle disables our organs and systems—causing them to perform poorly—and “takes away the vigorous tone of fibre”. In such a sluggish state, the nerves are prone to “the most horrid convulsions”. The deteriorating condition of the body soon affects the mind and one becomes a prey to “melancholy, dejection, despair, and often self-murder”. Burke claims that the only way out of this vicious quicksand is labour; he writes, “The best remedy for all these evils is exercise or *labour*; and labour is a surmounting of *difficulties”.* Labour involves pain and difficulty. But it has a beneficial impact on both the body and the mind. Pain or difficulty—though unpleasant—can have a therapeutic effect on the slothful.

Question No 10

Answer: Among harmless things which pose no danger, visual objects of great dimensions and huge proportions inspire terror and the sublime. Though Burke had said that the sublime emerges from pain and terror and has to do with the instinct of self-preservation, it has been observed, as he clarifies, that the sublime also emerges from things which may not pose a threat or immediate danger to the person concerned, but in their own way, they inspire awe and fear—emotions affiliated to the sublime. Visual objects of massive proportions are examples of a source of the sublime which is not dangerous. Objects

of great dimensions prove to be sublime as they strain and agitate the eye of the person who beholds it—producing pain in the process which is an efficient cause of the sublime.

Question No 11

Answer: Artificial infinity is productive of the sublime. With visual objects, it is achieved with a creation of uniform succession of great parts; for the aural sense it involves creation of uniform succession of sounds. Artificial infinity enhances and amplifies the effects of sights and sounds and raises tension in the observer and the hearer. The mental tension which induces pain and strain in the body makes for the sublime.

Question No 12

Answer: A careful uniformity is essential in succession of visual objects that are considered as sublime because uniformly laid out objects heighten the tension and agitation of the beholding eye. And tension, as can be inferred, is crucial in the making of the sublime. In cases where objects are not placed uniformly, the eye experiences obstruction and thereby undergoes “rest and relaxation” which prevent the generation of the sublime effect.

Question No 13

Answer: Locke had opined that darkness by itself is not a source of terror or trouble. It is only through associations that darkness, especially nights have become “painful and horrible to the imagination”—haunted as men are by tales of ghosts and goblins. Burke does not agree with Locke and says that darkness is a primary source of the sublime and it never fails to induce or impart some degree of pain or terror in people.

Question No 14

Answer: Darkness not only affects the mind, but also has a palpable effect on the body. When exposed to darkness, people lose their bearings and the optical nerves are strained beyond their natural capacity which causes a painful sensation. The tensed eyes are wide open in darkness as it seeks to receive relief in some form of light. Burke says that he knows of people who, having worked for a long time in the dark, find their greatly pained and weakened later.

Question No 15

Answer: Smoothness, sweetness, gentle and mild variations, adorable smallness, etc., are some of the qualities which constitute the beautiful. What is common to all of these qualities is that they impart pleasure and relaxation—which is the ruling principal of beauty.

It is generally acknowledged that smoothness is a principal cause of pleasure unto all the five senses. When it comes to sight, this is readily evident as objects with smooth bodies are considered beautiful. They relax the eyes and relaxation, as mentioned, is a key function of the beautiful.

And while the noxious or the bitter shocks a person into the sublime, sweet things soothe and give pleasure. Sweetness of things depend on their form or shape, in soft and minute variations that does not tire the senses and in plainness and smoothness. Many languages in fact conflate sweetness and softness, for eg., the French doux which means both soft and sweet. And "the Latin *dulcis*, and the Italian *dolce*, have in many cases the same double signification".

Deviations or variations which are not sharp but gentle and do not weary a person, rather causing one to relax, are beautiful. Even motions can be beautiful in that they are relaxing when it is of the gentle sort. Oscillatory movements or a measured rising and falling are thereby beautiful. And "rocking sets children to sleep better than absolute rest" as the varied motion gives them pleasure. Again, when one travels on coaches and ride over smooth turfs, the "gradual ascents and declivities" is pleasurable and relaxing.

According to Burke, small objects display the qualities and characteristic of beauty best. Epics and romances are filled with destructive giants like Polyphemus and Cacus. It is their defeat and death that people read with the greatest satisfaction. But 'beautiful' characters of normal stature like Simoisius who is separated from his parents and bride in the "soft bloom of youth" due to war, is able to move people in his favour. And when it comes to Achilles and Hector, Homer paints the latter in a more sympathetic light than the 30-foot tall and near-invincible warrior-giant. The comparatively weaker Hector draws our pity and pity is a core passion of love. It is thus seen that "objects of great dimensions are incompatible with beauty", but objects of smaller proportions are in most cases appealing and beautiful.

Question no 16:

Answer: The familiar bodily responses or gestures, as listed by Burke, of a person in love or when one looks at objects that excite love include the head reclined on one side; the "eyelids are more closed than usual"; gentle movement or rolling of the eyes towards the object of love; the mouth slightly opened; continual low sighs and slow breathing; idle hands, etc.

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Unit 6

Joseph Addison: On Wit

6.1 Objectives

The attempt in this unit is to familiarize you with the essays of Addison. This section, however, will not concentrate on only a textual analysis of the essays prescribed for you but will try to acquaint you with the intellectual climate which gave rise to the essay-form. Also, it is necessary for you to understand the form of this genre. By the end of this unit you will be able to

- *distinguish* the essay as a category of writing,
- *identify* the importance of the form of the essay in literature,
- *describe* the age and feel encouraged to read more essays by Addison and Steele,
- *assess* the role of the essayists in shaping the tastes of the age.

6.2 Introducing the Author

Addison was born on May 1, 1672 in Milton, Wiltshire. His father Lancelot Addison was the Dean of the Cathedral city of Linchfield. His education began in Charterhouse school, which he left for Queen's

College, Oxford in 1687. Later he became a Fellow of Magdalen College. In 1693 he addressed a poem to Dryden, the former Poet Laureate and his first major work, a book about the lives of the English poets was published in 1694. The translation of Virgil's *Georgics* enabled him to develop a friendship with Congreve, and through him with Montague, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Montague obtained a pension of £300 for the young poet in 1699, which enabled him to travel abroad and enrich his education, with a view to diplomatic employment, all the time writing and studying politics. During the time of his wanderings through France and Italy, he was more interested in classic association than in mere scenic beauty. In this period his views on religion also changed and he became an ardent follower of Catholicism.

Addison lost his pension upon the death of William III, forcing him to return to England towards the end of 1703. For a short period of time his circumstances has became a little straitened and he had to live without any employment. But the Battle of Blenheim in 1704 and subsequent coming into power of the Whigs led to more opportunities for his advancement. The government wished to commemorate the event with a poem and Addison, who was commissioned to write this, produced *The Campaign*, the success of which gave him the appointment of commissioner of Appeals in the government of Halifax. In the year 1708 he became the MP for Malmesbury, in Wiltshire (his home county) and thereafter appointed as the secretary of State for Ireland and Keeper of records for that country.

During Addison's stay in Ireland, he met Jonathon Swift and subsequently helped found the *Kitcat Club*. In the meantime he renewed his friendship with his old friend Richard Steele and in 1709 when Steele brought out the *Tatler* (1709-11) Addison immediately became a contributor. The Tatler was followed by the launch of the informal daily *Spectator* on March 1,1711.

The later events of Addison's life did not contribute to his happiness. In 1716, he married the Dowager Countess of Warwick whose son he had tutored and even though his political carrier continued to flourish (he was Secretary of State for the Southern Department till 1718). Addison was forced to resign as the Secretary of State in 1718 owing to his poor health but he remained an MP until his death at Holland House, on June 17, 1719. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Stop to Consider

If we infer here that Addison's involvement with affairs of State had a direct bearing on his literary methods or productions, how correct would we be ?

This question should occur to you as you read through this brief biography because it will help you to make inferences regarding the nature of literary writing itself. How does the intellectual climate of a period percolate down to the point of writing itself ? Try to make some estimation of this problem.

SAQ

Check Your Progress

1. Comment on how the 'literary' becomes the vehicle of 'taste' in social culture as seen in Addison's writing.

2. What, according to Addison, are the kinds of pleasure provided by imagination?

3.Why did Addison consider contemporary "tragedy" to be superior to that of the tragedy of Greece and Rome?

6.3 The Context

In May 1660, when Charles II returned from exile, monarchy was restored in England. The Act of Union in 1707 joined the parliaments of Scotland and England and Wales creating the nation called Great Britain. (Ireland was incorporated into the 'United Kingdom' by the Act of Union of 1801.) The prolonged eighteenth century underwent much transformation brought about by the redefinition of monarchy by the rejection of royal absolutism, the acceleration in the growth of population, urbanisation, the beginnings of industrialisation, and the greater commercialization of culture as people became more consumerist. The scope of literature began to adapt to new circumstances for which there had been no precedent.

The restoration of Charles II to the throne at first brought some relief from the "bedlam" of the previous years. The Interregnum had divided England into intransigent partisanship and in the first decade after the Restoration there were statutes to achieve order. Charles II later proved unable to contain the political dissensions not least because his personal estimates were known to be debauched. In 1685 James II ascended the throne but failed to prevent the crisis that erupted until, finally, in 1688 the Glorious Revolution took place when William of Orange was called to rule. However, there was no solution to the series of controversies that had originated even in the Interregnum of which a substantial question revolved around the nature of the right to rule.

In the literature of the period class demarcations were especially very strong. Restoration comedy was for the courtiers and for rising citizens of London. During this time the new middle class was gaining increasing control of the society. This 'new rich' class, whether their they were based in the town or country had different tastes. Bunyan was the first to take cognizance of this section of society. The rise of the middle class had made conditions favourable for the rise of prose. Essays, periodicals, and fiction had created new class of readers among the middle class and prose became their chosen medium of literature.

Factions in 17th-century England

The beheading of Charles I in 1649 itself was the culmination of many years of civil strife. Cromwell's Protectorate followed as the republic was established, the House of Lords was abolished, and conflicting ideologies rift the political atmosphere. There was both Anglicanism and Catholicism despite the Clarendon Code which sought to repress non-Anglicans. There were clashes of ideas regarding Crown-Parliament relations, religious issues, the law, and civil liberties. It was hardly possible that the Restoration should provide more than just temporary relief from such sectarianism. As the question of Charles II's successor came up, the possibility of his Papist brother, James, ascending to the throne led to the fabrication of the 'Popish Plot'.

In just such a time of crisis that the print culture flared up into a propaganda machinery with polemics conducted through pamphlets and other forms of political writing.

One remarkable change was the shift in population from the country to the town. Places of entertainment were no longer restricted to the gentry but became open for anyone who could afford to pay. Art, for the first time, became commercial and London itself became a favourite subject for artists and writers.

The new science of the seventeenth century, enshrined in the work of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, was to combine with Bacon's *Novum Organum* (1620) as a stream of thought which later flowered in the Enlightenment. After the Restoration, the new science was gathered into a progressive philosophy. In this movement stands large the figure of Sir Isaac Newton, whose great works of 1687, the *Principia Mathematica,* and of 1704, the *Opticks*, led to new scientific inquiries. After the Restoration, the universe was no longer viewed in the older Aristotelian manner. Members of the Royal society like Robert Boyle (1627-91) and John Ray (1627-1705) did important work in the field of science. By the middle of the eighteenth century, 'Nature' was no longer to be seen in theological terms as expression of the divine but as inert matter over which man could dominate.

The educated world now took its shape under this new influence. As discoveries multiplied, writers found the new science inspiring. It gave them new images to conjure with and new possibilities of fact and fiction to explore. On the other hand explorers were discovering new lands and new ways of life. The encounters of trade made the European nations rich but it also brought a new class to the society - 'the slaves'.

In the newly urbanized England shops and coffee houses became the scene of social gathering. Londoners began to assemble in these rendezvous and by daily intercourse they learned to feel interested in each other's manners and habits of thought. People tended more and more to seek pleasures of news and conversations and by the beginning of the 18th century coffee houses became the most striking feature of London life. As communication centres, the coffee houses became the platform for dissemination and collection of news and was one of the primary agencies facilitating journalistic enterprise. Coffee house culture had its impact on literary productions as well. For example, Steele's the *Tatler* started functioning from St. James' coffee house.

Stop to Consider

A striking feature of the period between the Restoration and the coronation of George III (1761) was that growth in the culture-sector was substantial. That is to say, economic opportunity, promise of employment and profit was to be found in "chocolate house, club and society clienteles". Inevitably, London became the hub of fashionable activity, glittering with exhibitions and theatres, personalities, diversions, parks "shimmering with promenaders", a parade offering a diversity of pleasures.

In this teeming landscape of news, fashion, talk and gossip the coffee houses were the vibrant centres where initially foreign and domestic news relating to trade could be tapped as the coffee houses at first sprang up close to the Royal Exchange and the Custom House. These social and business hubs were an innovation of the Restoration and provided the space where many financial deals were clinched. It was just a matter of time before coffee houses provided the space for cultural exchange. There was Will's, Button's, the Bedford, the Chapter. The magazine, *The Craftsman*, pronounced, "We are become a Nation of Statesmen, our Coffee-houses and Taverns are full of them." Coffee houses were made more attractive by keeping newspapers and gazettes. They served as the prototypes of clubs; the Kit-Cat is remembered as the one patronised by men of letters and Whig grandees.

In the social scene two classes were dominant. The upper class was either the 'citizen' or the country squire and against them were the slum dwellers and the peasants. And the troubled activities of political, religious and scientific unrest were primarily the concern of the upper classes. The field of politics was also haunted by confusions. The Whigs claimed to protect the liberty of the subject and thus helped the dissenters. The Tories on the other hand were mostly ardent churchmen and professed a devotion to royal prerogative and to the legitimate line of succession to the throne.

SAQ

Why is the period between 1649 and 1660 called the 'Interregnum'? (20 words)

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What were the events of the 'Glorious Revolution' ? (40 words)

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6.4 The Essay and other forms of Literature

The essay is distinguished from other branches of literature by its essential quality of persuasion. But the forms and techniques of one branch intermix with the other branches. Thus the essay may be in narrative, dramatic or poetic form. In narrative essay the author addresses the reader directly by means of an appeal or argument. He is like a storyteller who reports directly to us on persons and events. In a dramatic essay the author recounts the dialogue between two or more characters and he works only as a director of the events and actions. In a poetic essay the author appears to be talking to himself and the reader's position is like an over hearer.

SAQ

Attempt to show "qualities of persuasion" as those devices by which the reader is addressed directly in any essay of your choice. Your analysis should consider features like modes of address, references, etc. (50 words)

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The production of a number of periodicals in the 18th century gave new impetus to the writing of essays. The most significant among them are the *Tatler* (1709), and the *Spectator* (1711) published by Richard Steele. But we can safely trace the roots to the publication of the *Athenian Gazette* by Dunton in 1691. It was followed by Defoe's *A Weekly Review of Affairs in France* (1704). It was Richard Steele who popularized the periodical when the *Tatler* began to appear three times a week from 1709. Most of the periodicals presented stories of gallantry, entertainment and news items from both the local and international arena.

The example of the *Spectator* and the *Tatler* was followed a number of publications like *The Guardian, Lover, The Reader, Chit Chat* (all by Steele) and *The Englishmen, Freeholder* (Addison), the *Female Tatler,* the *Whisper* etc. but none of them were as successful and as enduring as the *Spectator.*

Check Your Progress

1. Apart from the inference of the spread of literacy in the period, what are the important social changes that are connected to the existence of a large number of periodicals published during this period ?

2. Can you make any connection between the informal art of the essay and the periodicals?

3. Why do you think the art of persuasion is such an integral part of the essay form? Does it have anything to do with the rise of the periodical and the coffee houses?

6.5 Readin g the Text: "On Wit"

In Spectator 61 and 62, published on 10 and 11 May 1711 respectively, Addison distinguishes between 'true' and 'false' wit, much like Pope's famous *Essay on Criticism* published in the same year, which deals with *wit* and *judgement*. According to him, 'true' wit is the ability to associate similarities between ostensibly unlikely ideas, whereas 'false' wit is mere association of words through ornamental devices such as puns. In essay 61, Addison compares *punning* with a mere "Jingle of Words" (Addison 225). He says that puns are common

to all men, but more susceptible in those not cultivated by the rules of Art. In such cases, instead of dwelling with or raising the mind to poetry, music, painting and other noble arts, people tend to associate wit with puns or quibbles.

Tracing the history of pun, Addison mentions ancient Greek writers such as Aristotle, who in the eleventh chapter of his book, *The Art of Rhetoric,* distinguishes between two or three kinds of pun which he called 'Paragrams'. It was abundantly used by Cicero in many of his works and flourished primarily under the reign of King James the First. It was an age when rhetoric was one of the most important forms of education and pedagogy, and puns were a crucial aspect of it, usually associated with eloquence, good writing, pomp, and dignity. The use of puns flourished throughout the ages and can be located in the sermons of Bishop Andrews and the tragedies of Shakespeare. Although the pun remained one of the most used ornamental devices throughout ancient times, it lost in significance in serious contemporary literature. The reason puns were so abundant during the times of Socrates, Plato, and Cicero, according to Addison, was their lack of "Rules and Arts of Criticism" (Addison 226). Their genius and greatness in authorship might not be replicated by a modern writer but will fall short of "Accuracy and Correctness", which the moderns greatly possess.

He mentions Quintillion and Longinus as the only two ancient authors that made a distinction between puns and true wit and defines pun as "a Conceit arising from the use of two Words that agree in the Sound, but differ in the Sense" (Addison 226). Thus, he suggests that in order to isolate wit from puns, we should translate it to a different language. If the grandeur of thought is still preserved, it is wit, as a pun plays with mere words and sounds.

He starts the next essay by mentioning John Locke's distinction between Wit and Judgement, which, he says, is the most philosophical account on the subject. According to Locke, Wit and judgment are not usually the aptitudes of the same person. Wit lies "most[ly] in the Assemblage of Ideas, and putting those togetherwith Quickness and Variety" (Addison 227), whereas judgment is the ability to discern ideas meticulously so that an idea is not mistaken for another. Under this broad definition falls retorical devices such as metaphors, allegories, and allusions. Addison extends Locke's definition by claiming that every congruence of ideas might not be wit, unless it

provides *Delight* and *Surprise* to the reader. The ideas should not be similar to each other, else the process of consolidation might not induce the element of surprise. To signify this, he gives an example of a poet comparing the white bosom of his mistress to snow, which does not contain any wit, but the same poet adding the quality of 'coldness' to her bosom to indicate indifference transforms it into wit.

Addison differentiates between true and false wit.*True wit*, according to Addison, is characterised by the "Resemblance of Ideas" whereas *false wit* consists of the "Resemblance of Words" and letters such as puns, doggerel rhymes, and anagrams. There is another kind of wit that Addison terms *mixt*(mixed) wit, which is partly the resemblance of ideas and words, and is found abundantly in the works of Cowley, Mr Waller, the *Italians*, and Ovid. Milton, Dryden, Spencer, and most Greek and Roman authors, however, are the possessors of true wit and their genuis surpasses all. Mixed wit lies partly in falsehood and partly in truth, as one half of it contains reason and the other extravagance.

He associates greatly with the French critic Bouhours and his view of wit. According to him, "the Basis of all Wit is Truth; and that no Thought can be valuable, of which good Sense is not the Ground-work" (Addison 229). *Boileau*, another French critic, reiterates the point by claiming that the ancient Greek and Roman authors possessed a majestic simplicity to nature, which, according to Addison, the *goths* in poetry did not have. These poets, being unable to recapture the beautiful simplicity of the ancient Greek and Roman authors, retorts "to supply its place with all the Extravagancies of an irregular Fancy" (Addison 229).

Addison ends the essay by mentioning Dryden, who quotes Monsieur Segrais for a three-fold distinction between the readers of poetry. The lowest kind, he says, are the *Les Petits Esprits*, or small-minded people, who are attracted towards puns and ornamental devices such as a quibble, conceit, or an epigram. The poets who cater to such audiences are more popular because of their greater number, and thus admired by the masses. But if a reader improves their stock of sense by reading better books and having conversations with "men of judgement", they will eventually forsake them for a poet with a greater prowess of true wit.

6.6 Critical Reception

Joseph Addison, the poet, dramatist and essayist is remembered in the history of criticism as the co- author with Richard Steele of the brilliant series of periodical essays, published in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. He is more famous as a social critic and became a model for the generation of critics and essayists for his effort to unite politics and literature. In his time, Addison was regarded as an influential cultural and literary figure popular with the middle class readers. Lucid style of his writing and skillful depiction of characters helped to elevate the status of the essay and prepared the ground for the emergence of the genre of novel. Though he lacks profundity as a theorist, Addison's importance lies in his cultural works and the role he played as a public intellectual. He lacks the seriousness of Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke and Coleridge in his theorization yet he is an important influence on Coleridge and Johnson. Relating literature to the public sphere, Addison provided his readers with the critical vocabulary necessary for categorization of the relationship between words and ideas, between the world they inhabited and the literature they read and remains a prominent figure in the history of ideas.

6.7 References and Suggested readings

Baugh A C : *A Literary History of England*. Vol.III.

Sanders Andrew :*The Short Oxford History Of English Literature*.

Rickett ,A C : *An Introduction to The History of English Literature*

Trevelyan G M : *English Social History*.

Unit 7
Joseph Addison: On Wit

Supplementary Unit

7.1 Introduction

Joseph Addison was a poet, dramatist, essayist, and a Whig politician who founded the periodical *The Spectator* along with his long-time friend, Sir Richard Steele. In 1709, he started contributing for *The Tatler,* a periodical edited by Steele, which ran till 1711. In March of the same year, they started *The Spectator* which was published regularly until its final article in 1712. However, the paper was revived in 1714 without the contribution of Steele, that ran for another six months, appearing thrice weekly. Although the readership was small compared to modern standards, it was highly influential and read by various sections of people. These periodicals were mostly aimed at the middle-class, including women, and attempted to reform their values by expounding philosophy, literature, and contemporary issues. In the words of Addison, "I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and in Coffee-Houses." His essays range from literary and philosophical discussions, to mannerisms, and life in cities and country sides. A total of 555 essays were published in *The Spectator* within its short literary span. Its publication was interrupted by the short lived *The Guardian*, another paper cofounded by Steele and Addison, that

was published between 12 March to 1 October 1713. Along with poems and periodicals, Addison also published a play which was acclaimed both by the Whigs and the Tories. His *Cato, a Tragedy* was first performed in 1713 and was revered for its representation of personal struggles amidst political tyranny. However, Addison's identity in histories of English literature is principally as an essayist.

7.2 Objectives

In this unit, you will be able to

- Find clues to approach the essays of joseph Addison
- Learn about a few other essays by Addison
- Find clues to a full-fledged answers to questions relating to the text

7.3 How to Approach Joseph Addison

Any discussion of Addison's use of the essay-form results in the discussion of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* essays. It is in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* essays where the character and genius of Addison are best exemplified.

Addison's essays became instantly popular. This is because the earlier essayists like Milton or Bacon were rich in eloquence and noble declamation, but with Addison we find the genial intimacy of the writer with the reader. In his writings we realize the delightful plasticity and the various subtle shades of mood and fancy for which Addison finds expression.

Addison's worth and genius came to the fore only with the *Spectator* essays. Addison contributed to Richard Steele's *Tatler* when it first appeared in 1709. The appearance of the *Spectator* in 1711 provided Addison with a regular platform. The *Spectator* essays, particularly the third division of the essays are not only far more numerous and far more weighty, but they also bear the stamp of Addison's authority and style. The essays include in their purview fable, descriptions, vision, literary criticism, treatise on morals and codes, discussions on

questions of marriage and education. He concentrates more on emotional response than mechanical instruments. Hence, he included any subject which was of interest to the readers.

Addison's essays are marked by simplicity of style. The easy flow of the language creates an intimacy of the reader with the writer. His approach to his subject is always direct. Although full of satire and irony, his conversational tone and his mastery of style contributes much to the development of the essay form and secures a place of prominence for him among the English essayists.

Addison contributed to the essay-form, as he played a major role in perfecting and popularizing the periodical essay in its evolutionary phase. Addison's writings extended over a number of diverse fields from poetry to drama to criticism. He is, however, best remembered for his essays published in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. Before examining his works as a critic, let us have a look at his other works.

Addison's first forays into literature were in poetry and his translation of Virgil's *Georgics* into English in 1694, earned him much fame. The same year saw the publication of his *The Account Of The Best Known English Poets*. This book, written in his 23rd year, could not claim much critical value and attention. The book lacked accuracy and technique. He also published a series of *Political Essays* and a comedy named *Drummer*. Besides the essays in the *Spectator* his best-known work is *Cato*, a tragedy that stands for the Whigs' defense of liberty against the atrocities of royal absolutism. The play is based on the last days of Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis. It deals with such themes as individual liberty versus government tyranny, republicanism versus monarchism, logic versus emotion and Cato's personal struggle to cling to his beliefs even in the face of death.

Now let us direct our attention towards the essays published in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, which epitomize Addison's literary and critical genius. If we group Addison's literary essays according to contents, we find the following three groups:

(a) The first of these groups consists of his early essays on the stage. It includes essays on *Chevy Chase and Paradise Lost*.

(b) The second group contains the famous and elaborate criticism of Milton along with the essays on 'tragedy' and observations on the 'epic'.

(c) The third group contains the more serious and more ambitious series of eleven essays on 'the pleasure of imagination'.

Addison's purpose was to upgrade the taste of the public and to do this he introduced a number of critical concepts through his essays.

Let us have a brief look at these concepts.

Addison distinguishes between true and *false wit*. But what is wit, in general, for Addison? In *Spectator No. 62*, he says that wit is the resemblance and congruity of ideas giving pleasure to fancy, which gives delight and surprise to the reader. Then, false wit is the resemblance and congruity of "words' and true wit is the resemblance and congruity of ideas. There must be some future congruity than the obvious between ideas. He illustrates this idea by pointing out that when someone says that the bosom of his mistress is as white as snow it is not wit but comparison but if it also suggests that it is as cold too, then it becomes wit.

Also noteworthy is Addison's *concept of tragedy.* It is different from both the classical and modern concepts. He thought that tragedy was the noblest product of human nature. He believed that contemporary tragedy was superior to that of Greece and Rome in the intricacy and disposition of the plot but it fell short in morals. Contemporary tragedy, according to Addison, is defaced by 'Sounding phrases, hard metaphors and forced expressions' and the style is often superior to the sentiment. He denounced 'poetic justice' 'tragi-comedy', and 'double plot' as absurd and unnecessary. The tragic hero, for him, is a virtuous man struggling with misfortunes.

Addison also put forward a concept of '*taste*'. He thought that only a person of "taste" could distinguish between 'good literature' and 'bad literature'. And taste according to him was a "faculty of the soul."

Addison's most celebrated critical concept is the so-called "*pleasures of imagination*". He touches upon such issues as what is imagination? What are the kinds of imagination? And what are the sources of imagination? Imagination is the impression formed by our 'sense of sight' and which our mind has the power to retain, alter and compound into varieties of picture and vision that are most agreeable to the

imagination. The pleasure of imagination is of two kinds. The primary pleasure of imagination comes from the objects, which are directly before our eyes whereas the secondary pleasures of imagination flow from the 'Ideas' of visible objects. He forms a hierarchy of art, nature and imagination, where imagination reigns supreme followed by nature and art respectively.

SAQ

Who were the critics who discussed 'poetic justice', 'tragi-comedy', 'plot', and 'taste' ? (30 words)

.....

.....

Can we identify 'neoclassical' traits in Addison's thought ? (25 words)

.....

.....

Check Your Progress

1. Comment on how the 'literary' becomes the vehicle of 'taste' in social culture as seen in Addison's writing.

Check Your Progress

2. What, according to Addison, are the kinds of pleasure provided by imagination?

3.Why did Addison consider contemporary "tragedy" to be superior to that of the tragedy of Greece and Rome?

7.4 Reading a few other Essays of Addison

7.4.1 The Uses of the Spectator

The essay opens with a couple epigraphs taken from Virgil and Dryden. Both epigraphs suggest the difficulty as well as the importance of the critic's task. The critic's task is difficult but

necessary for the refinement of taste and moral edification of the readers and society in general.

If we undertake a close analysis of Addison's essay, we will find that he is concerned mainly with the following themes and aspects. His first endeavour is to show the growing popularity of the *Spectator* and at the same time the growing responsibility of the writer, which it implies.

Among other things *The Uses of The Spectator* provides us with a picture of contemporary society. He shows the declining standard of English society, both in the professional and in the moral fields. The social picture that Addison gives, although ironical, is faithful. Let us recall here that society after the Restoration was freed from the extreme control of puritan authority and was suddenly transformed into extreme licentiousness. He presents three tableaux of society. In the first group come those whom we can roughly call the 'gentry'. They belong to the upper strata of society either by inheritance or trade as England was expanding its political and merchandising territories by this time. These people assumed high titles but were hardly concerned with anything relevant for society. They used to employ most of their time in the happenings in political and social scenario and used to observe everything. Here he takes a clever dig at the Statesmen and members of the Royal Society:

"... either by the affluence of their fortune or laziness of their disposition, have no other business with the rest of mankind, but to look upon them. Under this class of men are comprehended ... fellows of the Royal Society"

In the second group he includes the 'blanks' of society, the morally and intellectually degraded common Englishman. Addison's other concern is the status of women in his time. Women did not enjoy a position of respect in the social strata. Despite the presence of a number of women of significance, they were regarded as the inferiors of society, mostly occupied with minor household works.

7.4.2 The Spectator's Account of Himself

The Spectator's Account of Himself is one of the earliest essays in the series of essays generally known as the 'Spectator essays'. The essay is

important for a number of reasons. Addison here sets out to provide the reader with an outline of the character of the spectator, which helps us in understanding the later essays of the series in a better way. The biography and character of the spectator attracts the reader in a lighthearted way. It serves as a 'prefatory discourse'. The irony and exaggeration helps the reader to develop a kind of intimacy with the writer, which is a key mark of Addison's writing. He starts by justifying his decision of writing an account of himself and at the same time justifies his authority and position as the 'spectator of mankind'. We are given to know that the 'spectator' is a learned yet sullen person from his very childhood. He is widely traveled and commands considerable knowledge of almost every subject. As he says 'I am very well versed in the theory of a husband or a father, can discern the errors of economy, business, and diversions of others, better than those who are engaged in them".

He also gives the reader an idea of his lineage, the details of which may sound peculiar but well justified. Although some critics are at pains to discover affinities between the 'spectator' and Addison himself, the presentation of the character helps better as an alter ego of Addison. It distances the author from the personae of the 'spectator' and places him in a more comfortable place to express his observations.

7.4.3 Of the Spectator

This essay was published on Friday, March 2, 1711. The epigraph was taken from a Juvenalian Satire. After introducing the character of the ‘Spectator’ in an earlier essay Addison, in this essay, endeavours to introduce the other characters of the 'Spectator Club'. The central themes of discussion in this essay are Addison's art of characterization and the different traits of the characters of the Spectator club.

In an age when coffee houses were very much in fashion, it was customary for the ‘Spectator’ to be made the member of a club or coffee house. The original idea of creating the characters was Steele's, but it was left to Addison to develop and bring them to perfection. The idea seems to be derived from the numerous classical dialogues, then fashionable, in which each interlocutor is supposed to have a character of his own and represent a point of view. With this purpose Addison introduced five gentlemen from five different spheres of life, who

represent their points of view on social and moral issues. Apart from lending the dramatic or dialectic interest to the *Spectator* they also function as the representatives of their own class and are supposed to be the ideal models of their respective classes. Mr. Spectator is a man of profound learning, like the men of the old civilization who had been specialists and scholars in various fields. The other characters, viz., Sir Roger De Coverly the learned lawyer, Sir Andrew Freeport, Captain Sentry and Will Honeycomb are created as types who posses a sound knowledge of their own society. Their sensibility and different opinions towards moral and social issues are highlighted throughout the pages of the *Spectator.*

Addison and Steele began the *Spectator* after their first attempt with the *Tatler*. This periodical was conceived in a spirit of restrained idealism, and each character was intended, to be an object lesson to his class. Addison appears to be sympathetic towards all his characters. They brought to the task of self-education, the same seriousness that began to guide the more enlightened as far back as the civil war. Their true sphere was found in the routine of daily life. Their practical thoughtfulness centred round their institutions, manners, and intellectual development. All these characters took active part in the issues that were raised in the Spectator Club. They have their own opinions to express in the various discussions and Mr. Spectator's role was that of an over-hearer who reported, faithfully, every detail of these discussions to the readers.

7.4.4 The Uses of the Spectator

This essay was the tenth in a series of 555 essays, which appeared on the 12th of March, 1711. The importance of the essay is in the proclamation of its aims and intentions. We have already got an idea of the *Spectator* in the preceding sections. In this essay Addison established himself as a preacher and moralist whose aim was to reform the follies and vices of his age. He also attempted to develop a 'taste for literature' in this essay. Apart from giving a picture of contemporary society, he also suggests the absence of formal criticism by establishing a new principle of poetic appeal. What is the use of criticism if it cannot serve the purpose of the people? These were the questions that Addison was concerned with. And we can notice that he attempts to make criticism serve some practical purpose. The critic has

his responsibilities towards society, and he must undertake this task however difficult it might be. The epigraphs to the essays suggest this fact and Addison, with all seriousness undertakes his self-declared aim of instructing and amusing his readers at the same time.

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7.5 Addison's Style

Addison's style in the 'Spectator' essays is characterized by an intimacy with the readers together with wit, satire and irony. His irony in this essay, although masterly is gentle. While recommending the Spectator to its readers, he takes a clever dig at the cross sections of society. The descriptions of the social classes like the "contemplative tradesmen", "templers that are not given to be contentious", "statesmen that are out of business", "Titular physicians" etc. are characterized by his satiric wit. His satire is also directed at the members of the royal society. His irony is at its best in the description of the 'blanks' of society. His comments on women and their occupation are also another example of his satire.

Addison attempts to smite hard but his favourite mood is a mood of delicate and playful satire and here he is at his happiest. His satire is

not of the vituperative kind that Pope criticized. Here we find him as instructive and concerned with what he calls "enliven morality with wit and temper wit with morality".

Like all the 'Spectator' essays, *The Spectator's Account of Himself* is marked by Addison's free flowing and conversational style. He gives his readers a sense of intimacy. Of his prose, Johnson said "whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison". Addison's style is discursive, not like the thoughtful logical discourse of a speculative personality. He wrote in a fluent, easy and lucid manner. His language is often satirical but his satire very gentle. Irony and wit are the other markers of *The Spectator's Account of Himself.* Sometimes he exaggerates, but it is often used to provoke mirth. To make his presentation more effective, Addison uses a number of images from various fields. These familiar images are blended with a language to suit them.

Addison carefully picks up characters from different walks of life to create the Spectator Club. All these characters belong to different worlds and have their different and typical characters. They all have their own opinions on the subjects that were raised in the Spectator Club. Addison's characters are depicted with minute details and their idiosyncrasies add much to their charm and their attraction for the readers.

Stop to Consider

The friends of the 'Spectator'

Sir Roger de Coverly: Sir Roger de Coverly is the most remarkable of the 'Spectator's' friends. Addison portrays him as a man of remarkable wisdom and extraordinary style. He retains a certain mellowness and suavity of disposition. He is a kind man and his feudal background serves to make him independent. He is a man of strong physical vigour and remarkable intelligence. His enthusiasm for life has been temporarily blasted by his mystical love affair , but he did not succumb to it like ordinary men. His long career among bucolic and admiring tenants could not condemn him to a life of self-importance. The movement of his life has come to a halt and he finds himself at odds with the world. But he thinks that it is the world that is in the wrong. At fifty-six he is gay, cheerful and hearty.

Sir Roger is the most famous of the members of the Spectator Club

and Addison is very sympathetic in his portrayal. Owing to his popularity the essays dealing with Sir Roger de Coverly were later compiled as the *Coverly Papers*. Sir Roger embodies the ideals of the proceeding age and his portrayal suggests Addison's views on that age.

Captain Sentry: Captain Sentry is perhaps one of the most remarkable characters, in all literature, of a 'man in uniform' outside battlefield. He has proved himself to be a brave soldier but his worth is not merely in his heroism but in his talent that he exhibits in the other fields as well. He has quit the army because he thought that it does not give him enough opportunities to exhibit his talent. But he is not also a man concerned with advertising himself. Captain Sentry is a man of modest and admirable nature. In his conversations he compares the military and civil ways of life with the ardor of a philosopher. His discussions of military endeavors, and his discussion on the relation between modesty and courage will surprise a philosopher.

In portraying the character of Captain Sentry, Addison puts before us a number of remarkable questions. Which way of life is more worthy, military or civil? Can modesty and courage go together?

The Member of the Inner Temple: This anonymous character provides the much-needed clerical and religious point of view to the spectator club. He is a man of great probity, wisdom and understanding, and is held in high esteem among his friends in the spectator club. He became a member of the 'inner temple' to obey the directions of his father but instead of confining himself to it, he devoted his ample leisure to the learning of Aristotle, Longinus and the theatre. The most remarkable thing about him is " his familiarity with the customs, manners and actions and writing of the ancients makes him a very delicate observer of what occurs to him in the present world." His knowledge of the theatre prompts the actors to attempt to please him.

Sir Andrew Freeport: Sir Andrew is an uncommon businessman in the days of colonialism. He is rich, industrious and experienced but he is against the extension of dominion by arms. England was at that time completely a merchandising nation and Sir Andrew represents the 'new rich' who was receiving more and more influence over the government and the populace as well. But he is a man of great intelligence and eloquence of whom Addison has said that "a general trader of good sense is pleasanter company than a general scholar."

Will Honeycomb: Honeycomb the fop, had been the butt of comedy for centuries. He is a man of fashion who is depicted as ignorant, indolent and insolent by subsequent writers. Nevertheless, he is the person who is more aware about his own age than other members of

the club. He is the kind of man that was hated in the puritan period. But he is adept in courtly conversations and is informed about the various fashions in different parts of the world and their origin. He is also extremely knowledgeable about the female world.

Addison is not very sympathetic in the portrayal of this character. His language suggests not only his ridicule of Honeycomb but also his low opinion of women.

The Clergyman: The clergyman is not a regular visitor of the Spectator Club. But his infrequent arrivals were always welcomed members of the Spectator Club. He is "a very philosophic man, of general learning, great sanctity of life and the most exact good breeding". The members of the club always introduced a subject of divinity whenever he was present and he always spoke with much authority on that subject.

Stop to Consider

The 'gaze' of the spectator

The word spectator means an 'on looker' or 'observer'. So it is imperative to study the implication of this 'gaze'. How the spectator looks at things is an interesting aspect of study. In recent postmodern and feminist theories also the ' gaze' is given a prominent place. It will be useful to study the spectator essays in relation to these theories and to try to see how Addison places the spectators.

Are the spectators given a position of vantage? What can be learnt about the society and the writer from the creation of these characters also need to be addressed.

The idea of the 'spectator' should be seen in connection with contemporary discussions of progress, the new culture of commerce, and the changing ideas of human nature. Richard Steele announced in the *Tatler* in 1709, "The general Purpose of this Paper, is to expose the false Arts of Life, to pull off the Disguises of Cunning, Vanity, and Affectation, and to recommend a general Simplicity in our Dress, our Discourse, and our Behaviour." In 1740, after having published his *Treatise of Human Nature*, David Hume abandoned systematic philosophy for promoting practical morality through writing and publishing essays in the Addisonian mode. The *Spectator* had helped

to set standards of taste through its highly popular status as many contemporary readers remarked.

Questions and Suggested Answers:

1. How does Addison present the characters' views in conformity with his ideal of social standards ?

   The portrayal of the character of the spectator as a learned and much travelled man is strategically important for Addison to suit his purpose.

2.

Unit 8

Frances Burney's "Conversations with Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson" and "A First Visit to Mrs. Thrale and an Introduction to Dr. Johnson"

8.1 Objectives:

The Present unit is an attempt to throw light upon the life and writings of one of the greatest female writers of the late eighteenth century, Fanny Burney, also popularly known as Frances Burney. After going through this unit you will be able to

- be familiar with the lives and works of Fanny Burney

- explain the features and significance of Fanny Burney's writings with special reference to her letters.
- explore the underlying significance and literary merits of the texts written by Burney.

8.2 Introducing the Author:

Frances Burney's father, Charles Burney was from the village of Great Hanwood and he was the child of a country gentleman, James Macburney, who was a land steward. So Charles was born Macburney but the 'Mac' was dropped subsequently. Charles Burney was a well known historian of music. Frances was born on the 13th June, 1752 at King's Lynn. Her god mother, Mrs. Greville gave her the name of Frances. Frances, however, was very shy, silent and shortsighted at the outset and she was called a 'dunce' by Mrs. Burney's friends. Frances was actually not a dunce. Those who knew her closely were aware of her acute perceptive faculties. Frances was naturally witty and had great skills in mimicry.

Writing about the Burney family, Kate Chisholm notes,

> The Burneys were a talented clan of musicians, writers, scholars, geographers and artists. And their shared habit of 'journalizing', recording their encounters in vivid, as-they-happened letters and diaries that were written for each other but with an awareness, too, of their potential historical significance, has ensured that they will never be forgotten.(Sabor, 7)

Susan Burney, Frances's sister was the first diarist of the Burney family who started writing at a very early age. Frances also started observing and recording her experiences in her own innovative way. As you have come to know that the Burney family had a strong inclination towards arts and culture. Peter Sabor calls the house of the Burneys as a 'microcosm of eighteenth century culture'. (Sabor, 3)

Frances was having a close association with an old man called Samuel Crisp who was a musician, 'a man of taste and fashion'. Known as 'Daddy Crisp' among the Burney's, he was a good looking, well mannered and accomplished person having artistic and musical interests.

The Burney girls visited the theatres and opera and also learnt music and dancing. Betty Rizzo writes about Fanny's early experiences,

> She had the opportunity to observe the characteristics of every social class: the servants, her low city cousins, artists and musicians, professional men, and the provincial gentry of King's Lynn. She also glimpsed the fashionable world, who could be seen at the theatre, but she was able to note closely, without interacting with, this world at her father's Sunday-night concerts. (Sabor, 131)

Thus Frances made good acquaintances with many artists and other professionals and she derived vivid experiences from those meetings and conversations. Her sister was her constant companion in this case as she could share all her experiences and recount ideas with sister Susane. Frances was quite familiar with the life of gentry because she was introduced to such a life by her father's association with courtly people. However, Dr. Burney had a difficult time in putting his children at a comfortable position through music and writing. Frances herself witnessed the difficulties that her father experienced in the process of establishing himself in the social cycle through writing and music. As Betty Rizzo writes,

> The Burneys, ever desirous of improving their station in life, were naturally fearful of falling. From the start, Charles Burney and his family were involved in the struggle for upward mobility and sought to rise from modest origins to the elegance of the Grevilles .(Sabor, 134)

Charles Burney's access to the important luminaries of that time was a result of his struggle, his way of life and his daughter, Frances's

success in writing. However, the Burney family was afraid of such acquaintances and reputations because of their origin and profession. In fact, Charles Burney refused to bring up his daughters as notable housewives despite his second wife's insistence. As a result of which the Burney daughters, specially, Frances had to face a lot of obstacles in pursuit of marriage.

Betty Rizzo writes,

> It was the family reputation, and thus its livelihood, that Burney had to guard, a necessity that drove the entire family to agonies of resourceful concealment over the too-often repeated peccadilloes of their own sons. The prosperity of the meritocratic professionals still depended entirely on the countenance of the aristocracy, and the aristocracy claimed the prerogative of enforcing on the acknowledged meritocrats a purity of life in no way similar to their own.(Sabor, 137)

Thus the Burney daughters had to struggle a lot to cope with the rigid social structure of that time. Frances had to publish her works anonymously for fear of being recognized as writer. Women in those days were not encouraged to express that way. Though she joined the court against an elite post, she could never enjoy her freedom as a writer.

Frances had to move to Paris and remain in exile for ten years with her husband and son as the war between France and England broke out in 1802. That was a difficult time for Frances. In 1810, Frances suffered from breast cancer. She was treated and she survived after a successful surgery**.**

8.3 The Time of Frances Burney:

Women in the eighteenth century were engaged in various works, mostly unwaged, household works, agricultural activities, bearing and

rearing of children etc. Besides, they did seasonal and part-time jobs in various trade related activities. Bridget Hill in the book *Women, work and sexual politics in the eighteenth- century England* observes,

> In the first half of the century, women seem to have worked in a wide range of trades, some of them involving work that was later to become the monopoly of men. The grounds on which they were excluded from such trades were that the work was unsuitable, unfeminine, inclining to immoral habits because it required being in close proximity to men, or that it was physically too demanding. (Hill, 259)

As you can find here that some works were specially assigned for women. Works that were considered masculine were not for women and works that involved less skill were for women. However, women were multi-occupational at that time as they were engaged in both household and trade related works. The women were constantly competing with their male counterpart but they were ignored and unappreciated. Thus there was gender discrimination in works and feminization of works in the eighteenth century. Hill further writes,

> In the first half of the eighteenth century by far the majority of households were rural, and the great majority were dependent at least in part on the cultivation of land. Very few of the labouring classes owned more than ten acres of land, and many owned none. The unit of production for these classes therefore was usually small. In whatever role they are found, outside the upper classes, it was taken for granted that women worked. (Hill, 28)

Besides, women used to work at dairy farms. She was involved in milking, cheese and butter making. She took care of the poultry farms, the pigs, the gardens etc.

> Women's contribution involved work of many different kinds, both waged and unwaged, both in the home and outside of it. Whatever the small area of land possessed it was usually they who undertook the sowing, the weeding and hoeing, and usually the harvesting of crops. Even the wife of a cottager or squatter with no land at all could, by her cultivation of the cottage garden, provide vegetables and other produce that helped achieve a measure of self-sufficiency.(Hill, 34)

As time passed, women were deprived of their jobs and they became completely dependent on their husbands. Women's works were confined to household activities only. As a result of which women got leisure hours. Moreover, after industrialization, women were forced to work at home. Homemaking and motherhood were now only important for women. Most women were also engaged in domestic services. Some also worked as charwomen, washer women and also as gardeners. This also led to disintegration in family economy because the family had to depend solely on the male bread owners. Those who worked at cotton mills and other factories in the first stage of industrialization were considered as 'workers'.

> It was only when women's work moved out of the household, when women begin to enter cotton mills and factories in the first stage of industrialization, that they were seen to become 'workers' and no longer mere 'housewives'. In other words, women's 'work' was defined solely in terms appropriate to nineteenth-century industrialization. And, of course, defined in such terms, women in pre-industrial England, even in the protoindustrial stage, were not 'workers'. (Hill, 149)

In the early eighteenth century wives were engaged in jobs like printing and publishing of books. Hill observes,

In the 1851 census, under the fifth class of female occupations, described as 'Persons engaged in the Domestic Offices, or Duties of Wives, Mothers, Mistresses of Families, Children, Relatives' are recorded over 2.5 million wives 'of no specified occupation'. Yet interestingly, this class is described as one which 'comprises large numbers of the population that have hitherto been held to have no occupation'. (Hill, 154)

STOP TO CONSIDER:

Marriage in the eighteenth century: The eighteenth century marked important economic and political transformation following industrialization and commercialization. Both private and public life of people were influenced and affected by the changes. Class disparities, gap between the rich and the poor increased. So far as family lives are concerned, men and women enjoyed separate roles. Marriage was an important social function and it was tied to social class. The reputation of a family was dependent on the women's marriage to higher social class. Women without husbands such as spinsters, unmarried mothers, or widows had a hard time. Women hardly had any existence outside marriage.

Thus you can see that unemployment or underemployment led women to become dependent on their husbands. Women had to suffer as they had lost their economic independence. They were powerless against the strong patriarchal system.

As it has been mentioned earlier, the Burney family had to face a lot of hurdles to establish themselves. One of the problems that the eighteenth century girls and women faced was the problem of marriage and even the Burney girls faced the same. Charles Burney refused to bring up his daughters as notable housewives and in this respect he

was opposite to his second wife, Elizabeth Allen. As it has been mentioned earlier, the Burney girls were unable to marry due to lack of fortune, money despite their good looks and wit. Besides, Frances Burney was ignored due to her writing occupation and her family background. Her association with General Alexandre D'Arblay who was an artillery officer at that time of revolution brought changes to her career as a writer. It was D'Arblay who taught her French and introduced her to the writer Germaine de Stael. Burney's father was against this closeness between the two as D'Arblay was an émigré, a poor, catholic fellow. Despite this, the couple married in 1793.

SAQ:

Q1. Discuss the social background of England in the eighteenth century with special reference to condition of women.

……

…….

Q.2 The eighteenth century was known as the age of reason and satire. What was the objective of such satirical writings? Who were some of the prominent writers of satire in the eighteenth century?

……

……..

Q3. Samuel Johnson showed great influence on the writers of the eighteenth century. Write about his influence on Frances Burney.

……

……

Q4.Discuss the role of women writers in the eighteenth century in bringing social revolutions in the west.

……
……

8.4 Burney's literary interests and growth as a writer

One of the forerunners of women's writing, Frances Burney was praised by the noted novelist Virginia Woolf as 'the mother of English Fiction' in 1918. Frances had to write at a time when women were hardly allowed or encouraged to express themselves. Frances's education life was not very sound. She was a silent, backward, dull girl. However, her mother had confidence in her. Frances lost her support at an early age due to her death. The family then received support from the relatives and friends. One of the famous actors of that time David Garrick was a frequent visitor of their house and he tried to help the children as much as he could. Frances had skills in acting and mimicry with her strong memory power and observational skills. However, the family faced a setback after Charles Burney's second marriage to a widow, Allen Elizabeth. Allen was not supportive to her family and so she was unpopular in that family.

As you have already known that Frances was honoured with an unusual post as "Keeper of the Robes' to George III and Queen Charlotte. Initially Frances was reluctant to join the post of ' Keeper of the Robes' offered by the Queen because she did not want to be separated from her family and especially for the reason that such a job would restrict her from freely engaging herself in writing. But later on she joined in 1786 thinking that such a job would improve her social standing and would give her more freedom to write. To her utter disappointment, the job failed to satisfy her as she became restless and uncomfortable after joining the job. Besides, she was not comfortable with her colleagues at workplace.

Frances wrote letters to her mentor Samuel Crisp and sister Susan. She was deeply inspired by the writings of Samuel Richardson and composed her novel *Evelina* in secret following the style of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (Virtue Rewarded) and *Clarissa*(The History of a Young Lady). *Evelina* narrates the life experience of woman, Evelina who was rejected by her own father and brought up by a kind clergyman. The protagonist had to undergo a difficult life and she had to suffer a lot. Evelina 's instant success made her acquainted with famous literary figures such as Mrs. Thrale, Samuel Johnson. Mrs. Hester Thrale had a literary cycle at Stratham where she invited the literary luminaries of that time. She also established a library where she took stock of the books of Samuel Johnson, the portrait of Sir Joshua, Edmund Burke and Oliver Goldsmith etc. Samuel Johnson was intimate with Frances's father and family since the days of his dictionary. However, it was by the introduction of Mrs. Thrale that Johnson came to know more about Frances Burney.

It was Henry Thrale who brought Dr. Johnson to live with him. Frances Burney was introduced by Hester Thrale at Streatham in July 1778. Frances Burney received good recognition after the publication of her novel *Evelina* which brought her to the attention of Hester Thrale, a patron of arts. Streatham was a centre for literary and political gatherings where people met and took part in intellectual endeavour. However, the people who attended those meetings were mostly meritocratic people. Women initially did not received the chance to join such cycles.(Sabor, 139). So credit goes to Hester Thrale who took initiative to introduce female aspiring literary figures as guests and companions at her place. Among them were Margaret Owen, Sophia Streatfeild and Fanny Browne. At Streatham, Frances was introduced in 1778 to the great literary person Dr. Johnson who remained a friend and correspondent in her life from 1779-1783. This

conversation brought great changes to her life and she received unprecedented favour and reputation as a writer.

If you want to learn about some of the women luminaries of literature in the eighteenth century, you must read the works of Aphra Behn, Frances Burney to Eliza Heywood and also Maria Edgeworth and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797). Among those educated women writers who tried to place women as intellectually equal to men included Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Vesey and Hester Thrale Piozzi. Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* which was published in 1792 heralded a change in the era of women's writing. Wollstonecraft raised questions over the French Revolution, women's rights, slave trade and called for radical reforms.

In the early nineteenth century, women writers who successfully established themselves as prominent women voices include Mrs. Ann RadCliffe (1764- 1823), Jane Austen(1775-1817), Charlotte Bronte9 1816-1855) etc.

STOP TO CONSIDER:

Influence of the French Revolution:

The French revolution began in 1789 in France and it heralded a great political change. It was a time when the enlightenment thinkers appealed to the Govt to promote equality for the greatest good of the people. There was a call for religious and cultural freedom and equality under the law to set up new political rights and ideals. The revolutions and its democratic ideals such as Rousseau's influenced the women writers of that time. Women had no political rights before the movement who lived only as passive citizens. After the revolution women began to claim their political rights and also right to education.

8.5 Form and Style:

Let us now discuss some of the special features of Frances Burney's writings.

Frances Burney mostly used humour, wit and satire for writing. She tried her hands in drama, letters and novels as she was a witty observer and skilled writer. In the Introduction to the book *Macaulay's Essay on Frances Burney (Madame D' Arblay),* Alice D. Greenwood wrote that the publication of Frances's anonymous work opened a new chapter in English literature. Frances went ahead of writers like Richardson, Fielding and Smollett and composed her novels with lifelike presentation of characters and ordinary scenes with wit and humour (Greenwood, Vii).Greenwood further praised her saying that she opened the classical age of the novel.

Her writings also had a serious undertone with a strong message for society. Her heroines were vision makers and struggling figures. The characters were set against the contemporary social scenario. Frances used humour and satire as a strategy to reveal her characters. As you know that the eighteenth century was also known for satire. Writers like Samuel Johnson, Alexander Pope used satire for their writings. *Evelina'*s instant success made Frances popular among the literary luminaries of the eighteenth century and she was welcomed by this intellectual circle.

Julia Epstein in her article "Marginality in Frances Burney's novels" mentions,

> The heroines of Frances Burney's four novels embody a set of contradictions so paradigmatic of the later eighteenth century that they might be said to define the ideological tensions inhering in the period's complex demarcations of woman's social place. Burney's heroines are proper, decorous, and innocent, yet preternaturally aware of social danger; diffident yet fiercely self-protective; publicly

> self-effacing yet bent on independence of thought and action; ambiguously presented as to class yet adhering to upper-class ambitions; apparently unknowing about social mores and expectations, yet acutely observant of others and conscious of their own desires (Richetti, 198).

Here Epstein writes about the nature of France's writings and also about the implications of her writings. Frances presented the conflicting status and conditions of women in the eighteenth century through her novels. She also wrote about women struggling for self expression.

Burney's novels are a critique of gender and class ideologies and social hierarchies in the late eighteenth century and she satirically explored the themes and narrative techniques that were quite innovative on her part. Burney was a keen observer of her time and narrated about the economic fissures in social categories after the rise of the new mercantile class.

As a satirist, Frances Burney, according to Julian Fung, was not like Jonathan Swift or Alexander Pope. Her satiric objective was neither 'punitive', nor 'reformative' but rather 'cautionary' as she had a serious purpose behind her satiric writings (Fung, 937-953).

Jane Spencer in the article "Evelina and Cecilia" appreciates the writings of Frances Burney and writes about the use of satire in her novels,

> As naive observer, Evelina is a satirical device, her innocent enthusiasm for the acting exposing the foppishness of those who attend the theatre to be seen rather than to watch and her ignorance of the rules of a young lady's behaviour at the ball acting as a covert critique of them. Shy and easily abashed in company, tart and witty in her letters, Evelina manages to combine an innocent appreciation of the world's pleasures with a satire on its follies.(Sabor, 28)

You must read Frances Burney's *Evelina* and her novelistic works to understand her depiction of satire. You should try to make comparisons among Frances Burney, Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope in terms of their respective satirical styles.

Eighteenth century satirical writers:

The eighteenth century was a classic age of literature with its emphasis on realism, refinement of expression and prevalence of satire. It is important to mention here that there were strong political strife in England in the century and satirists were encouraged and rewarded for specific political interests. Satire which aims to search out faults of men or institutions, according to William J. Long, is at best a destructive kind of criticism. (Long, 261)

Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was a master of satire and didactic writings. Pope followed the Italian satirical style and developed his own mock heroic theme of writing. His *Rape of the Lock* (1712), *The Dunciad* (1743) marked a landmark in the history of eighteenth century satire.

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was mostly remembered for his *Gulliver's Travels* and *Tale of the Tub. Gulliver's Travels* is a satire on European Government and religion while his *Tale of the Tub i*s a satire on the religious beliefs such as Catholic, Lutherian and Calvinist.

Both Pope and Swift were inspired by classical masters like Horace for inspiration. Pope tried to display the follies, foibles and vanities of the upper class society through his satire.

Joseph Addison (1672- 1719) occupies a special place in the history of periodical literature and satire. With gentle kindliness, Addison wrote essays on men and manners such as *The Tatler* and *The Spectator.*

8.6 Critical Reception:

In the book *Women Writer: Their Works and Ways*, Catherine J. Hamilton praises Frances Burney's Diary writings in following words,

> In her delightful Diary she tells us all the little details of her life, of her sudden -celebrity, of her visits at Streatham and Bath, of the people she met, the parties she went to, the compliments she was paid. The whole history flows easily from her fluent pen. Little oddities of odd people are set down with shrewd humour and dramatic force, that show how quick she was in seizing amusing situations, and in catching up the fire of wit and raillery which was passing around. (Hamilton, 2)

Hamilton eulogizes Frances Burney for her graphic power of narration, observational skills, her easy, chatty style of writing and her bright, vivid and life like presentation of scenes (Hamilton, 2)

Kate Chisholm praises the contribution of the Burney family towards arts, Music and culture and celebrates the success of Frances Burney,

> Her novels, best-sellers in their time, are read and enjoyed now not for the elegance of her prose style or her ingenious plotting, but for the range and depth of her characters – Captain Mirvan, Elinor Joddrel, Sir Sedley Clarendel, Mr Dubster – inspired by the rich variety of her father's circle of acquaintance.

After the publication of her diaries, Frances received admiration from great novelists like William Thackeray.

Jane Spencer, a critic of Frances Burney's writing also writes that Frances Burney has often been identified with her own heroines such as Evelina. Spencer writes,

> That Evelina's story, subtitled 'A Young Lady's Entrance Into the World', was also the means of her creator's entrance into the world of professional writing has been noticed by many readers. (Sabor, 23)

In the article on "Journals and Letters", John Wiltshire writes an account of Frances Burney's literary life and her quest for self expression. Wiltshire opines that Frances Burney was an apolitical person yet her life was caught up and invaded by politics. Her privacy was constantly tested and infringed during her court life. Wiltshire writes,

> Privacy was an essential attribute of female gentility, augmented in her case by great personal shyness. Nevertheless it was Burney's fate that her privacy should be constantly tested or infringed. The contest between the desire for privacy and the lionising of a successful author is the substance of many of the incidents, both excruciating and comic, that she recorded after the publication of Evelina in 1778. (Sabor, 77)

Judy Simons in her chapter "Secret Exhibitionists: Women and their Diaries" in the book *Diaries and Journals of Literary Women from Fanny Burney to Virginia Woolf* discusses about women writers like Frances Burney's problems in expressing themselves in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when silence was considered as a 'female virtue' and therefore encouraged to develop. As an only outlet of expression, the women writers turned to, their diaries, journals and letters. Now look at the following lines written by Frances Burney,

ADDRESSED TO A CERTAIN MISS NOBODY

Poland Street, London,

March 27.

> To have some account of my thoughts, manners, acquaintance and actions, when the hour arrives in which time is more nimble than memory, is the reason which induces me to keep a Journal. A Journal in which I must confess my every thought, must open my whole heart! But a thing of this kind ought to be addressed to somebody- I must imagion [sic] myself to be talking- talking to

> the most intimate of friends - to one in whom I should take delight in confiding, and remorse in concealment: - but who must this friend be? to make choice of one in whom I can but half rely, would be to frustrate entirely the intention of my plan. The only one I could wholly, totally confide in, lives in the same house with me, and not only never has, but never will, leave me one secret to tell her. To whom then, must I dedicate my wonderful, surprising and interesting Adventures? - to whom dare I reveal my private opinion of my nearest relations? my secret thoughts of my dearest friends? my own hopes, fears, reflections and dislikes? - Nobody!

In the above lines, Frances has addresses the receptor of the letter as 'Nobody'. Judy Simons observes that a sense of double identity –the private and public was central to her journals. Frances herself expressed that it was in her journals that her concealed self found expression.(Simons, 23). Another critic, Norma Clarke writes that the 'nobody' in Frances's diary signified her closest confidante, an extension of herself.(Clarke, 183)

STOP TO CONSIDER:

There were three stages in Burney's journals, each with distinct features. The early diaries from 1768 to 1786 were about her time of literary apprenticeship and publication of first novels. The journals from 1786 to 1791 were written during her court life when she was isolated from her real life, depressed and exhausted. The third phase of diary records her marriage life, her experience in post- Revolutionary Europe. These personal writings reveal before the readers the life of a struggling woman for self expression and recovery and also they give insights into her creative life.

Initially Frances Burney began her journal as a semi-satirical chronicle of her life for a genuine and private amusement but the purpose of her writing changed its course when she grew older. Frances used to write to her sister Susan at regular intervals and after Susan's demise, she continued to write being inspired by her husband. Judy Simons praises her creativity and flexibility as a writer and calls the journal as an outstanding work of art in her book. Her journals were remarkable for the variety of literary genres. Besides, the journal presented the practical and the psychological problems besetting the literary woman. She writes,

> Fanny Burney's journal is thus remarkable for the variety of literary genres it incorporates: it is a personal memoir; it is a series of letters to an intimate friend; it is a political and social history; it is a working notebook; and it is also a fiction, creating a narrative of compelling intensity with a central character of heroic stature.(Simons, 19)

Thus Frances Burney's personal writings were appreciated and followed by the writers of the time and her writings inspired many female writers in the subsequent centuries.

Another important critic and writer of Frances Burney, Macaulay wrote extensively about Burney and her family Macaulay celebrates her success as a literary luminary of her time makes a biographical account of her struggle and achievements. Macaulay observed that the diary of Frances was written in clear, natural lively style and her scheme as a writer was to become a candidate for fame without running any risk of disgrace. (Macaulay, 17)

Macaulay praised the distinguished skills of Frances Burney. He writes,

> She was emphatically what Johnson called her, a character-monger. It was in the exhibition of human passions and whims that

her strength lay; and in this department of art she had, we think, very distinguished skill.

Lord Macaulay rightly says that Frances Burney did for novel what Jeremy Collier had done for the English Drama. In Macaulay's words, "She vindicated the right of her sex to an equal share in a fair and noble province of letters."

S AQ:

1. Discuss the significance of the following words of Macaulay,

"She vindicated the right of her sex to an equal share in a fair and noble province of letters."

Do you think that Frances Burney indeed fought for her rights to express? Justify

……
……
……..

8.7

8.7.1 The Context:

Frances Burney lived among distinguished men and women of her time and she was admired and praised by those luminaries. Her reputation lasted long as a chronicler of English social and court life during the reign of George III. It is significant to mention here that her early diaries chronicle evenings were spent in such circle at home. You are already aware that Frances Burney's first novel *Evelina* was published anonymously in 1778 and the instant success after the release of her first novel made her way to Streatham, the place of Mrs. Hester Thrale. Burney's use of comedy, realism and wit enthralled the writers and inspired female writers such as Jane Austen, Maria

Edgeworth. The texts that are prescribed for you are about those personal experiences of Frances Burney. Here you will come to know about Frances Burney's introduction to the intellectual world at Streatham and her meeting with Dr. Johnson and Mrs.Thrale.

8.7.2 Reading Frances Burney's "Conversations with Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson":

The present text "Conversations with Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson" is extracted from the book *The Diary and Letters of Madame D' Arblay* edited by Mrs. Barrett, Frances's niece. This book was originally published in seven volumes in 1842-46. The preface to the book includes the following lines,

"Of the Diary itself it is hardly necessary here to say anything in praise. It has long been acknowledged a classic; it is indubitably the most entertaining, in some respects the most valuable, work of its kind in the English language."

The book includes accounts on Frances's *Evelina* and its publication mystery, Frances' Streatham experiences, her introduction to Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson, the ' bluestockings', Dr. Johnson's acquaintances with some ladies, correspondence with the ladies and members of Dr. Johnson's household, Frances's meeting with Mrs. Montagu etc.

In the present text you come across a few acquaintances and relatives of Frances Burney. Frances Burney records her memories with her acquaintances and their influences on her life. Her lived experiences, her correspondence with those people added a special attribute to her life. In this text you need to identify the special characters in Frances Burney's life and their approaches and responses. In these texts Frances has best expressed herself as a writer.

Frances expresses her happiness to be there at Streatham as she she was excited to meet her father, sister Susan, Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, Dr. Johnson and Mr. Crisp, mostly known as 'daddy Crisp'. Before reading this text you should remember one point that the immediate success after the publication of the novel *Evelina* led Frances to Streatham. She was invited by Hester Thrale at Streatham as a literary luminary of that time after her success as a female writer. The present text gives you an impression of that first correspondence with Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson at Streatham. At Streatham, Frances became acquainted with an witty circle of people and that experience was remarkable for Frances.

After reaching Mrs. Thrale's place, Frances went to visit her places, her library and room. Frances liked Mrs. Thrale for her sweet good humour and enthusiasm but remained confused about Mr. Thrale who did not seem to be a happy man though he had every reason to be happy. Dr. Johnson was in good humour and was sociable when she first met him at Streatham. Dr. Johnson spoke about the children of Mr. Langton who were asked to learn and cram in a dull conventional way by their parents. Mrs. Thrale also added that even parents cram their 'children's nonsense.' Thus Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale expressed concern over the parent's passive role in upbringing their children. Mrs. Thrale was well aware of Frances's good humour. So she introduced her to Dr. Johnson saying,

> "No, that they won't!" cried Mrs. Thrale; "Miss Burney looks so meek and so quiet, nobody would suspect what a comical girl she is—-but I believe she has a great deal of malice at heart."

Frances at first quite confused about Dr. Johnson's response but later got surprised to know that Dr. Johnson in fact liked her novel. She wrote,

> "I was almost afraid he thought I was really idiot enough to have taken him seriously; but, a few minutes after, he put his hand on my arm, and shaking his head, exclaimed, "Oh, you are a sly little rogue!—what a Holborn beau have you drawn!"

Dr. Johnson praised her work *Evelina*. He praised the character Mr. Smith in the novel.

"Oh, Mr. Smith, Mr. Smith is the man!" cried he, laughing violently. "Harry Fielding never drew so good a character!—such a fine varnish of low politeness!—such a struggle to appear a gentleman! Madam, there is no character better drawn anywhere—in any book or by any author."

To this Mrs. Thrale added that she remembered all the characters by heart in the novel. Frances, after receiving the responses from both Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Jonson felt overwhelmed and encouraged. She expressed in the letter,

> "I almost poked myself under the table. Never did I feel so delicious a confusion since I was born! But he added a great deal more, only I cannot recollect his exact words, and I do not choose to give him mine."

At Streatham, after her initial trepidation, she finally felt well and comfortable with the new acquaintances. She understood that the society at Streatham demanded wit or 'flash' along with literary achievement. That was a society of meritocracy and Mrs. Thrale was in favour of it. People like John Cator, Peggy Owen who visited the place and participated in mimicry and other witty activities. As a guest

of that cycle, Frances too had to join in mimicry to sharpen her mastery over wit.

As it has been mentioned earlier, Frances had high regard for Mrs. Thrale and she gave her a good opportunity to meet Dr. Johnson. Mrs. Thrale was also excited for this introduction of Frances because she herself was a supporter of her work. This is how Frances writes about Mrs. Thrale after her meeting with Dr. Johnson

> "About noon when I went into the library, book hunting, Mrs. Thrale came to me. We had a very nice confab about various books, and exchanged opinions and imitations of Baretti; she told me many excellent tales of him, and I, in return, related my stories."

Frances spent quality time with Mrs. Thrale discussing about various literary notions and characters. They both liked Goldsmith's writing but Dr. Johnson did not have high regard for Goldsmith's writings.

STOP TO CONSIDER:

Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi (1741-1821) played a very important role in the life of Frances Burney. By birth, she was an aristocratic who was married to Henry Thrale. In the year 1765 she met Dr. Samuel Johnson and she became associated with prominent circle of writers like Frances Burney, David Garrick, Oliver Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds and many more. Piozzi's noted work was Anecdotes (1786) which was about Samuel Johnson's life. Hester Thrale wished to develop a literary circle at Streatham with female luminaries of that time and hence she invited promising writers like Elizabeth Montagu and Frances Burney to visit Stratham for some special conversations and meetings.

8.7.3 Reading Frances Burney's "A First Visit to Mrs. Thrale and an Introduction to Dr. Johnson"

This is an introduction to one of the most brilliant literary circles of the eighteenth century where you meet literary figures like Fanny Burney, Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Samuel Johnson. Dr. Charles Burney had been a welcome guest at Streatham since 1776 and he used to give music lessons to the eldest daughter of Mrs. Thrale, Hester Thrale. At Streatham, Fanny got an opportunity to meet the giant literary figure, Dr. Johnson. Streatham became a meeting place of famous literary persons and that was the place where Frances Burney was first introduced as an established writer. Before reading this text you should do some prior reading on Dr. Johnson and some of the prominent women writers of the eighteenth century. The present text is about Frances Burney's visit to Streatham and her first meeting with Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson.

Frances was quite anxious and excited to visit Mrs. Thrale's place. A sense of fear also disturbed her conscience as she was not sure as to how she would be received at Streatham. However, she found the place very pleasant at her first sight.

Frances was well received by Mrs. Thrale at her place and led her to her house with mixed politeness and cordiality. However, what greatly embarrassed her was her indifference towards her, her book. She did not even hint at her book. She impatiently waited for that moment. Soon afterwards, Mrs. Thrale took her to the library and there she mentioned her book amidst other common topics. She informed her that Dr. Johnson was pleased with her book *Evelina.*

Frances had good impression on Miss Thrale, daughter of Mrs. Thrale who learnt music from Frances's father. She was a fine, knowledgeable, intelligent girl with a cold, reserved disposition. From Mrs. Thrale Frances came to know that her work *Evelina* was well

appreciated by Dr. Johnson. This is how Mrs. Thrale responded to Frances Burney,

> Yesterday at supper," said she, "we talked it all over, and discussed all your characters—but Dr. Johnson's favourite is Mr. Smith. He declares the fine gentleman manqué was never better drawn; and he acted him all the evening, saying he was 'all for the ladies!' He repeated whole scenes by heart. I declare I was astonished at him. O, you can't imagine how much he is pleased with the book;

Frances had great reverence for Dr. Johnsonr. She was excited to learn that she would be accompanied by Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale at dinner time. Frances wrote,

> I have so true a veneration for him, that the very sight of him inspires me with delight and reverence, notwithstanding the cruel infirmities to which he is subject; for he has almost perpetual convulsive movements, either of his hands, lips, feet, or knees, and sometimes of all together**.**

Dr. Johnson expressed his happiness at the sight of Miss Burney and felt proud.

Dr. Johnson replied gaily,

> No, madam, no," cried he, "I despise nothing that is so good of its sort; but I am too proud now to eat of it. Sitting by Miss Burney makes me very proud to-day!"

Johnson had his witty side when he spoke and responded. The following words of Johnson will give you the impression that he was mostly known for his witty demeanor.

> "Miss Burney," said Mrs. Thrale, laughing, "you must take care of your heart if Dr. Johnson attacks it for I assure you he is not often successless."
>
> "What's that you say, madam?" cried he; "are you making mischief between the young lady and me already?"
>
> A little while after he drank Miss Thrale's health and mine, and then added: "Tis a terrible thing that we cannot wish young ladies well, without wishing them to become old women!"

He said wittily that it was a terrible thing to wish young ladies.

After this first meeting with Dr. Johnson, Frances and her father became very happy and excited as they were well received and appreciated by Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson.

STOP TO CONSIDER:

The records at the residence of Mrs. Thrale in South London, Streatham are known as ' Streatham Journals'. At Streatham, Burney recorded information about Dr. Johnson, one of her greatest admirers. Frances recorded his domestic behavior, his way of conversation etc. Frances finds in Dr. Johnson a 'sportive and benign man', 'full of teasing and repartee' who took delight in the company of the two women, Burney and Mrs. Thrale. After Johnson's death, Burney was depressed deeply and that changed the course of her life afterwards.

Chauncey Brewster Tinker in his introduction to the book *Dr. Johnson and Fanny Burney* writes,

Here she is simple; here her style flows swift and limpid. There is no affectation of dignity in this pleasant con- verse with her sisters, no suspicion of pomposity in this spirited account of Dr. Johnson. Here she is what she is "by art as well as by nature." (Tinker, xxi)

Tinker in this book writes extensively about Frances's association with Dr. Johnson and their literary correspondence. In her journals Frances was at her best as a writer.

SAQ:

1. Discuss the circumstances under which Frances Burney was introduced to Dr. Samuel Johnson by Mrs. Hester Thrale at Streatham.

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……
……

2. Discuss the literary merits of the diary entries of Frances Burney.

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……

8.8 Summing Up

Mostly considered as a social critic, Frances Burney had a serious literary purpose behind her writings. Even though she was reluctant initially to express herself out of fear and social stress, Frances strongly stood up as a distinct woman writer of her time and her influence brought a huge change in the background of eighteenth century. Macaulay, the famous critic opines that she held a place of high esteem and set classic examples by her writings despite change of time and manners (Greenwood, 2).

8.9 References and Suggested Reading:

Unit 9

Frances Burney's "Conversations with Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson" and "A First Visit to Mrs. Thrale and an Introduction to Dr. Johnson"

SUPPLEMENTARY UNIT:

9.1 Objectives:

9.2 Understanding the author:

Frances Burney was chiefly known as a novelist of manners and she preferred a realistic representation of her plot and character. She used wit and satire as literary devices and chose a literary mode for frank disclosure of facts and incidents. She wrote prior to Jane Austen and other nineteenth century feminist writers. Yet her writings were about women and feminism. You can read her novels from a feminist perspective. Like novels of manners, comedy of manners were also composed and they were also depicted and satirized the manners and

affectations of contemporary society. Such comedy of manners is full of wit and satire that depicted human follies and foibles. You should keep in mind that Moliere who was best known for his comedy of manners satirized the hypocritical and pretentions of the French society of the seventeenth century. Such plays were written in England during the restoration period by writers like Sir George Etherege, William Congreve and they used a witty, epigrammatical style in their writings. In the eighteenth century, writers like Oliver Goldsmith, R. Sheriden again revived the form. Similarly in the early nineteenth century Jane Austen wrote remarkable on novel of manners. France Burney was like a precursor of that form. Thus it can be said that the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century focused on this form and genre of writing with its focus on men and manners, customs, values of a complex society. To place Frances Burney against her age as a writer is important because Burney wrote exclusively about family affairs, human passions, social life, private and public life in her literary works. A comparative study of Jane Austen's novels and Frances Burney's will help you the common themes and interests in their writings. In the nineteenth century Henry James, Evelyn Waugh also used this genre. To understand Frances Burney's writings and to access her literary merits a historical and sociological study of her works will definitely help.

9.3 How to read her autobiographical texts?

Frances Burney was one of the finest chroniclers of her time. Her acquaintance with some of the notable literary personalities of her time and her close connection with the Court paved the way for a remarkable literary career. Her private life found reflection through her literary works. Hence a biographical study of Frances Burney will help you in the process of understanding her texts. Her diaries and personal

writings exhibit her life journey as a writer and her association with various people.

After studying The Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, you must explore whether the diaries and letters were like ordinary diary entries and letters. You will notice that the forms of those writings often melt into each other. Such fluidity in writing was one of the characteristic features of her writings and Burney freely used the English language to suit her form and style. The diaries and letters introduce you to the mind of Frances Burney as she recorded each and every important aspect of her life. Try to understand the various literary influences on Frances Burney's life.

Stop to Consider:

Diary as literature: Diaries are autobiographical in nature which involves the daily record of one's life and activities. As a literary genre Diary writing came to the scene in the late Renaissance. Some of the noted diarists in English Literature include John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys. In the eighteenth century Jonathan Swift tried successfully and wrote *The Journal of Stella.* Frances Burney's English diary was published in 1842-46. Another important work was James Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides (1785). Two other notable works of this genre include Ann Frank's Diary and The Diary of Virginia Woolf (1977-84)

9.4 Important works by the author:

Fanny Burney is mostly known for the following fictional works:

Evelina or The History of A Young Lady's Entrance into the World was her first novel in 1778 and the novel changed the whole life of Frances. Written in an epistolary form, the book introduced Frances as

a promising writer. Frances could not believe her success because she had to travel a long secret journey in revealing herself as a writer. The novel was about the life experiences of a young girl and her trials and tribulations. Samuel Johnson praised Frances Burney as a superior writer to Henry Fielding after reading her book. Hester Thrale welcomed Frances to her literary world after the instant success of the first novel.

Cecilia or Memoirs of an Heiress, London, 1782 was Fanny Burney's second novel. The novel falls under the genre of novel of manners and Burney has skillfully portrayed the London society of that time. Like most of her novels. *Cecilia* also addresses women's issues and her trials and tribulations against a conservative social pattern. The novel surrounds round the character named Cecilia Beverley who was characterized as an open, liberal and intelligent heiress.

Stop to Consider:

What do you mean by Novel of Manners?

This genre was practised by writers like Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, Evelyn Waugh and Henry James. Such novels deal with social conventions, values and customs, private and public life of characters. Fanny Burney's *Evelina*, for instance, portrays the contemporary society, men and manners of the people. Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice*(1813) deal with nineteenth century life , people, social behaviour and manners.

Camilla or A Picture of Youth was published in 1796. This was the book that saved the Burney couple from poverty in 1796. The couple built a house in Surrey and named it "Camilla Cottage". The novel deals with eighteenth century social cycles and women's conditions. It

is about Camilla Tyrold and her sisters and addresses the mental dilemmas of the characters arising out of generation gaps. Fanny Burney writes this novel using romantic and comic vibes.

Jane Spencer writes,

> From the epistolary narrative of Evelina, with its two strands of the heroine's experiences in contemporary society and her confrontation with a troubled family history, Burney moved to a flexible third-person narrative for the more ambitious Cecilia.(Sabor, 23)

Jane compares the two novels and finds similarities between the two in terms of themes.

> Different though the two novels are, they share the same fundamental concerns. Both address the issue of what sort of place a young woman can take, what sort of power she may wield, within the patriarchally organised society of late eighteenth-century England.

Published in 1814, Frances Burney's last novel *The Wanderer or Female Difficulties* is also about Women's identity and her struggles for economic and social independence. The novel has a gothic overtone and narrates the story of a struggling woman and her difficulties. Burney portrays the picture of the divided world where the rich exploit the poor. This novel is treated as a response of Fanny Burney to the French Revolution. Here Burney draws her reader's attention to the question of female identity, women's emancipation and freedom.

Stop to consider:

Two of Frances Burney's non-fictions are *Brief Reflections Relative to the French Emigrant Clergy*. London, 1793 and *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*. London: Moxon, 1832

A few important plays are:

The Witlings, 1779 (satirical comedy): This play satirically records the pretensions of the literary and social cycles of the eighteenth century London. The play, however, was not published at that time as it was not considered proper for a woman writer to mock the bluestockings of the society.

Other important works include *Edwy and Elgiva*, 1790 (verse tragedy). Produced at Drury Lane, 21 March 1795, *Love and Fashion*, 1799 (satirical comedy), *The Woman Hater*, 1800–01 (satirical comedy) and *A Busy Day*, 1800–01 (satirical comedy). Burney wrote the three comedies viz. *Love and Fashion*, *A Busy Day* and *The Woman Hater*, but these remained unpublished in her life time.

Journals and letters:

Frances was inspired to write for her near and dear ones such as Susan, her 'Daddy' Samuel Crisp, sister Esther and also her son Alexander. Jane Spencer writes about the difficult time when women had to face a lot of hurdles in expressing themselves. The literary scenario and publishing market was dominated by male professionals mostly. She writes,

> The world of letters which Burney was entering was itself changing as writing for money began to be, for some, a prestigious as well as possible occupation, with Johnson himself foremost among the new professionals. An expanding and diversifying literary market afforded many opportunities for female writers. Yet the national literary canon, the gradual creation of over a hundred years of developing criticism, biography and literary history, was still a largely male affair, constructed as a patrilineage.(Sabor, 24)

John Wiltshire compares Fanny Burney's writing style with that of Boswell and writes,

> Like Boswell, the other great life-writer of the age, Burney wrote about her own experiences copiously, even obsessively, and, like Boswell, she collected famous 'characters' and incidents. Like Boswell, she took notes, though not, as he did, on the spot. Instead – and throughout her life – she seems to have written brief 'memoranda' on scraps of paper, which served to jog her memory when she wrote them up, often shortly afterwards, but sometimes much later. Unlike Boswell, she had specific readers in mind, not the general public (Sabor ,75).

The following volumes are available till now and you should try to have a glimpse of those writings to have a better understanding of Frances Burney:

- Two volumes of The early Diary of Frances Burney 1768-1778
- The Diary and Letters of Madame D' Arblay edited by Austin Dobson
- The Diary of Fanny Burney edited by Lewis Gibbs.
- Dr. Johnson & Fanny Burney edited by Chauncy Brewster Tinker

Frances Burney chose an Epistolary form of writing which was a popular form in English literature. It includes diary entries, letters etc. Such form adds greater realism to an account and does not require an omniscient narrator. Samuel Richardson's Pamela (1740), Clarissa (1749) were written in epistolary form. Frances Burney's first novel Evelina (1788) was in epistolary form. Jane Austen, however, abandoned this form while Mary Shelly used this form in her novel

Frankenstein (1818). Thus you can see that Diary and Letters played a very important role as a literary genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and Frances Burney was one of the chief practitioners of that form.

9.5 Important works/ materials/ books about the author:

The following are some of the important works about Frances Burney. You study of such books will enable you to critically look at Frances Burney's life and literary works.

- Simons, Judy. *Diaries and Journals of Literary Women from Fanny Burney to Virginia Woolf.* London: Macmillan, 1990

- Tinker,Chauncey Brewster. *Dr. Johnson and Fanny Burney*, New York: Moffat, Yard & Company, 1911

- Dobson, Austin. English Men of Letters: Fanny Burney, New York: Macmillan, 1903

- Greenwood, Alice D. *Macaulay's Essay on Frances Burney*, New York: Macmillan, 1919

- Sabor, Peter(ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, Cambridge: Cambridge, 2007

- Clarke, Norme. *Dr. Johnson's Women*, London & New, York: Broadway, 2000

- Troide, Lars E. and Stewart J. Cooke (eds.) *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* Vol.III, The Streatham Years (Part I) 1778-1779
  Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994

- Rizzo, Betty (ed.) *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*
  Vol IV, The Streatham Years (Part II) 1780-1781
  Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003

9.6 Probable questions and Suggested answers:

1. Discuss the special features of Frances Burney's writings. Write briefly about the merits of Frances Burney's Diaries and Letters.

Ans: Points: Burney's use of wit, humour in her writing- Diary and letters as a genre used by Frances- mixed form of writing- Novel of manners.

2. Define Satire. Write briefly on the development of satirical writings in the eighteenth century.

Points: Satire as a form in eighteenth century- Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift and their comparison with Frances Burney's use of satire- Italian influence on English satire.

9.7 Summing Up

9.8 References and Suggested reading