



GAUHATI UNIVERSITY

Institute of Distance and Open Learning

Semester- II

MA in English

Paper - I (ENG-2026)
19th Century Prose

ENG-02-I-2026

GAUHATI UNIVERSITY
Institute of Distance and Open Learning

M.A. Second Semester
(under CBCS)

ENGLISH
Paper: ENG-2026
19th CENTURY PROSE



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BLOCK 1

Unit 1

General Introduction to Non-Fictional Prose

Unit Structure :

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Development of Prose
- 1.4 English Prose & the Bible
- 1.5 Secular Prose
- 1.6 Essay
- 1.7 Letters
- 1.8 Autobiography
- 1.9 Biography
- 1.10 Suggested Reading

1.1 Objectives

This unit will help in introducing you to the different forms of non-fictional prose. By the end of this unit, you will be able to

- *recognize* the different forms of non fictional prose
- *identify* these forms through the examples of individual writers
- *relate* the importance of the form to the author's concerns
- *distinguish* the different strategies adopted by the authors
- *understand* how prose can be used in different genres

1.2 Introduction

Let us begin with the notion of how prose developed from a more rigid language used in religious sermons to an extremely applicable form that was used in essays and letters in the subsequent periods.

Prose is a word supposed to be derived from Lat. *prorsus*, meaning direct or straight, and signifying the plain speech of mankind, when written or rhetorically composed, without reference to the rules of verse. There is a distinguishable difference between prose and poetry. Prose is

most safely defined as comprising all forms of careful literary expression which are not metrically versified. Earlier it was supposed that the conscious use of prose in the English language is comparatively recent, dating back at the farthest to the middle of the 16th century, and due directly to French influences. However, prose was used in England much before this. "The Code of Laws of King's Inn " dates from the 7th century, and there are various other legal documents which may be hardly literature in themselves, but which are worded in a way that seems to denote the existence of a literary tradition. After the Danish invasion, Latin ceased to be the universal language of the educated, and translations into the vernacular began to be required. In 887, Alfred, who had collected the principal scholars of England around him, wrote with their help, in English. His Hand-Book, which was probably the earliest specimen of finished English prose, is lost. Alfred also produced various translations from Bede, Orosius, Boethius and other classics. The prose of Alfred is simple, straightforward and clear, without any pretension to elegance. He had no direct followers until the time of the monastic revival.

1.3 Development of Prose

After the Norman Conquest, the progress of English prose was violently checked, except in a few remote monasteries. English ceased to be used, even for religious purposes, and the literature became exclusively Latin or French. Modern English prose begins John Wyclif, who, in the course of his career, abandoned Latin for English as the vehicle of his tracts. The earliest English Bible was begun by Nicholas Hereford, but was not completed. The completion of this great work is usually attributed, but on insufficient grounds, to Wyclif himself. A new version was almost immediately started by John Purvey, another Wyclifite, who completed it in 1388. Towards the middle of the 14th century Englishmen began, somewhat timidly, to use prose as the vehicle for original work. Capgrave, an Augustinian friar, wrote a chronicle of English History; Sir John Fortescue, the eminent constitutional jurist, produced around 1475 a book on *The Governance of England*; and Reginald Pecock, Bishop of Chichester, attacked the Lollards in his *Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy* (1455), which was so caustic and scandalous that it cost him his diocese. The introduction of printing into England is coeval with a sudden development of English prose, a marvellous example of which is to be seen in Caxton's 1485 edition of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d' Artur*, a compilation from French sources, in which the capacities of the English language for melody and noble sweetness were for the first time displayed, although much was yet lacking in strength and conciseness.

SAQ

In which languages did the Bible exist in ancient times ? (20 words)
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Which languages can be thought to have been in use in England in Alfred's time? (20 words)

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Stop to Consider:

Like other Western European vernaculars, English developed in the shadow of Latin, and its models for prose were therefore Latinate, at first through translation, imitation, and experiment, later as a consequence of its hybrid inheritance. Old English prose writing was largely a matter of translation from Latin, as in the works of Alfred the Great (9th century), but original vernacular prose was also produced by such writers as Aelfric of Eynsham(10-11th century) and the clerics who compiled the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. In the Middle English period vernacular prose could not develop much due to the dominance of French as the language of aristocracy and government and of Latin as the language of religion and learning. However, the vernacular sermon added persuasive rhetorical strength to some English prose texts, notably in the writings of John Wycliffe, Geoffrey Chaucer, and William Caxton.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, more and more writers chose to develop English prose rather than continue with Latin. Although their prose still followed Latin models, it accommodated itself increasingly to such vernacular usages as the compound noun and the phrasal verb, as well as less formal syntactic constructions. The Roman lawyer and orator Cicero was the supreme model for Elizabethan prose writers like Richard Hooker and Sir Thomas Elyot who imitated his periodic sentence, formal and ordered in structure, building to its climax before its full meaning is revealed. This apparent neo-classical artificiality tightened up the loose, rambling style of Middle English and took on a powerfully disciplined form in the preface to the Authorized Version of the Bible.

1.4 English Prose & the Bible

The Authorized Version of the Bible (1611), which was widely read and became an integral part of the life of most Englishmen for decades had a far reaching impact on the development of English prose. The language of the Authorized Version is frequently as poetic as that of the most beautiful verse. This can be attributed to the fact that the English language was still fresh and had not become dull because of prolonged

usage. The shortness of the verses of the Bible compelled restraint and helped in the formation of a language that was poetic without becoming too ornate. The literate readers of The Authorized Version of the Bible were encouraged to use a language that was simple and did not become verbose and pedantic. Many phrases from the Bible have grown so common that they have become part of the web of current English speech, and are hardly thought of as Biblical at all, except on deliberate reflection. For instance: "highways and hedges"; "clear as crystal"; "still small voice"; "hip and thigh"; "arose as one man"; "lick the dust"; "a thorn in the flesh"; "broken reed"; "root of all evil"; "the nether millstone"; "sweat of his brow"; "heap coals of fire"; "a law unto themselves"; "the fat of the land"; "dark sayings"; "a soft answer"; "a word in season"; "moth and rust"; "weighed in the balance and found wanting"; even such colloquialisms as, "we are the people" (cf. *Job* xii, 2).

Stop to Consider

1. The impact of The Authorized Version of the Bible can be gauged from the comment of different writers:

(a) **Coleridge** was so impressed with the vigour of Biblical style that he affirmed: "After reading *Isaiah, or St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews*, Homer and Virgil are disgustingly tame to me, and Milton himself barely tolerable".

(b) **Ruskin** ascribed the best part of his taste in literature to his having been required by his mother to learn by heart certain chapters of the Bible, adding: "I count [it] very confidently the most precious, and, on the whole, the one *essential* part of all my education."

(c) **Carlyle** said: "In the poorest cottage ... is one Book, wherein for several thousands of years the spirit of man has found light, and nourishment, and an interpreting response to whatever is deepest in him." (d) Swift writes, almost exactly a hundred years after the date of the *Authorised Version*: "The translators of our Bible were masters of an English style much fitter for that work than any which we see in our present writings, which I take to be owing to the simplicity that runs through the whole"; and again, of the changes which had been introduced into the language: "They have taken off a great deal from that simplicity which is one of the greatest perfections in any language."

2. The language of the Bible was extremely poetic and this helped to make it the medium for essays that were meant to be persuasive.

William Tyndale

Tyndale, the religious reformer, lived from 1494 to 1536. His translation of the Bible into early modern English is probably one of the most noteworthy events in the history of the Bible itself. Tyndale took advantage of the print revolution of the times which helped to make his work widely available. Finally, Tyndale was tried for treason and burnt at the stake as a heretic.

In the history of English prose, twentieth-century Bible-translators noted how Tyndale's contributions were picked up in the King James' Version. This alone is enough for us to surmise how indebted modern English is to Tyndale. Some of the most commonly used phrases of modern-day English look back to Tyndale-- "salt of the earth" is one such instance.

1.5 Secular Prose

Side by side with religious prose a secular literature was also coming into its own. This literature, written in prose, was concerned with philosophy and morals. In the early 17th century, a preference for the Latin of Seneca and Tacitus helped to bring more brevity and precision to English prose as is evidenced by the *Essays* of Francis Bacon and the allusive prose of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* by Robert Burton (1577-1640).

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) who wrote in Latin and English was one of the most important writers of this time. The prose that he used is marked by balance and terseness, his emphasis, especially in his *Essays*, was always on argument and density of thought. He frequently used brilliant images, but they were never inserted as ornaments but always to emphasize an idea.

With the advent of the Renaissance to England, prose was heightened and made more colloquial. Sir Thomas More's *Richard II.* was a work of considerable importance; his finer *Utopia* (1516) was unfortunately composed in Latin. Sir Thomas Elyot in his *Governor* (1531) added moral philosophy to the gradually widening range of subjects which were thought proper for English prose. In the same year Tyndale began his famous version of the Bible, the story of which forms one of the most romantic episodes in the chronicles of literature; at Tyndale's death the work was taken up by Miles Coverdale. The *Sermons* of Latimer (1549) introduced elements of humour, dash and vigour which had before been foreign to the stately but sluggish prose of England.

The earliest biography, a book in many ways marvellously modern, was the *Life of Cardinal Wolsey*, by George Cavendish, written about 1557, but not printed (even in part) until 1641. In the closing scenes of this memorable book, which describe what Cavendish had personally experienced, we may say that the perfection of easy English style is reached for the first time. The prose of the middle of the 16th century - as we see it exemplified in the writing of Sir Thomas Wilson, Roger Ascham and Sir John Cheke is clear, unadorned and firm, these Englishmen resisted the influences coming to them from Italy and Spain which were in favour of elaborate verbiage and tortured construction. Equal simplicity marked such writers as Foxe, Stow and Holinshed. But Hoby and North, who translated Guevara, Castiglione and Amyot, prepared the way for the startling innovations of Lyly in his famous didactic romance of *Euphues* (1579). The extravagances and eccentricities of Lyly outdid those of his continental prototypes, and euphuism became extremely popular. It was characterized by long

periodic sentences, with abundant tropes and figures of rhetoric, classical allusions, and improbable analogies from the natural world. A more restrained style, formal but somewhat less mannered was achieved by Sir Philip Sidney in his *Arcadia*(1581) and *Defence of Poetry* (1579-80).The Elizabethans could also produce fresh colloquial prose as is evidenced by the Marprelate pamphlets and the writings of Robert Greene and Thomas Deloney.

Colloquial prose & formal writing

Perhaps one way of defining the difference between formal English and what we generally call "colloquial" English is by seeing how formal language is standardised, made universal so that its meanings are distinctly understandable. In comparison, "colloquial" language employs slang, phrases borrowed from dialects, and thus not always transparently clear in conveying the sense. Colloquial language is the language of the spoken word.

The Restoration period *saw the emergence of a distinctly native prose style, simpler and less ornate, further from Latin syntax, more familiar in tone, though still polished and urbane.* The beginnings of journalism strengthened the close relationship between writer and reader. Prose became increasingly used for instruction as well as for persuasion and entertainment. Addison, Defoe, Steele, and Swift further developed the polite familiar style in the early 18th century.

With the rise of the essay and the novel in the 18th century prose took the assured and accepted place in literature that it already held in legal, commercial, and other uses. However, in the late 18th century there was a return to the periodic Latinate style in writers such as Johnson, in the political prose of Burke, and the historical prose of Gibbon.

The 19th century brought much variety and abundance in prose styles with the expansion of the reading public, the increasing popularity of the novel, and the growth of journalism, making prose the major vehicle of news and opinion. Although there are marked differences between the leading novelists of the period, they shared a desire to write accessibly and to keep the interest of the reader. Arnold, Carlyle, Macaulay and others practiced a more didactic type of prose, designed to inform and to convince. Carlyle wrote in an idiosyncratic and sometimes turgid style, but his vigorous use of "Saxon" forms and his defiance of classical smoothness made him a strong influence on polemical prose.

The 20th century has seen vast increase in the quantities as well as the objectives and styles of prose. By and large, although every kind of prose can be found in the 20th century, there is a general tendency towards factual and referential writing, favouring shorter sentences and the vocabulary as simple as the subject allows.

The main kinds of non- fictional prose are - autobiography, biography, the essay, and letters.

Stop to Consider

The prose that was used during different ages reflects the changes in society.

1. The rise of the middle classes and the beginning of journalism was important for increasing use of prose in the Restoration.
2. The Authorized version of The Bible had a profound impact on the development of English prose.

Check Your Progress

1. How did the translation of the Bible influence the development of English prose?

(Hint: It helped to transmit a sense of literary standards.)

2. Why was the rise of the middle classes important for the use of prose?

(Hint: Greater access to the world of letters meant more users of the language and more readers. Other reasons also can be found.)

3. Did the increasing importance of science have an impact on the language of prose and its increasing importance?

(Hint: Your knowledge and imagination will be of use here !)

1.6 Essay

A composition, usually in prose (Pope's *Essay on Criticism* and *Essay on Man* were in verse), which may be of varying length and discusses, formally or informally, a topic or a variety of topics. It is one of the most flexible and adaptable of literary forms.

A distinction is often drawn between the formal and the informal essay. The formal essay is relatively impersonal with the author writing as an authority on the subject and expounding it in an ordered and thorough fashion. An informal or personal essay on the other hand is one in which the author assumes a tone of intimacy with the reader, tending to be concerned with everyday things rather than with public affairs or specialized topics, and writing in a relaxed, self-revelatory and often whimsical fashion.

The genre was given its name by Montaigne's great French *Essais* in 1580. The first major essayist in English was Francis Bacon, who adopted a pithy, epigrammatic style, each piece usually dealing with one topic. The form is also associated with the periodicals written and edited by Steele, Addison, Goldsmith and Johnson in the 18th century. The essay flourished in the 19th century with such writers as Lamb, Hazlitt, and De Quincey bringing the personal essay to a level of perfection that has remained unsurpassed. Among the many others who have adorned

the genre, mention may be made of G.B Shaw, T.S. Eliot, Orwell, Bertrand Russell, and Aldous Huxley. The genre is perhaps the most common prose form ever developed with writers using the form for the discussion of ideas, for polemic, and for political purposes.

The essay in ancient history

We have to refer to the work of Plutarch when talking of the development of the essay. Shakespeare found access to Plutarch's essays and biographies, which he used as inspiration for his plays, through the translations made by Jacques Amyot into French and then translated into English by Sir Thomas North. Plutarch is remembered chiefly for his *Parallel Lives* of Greek and Roman heroes.

Montaigne is held to have fashioned the modern essay. His famous motto goes: "I am myself the matter of my book".

SAQ

How do essays emerge as a literary form? (40 words)

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1.7 Letters

Latin rhetoricians made a distinction between the private letter and the letter of affairs. A third kind is the open or general letter addressed to an individual or a newspaper editor, and intended for publication.

Personal and official letters date from remote antiquity. Nearly any sort of letter may be of use to the historian and the biographer. In England, the *Paston Letters* (15th century) and *Stonor Letters* (14th-15century) are important for the study of their periods.

Literary compositions in the form of personal letters were popular in the 17-18th century. The device was used mainly for the circulation of ideas and arguments, with the appeal of apparent direct address to the reader. Swift's *Drapier's Letters* (1724) were widely read and forced a change in government policy in Ireland regarding the grant of a private patent. Pope followed the classical tradition in calling some poetic satires "epistles", indicating the contemporary liking for the idea of the letter. Edmund Burke wrote several political letters which urged resistance to the French Jacobins.

The use of letters in fiction was pioneered in the 16th century by John Lyly in *Euphues*, and taken up in the 18th century by Richardson, who published *Letters to and from Particular Friends*, out of which grew the first major epistolary novel, *Pamela* (1740-1). This form of fiction was also practiced by Smollet, Frances Burney, and experimentally, by Jane Austen, among others, but declined in vogue after the early 19th century. William Golding's *Rites of Passage* (1980) combines the epistolary and diary forms. Although often artificial in style, the epistolary novel combines personal narration by characters with multiple points of view.

There have been many scholarly editions of letters not originally intended for publication, such as those by Keats, George Eliot, Shaw, and Henry James. They reveal the lives and characters of their authors, often providing insights into their literary methods, and showing them using English in a more informal and personal manner.

Stop to Consider

Letters as a literary form require your knowing the history which attaches to them. You would surely understand that letters can provide the most revealing evidence when viewed as sources of information relating to histories of particular persons, etc. But when we study them as 'literary' form many other questions arise, most importantly with regard to why certain matters which seem to connect us to the author's world, came to be expressed as letters.

The answer would certainly lie in the way that matters of the 'real' world can be discussed through the literary art without bringing in 'real' consequences of legal prosecution. Swift's "Drapier's Letters" are to be included in this category where 'letters' is the guise given to writing which is not of the personal kind but reaches out to matters of state where the writer stands in danger of being held up to punishment or prosecution.

Letters provide us with social history. It is for you, as the student of literary writing, to analyse how a form of writing, which is closely identified with the intimate, personal dimensions of a person's life, helps us to a wider, impersonal world of society and social events.

Swift's *Drapier's Letters* is "the collective name for a series of pamphlets written in 1724 and 1725 to arouse public opinion in Ireland against the imposition of a privately-minted copper coinage of inferior quality. As the subject was politically sensitive, Swift wrote under the pseudonym, "M. B. Drapier"."

Paston Letters -"the largest surviving collection of 15th-century English correspondence. It is invaluable to historians and philologists and is preserved mainly in the British Museum" {*Encyclopedia Britannica*}

When you begin to consider 'letters' as a purely literary-creative form, or a form which is avowedly fictional, then you must take into account how the writer adopts the strategies necessary to create a 'real' world in which the letters participate as expressive counters in human relationships. For letters essentially articulate the foundations of human connections.

Lyly's *Euphues* - is a romantic intrigue told in letters interspersed with general discussions on such topics as religion, love, and epistolary style. Lyly's preoccupation with the exact arrangement and selection of words, his frequent use of similes drawn from classical mythology, and his artificial and excessively elegant prose inspired a short-lived Elizabethan literary style called "euphuism." The *Euphues* novels introduced a new concern with form into English prose. {*Encyclopedia Britannica*}

"Letters in the tradition of Pliny the Younger relate to the essay rather than to narrative fiction --such letters, for example, as the curious *CCXI Sociable Letters* (1664) by the Duchess of Newcastle. These, however, as well as the translation of the witty epistles of Balzac and Voiture, indicate that the English were learning from abroad in part that the personal letter might possibly be an elegant literary composition. Three types which thus early began to influence fiction were the news letter, the travel letter, and the love letter." [p.795, *Literary History of England*, Vol.III, ed. Albert C. Baugh, 1972]

Check Your Progress

1. Define the essay as a literary form.
2. Which literary strategies distinguish the essay from other literary forms?
3. To what extent do Bacon's essays emulate the example of Montaigne?
4. Distinguish between the essay and the 'letter' as forms of literary writing.
5. Consider the essay and the letter as forms of literary representation.

1.8 Autobiography

An autobiography is an account of a person's life by himself or herself with the emphasis on the author's developing self. Dr. Johnson had opined that no man was better qualified to write his life than himself, but this is debatable. Memory may be unreliable. Few can recall clear details of early life and hence depend on other people's impressions, of necessity equally unreliable. Moreover, everyone tends to remember what he or she wants to remember, glossing over disagreeable facts, and sometimes distorting truth for the sake of convenience or harmony.

The first autobiography of any note was St. Augustine's *Confessions* centring on the author's mental crisis and a recovery in which he discovers his Christian identity and vocation in life. This design has been repeated in many later autobiographies, whether these, like Augustine's, are religious confessions of crisis and conversion, such as John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), or secular works in which the crisis is resolved by the author's discovery of his identity and vocation as a poet or artist, such as Wordsworth's great autobiography in verse, *The Prelude*. Among notable British and American autobiographies in prose are those by Benjamin Franklin, John Stuart Mill, Anthony Trollope, Henry Adams, and Sean O'Casey.

Autobiography as a Genre

A definition of autobiography proposed by Philippe Lejeune in 1982 is widely quoted although Lejeune sought to revise it on later consideration:

"A retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality."

Lejeune, however, insisted that in autobiography the author, the narrator, and the protagonist must be seen as being identical.

In the aftermath of the controversy surrounding the word "intention" in literary writing which the New Critics had highlighted, critical discussions of autobiography often putting 'intention' at the centre, recognise it as vital link between author, narrator, and protagonist. Roy Pascal, in 1960, saw autobiography as depending on "the seriousness of the author, the seriousness of his personality, and his intention in writing".

Definitions of autobiography centre on questions of representation, author and selfhood , finally the problem of 'truth-telling'.

Robert Southey, the nineteenth-century poet, is thought to have coined the term "autobiography" in 1809 as he sought to describe a Portuguese poet's work.

SAQ

Consider 'autobiography' as a form of writing which implies 'society' as reader. (40 words)

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1.9 Biography

The term "biography" connotes a relatively full account of the facts of a man's life, involving the attempt to set forth his or her character, temperament, and milieu, as well as his or her experiences and activities. English biography proper -- as distinguished from the generalized chronicles of the deeds of a king, or the pious lives of the Christian saints -- appeared in the 17th century; an example is Izaak Walton's *Lives* (of John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Hooker and others). Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* and Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, written in the 18th century, constituted a great advance in the practice of biography as a special literary genre. As 19th-century biographers tended to write reverentially, the frankness of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Bronte* (1857) caused controversy. In the early 20th century, Lytton Strachey set the fashion for a more ironic and debunking treatment: "There was humour in her face; but the curious watcher might wonder whether it was humour of a very pleasant kind".(on Florence Nightingale, *Eminent Victorians*,1918). Late 20th-century biographers usually seek or claim detachment and generally engage in detailed research. A handful of the most eminent and monumental works since the 1950s are: Leon Edel's four volumes on Henry James; Richard Ellman's classic works on W.B.Yeats, James Joyce, and Oscar Wilde, and Michael Holroyd's volumes on Lytton Strachey.

James Boswell (1740-1795)

James Boswell (1740-1795), when he met Dr. Johnson in 1763, was known in Scottish literary circles for his work in pamphlets, in the writing of some poetry and correspondence with the Hon. Andrew Erskine. It was probably by 1766, that he had decided to write about his friend, Dr. Johnson, having met with celebrities like Voltaire and Rousseau. Boswell had qualities of sensitivity and perception of human nature of great value in a biographer. To this he added a prodigious memory, meticulous observance of detail, and a thoroughness in the way he gleaned the various facts about his subject, all of which are invaluable in a researcher. "These qualities evidently, and fortunately, won the respect and aid of the ablest scholar of the day, Edmund Malone-- . . . Boswell knew material; Malone knew a competent workman, and so gave up any desire he had to write Johnson's life and by his discreet and judicious aid helped to settle Boswell's final draught of the greatest biographies." [*Literary History of England*, Vol. III, p.1065]

"[Boswell] knew, and transmits, the sound of his subject's voice to a degree unparalleled in other biographers. From the Malahide Papers we now learn that frequently Johnson's talk is more characteristically Johnsonian in the final form Boswell gave it than it was in the first form -- that in which very likely it fell from Johnson's lips. Not merely remarks but scenes doubtless undergo this artistic reshaping to give them character. At least many scenes, such as the first meeting of Boswell with Johnson and the famous dinner with Wilkes in 1776, come to mind as masterpieces of theatrical manipulation, in which every detail has been given priceless organic value." [*Literary History of England*, Vol.III, p.1066]

SAQ

Attempt to distinguish between biography and autobiography by analysing their distinctive relations with the idea of "truth" and "fact". For instance, how does authorship in the two genres interfere with ideas of 'fact' ? (50 + 50 words)

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1.10 Suggested Reading

Anderson, Linda - *Autobiography*, Routledge, London , 2001
Baugh, Albert C. (ed.) - *A Literary History Of England*, Vol.3, "The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century", by George Sherburne and Donald F. Bond, Routledge, 1967, 1972
The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Unit 2

General Introduction to Nineteenth Century Prose

Unit Structure :

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Early Nineteenth Century Prose Writers
- 2.4 Late Nineteenth Century Prose Writers
- 2.5 Summing Up
- 2.6 References and Suggested Reading

2.1 Objectives

This unit is an attempt to give a brief introduction to the Nineteenth century prose. After going through this unit, you will be able to---

- know about the social, political, economic and cultural background of the nineteenth century
- know the general characteristics of the literature of the nineteenth century
- differentiate between the literature of the nineteenth century and of the preceding ages
- know about the major prose writers of the age and their major works

2.2 Introduction

In the history of English Literature, the early nineteenth century is known as the Romantic age. The literature of this period underwent a change which was not completely new but in stark contrast to the literary practices of the previous age. In the eighteenth-century literature,

reason or intellect held the high position but in the nineteenth century it was replaced by emotion, imagination and intuition. The eighteenth-century literature was realistic and objective. But the subject matter of the nineteenth century literature became subjective; writers chose themselves as the subjects of their works. From the realistic settings of the social life, the romantic writers' interest shifted to nature and solitary places. They tried to escape from the reality of the world and sought peace in the lap of nature. Individualism is another dominant feature of romantic literature. Like the subject-matter and settings, there were changes in form also. The heroic couplet of the previous age was replaced by blank verse, ballad, sonnet etc. which had not been in use since the Renaissance period.

The age of Romanticism is basically an age of poetry. But the early nineteenth century also witnessed a remarkable development in the genre of prose writing. Though the development of romantic prose cannot reach the height of romantic poetry. With other forms of prose writing that were popular in the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century witnessed the development in the form of essay writing. Along with essays, reviews and magazines began to flourish during the nineteenth century. There were some fundamental reviews published in the nineteenth century which laid the foundation of romantic prose like *The Edinburgh Review* (1802), *The Quarterly* (1809), *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, *The London Magazine*, *Fraser's Magazine* (1830). Like the poets of the romantic age, the prose writers were also different from that of the eighteenth century. Like the romantic poets, they also discarded the tradition of the eighteenth century in structure and style of writing prose. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb and Thomas De Quincey were the pioneers in the development of the romantic prose. Wordsworth and Coleridge's collaborative work *Lyrical Ballads*, first published in 1798, is considered as a landmark of the Romantic era. The "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads* published in 1800 can be regarded as the fine specimen of romantic prose which is an explanation of Wordsworth's theory of poetry. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*(1817), *Lectures on*

Shakespeare (1849) and *Aids to Reflection* (1825) are the remarkable prose pieces of the Romantic age. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge discusses the process of creativity. Like other romantics, Coleridge is of the opinion that the creativity of a person depends upon the power of imagination and a large part of the book deals with this aspect. Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* (1821) is also an important work of Romantic prose where he gives a philosophical explanation of the role of the poets. Though these poets wrote prose pieces, Lamb, Hazlitt and De Quincey's writings paved the way for the development of the romantic prose.

The late nineteenth century, known as the Victorian period, was a time of rapid social and political changes. It was a time of industrial development, colonial expansion of the British empire, development in science and technology that made England a leading nation in the world. Though these changes gave birth to the sense of nationalism and optimism, it also produced a sense of religious conflicts in the minds of the people. Because of Darwin's Theory of Evolution, people started questioning the religion and its importance in their lives. Though England became a powerful nation due to the advancement of technology and economic growth, the period also witnessed an atmosphere of social unrest. Most of the writers reacted against the developments of Industrialization and started addressing the troubles of the industrialized society. Because of these complexities of the age, the literature of the late nineteenth century shifted from the idealism of the Romantic writers to the realism. Since reading became the social pastime with the increased literacy rate, the writers became more responsible to the realistic portrayal of the society. Most of the early Victorian writers were conservative and religious nature. They were against the Industrialization, science and democracy. They protested against these forces through their writings. Though these essays have a personal touch but it is not like that of the Romantic period. So, the aim of the writers of the late nineteenth century was social criticism than writing about their personal lives. The prominent prose writers of the late nineteenth century are Thomas Babington Macauley, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold.

2.3 Early Nineteenth Century Prose Writers

2.3.1 Charles Lamb

The prose of the early nineteenth century is marked by the writers' ardent urge to express the 'self' through autobiographical writings. One of the notable features of the 19th century prose is the development of the familiar essay. These essays are personal in tone and highlight the authors' tastes, preconceptions, peculiarities etc. Though these types of essays were in vogue during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it became a standard form of essay for the first time during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Charles Lamb is the founder of this genre of familiar essay. Lamb started to work on prose with an early work *A Tale of Rosamund Gray* (1798), a story of a village young girl ruined by a villain. In 1807, Lamb, along with his sister Mary, published *Tales from Shakespeare*, a retelling of the plays of Shakespeare for children. Since, the work is meant for children, these plays are devoid of all real significance and merely reduced to the surface plot. In 1808, Lamb published *The Adventures of Ulysses* which is a children's version of *Odyssey*. Charles Lamb was interested in the Elizabethans and the Jacobean. In 1808, he published *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived about the Time of Shakespeare*. This work brought about a new interest in non-Shakespearean Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. Though it is a critical work, Lamb's criticism is not argumentative; it appears in the form of brief comments and phrases. Lamb is now famous as an essayist because of his contribution to *The London Magazine*. In *The London Magazine*, he published *Essays of Elia*, which ran from 1820 to 1823, under the pseudonym of Elia. The second series of the Elia essays were published in 1833 as *Last Essays of Elia*. These essays are personal and conversational in tone, portrays his own character--- his interest in persons and places, his preference for London life, its streets, institutions and countryside, his fancies, sentiments and humours. In the history of English literature, these essays are perfect examples of

Romantic celebration of the self. But in these essays, he mingles pathos with the portrayal of self that makes his essays unique and appealing.

STOP TO CONSIDER

- The growth of the personal essay during the nineteenth century is one of the important features.
- Charles Lamb was the great practitioner of the personal essays during the early nineteenth century
- The early nineteenth century prose is characterized by the portrayal of the self by the writers
- The most notable work of Charles Lamb is *Essays of Elia* published in *The London Magazine*

2.3.2 William Hazlitt

William Hazlitt (1778-1830) was one of the foremost literary critics of the Nineteenth century. He, along with Coleridge, acknowledged the significance of journals in circulating information on contemporary issues. He started his career as a painter but could not become successful in this field. Then he started his career as a prose writer by writing philosophical topics. In 1805, Hazlitt published his first book *On the Principles of Human Action*. In 1806, he published a political pamphlet titled *Free Thoughts on Public Affairs* which was followed by *The Eloquence of the British Senate* published in 1807. However, Hazlitt influenced his contemporaries not as a philosopher but as a literary theorist and critic. His first collection of literary essays, *The Round Table*, was published in 1817. He published this collection of essays with Leigh Hunt where Hazlitt contributed forty essays and Hunt wrote twelve essays. These essays were first written in *The Examiner*, a newspaper edited by Leigh Hunt. The same year he published *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, which places him as one of the most prominent Shakespearean critics of the Romantic period. The

importance on the characters of Shakespeare's plays is the chief focus of this work where Hazlitt incorporates psychological insights to the characters. Though John Keats was highly influenced by this work of Hazlitt, it had to face severe criticism during the author's lifetime. It was only in the late nineteenth century that it became one of the important documents of Shakespearean criticism. His ardent and lively interest in literary criticism and scholarship is evident in his collection of lectures *On the English Poets* (1818), *On the English Comic Writers* (1819) and *On the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (1820). His other important critical essays are *Table Talk* (1821-22), *The Spirit of the Age* (1825) and *The Plain Speaker* (1826). *The Spirit of the Age* is considered as one of the important works in the history of English literary criticism. This work contains critical essays on Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Lamb and Scott, the men he had once associated with.

Hazlitt's contribution towards English prose is twofold---as an essayist and as a critic. It is, in fact, as a critic that he was able to achieve success in his life. Hazlitt is considered as one of the greatest prose writers of the age because of his fierce radicalism, critical intelligence, vigorous and versatile style of writing prose. His writing style is simple, conversational, lucid, informal but persuasive. As a prose writer, he had initiated a new trend in English prose with new life and vigor.

STOP TO CONSIDER

- Hazlitt is famous both as a critic and essayist of the romantic age
- He was one of the prominent Shakespearean critics of the age
- *The Spirit of the Age* is his prominent literary work which makes him a leading critic in the history of English literature

2.3.3 Thomas De Quincey

Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859) stands as one of the prominent essayists of the Romantic era, along with William Hazlitt and Charles

Lamb. De Quincey is best known for his autobiographical work *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* which was published in *The London Magazine* in 1821. The work is an autobiographical account of the author's addiction to opium. Here, De Quincey, in a manner of confession, hauntingly describes the symbolic reveries and nightmares he experienced under the influence of opium. This work reflects on the effects of opium and the kind of dreams and imagination it produces; in a way it anticipates psychoanalysis with its focus into the subconscious. His other notable autobiographical works are *Autobiography* (1834-53) and *Suspiria De Profundis* (1845). Both these works deal with his own psychology, significance of dreams and different levels of consciousness---subjects taken into consideration with the advent of Freudian psychoanalysis. *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets* (1834-39) is another notable autobiographical works of De Quincey, deals with the author's relationship with William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey. Among his critical works, "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth" (1823) and "Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts" (1827) are remarkable. Like his autobiographical works, his critical writings are also based on psychological reading of the characters. Among the romantics, De Quincey remains unique because of his interest in psychology, states of mind and levels of consciousness---subjects which are surprisingly modern.

STOP TO CONSIDER

- De Quincey is famous for his autobiographical work *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*
- He is unique among the romantics because of his interest in the explanation of the psychology and the levels of consciousness which anticipates psychoanalytic explanation of the characters of the modern age.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

- Question 1: In which prose work of Lamb, he himself revealed

his own personality, his experiences and his struggle?

- Question 2: Who is known as “The Prince among English Essayists”?
- Question 3: Which prose writer of the Romantic age wrote *The Spirit of the Age*?
- Question 4: Who wrote “On Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth”?

2.4 Late Nineteenth Century Prose Writers

2.4.1 Thomas Babington Macauley

Thomas Babington Macauley or Lord Macauley (1800-1859) is one of the most prominent figures of the nineteenth century. Macauley was more closely associated with the social and political struggles of the age than with the literary scene. He was basically a historian and a politician rather than a literary man. His writings lacked the spirit of imagination and spiritual perception which were the literary spirit of the age, rather he was more concerned with the present problems of the time. His first important work *Essay on Milton* appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1825. This work is important not only as a critical writing on Milton but also of the historical details of Milton’s times. Macauley was one of the first writers who brought history and literature together and showed how historical conditions influenced a writer’s literary works. The style of the work is highly lucid, vigorous and persuasive. Macauley’s fame rests on his masterpiece *The History of England*. Macauley planned to write this *History* covering the period from the accession of James II in 1685 to the death of George IV in 1830 but he could cover only sixteen years in the five volumes. The first two volumes appeared in 1848 and the third and fourth volumes appeared in 1855. He worked hard to complete the remaining volumes but he died in 1859. Before writing the *History*, Macauley consulted many original resources which made his descriptions somewhat exaggerated. His zeal to give realistic depictions

of the events makes his narratives fictitious. Sometimes his passion for accuracy and detailed description forces him to ignore the significance of some great movements and great leaders. Though this work is Macauley's masterpiece and indeed a fascinating one, Macauley's lack of historical insight makes prevents this document to be reliable historical document of England.

STOP TO CONSIDER

- *The History of England* is the major work of Macauley.
- More than a literary critic, he was concerned about the political and social changes of his time
- His writings show the combination of history and literature and how historical background shapes the work of a writer

2.4.2 Thomas Carlyle

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was another dominant figure of the late nineteenth century. He was a historian, a prophet, a social reformer and a moral leader whose chief concern was to save the society from materialism, selfishness and industrial chaos through his writing. Carlyle was not a man of practical affairs and was skeptical about the development of his age. His writings like *Chartism*, *Latter-Day Pamphlets* and *Shooting Niagara* shows that he is a cynic and his opinions are marked by prejudices. His important works *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic, Cromwell* and *Sartor Resartus* proves him to be a great literary genius of the age. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic* was first published in 1841. This work is based on Carlyle's series of lectures delivered in 1840 which were immensely popular during that period of time. This work is divided into six parts which discusses different types of heroes such as heroes as divinities, prophets, poets, priests, men of letters and kings. Through these types of heroes, Carlyle gives various examples of great men throughout history

to give his own concept of hero. *The French Revolution*, published in 1837, is another famous historical work of Carlyle, covering the history of French Revolution from 1774 to 1795. In this work, he appears to be a preacher than a historian. Carlyle, here, believes that the French Revolution is the divine judgement upon excessive wrongdoings of the monarchy and nobility. He gives vivid and picturesque depiction of some of the striking incidents of French Revolution which makes the work a dramatic one. The work is more like a prose epic than a reliable work on history. *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle's major creative writing, was published in 1834. It was first published serially in *Fraser's Magazine*. The title is taken from Latin which means "The Tailor Retailored". The novel is based on the philosophy of a fictional character Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, a German Professor who is the protagonist of the novel. The novel is based on the philosophy of clothes which is an attempt to differentiate between the appearances of things and their reality. Through this metaphor of clothes, Carlyle suggests that the religious institutions appear to be complete outwardly to satisfy men's religious desires but inwardly they are worn-out and should be replaced. This 'cloth' metaphor is also used to describe the relationship between the material and spiritual world. Like clothes which hide the body, the natural world hides the reality of God. Because of the unusual form and style of the book, *Sartor Resartus* is a complex novel.

STOP TO CONSIDER

- He reacted against the industrialization, materialism and scientific temperament of his age
- *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic, Cromwell, The French Revolution* are his famous historical works
- *Sartor Resartus* is his only critical work where he tries to differentiate between appearance and reality

2.4.3 John Ruskin

In the history of English Prose of the late 19th century, John Ruskin stands next to Carlyle. Ruskin started his career as an art critic. Among his notable works on art are---- *Modern Painters* (1843-1846), *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853). In these works, Ruskin analyses the classic art works of Europe. In *Modern Painters*, Ruskin analyses the principles of art and defends Turner's landscape paintings. In *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, he discusses the seven principles of architecture--- Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory and Obedience which are essential to achieve nobility in the work of art. In *The Stones of Venice*, he examines the architecture of Venice during the Byzantine, Gothic and Renaissance periods. In these critical works on art, Ruskin focuses on four important points (i) the aim of art should be to express truth (ii) art must not be conservative (iii) art should be associated with morality (iv) the aim of art should be to amuse common people not a selected few. Apart from these critical works on art, his other notable literary works are *Unto the Last* (1860-62), *Munera Pulveris* (1862-72), *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), *Fors Clavigera* (1871-84), *Seasme and Lilies* (1865). *Unto the Last* is a work on economy where he criticizes classical economies of Adam Smith and J.S. Mill. Here, he condemns men's concern for wealth and states that men's real wealth is hidden in his soul. Here, he also discusses the destructive consequences of Industrial Revolution. His critical writings prove that he is a prophet of his age who anticipates the destructions and evil- effects brought about by the new developments of the age.

STOP TO CONSIDER

- Ruskin started his career as an art critic and analysed the classical art works of Europe
- *Modern Painters*, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, *Stones of Venice* are his prominent works on art.
- *Unto the Last* is notable work of criticism.

2.4.4 Matthew Arnold

In the literary scene of the late nineteenth century, Matthew Arnold occupies a high position both as a poet and as a critic. Like Carlyle, Arnold was also critical of the tastes and manners of the people of his age. He had deep faith in the English middle classes as the representatives of the English civilization and therefore he was determined to educate this class. He was of the opinion that the lack of culture is the cause of the degradation of the society and only literature can play a vital role in restoring culture to human society. The most notable prose work of Arnold is *Essays in Criticism* (first series 1865, second series 1888, third series 1910) which places him in a high rank as a critic. Here, he analyses what should be the function of criticism. According to him, the function of criticism is to disseminate the best that is thought and said in this world. Among the essays of this work, “The Study of Poetry”, “Wordsworth”, “Byron” and “Emerson” are worthy of study. Another notable critical work of Arnold is *Literature and Dogma* (1873). This work is Arnold’s appeal to liberality in religion. Another masterpiece of Arnold in critical writing is *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). Here, he classified English society into “Barbarian”, “Philistine” and “Populace”. He believes that the Philistines which means the middle class is the important part of the society. They are the key to culture. Therefore, it is important to educate these group of people for the betterment of the civilization. Here, he uses the term “Hebraism” for moral education. Therefore, Arnold was determined to disseminate the moral and intellectual ideas among the Philistines because these two elements are the keys to culture.

STOP TO CONSIDER

- Like Carlyle, Arnold was also critical of the changes brought about by the new developments in science, technology and industrialization in England

- He emphasized on the education of the English middle class to preserve culture in human society.
- His analysis of the function of criticism, differentiation between culture and anarchy, his intellectual and moral ideas make him one of the most prominent critics of the late nineteenth century.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

- QUESTION 1: What is the subject of Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*?
- QUESTION 2: Name one of the prominent art works of John Ruskin.
- QUESTION 3: Write the name of the literary work of Thomas Carlyle.

2.5 Summing Up

The nineteenth century in the history of English literature is important because of its rapid social, political, economic and cultural growth with a capitalist economy, democratic government, scientific and technological advancement, industrialization etc. The increased literacy rates of the people led to an increase in the number of reading public. The general features of the literature also underwent a change in comparison to the preceding ages. The prose writers of the nineteenth century reflect these changes of the society through their works. The early nineteenth century prose writers were more concerned with the expression of their own personality whereas the late nineteenth century prose writers criticized the tastes and practices of the people of their society. The prose works of the nineteenth century is important in the

history of English literature as these works reflect the nature and spirit of the age.

2.6 References and Suggested Readings

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Unit 3

Charles Lamb

Unit Structure :

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introducing the Author
- 3.3 The Context
- 3.4 The Essay as a Literary Form
- 3.5 Reading the text: Dream Children
- 3.6 Style of Lamb's Essay
- 3.7 Critical reception
- 3.8 Glossary
- 3.9 Suggested readings

3.1 Objectives

A reading of Charles Lamb's essay My Relations is designed to acquaint you with the unique position of Lamb in the development of the English essay. However, after the end of this unit you will be able to

- *trace* the history of the essay, and its various forms
- *relate* the life of the writer with his works.
- *place* the text in its proper context.
- *appreciate* Charles Lamb in totality.

3.2 Introducing the author

Charles Lamb (pseudonym 'Elia'), was born in London in February, 1775. Youngest of a large family of whom only two other children survived - John and Mary, Lamb describes his early surroundings colourfully in several essays like *Old Benchers of the Inner Temple*, *My Relations*, and *Mackerey End in Hertfordshire*. Lamb received his early schooling in Christ's Hospital. It was also the place where he formed a lifelong friendship with Coleridge. He pens his memories of his school life chiefly in two essays - *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*, and *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago*.

Christ's Hospital

(also called, The Blue Coat School) is the name of an English public school. It was originally situated in Newgate Street, London, but in 1902, was shifted to Horsham, Sussex. Founded by Edward VI in 1552, it was well endowed, and it admitted homeless children. Later it became a leading public school in England. The old buildings of the school in London, where Charles Lamb and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were educated, were pulled down, to give place to the G.P.O. The pupils of the school retain the blue coat dress of their predecessors.

Lamb inherited much of his father John Lamb's literary inclinations and also his sense of humour. John Lamb was a clerk to a Member of Parliament. Charles Lamb spent his early years partly in London and partly with his mother's family in Hertfordshire, years which gave him numerous memories of people and places, which he recollected in his writings. Later in life, Lamb took up employment in a London merchant's office before his appointment as a clerk in the South-Sea House. In 1792, he was transferred to East India House where he served for thirty three years. Little is known about his life during the period 1792-1795. Towards the end of 1794, he joined Coleridge in writing sonnets, and by the end of 1795 he suffered from mental imbalance for which he had to be confined to an asylum. This imbalance was attributed to his unsuccessful affair with Ann Simmons, the Hertfordshire maiden to whom his first sonnets were addressed. Insanity, in fact, was inherent in his family. Lamb spent the last six weeks of 1795 in a madhouse at

Hoxton, while his sister Mary, in a fit of madness, stabbed her mother to death in 1796. Charles Lamb never married as he devoted all his time looking after his sister Mary . He died on 27th December 1834, Edmonton, Middlesex, England after complications to a wound suffered in a fall. He was then 58 and was cremated at All Saint's Churchyard, Edmonton, London, England.

Charles Lamb had developed an interest on literature from his early years. He had published sonnets and other verses in association with Coleridge and Charles Lloyd and his first independent book, *A Tale of Rosamund Gray and Old Blind Margaret*, appeared in 1798. Shortly, he published a five-act tragedy, *John Woodvil*, besides contributing to newspapers. In the same year, he moved out with Mary (his sister) to their loved temple, 16, Mitre Court Buildings, where they together penned *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), *Mrs. Leicester's School* (1808), and *Poetry for Children* (1809). In 1820, Lamb began those essays signed 'Elia' and contributed to a periodical called "The London Magazine", which confirmed his place in English literature. The first of these, *The South-Sea House*, gave recollections of his brief clerkship there. The pseudonym, 'Elia', was in fact borrowed from the surname of a clerk there. In 1823, Charles and Mary again moved to Colebrook Cottage, Islington, and in the same year published the volume called *Elia: Essays* which have appeared under that Signature in the London Magazine. In 1827, they moved again this time to Enfield, and in 1833 yet again to Edmonton, whence he published *The Last Essays of Elia*.

In estimating the importance of early memories and friendships upon Lamb's work, one cannot overlook his connection with his mother's native county Hertford. His grand mother, Mrs.Mary Field, was a housekeeper at Blakesware , a country house in the parish of Widford. The owner of the house lived elsewhere and Charles and Mary Lamb spent many holidays in their early years at this place. In the autumn of 1799, Lamb revisited the place and wrote to Southey about some of the features of the house. In 'Dream Children' Blakesware is vividly described with its empty rooms, gardens, orangery and fish pond.

SAQ

So far, you are sought to be acquainted with Charles Lamb's early life and family background. Do you feel that such an ambience contributed much to his development as an essayist? (50 words)

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The contemporary age

During this time, many writers began to find their subjects in the life of the city, especially its low life. Thomas Brown, Jonathan Swift, John Gay, Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding and Tobias Smollett, and perhaps best of all the painter Hogarth were the names of great authors of Eighteenth-Century England. However, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Edmund Burke, Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, Richard Brinsley Sheridan were also closely associated with the social, political and literary life of the city. Finally, it was a golden age for the theatre and the profession of acting represented by such popular actors as **Garrick, Mrs. Siddons, the Kembles, Kean, Fanny Kelly, Elliston, Mathews, Munden, and so on.**

Chronological Table of Events in Lamb's Life:

1789: Went to work as a clerk at the South Sea House.

1792: Transferred to India House. Death of Mr. Salt left the family (except for his brother John who had a well paid job at South Sea House) in reduced circumstances

1796: Mary, his sister killed his mother in a fit of madness with a table knife. (Lamb looked after her for the rest of her life and she was to be his constant companion and the "Cousin Bridget" of many of his essays). He contributed four sonnets to Coleridge's "Poems on Various Subjects".

1798: He published "Blank Verse" in collaboration with his friend Charles Lloyd (of Lloyd's Bank fame). This included "The Old Familiar Faces" which became one of his best loved poems.

1807: Charles and Mary had moved around from one set of lodgings to another and most of his literary outpourings had brought neither fame nor the much needed money. He was asked by William Godwin to help contribute to his "Juvenile Library". To this he contributed the work which was to become famous, "Tales from Shakespeare". (Charles worked on the Tragedies whilst Mary worked on the comedies).

1808: They again collaborated on a work for Children "The Adventures of Ulysses."

1809: He was commissioned by the publishers Longmans to edit and criticize selections from the Elizabethan dramatists.

1812: He published works on Hogarth and Shakespeare which appeared in the journal "The Reflector" edited by Hunt.

1818: His many works for various publications were brought together in the "Works of Charles Lamb" and because of this he was asked by the "London Magazine" to contribute a series of essays. These essays, under the pseudonym "Elia" (named after a fellow Clerk in India House) were to secure his fame once and for all.

1820-25: First series of "Essays of "Elia".

1823: He left London and took up a cottage in Islington now he was earning more money. Charles and Mary took with them Emma Isola a young orphan whom they looked after until she married.

1825: Retired from India House on a pension of two thirds of his salary. The Lambs went to live at Enfield and then Edmonton.

1833: Marriage of Emma Isola to the publisher E. Moxon. Completion of "The Last Essays of Elia".

(1847): Death of Mary Lamb.

Written Works:

1798: "The Old Familiar Faces". "A Tale of Rosamund Gray".

1802: "John Woodvil". (Drama).

1803: "Hester".

1806: "Mr. H". (Farce).

1807: "Tales from Shakespeare". (With Mary Lamb, published at the invitation of William Godwin).

1808: "The Adventures of Ulysses".

1809: "Poetry for Children".

1811: "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare". "A Bachelor's Complaint on the Behaviour of Married Couples".

1818: "Collected Works". "Queen Oriana's Dream".

1819: "Valentine's Day".

1820: "Essays of Elia". "The South Sea House".

1821: "My Relations".

1823: "Essays of Elia". (2nd Edition). "Poor Relations".

1825: "The Superannuated Man".

1826: "The Genteel Style in Writing". "Sanity of True Genius".

1827: "Angel Help".

1828: "On an Infant Dying as Soon as it was Born."

1830: "To a Young Friend". "She is Going." 1833: "Last Essays of Elia".

(1837): "Letters with a Life by Talfourd".

Personality and Character

The humanity of Charles Lamb was ingrained in his nature and it drew from Wordsworth the title of "gentle-hearted". There was a heroic determination in his character, which is evident in his handling of the crisis that had befallen him and his sister when their minds became imbalanced. Lamb, however, suffered from a chronic melancholy, which was to some extent inherited. There is a deep feeling of gloom and sadness in essays like *New Year's Eve*, *Witches and Other Night Fears*, and *Confessions of a Drunkard*. In the *Preface to the Last Essays* which was supposed to be written by "a friend of the late Elia", but was actually written by Elia himself, Charles Lamb gives us an interesting analysis of his own character and temperament. In it he defends himself against the charge of egotism by saying that he talks not about himself but about others too. He calls himself a "singular character", whom some hate bitterly. The severe religionist considers him a free thinker, while the opposite school of thought accuses him of being a bigot. Lamb was

fond of employing irony and could lighten the gravest discussions with his jest. The informal nature of his mind, coupled with the stammer in his speech, made it impossible for him to be an orator. He was accused of trying to be witty when in practicality; he was simply strained to give expression to his poor thoughts. Such is the image that Lamb projects in this essay and the self-denigration proceeds from his modesty.

Thomas Talfourd, long-time associate, biographer and collector of Lamb's letters, describes Lamb in the following manner:

"Methinks I see him before me now, as he appeared then, and as he continued, with scarcely any perceptible alteration to me, during the twenty years of intimacy which followed, and were closed by his death. A light frame, so fragile that it seemed as if a breath would overthrow it, clad in clerk-like black, was surmounted by a head of form and expression the most noble and sweet. His black hair curled crisply about an expanded forehead; his eyes, softly brown, twinkled with varying expressions, though the prevalent feeling was sad; and the nose slightly curved, and delicately carved at the nostril, with the lower outline of the face regularly oval, completed a head which was finely placed on the shoulders, and gave importance and even dignity to a diminutive and shadowy stem. Who shall describe his countenance -- catch its quivering sweetness -- and fix it for ever in words? There are none, alas! to answer the vain desire of friendship. Deep thought, striving with humour; the lines of suffering wreathed into cordial mirth; and a smile of painful sweetness, present an image to the mind it can as little describe as lose. His personal appearance and manner are not unfitly characterised by what he himself says in one of his letters to Manning of Braham. -- 'a compound of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel.'

3.3 The Context

The essay can be read as a confession to his readers replete with the variety of experience of Lamb, the bibliophile, the rambler through London, the sentimentalist the connoisseur of old personalities and in short the man in love with life and past memories. This essay is contextualized in a kind of experience conjuring up with humour and sometimes with pathos, old acquaintances, recollection from childhood and matured life and indulgence of the author's sense of playfulness and fancy.

3.4 The Essay as a Literary Form

A.C. Benson defines the essay as 'a thing which someone does himself: and the point is not the subject, for any subject will suffice, but the charm of the personality.' It differs from a "treatise" or a "dissertation" in that it is not a systematic and complete exposition, and is addressed to a general rather than a specialized audience. Consequently, an essay discusses its subject in a non-technical fashion, employing devices like anecdote, illustrations, and humour to augment its appeal.

A distinction is often made between a formal essay and an informal one. The formal essay is impersonal; the author writes with authority and in an orderly manner. In the informal essay or the personal essay (of which Lamb is an exponent) there is a tone of intimacy and the subject is taken from mundane matters rather than issues of grave public importance. The writer writes in a relaxed and sometimes whimsical fashion. A feature of the personal essay is the abundance of humour, elegant style, an innovative use of incidents and the lack of ornamentation.

M.H. Abrams traces the origin of the essay to the Greeks Theophrastus and Plutarch and the Romans Cicero and Seneca who wrote essays much before it assumed its standard form and nomenclature with Montaigne's great French *Essais* in 1580. The influence of Montaigne on subsequent writers was far-reaching. It was Francis Bacon who in the sixteenth century inaugurated the English use of the term in his own *Essays*, the content of which were in the nature of short commentaries on subjects like "Truth", "Adversity", "Marriage and the Single life" etc. The first edition, which became immensely popular, was subsequently enlarged to include more personal pieces with more illustrations. In the seventeenth century, the development of the English essay was not purely literary although Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644), Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesie* (1688) and Locke's *Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) were examples of argumentative formal essays. In *Essays on Criticism* (1711) and the *Essay on Man* (1733), Alexander Pope used the term, but it was not until the early eighteenth century, with Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele's *Tatler* and *Spectator*, that the essay assumed its modern form - the literary periodical. The periodicals were different from the earlier mode in that it was concise, less formal with a good measure of

humour and satire. The *Tatler* and the *Spectator* gave rise to numerous imitations - *Guardian*, the *Female Tatler* and the *Rambler*. After this period, curiously, the essay declined as a literary form. It is in the Romantic age that it found a new outlet. In the early nineteenth century, the growth and proliferation of new types of magazines like- *Blackwood's Magazine* (1817), *London Magazine* (1820) gave an impetus to essay writing. This was the age when William Hazlitt, Thomas De Quincey, and Charles Lamb brought the English essay, especially the personal essay, to a level that has not been surpassed in the history of English literature. Other major American essayists of the period include Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Russell Lowell, and Mark Twain. English exponents of the personal essay include Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, E.M. Forster, James Thurber and E.B. White. The formal essay, on the other hand, developed significantly with the critical magazines like *Edinburgh Review* (1802), *Quarterly Review* (1809), and *The Westminster Review* (1824).

Check Your Progress

- 1.What differentiates a formal essay from an informal one?
- 2.How is an essay different from a treatise or a dissertation?
- 3.Name some important exponents of both the forms with their chief works.

3.5 Reading Dream Children: A Reverie:

Charles Lamb's *Dream Children: A Reverie* is an exquisite personal essay enlivening the memories of his childhood days. The essay features people who are either his family members or someone closely associated with him. Such characters include Field (his grandmother) and John (his brother who had passed two years before the publication of this essay in 1821). On the other hand there is reference to Ann Simmons whom he had courted but the results that had a disturbing impact on him. This essay provides the readers an unexpected start. Lamb died a bachelor so the issue of the speaker talking about his children in an autobiographical

essay amuses as well as surprises a reader. That the author's intent is to take the readers through a different course is distinct in the manner that he puts the description of his imaginary children at the very outset in the essay.

Elia's children, Alice and John, would like to listen to stories about the elders around them just like most other children. They desired to listen to tales of Field, their great-grandmother, and Elia's grandmother, who lived in a grand house in Norfolk much bigger than their father's house. The 'a hundred times' analogy has been given to create a sense of awe as regards the hugeness as well as magnificence of the house. Elia begins by narrating about how diligently his grandmother Field had performed her duties as a caretaker (as the owner lived somewhere else) till her last breath. The artistic magnificence of the house can be gauged from the statement that the children got to know about the famous ballad *Children in the Wood* which was carved 'out in wood upon the chimney-piece of the great hall'. Unfortunately, that chimney was replaced by a marble made one sans any story. She was a graceful dancer in her youth till cancer took the better of her, a religious lady who was well versed in the *Book of Psalms* and a considerable section of the *New Testament* and was revered by many. This could be ascertained from the attendance in her funeral. Her grandchildren who would spend their holidays with her got to know that she slept alone and that she had seen two apparitions of children moving in the stairs near her chamber though Elia admits that he had never seen any and used to sleep with a maid during his holidays at his grandmother's place. The death of the old lady was like a death knell to the house as well as the owner decided to take 'all its old ornaments stripped and carried away to the owner's other house' which Elia felt was not in harmony with the surroundings. Narrating his stay in grandmother Field's house he speaks about how he looked around the twelve busts of Roman emperors in the hall, roamed tirelessly around the mansion and the beautiful gardens

filled with nectarine, peaches and oranges almost alone except on exceptional circumstances when he used to meet an odd gardener. He cherished sauntering around the yews and firs which he describes as ‘melancholy-looking’ and looking at the dace in the fish-pond and the pike ‘hanging midway down the water in silent state’.

Elia then shifts his attention towards the uncle of the imaginary children John L —, which is a reference to Lamb’s brother John Lamb. He was the grandmother’s favourite which Elia presumes was because ‘he was so handsome and a spirited youth, and a king to the rest of us’. John L —’s description is of a bold young boy capable of carrying Elia on his back though the latter accepts his inability to return the favour. However, he accepts that it was in his death that he could realize the gulf between life and death and that his death had haunted him tremendously so much so that he says that he missed his dead brother ‘and knew not till then how much I had loved him’. His intimacy with his dead brother is so heightened at times that he ‘missed him all day long’. Then Elia shifts to describe the children’s reaction to their uncle’s death which is one of utter sadness to the level of ‘the children fell a-crying’. Then he shifts his description to his affair with Alice W— n who has been spoken of as the mother of the two children which can be viewed as an oblique reference to Ann Simmons with whom he had an unsuccessful courtship. Then the course of events change suddenly as the images as the images of John and Alice begins to fade and an awareness come that Alice’s children ‘call Bartrum father’ hinting that the lady he courted had married another man. Then suddenly Elia comes out of the reverie and realizes that everything had been a dream and he was seated in a ‘bachelor arm-chair’ indicating the impossibility of everything that he has described. Though he could find Bridget, whom he mentions as his cousin in his essays *My Relations* and *Mackery End, In Hertfordshire*, near him as he comes out of his dream, he pines at the loss of John Lamb (or James Elia) who was dead and gone forever. However, Bridget

appears to be the name that Lamb uses to describe his sister Mary with whom he had a very good relationship replete with love, care and understanding. Thus, the essay gives us a vivid description of a dream featuring his imaginary children juxtaposed alongside the imagery of his grandmother, Ann Simmons with whom he failed to establish a relationship and his brother whose loss has been specifically highlighted.

3.6 Style of Lamb's Essay

Charles Lamb perceived the English essay to be flexible enough to be used for various purposes. Hence the wide range and themes of his essays. What strikes a reader who comes to Lamb for the first time is the revelatory nature of his prose. Taking the reader into confidence, he talks without any hesitation, about his likes and dislikes, his preferences and aversions, his meditations and reflections. This constant preoccupation may be termed as egotistic, but it is this which lends to his essays a rare charm. his chief skill as an essayist is his ability to visualize memories - a vanished face, a hushed voice, recollected gesture, the memory of some treasured joy. The essays in which this feature of Lamb's essays comes out clearly are *Oxford in the Vacation*, *New Year's Eve*, *My Relations*, *Dream Children* and *A Dissertation Upon Roast pig*. An example of this aspect of Lamb's essay from *My Relations*:

His (James Elia) youth was fiery, glowing, tempestuous - and in age he discovereth no sympathy of cooling. This is that which I admire in him. I hate people who meet Time half way. I am for no compromise with that inevitable spoiler. While he lives, J.E. will take his swing - it does me good, as I walk towards the street of my daily avocation, on some fine May morning, to meet him marching in a quite opposite direction, with a jolly handsome presence, and shining sanguine face.

An important aspect of Lamb's prose is his humour and wit. It is this which in fact saves his essays from degenerating into mundane personal recollections and gives it its appeal and charm. *A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig* is replete with humour which arises from the description of the origin of the art of roasting a pig. Similarly one is amused by the way in which he describes the chimney sweepers in *In Praise of*

Chimney-Sweepers - "dim specked", "poor blots", "innocent black nesses", "young Africans of our growth". Allied to this is the pathos in his writing. He refused to be overwhelmed by melancholy induced by the morbid taint in his mind. He laughed to save himself from melancholy, but there are essays in which the note of sadness inevitable enters his composition. *Dream Children* is one such essay where Lamb concretizes a deeply felt paternal longing in the form of two imaginary children - Alice and John - in an imaginary marriage with Ann Simmons whom he had loved as a young man only to realize at the end of the essay that the whole thing was a dream, a reverie:

"and while I stood gazing, both the children grew gradually fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the utmost distance, which without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: "We are not Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence, and a name" - and immediately awakening, I found myself quite seated in my bachelor arm-chair, where I had fallen asleep".

A striking feature of Lamb's essays is his ability to sketch humorous characters, most of them almost caricatures of people who were dear to him or his acquaintance. "My Relations" is replete with such portrayals. Some examples of character-sketches from "My Relations".

a. I had an aunt, a dear and good one. She was one whom single blessedness had soured to the world. She often used to say, that I was the only thing in it which she loved; and, when she thought I was quitting it, she grieved over me with mother's tears.

b. James is an inexplicable cousin..... The genuine child of impulse, the frigid philosopher of prudence - the phlegm of my cousin's doctrine is invariably at war with his temperament, which is high sanguine. With always some fire-new project in his brain, J.E. is the systematic opponent of innovation, and crier down of everything that has stood the test of age and experiment.

With regard to style, Lamb cannot be said to be truly modern. He was more aligned to the prose style of the seventeenth century, particularly Browne, Burton and Fuller incorporating into his style their quaintness. This explains why his style is so immediately unique and effective. His style moreover depends largely on his moods, sometimes it is of

reflexive ness, at other times it could be one of pensiveness, or melancholy, or even of merriment. He was fond of coining words, loved to be alliterative, and enjoyed puns.

Richard Haven appropriately sums up Lamb's style:

The value of the essays does not lie only in their reflection of an interesting and appealing personality, in their charm of style, or in their pleasant and erudite eccentricities. Lamb was doing in prose something akin to what others, especially Wordsworth and Coleridge, were doing in poetry, and his essays at their best exhibit an equally careful and artful poetic structure.

3.7 Critical Reception

Lamb's essays have, indeed, been universally extolled by reviewers since their initial appearance. While some scholars have considered Lamb's style imitative of earlier English writers, the majority now accept that quality as one of his distinctive hallmarks, along with his fondness for the obscure and other idiosyncrasies. In addition to the elegant prose of his essays, works that have delighted generations of readers, Lamb's critical writings testify to his versatility and insight, although some commentators have faulted his unsystematic critical method. During the nineteenth century, Lamb's collected writings tended to elicit highly polarized critical reactions. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Lamb's status as one of England's most beloved writers was affirmed, and today he is remembered as a perceptive critic and the finest practitioner of the familiar essay form in English. The "Elia" essays maintained their popularity until the 1930s, when Lamb's reputation suffered a near total reversal as critic, F. R. Leavis and his disciples reappraised the Elian style. The Leavisite critique echoed throughout academia, and Lamb's works ceased to be studied seriously by British scholars for several decades. By the mid 1960s, however, critics such as George Barnett and later Gerald Monsman undertook the process of rehabilitating Lamb's standing by producing detailed studies of his essays. The Charles Lamb Society and its quarterly publication, *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, the main source of contemporary Lamb criticism, have assisted in this renewed interest and study of Lamb's works, covering such topics as Lamb's theories of drama, his poetry, and

especially his "Elia" essays, whose enduring humor and spontaneity continue to capture the imaginations of modern readers.

Check Your Progress

1. Enumerate the distinctive features Charles Lamb's 'Elia' use of language.
2. Point out the chief elements of Lamb's prose style.
3. Comment on the 'modern' elements of Lamb's character-sketches.

3.8 Glossary

Thomas a Kempis: The famous author of a Latin work called *De Imitatione Christi*, or *Imitation of Christ*. He was a German theologian.

Papistical tendency: A tendency to influence the reader in the direction of Roman Catholicism.

Sabbath: Day of rest and holiness for Jews from sunset on Friday to nightfall of the following day.

Chapel in Essex Street: Reference to the Unitarian Church opened in 1773.

Asperities in her constitution: Temperamental harshness.

Male aunts: A humorous phrase for uncles.

James and Bridget Elia: Names used for Lamb's brother John and sister Mary.

Primogenitur: First born child.

The pen of Yorick: The pen of Laurence Sterne (1713-1763), the author of the famous novel *Tristram Shandy*. He is also known for the novel *A Sentimental Journey* (1768).

Dominichino: An Italian painter. Renowned as a leading practitioner of Baroque classicism in Rome and Bologna.

Quaker: Member of a Christian group which emphasizes the guidance of the Holy Spirit, rejects rites, and works for peace.

Cham of Tartary: A ruthless dictator. Allusion to Genghis Khan (1162-1227), leader of a combined force of Mongols and Turks, collectively called Tartars.

A Claude or a Hobbima: A painting by Claude or by Hobbima. Claude was a French landscape painter, and Hobbima was a Dutch landscape painter of the seventeenth century.

Christie's and Phillip's: The names of two London auctioneers in London.

Pall-Mall: The name of a London street.

Madonna: Term used for the depiction of the Virgin Mary in the devotional and non-historical context.

Raphael: Master painter and architect of the Italian High Renaissance. Best known for his Madonnas and for his large figure compositions in the Vatican in Rome.

Lucca Giodano, Carlo Maratti: Names of inferior Italian painters of the seventeenth century.

Hallowmass: Another name for All Saints' Day, which commemorates all the saints of the church on November 1.

Thomas Clarkson: A philanthropist (1760-1846) who worked for the abolition of the Negro slave-trade.

3.9 Suggested Reading :

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Unit 4

Charles Lamb's *Dream Children: A Reverie*

Supplementary Unit

Unit Structure :

4.1 Objectives

4.2 How to Approach Charles Lamb

4.3 Practicing Essay as a Literary Form: Lamb and his Contemporaries

4.4 Other Essays of Lamb: Are they autobiographical?

4.5 Books on Lamb's Life and Writing

4.6 Questions and Suggested Answers

4.7 Summing Up

4.8 Reference and Suggested Reading

4.1 Objectives:

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Learn how to read Lamb's essays
- Gain a familiarity with the other essays of Lamb
- Learn about books and articles on the poet.
- Answer questions relevant to the texts.

4.2 How to Approach Charles Lamb

There are very few writers who have tried various genres with varying degrees of success. Charles Lamb wrote poems, plays and also the famous *Tales from Shakespeare* which is an adaptation of

Shakespearean plays. However, his reputation as a litterateur appears to primarily rest on his intensely personal essays which are strewn with autobiographical elements. Lamb's journey as an essayist began in 1820 with the publication of *Recollections of South-Sea House* in the famous *London Magazine*. Known for his captivating personal essays Lamb, in the garb of the pseudonym 'Elia', soon became a popular name among the readers. His *Dream Children: A Reverie* appeared in January 1822 to be later anthologized in *Essays of Elia* in 1823. Another notable collection of his essays entitled *The Last Essays of Elia* was published in 1833. As regards the name 'Elia' it is opined that Elia was a surname of one of his Italian colleagues at the South-Sea House where he had joined in 1791 for a year before joining the Accounts Department of the East India Company in 1792. Further the name is also taken to be an anagram (a word or a phrase resulting from a rearrangement of another word or phrase which may or may not have any visible similarity with the original word or phrase) for 'a lie'; and this anagram seems to be true in the context of the essay *Dream Children: A Reverie* which mystifies the readers by taking them to a different world only to bring everybody back to the real world in the end with the realization that what the essayist has said is all a part of a dream. Lamb has been very liberal in his usage of the Elia persona which he uses to discuss subjects as varied as the people whom he had met in his everyday life to his workplace to newspapers to cooking. This essay is an attempt to portray Lamb's view of a world he would have loved to be a part of in the midst of the numerous personal tragedies that disturbed him at various phases of his life.

Charles Lamb's essays contain anecdotes from his personal life. The incidents that he has portrayed in *Dream Children: A Reverie*, written in a single paragraph, might be a dream that he had while seating on an armchair but the dream sequence can throw much light on his personal life. There exists symmetry between the intensely personal content of the

essay and the language used therein. The language is lucid with a colloquial touch and is informal. The description of the individuals portrayed in the essay is realistic with a significant presence of the pronoun 'I'. The narration in the context of this essay is omniscient thereby implying that Lamb knows best what is going on around him. Lamb's humour is one of his richest tools in the essay. However, alongside his wit there are elements of pathos and one prominent quality with his language is the subtle amalgamation of humour and pathos. Transition between moods from one of grave seriousness to one of nostalgia to that of harsh reality has been seamlessly articulated and his style does not seem incoherent. Because of his lucid language the irony of the situation can be easily grasped by the readers. In fact Lamb has been successful in sustaining the attention of the reader till the end to learn the fact that whatever has been narrated throughout the essay was but a speck of the essayist's rich imagination without anywhere appearing unrealistic.

Genuine humour is induced at the succinct yet uncomplicated description of the reaction of Alice to the information regarding their great-grandmother being a good dancer and that of John on learning about the infant apparitions in the grandmother's house. The readers cannot but smile at the manner of description. Elia's tone at the dismantling of the old chimney space to replace it with one of marble gets scathing. Further, on the shifting of various artifacts and other objects to a new household Elia makes his displeasure by giving the paradoxical statement that things should be in symmetry with the surroundings. The oblique manner of making such a serious statement makes reading pleasant.

Lamb's prose has a poetic fervour, is natural and original. He has a penchant for creating new words in his writings. In *Dream Children: A Reverie* his coinage is 'traditionary' to denote a person or event who/ which had once lived/ taken place and is part of the family lore. Lamb

can be seen referring to texts and stories in order to add greater variety to his writings. In this essay he has exquisitely and seamlessly adjusted the ballad of *Children in the Wood* to describe the brilliance of his grandmother's house. The ending in the essay both pleases the reader at the delicate manner in which a swift transition from a dream world to the real world has been made and at the same time induces pathos at the unsavoury experiences that have defined his existence. Lamb's smooth blend of nostalgia and reality is undoubtedly of the highest order.

4.3 Practicing Essay as a Literary Form: Lamb and His Contemporaries:

Derived from the French term *essai*, Dr. Samuel Johnson had defined the essay as “a loose sally of the mind, an irregular, undigested piece, not a regular and orderly performance”. W.H. Hudson has opined that an essay is ‘essentially personal’ with an onus on ‘self-expression’. Ross Murfin and Supriya M. Ray in *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* have defined the essay as a “composition that usually explores a single theme or topic” (153). Essays may be classified as argumentative, descriptive, expository and narrative though the categories are not exclusive and overlapping is more the norm than an exception. The emergence of Charles Lamb in the nineteenth century marked the emergence of the personal essay. Murfin and Ray says that:

In the nineteenth century, the formal essay was chiefly found in a handful of important literary magazines, and the personal essay, a type of informal essay stressing autobiographical content and often written in an urbane and intimate manner, emerged. (Murfin & Ray 153)

W.R. Goodman in *Quintessence of Literary Essays* has stated that in a personal essay ‘the writer entertains his readers by painting a complete

portrait of himself' (Goodman 485). Commenting on the personal essay of Lamb he further says:

His essays are also the first examples of the disquisition on general topics illustrated from personal experience and literature. (Goodman 485)

Lamb's essays feature the people around him and the setting is very realistic and lively. The titles of some essays directly indicate to the reader the subject matter of the essays. For instance, with the biographical information that Lamb had joined South-Sea House in 1791 a reader would be easily able to make out the content of the essay by the same name. He seems to have rightly intimated to his publisher that his essays require no separate preface and that the essays are preface by themselves. The past is a strong presence in his essays and the memories related to that phase of his life feature in his essays like *Christ's Hospital*, *My Relations*, *South-Sea House* and *Dream Children: A Reverie*. Louis Cazamian is of the view that:

Lamb's personality is unique. The essay, a form which provides him with his favourite mode of expression, becomes in his hands the artificial but precious instrument of a constant self-revelation. The fictitious character of Elia is the main but not the only centre of that secret magnetism which organizes the reflections, the memories of books and things, the diversity of opinions and characters, the comedy and drama of each day, around one theme, namely, the particular reaction of a soul to life. Without openly taking himself as a subject, without touching upon any aspect of his own experience but to transform it, Lamb is forever speaking to himself... The past like the present of his self offers him a fund of inexhaustible matter which he freely exploits... But Lamb is not a moralist nor a psychologist; his object is not

research, analysis, or confession; he is, above all, an artist.
(Legouis and Cazamian 1070-1)

Charles Lamb belongs to an age that is more known for the great romantic poets for whom subjectivity and imagination were of utmost significance. Associating the essayists with the poets in terms of their artistic concerns and treatment of their subject, Ronald Carter and John McRae have opined that:

Like the Romantic poets, the essayists of the Romantic period put their own responses to experience at the very centre of their work... Charles Lamb's two series of *Essays of Elia*... covered a wide range of middle-brow topics including whist and roast pig.
(Carter & McRae 230)

Reworking on the then existent norms of an essay, Lamb experimented with the form and succeeded in putting into it the most intimate personal thoughts born out of nostalgia or his perception of an incident or an individual which/ whom he had encountered. While accepting that Lamb's reputation as an essayist escalated with the name 'Elia', on the influences on Lamb that moulded him as an essayist of repute Andrew Sanders upholds a very noteworthy observation that his "essays cultivate a form and a style that Lamb admired in his seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mentors, Bacon, Browne, Walton, Fuller, Addison and Steele. He plays with archaisms and with a familiar archness, but he superadds his own delight in whimsy, reminiscence, and digression" (Sanders 397). Lamb wrote at an age which also had some renowned names as his contemporaries like William Hazlitt, Thomas De Quincey, James Henry Leigh Hunt and Walter Savage Landor. The essay as a literary form certainly got a tremendous boost in their hands. They contributed to the growth and enrichment of the essay as an art form in their own ways. Whereas Hazlitt is known for his sharp and critical insights into his

subjects; De Quency's essays puts emphasis on the psychological world; Lamb made his essays a medium for gradually unfolding the events of his life and his inner world. Louis Cazamian aptly says that he was constantly unraveling himself through his essays so much so that almost every essay could give an impression of the different phases of Lamb's life and the various influences on him. It is hard not to appreciate Lamb's subjectivism which never falls into self-glorification, moralizing or end up giving exclusive insights into the various tenets of human psychology. Artistic pleasure seems to be his primary concern as can be seen in his language and application of wit and humour.

Lamb's autobiographical essays are replete with wit and humour and pathos that exists alongside wit and the descriptions of people who he has met at the personal or official levels. He makes his point directly as regards his impressions of a person, place or event rather than providing oblique indications to the readers. In *The South-Sea House* he writes thus about the clerks working at the South-Sea House where he also worked at one point of time:

The very clerks which I remember in the South-Sea House – I speak of forty years back – had an air very different from those in the public offices that I have had to do with since. They partook of the genius of the place. (Lamb 3).

In *Christ's Hospital* he gives a pathos filled outline of his childhood whose reminiscences are less about good company of the loved ones but one of utter loneliness:

I was a poor friendless boy. My parents, and those who should care for me, were far away. Those few acquaintances of theirs, which they could reckon upon as being kind to me in the great city, after a little forced notice, which they had the grace to take of me on my first arrival in town, soon grew tired of my holiday visits. (Lamb 12)

In the same easy and with the same pathos filled tone he contemplates his life away from his 'home', a symbol of belongingness and familiarity. The description of the essayist's sense of nostalgia is:

O the cruelty of separating a poor lad from his early homestead!
The yearnings which I used to have towards it in those unfledged
years! How, in my dreams, would my native town (far in the
west) come back, with its church, and trees and faces! How I
would wake up weeping, and in the anguish of my heart exclaim
upon sweet Calne in Wiltshire! (Lamb 13)

K.G. Seshadri in his introduction to *Selected Essays of Charles Lamb* has aptly summed up the artistic genius of Lamb as well as his personality that appears distinctly in his essays:

One of the masters of the English essay, he is also a fine
imaginative critic, a beautiful letter-writer, and a minor poet. His
kindly and rich personality is expressed in his Elia essays with
great charm and literary artifice of a high order. (Seshadri xvi)

Romantic Age is commonly associated with the great poets but it was also an age of excellent prose writings. It is very unfortunate that scholars like Robert Huntington Fletcher have placed the prose writers like Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt and Thomas de Quincey under the category of 'Lesser Writers' in his book *A History of English Literature*. However, majority of literary historians have made erudite study of prose writings in an age overshadowed by the immortal romantic poets.

Lamb and Hazlitt perfected the informal essay though critics feel the latter to be comparatively more formal while the former is considered to be a little prejudiced at times and this can be there as he wrote personal essays. In addition to his critical writings, Hazlitt's major works include *Life of Napoleon* which is also his longest book.

However, it is in his essays that his reputation as a prose writer primarily rests. George Saintsbury has grouped his essays and lectures into three categories for their systematic study: the first category deals with his writings and lectures on art and drama which is distinctively formal in tone; the second category contains his miscellaneous essays and here he appears to bear some similarity with the aesthetic concerns of Lamb; and the third category deals with literary criticism and such writings amply justify his recognition as a critics' critic. Hazlitt's remark on Lamb that his friend succeeded as an author not by flowing with the tendencies of the age but by challenging the spirit of the period shows his keen sense of observation as a critic. Some of his very popular essays are *The Indian Jugglers*, *On Going a Journey*, *Merry England*, *On Taste*. Few of his essays have been published under the title *The Spirit of the Age*. Regarding Hazlitt as a writer Louis Cazamian says that:

There is a touch of Rousseau in him, an element of suffering pride, a certain misanthropy; but he does not lose his self-control, his sense of balance (Legouis and Cazamian 1075)

Considered to be one of the biggest names in literary criticism during the romantic age along with Samuel Taylor Coleridge his creative as well as critical essays and lectures are filled with fresh information along with an innovative approach in dealing with a character of which one of the best examples is his treatment of Shakespeare's immortal Jew Shylock. Some well known anthologies of his essays are *The Round Table*, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, *A View of the English Stage* and *Political Essays*.

Leigh Hunt is believed to have reduced the gap between the essay as a literary genre and journalism, thereby adding another dimension to the English essay, by attempting to do away with the tradition of essay writing initiated by doyens like Bacon and given a

fresh lease of life by Lamb and Hazlitt. He started the *Examiner* with his brother, edited the *Indicator* and also started the *Liberal*. It was a platform for disseminating his views which were then deemed radical and anti-establishment. Such heightened political consciousness directly showcasing his radical opinions cannot be traced in authors like Lamb who rather use humour as the tool for dealing with unpleasant issues. His critical essays show his knowledge of literature. Theatre criticism, which later flowered in the hands of Hazlitt, was initiated by Hunt.

Thomas de Quincey is a voluminous author who possessed a poetic prose style but his reputation as a writer primarily rests on *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. Like Lamb, his best essays have autobiographical elements and his recollections are frank and published his works in the London Magazine. In fact, the *Essays of Elia* and *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater* can be considered to be the best to be published in the magazine. Andrew Sanders is of the view that:

It is work of considerable psychological daring, prefiguring Freudian theories and preoccupations, as much as an intricate personal apologia which interweaves recollections of human kindness, nightmarish recalls of childhood trauma, and an equivocating justification of drug-taking. (Sanders 397)

However, the direction that Hazlitt gives to his essays leading them to a brilliant ending is mostly absent in Quincey as he gives in to triviality and digressions that ends up taking him away from his core subject matter. Lamb too had considerable literary output but unlike de Quincey he could sustain his aesthetic excellence after some initial hiccups in his literary career.

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4.4 Other essays of Lamb: Are They Autobiographical?

Charles Lamb is most known for his essays anthologized in *Essays of Elia* and *Last Essays of Elia*. Published in a gap of ten years the anthologies have a total of fifty two essays. A reading of the essays can give the readers an idea of the range of Lamb's subjects and the uniqueness of the treatment of his subject. Some essays have been interestingly named after certain dates and events like *New Year's Eve*, *Valentine's Day* and *All Fools' Day*; significant places and institutions like *The South-Sea House*, *Oxford in the Vacation* and *Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago*; some titles are based on cuisine and cutlery like *A dissertation upon Roast Pig* and *Old China*; on relationships like *My Relations*, *Poor Relations*, *Old Benchers of the Inner Temple*, *Mrs. Battle's Opinions* and *Dream Children: A Reverie*; on the essayist's personal dislikes like *A Chapter on Ears* (lack of interest for music in this context). *Popular Fallacies* is unique among all the other essays of Lamb as it is not a single work but a grouping of sixteen short essays (titles of some short essays are *That a Bully is Always a Coward*, *That Ill-Gotten Gain Never Prospers*, *That Enough is as Good as a Feast*, *That Handsome is that Handsome Does*, *That You Must Love me and Love My Dog*). Some essays that deal with Lamb's inherent spirit of compassion and goodness are *The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers*, *A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars*, *Captain Jackson and Grace before Meat*.

One of the most prominent features of the essays of Charles Lamb is the liberal presence of autobiographical elements. In fact a close reading of his essays provides enormous opportunity to look into his personal life. At certain instances the titles directly suggest the essayist's association with the place, or person or event mentioned therein. Essays like *South-Sea House* (where Lamb once worked), *Christ's Hospital* (where Lamb once studied), *My Relations* (about the people close to him), *Old China* (about china clay cutlery) have suggestive titles. *Dream Children: A Reverie* takes the readers to the dream world of Lamb. If unfulfilled desires feature and receive fulfillment in dreams, then the essay's realistic vein assumes greater prominence. The essay begins with a story being narrated by Elia to his children, Alice and John, with their great-grandmother as the subject. Alice Winterton is portrayed as the children's mother. The presence of his wife and children form part of his unfulfilled desires. He wanted to start marital relationship with Ann Simmons but could not and the failure did not go down easily for him and haunts him even in his dreams. The grandmother's house was of great wonder and awe for him, both for its magnitude and magnificence. The description is precise and replete with his personal opinions regarding the things and surroundings. The manner of description of the household shows the level of his acquaintance with as well as attachment to the mansion where grandmother Field was a caretaker. Lamb had deep regards for and elevated opinion of his grandmother which finds a realistic presentation in the essay. The description of the grandmother's funeral has been utilised by the essayist to justify the grand personality of his grandmother. Lamb's personal life was one of tragedies: his sister Mary murdering their mother in a fit of lunacy, Mary's illness, personal mental disturbances that forced him to remain in asylums at times, death of Samuel Salt who was their patron, unrequited love, death of his brother John and initial failure as an author in other literary forms. This essay appears to be an attempt of Lamb to move

beyond all these to a world where he would have liked to be in. Lamb succeeds till his Riviera lasts. But once he wakes up painful thoughts of his brother's death disturbs him but the solace of his sister near him gives him some respite. It can be concluded that the essay is an evocative portrayal of intensely personal thoughts of one of the most renowned English essayists.

4.5 Books on Lamb's Life and his Writings:

Charles Lamb is one of the most popular English essayists and hence the histories of English literature amply cover the various facets of his creative works. Following is the tentative list of books (the list excludes histories of English literature) that a reader may go through if he/ she desire to have greater insight into the life and works of the great essayist:

- 1) E.V. Lucas's *The Life of Charles Lamb*, Vol. I & Vol. II
- 2) Walter Jerrold's *Charles Lamb*
- 3) Alfred Ainger's *Charles Lamb*
- 4) Charles Lamb's *Miscellaneous Essays*, edited by Alexander Hamilton Thompson
- 5) George Saintsbury's *A History of Nineteenth Century Literature (1780-1895)*
- 6) Hugh Walker's *The English Essay and Essayists*
- 7) Edmund Blunden's *Charles Lamb and his Contemporaries*
- 8) Joseph E. Riehl's *That Dangerous Figure: Charles Lamb and the Critics*
- 9) The Charles Lamb Bulletin (this is a bulletin of The Charles Lamb Society which can be assessed by visiting the website of the society)

4.6 Questions and Suggested Answers:

Q.1. Write a brief note on Elia's grandmother. (75 words)

Answer: The grandmother's portrayal has been impressively done... her influence on the household... the grandchildren's impressions of her... her clout in the society.

Q.2. Do you think that the title of the essay *Dream Children: A Reverie* is appropriate? Give your views. (75 words)

Answer : Appropriateness or otherwise of the title... it appears appropriate... reason for the children not being real children... how the essayist tells at the very end the basis of his narration.

Q.3. Describe in your own words the household of Elia's grandmother at Norfolk. (100 words)

Answer: Description of the house along with its hall and other magnificent artifacts... description of the outdoor landscape, gardens, and fish-pond.

Q.4. Discuss the manner of portrayal of Elia's imaginary children in the essay *Dream Children: A Reverie*. (75 words)

Answer: the children have been realistically portrayed... mutual communication between Elia and his children is captivating... they respond to the changing tone of the storyteller and mood of the story... the children do not appear imaginary until informed at the end.

Q.5. Write briefly on Lamb's prose style on the basis of your reading of *Dream Children: A Reverie*. (75 words)

Answer: Simplicity and lucidity marked Lamb's prose style... The reader's interest is sustained till the end because of the essayist's

gripping narration... generation of with and humour... description of pathos as well as the juxtaposition of humour and pathos.

Q.6. What are the autobiographical elements present in *Dream Children: A Reverie*? Elucidate. (100 words)

Answer: Characters, imaginary or real, are related to Lamb... memories of his childhood and adolescence... impact of somebody's loss or moving away from him... realization of the truth of his life.

Q.7. "Lamb is forever talking of himself. It is not a case of vanity, but simply that he relates what he knows best". Discuss the statement based on your reading of *Dream Children: A Reverie*.

Answer: Presence of personal elements in his essays... unfolding various aspects and experiences of his personal life... some glorification of the people, place or objects associated with him is present but there are also situations where he is critical of some people or things... he attempts to be honest in his description though sometimes it might appear that he is blowing his own trumpet... it appears less to be a case of vanity and more of artistic integrity considering that fact that he is a master of the personal essay.

Q.8. Do you think that in *Dream Children: A Reverie* "Elia is the main but not the only centre"? Give your views.

Answer: There are many characters in the essay who are very impressive... grandmother Field is the focus of the essayist for a long time... she is one of the major characters in the essay and has been amply developed... Lamb even accepts that his brother and not he who was more popular with his grandmother... while reading the essay we look at Elia for the storyline but to other characters for the striking tenets of their personality.

Q.9. Write a detailed note on Charles Lamb as an essayist on the basis of the essays that you have read.

Answer: The learner is expected to comment on the literary qualities of Charles Lamb after reading at least a few representative essays of the essayist. For instance, if the presence of autobiographical elements is one of the notable aspects of his essays then how has it been manifested in the essays read by the learner. Similarly, other literary aspects are to be traced and necessary comments to be given.

4.7 Summing Up

In this unit you have gained some idea about the traits of Lamb's essays and how to read them. You have also learned about the position of Lamb in relation to his contemporaries. Important resources—books and articles—have been mentioned, and they will offer you better understanding of the Romantic essayist. Further, you are also offered clues to some of the important questions about the writer and the text under discussion. These will enrich your reading and understanding of Lamb's

4.8 References and Suggested Reading

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Unit 5

William Hazlitt: The Indian Jugglers

Unit Structure :

- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Introducing the Author
- 5.3 Hazlitt and His Times
- 5.4 Hazlitt as Essayist
- 5.5 Reading the Text
- 5.6 Summing Up
- 5.7 References and Suggested reading

5.1 Objective

This unit is intended to

- provide a clear understanding of the text and related topics
- familiarize the student to numerous aspects of the author, his literary merits and background
- provide A comprehensive explanation of the text
- facilitate the student for preparation for the examination

Introducing the author: Biographical Sketch

William Hazlitt was born on 10th April, 1778, at Maidstone in Kent, United Kingdom. He was the youngest son of a family belonging to the Irish Protestant Church. His father was a Unitarian who had entered the Ministry.

Key Words

Unitarian – A Christian who believes in the unity of the Godhead as opposed to the Holy Trinity. A Unitarian also believes in the independent authority of each congregation. Ministry – the clergy

Hazlitt's father was a pastor in many places like Cambridgeshire, Gloucestershire and Maidstone till he was compelled to return to Ireland because of his disagreements with the different congregations. So, though born in Kent, Hazlitt spent his boyhood years in Ireland. Hazlitt's father was a sympathiser of the American struggle for Independence. His championing the cause of the American rebels made the climate in England hostile for him. The family then departed to the new emerging land of the United States of America.

So, a part of Hazlitt's childhood was also spent in America. But after a few years of staying in the New World, the Hazlitt family eventually returned to England and settled in Shropshire. His father wanted his son to join the clergy for which he was sent to study theology in the Unitarian college at Hackney. However, the young Hazlitt was disinterested in joining the Church and withdrew from the college.

Stop to Consider

Keeping in mind the diverse environments in which he was exposed to since his early days, we can understand better the influences at work which made him the writer he became. We can see how he acquired his father's liberal ideas which later got reflected in his writings.

During this time Hazlitt paid frequent visits to his brother John, who was working as a painter in London. This was when an interest for painting aroused in his young mind. This was also the time when he started reading the works of some of the great philosophers like Hobbes, Burke and Hume; novelists like Smollett and Fielding; and the philosopher Rousseau. Towards the end of the century, he made acquaintances with Coleridge and Wordsworth. He was greatly impressed listening to Coleridge's sermon in the Unitarian chapel at Shrewsbury. It was in the poetry of these two poets that he found a kind of rapture. He later expressed his indebtedness in his work, *My First Acquaintance with Poets* (1823).

His obsession with painting made him visit the Louvre in Paris where he tried his hand in copying the great masters. But after three years he realised that he could not acquire any expertise in painting and abandoned it altogether to take up literature for the rest of his life. His early writings comprised of philosophical and political pieces. Around this time, he made acquaintance with other writers of his age like, Charles Lamb, Mary Lamb and Robert Southey.

Check your Progress

How far do you think Hazlitt was influenced by his close friendship with the contemporary writers of his day?

During this period, he also met Sarah Stoddart, a close friend of the Lambs whom he married in 1808. But the marriage was not destined to be a happy one. This was a period of struggle to earn a living as a writer. Hazlitt had not yet made a mark as a writer of substance. He was also disillusioned with the shift in loyalties of Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth who were earlier sympathisers with the ideals of the French Revolution. The repose and complacency of these writers made him furious.

Stop to Consider

It is easy to see how Hazlitt was disappointed by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey because these writers had glorified the ideas of freedom. Hazlitt was a passionate lover of liberty and had seen Napoleon as a champion of freedom. Napoleon's defeat left him in a state of distress unlike the other writers.

In 1813 Hazlitt started his career as a dramatic critic for the *Morning Chronicle* and later for the *London Magazine*. He also started to contribute essays on drama in the *Examiner*. This periodical was edited by Leigh Hunt, an essayist as well as a journalist. Hazlitt was also invited to contribute to *The Edinburgh Review*. Through the publication of a collection of essays in *The Round Table* in 1817, Hazlitt rose to prominence as a writer. *The Round Table* was a collection of 40 essays by Hazlitt and a dozen by Leigh Hunt. His *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* published in 1817 earned for him the status of a leading Shakespearean critic. In the next three years, Hazlitt came up with three discourses which established him as a literary critic of repute, namely, *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818), *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* (1819) and *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (1820). His best collection of miscellaneous essays was, however, incorporated in *Table Talk or Original Essays* (1821-22).

In his personal life, however, things were not going smooth. Incompatibility between husband and wife finally led to their divorce in 1822. Two years later, in 1824, Hazlitt married a widow by the name of Isabella Bridgwater. But this marriage was also short-lived. In the following year, he travelled to Italy and France and compiled a

travelogue recounting the complete tour. It was published as *Notes of a Journey through France and Italy* in 1826. In 1825, after his return from Europe, was published *The Spirit of the Age: or Contemporary Portraits* which was a collection of sketches of many eminent personalities of England. *The Plain Speaker* (1826) is the last collection of Hazlitt's fine essays. Towards the end of his life, he had attempted a biography on his hero, Napoleon, which turned out to be a financial failure.

Hazlitt died in 1830 and buried in St. Anne's Church, Soho, London.

SAQ

What aspects of Hazlitt's character and personality do you gather from your reading of his biographical sketch?

5.3 Hazlitt and his times

William Hazlitt belonged to the period of English Romanticism. It was a time when many changes were occurring in England and Europe, changes brought about by new developments in the social and political world. This was the time of the French Revolution (1789), the American War of Independence (1775-1783) and the rise of Napoleon.

The end of monarchy and the rise of democracy in France after the storming of the Bastille and the overthrow of colonialism in America created a new excitement among the intellectuals of the day. The restrictions of thought of the preceding years gave way to a new optimism, a blossoming of liberal ideas which got mirrored in the writings of the times.

In the economic sphere, the continuous wars took a heavy toll of the national coffer. Prices and rent shot up bringing woe to the common people. The divide between the haves and the have-nots increased. Industrial towns mushroomed as a result of the Industrial Revolution. The old village life crumbled. On the one hand, the sufferings of the poor increased. In complete contrast to that, the big landlords and factory owners became richer. The rich now have more time for leisure. Writing poetry, painting, music and dance became the favourite pastimes of the gentry, as can be seen to be the preoccupations of the characters in the novels of Jane Austen.

Stop to Consider

You can see here how the divide between the rich and the poor gradually increased. The dichotomy between the town and the country widened as a result of the breakdown of the old social order.

The growth in education, the rise of the middle class and the coming up of many publishing houses made the atmosphere conducive to the emerging writer. The prominent writers of the time were Wordsworth, Coleridge, Jane Austen, Charles Lamb, Robert Southey, Shelley, Keats and Hazlitt along with many others. The *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), which was a collection of poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge, brought a breath of fresh air after the aridity of the works of the earlier writers. Along with poetry, this period also saw growth in the field of prose writing - political pamphlets, journalistic writing, essays, articles and literary criticism. Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Thomas De Quincey, Thomas Love Peacock and Hazlitt were the leading prose writers of the day. Most of them contributed to the periodicals and also gave lectures on wide ranging topics.

5.4 Hazlitt as an essayist

Hazlitt was a foremost essayist and a Shakespearean critic of his times. He was a follower of Coleridge and he, along with Lamb, De Quincey and Leigh Hunt, defended the new kind of poetry. He was a child of the new Renaissance and his literary outpourings were the result of his efflorescence.

His interests were varied – books, painting, politics, art, philosophy, Nature and dramatic criticism. Some of his delightful essays include *On Going a Journey*, *On the Pleasures of Painting*, *On Reading Old Books*, *My First Acquaintance with Poets* and *The Indian Jugglers*. Most of his charming essays got published in collections like *The Round Table* (1817), *Table Talk* (1821-22) and *The Plain Speaker* (1826). Hazlitt was one of the best dramatic critics of England. Romantic criticism was a revolt against the neo-classical criticism of the 18th century.

Being autobiographical in nature, his essays reveal the man. Hazlitt never feels inhibited in projecting his thoughts and emotions, and even tries to convince the reader to accept them. To do so, he proceeds from a point and goes on to long explanations, often digressing from the original

point. This makes his writings somewhat cumbersome at times. His essays proliferate with too many references from past authors as well as his contemporaries. His essays lack humour as he is a serious writer who does not indulge in unnecessary witticism or engage in trivial matter.

But despite the shortcomings, what gives charm to Hazlitt's writings are his liveliness, passion, eagerness and enthusiasm. His keen sense of observation and eye for detail finds evidence in the vividness of his descriptions. Hazlitt's essays are striking for their felicity of perception and frankness of expression.

Stop to Consider

You can understand here how Hazlitt was influenced by the spirit of his times. His association with the contemporary writers as well as his reading of the works of his predecessors, especially Shakespeare and other dramatists of the Elizabethan Age, shaped his mind and contributed to his making of a writer.

As for style, Hazlitt is the master of the *familiar style* or the informal style of writing. As an essayist he followed the model of the French essayist Montaigne. He was equally influenced by Steele and Addison, the illustrious essayists of the 18th century. Hazlitt wrote in simple prose without any adornments or affectations. It is as if he is engaged in a conversation with the reader. He uses the familiar idiom of the day understandable by all.

However, his style is not monotonous. It varies from subject to subject. If he is writing on a philosophical topic, he writes in a solemn language. On other matters, the intensity of his feelings gets exposed through his authoritative and vigorous presentation. His bold assertions reveal his strong individualism.

Another distinctive feature of Hazlitt's style is his abundant use of quotations. He often quotes and misquotes from the writings of his eminent predecessors, especially, Shakespeare, Goldsmith and Milton.

Hazlitt writes long sentences and long paragraphs to convey to the reader the thoughts that flow through his mind uninterruptedly. Sometimes these ramblings make the reading tedious. But one cannot deny the vivacity and forthrightness of his mind.

SAQ

Asses Hazlitt as a master of the Personal Essay. What aspects of his style do you find to be most appealing?

5.5 Reading the Text

Hazlitt's *The Indian Jugglers* appeared in *Table Talk*.

The author begins his essay with a description of an Indian Juggler who is dressed in a white outfit and a headgear in the form of a turban. He picks up two brass balls which he tosses into the air. This at first appears to be a simple task which any average person can do. The act becomes progressively difficult as he tosses two more balls into the air and keeps all the four bouncing off his hands without any falling to the ground. None of us can do this even supposing our lives depended on it.

Stop to consider

A juggler is an entertainer who continuously tosses a number of balls or other objects into the air and rotating them with great dexterity.

So, what we see before us is not a small matter of little value but an amazing feat equivalent to the point of being remarkable. It is an inventive act which a human being can accomplish through the perfect intermixing of physical and mental faculties over long years of diligent practice.

Just as Sophocles, the great Greek dramatist of ancient times had said:

“Many are the wonders of this world.

But none so wonderful as Man”,

Hazlitt too, marvels at the wonderful creation, which is man. Hazlitt implies something divine in man which makes him capable of accomplishing unbelievable things, but without him realising his own potential. It is beyond human imagination even to think of the possibility of performing such an action, so much so, that it seems super human, leaving the onlookers spellbound.

Yet, for the performer, it is merely an act which costs nothing. He is amused to see the looks of astonishment on the faces of the spectators. A

single slip of the fingers, a single miss, or the slightest misjudgement of time would ruin the whole show. The perfect coordination of the hand and the eye brings precision in the act to the point of mathematical accuracy. The speed of the movements is compared to lightning. The balls follow one another with such rapidity that it seems as if they chase each other like flashes of fire or shoot up like flowers. They are compared with planets and meteors, with ribbons and serpents that slide effortlessly behind the back and round the neck of the performer. It is as if the balls are animate beings consciously playing their parts.

Stop to Consider

You can see how Hazlitt makes a number of comparisons - comparing the balls to planets, flashes of fire, flowers, ribbons and serpents. This is a special characteristic of Hazlitt's style, i.e., vividness and emphasis on details.

What appears to the eye seems incredulous, and yet the juggler does it all with a playfulness as if his only concern is to coincide his movements with the rhythm of the music. There is something so fascinating about the whole performance that if anyone who fails to admire it must surely be a person who has never admired anything in his whole life. Beauty lies in such mastery. Once the difficulty is surpassed, the act appears to be spontaneous, natural and effortless. Though there is something magical about it, it is fun for children.

Hazlitt goes on to talk about other feats performed by jugglers, such as, balancing an artificial tree and shooting a bird from each branch through a quill. But none of the other acts are comparable with the meticulousness, flexibility and elegance of keeping up the brass balls. As one watches it, one becomes anxious lest the show is spoiled because of a mismatch. One feels relieved when the performance is successfully over. The spectator is left with a sense of awe and delight, just like Hazlitt himself, who is not only bewitched but also pleased at having witnessed such brilliance. There is another perilous act performed by the Indian juggler, and that is, the swallowing of a whole sword upto the hilt. Hazlitt feels that such hazardous acts should be prohibited. When he saw the Indian juggler rotating large rings on his bare toes as if they moved on their own, he feels a sense of joy, of them having accomplished something which he himself is incapable of.

Check your Progress

How does Hazlitt describe the other acts of the jugglers? Which act does he consider to be supreme?

Which emotions are triggered by watching such mind-blowing acts?

When an honourable member makes his speech in parliament in a jerky manner, with pauses and repetitions, Hazlitt is not impressed by it. Such speech can be delivered by anyone without requiring any special skill. Hearing such a speech does not lessen the author's own self-confidence. But seeing the astounding performances shakes his self-confidence. He feels diminutive and ashamed of his shortcomings. He realises that there is nothing he can do so flawlessly. Doubts cloud his mind when he wonders whether he had wasted all his time in useless pursuits and ineffectual things. His labours must have been futile exercises, as meaningless as pouring water into empty sieves, rolling a stone up a hill which then rolls down, or engaging in pointless arguments and failing to find the right logic. He wonders if there is any single act which he can carry out to perfection, without anybody finding fault in it.

The best he can do is write a description of the jugglers' performances. He can write a book on it, but so can others. He utters with a vehemence that such pieces of writings are failures, mistakes, unsatisfactory and dull productions. He is sick of his own worthlessness, and yet, that is the height of his potential. A juggler can keep up four balls in the air simultaneously. Unlike him, the author manages to follow only one line of thought at a time so as to keep it clear from any complications arising from intermixing with other thoughts.

SAQ

Describe how Hazlitt contrasts his shortcomings with the exceptional brilliance of the performers.

Hazlitt says that he recollects past observations, ponders on a subject and then starts expressing exactly what evolves in his mind. He is aware of the fact that time is no constraint, thus offering him ample scope for corrections and refinement. Yet he chooses not to do so as he is fond of argument. He would go to any length to defeat his adversary even though the latter may be an ordinary fellow. The fencer (one who fights with a sword) can defeat his opponent within seconds if the latter is not an expert. But in the case of a debate, such complete mastery or a

definite win (as in the case of the fencer), is undeterminable. This is because it is very difficult to differentiate between real scholarship and a pretender to knowledge. Here he refers to how the hidden talent of John Opie, the painter, was discovered by Dr. Wolcot. It shows that outward appearances do not always convey the whole truth. People can make false pretences and it is difficult to pick the real from the false.

The fact that intellectual progress is much slower than progress in mechanical tasks leaves him discontent. He recalls the performances of the famous rope-dancer Richer, in the once famous theatre hall in north London, Sadler's Wells. He was captivated by the incomparable performance of Richer who could perform with natural suavity, skill and elegance.

At that time, Hazlitt was engaged in copying a picture of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was a renowned portrait painter of his times. But he was not happy with his own reproduction as many parts of his drawing were messy and poorly done. It was immediately discernible to him that had the rope-dancer performed with such inaccuracy and clumsiness, he would have ended up breaking his neck long ago. The agility and prowess are obtainable through consistent practice and experimentation. So, is dancing on a tight rope an easy task? If anyone feels so may try his hand at it.

In such acts, success or failure is easily discernible, and so is detectable the exact point in which perfection is achieved. Either the thing is done or not done, just as a man aiming at a target may hit it or miss it. If he continuously falls short of the target or hits much beyond the range, he cannot claim to be making progress. Everything is clearly visible leaving no scope for doubt. He cannot hoodwink himself by giving lame excuses for his failure. Hazlitt quotes from Goldsmith's poem *The Deserted Village* where he talks about a village schoolmaster who carries on with his arguments even after being defeated. The actual lines of Goldsmith's poem go this way:

“In arguing too, the parson owned his skill

For e'en tho' vanquished, he could argue still”.

Stop to Consider

Hazlitt often quotes from the works of earlier writers as seen in this case. You can make a list of the number of times he makes reference to the works of other writers.

Fear of danger, disgrace, defeat, and exposure to ridicule serve as stimuli to attainment of perfection. Here there is absolutely no space for carelessness, self-deception, wastage of time or giving in to the vagaries of the mind. In the case of the juggler, the slightest mistake can lead to injury. But if the author makes a grievous error in judgement and presents a poor contrast of ideas, he will not be physically hurt. But he faces a greater challenge, i.e. validating a truth. Diplomacy in presenting things can be more challenging than even a double-edged sword.

If an Indian juggler is told that he will gain entry into Paradise if he throws himself under the wheels of the vehicle carrying the idol of the Lord, he will believe it and there is no way to disprove it. So, the Brahmins come up with many such dogmas to vociferate for their truths, and there is no way to prove otherwise. But such a thing can never happen in a theatre hall in London, where the actual performance every time is, in fact, the evidence of the expertise of

Stop to consider

Hazlitt here refers to the custom of carrying the idol of Lord Jagannath in an open vehicle for all to revere. Lord Jagannath is the principal deity of the temple at Puri in Orissa, India.

the performer. The regular exertion makes the body comply with the increasing demands to effectuate a perfect synchronisation in movements. The resultant is that, the limbs move with mathematical precision just as Locksley in Sir Walter Scott's novel, *Ivanhoe*, who is known for his skill in archery.

Perfection in mathematical exercises mean, reaching a certain fixed level of excellence. This level is fixed by the performer himself, as per his ability. There is no standard difficulty or excellence level. For eg., in the case of the Indian juggler, his level of perfection is his ability to keep up four balls in the air at the same time. This level is determined by him alone. Adding a fifth ball will be a disaster. He strives to surpass himself and not another.

But an artist seeks to imitate another, to copy what Nature has set before him in its entirety and flawlessness. So, the work of the artist is more difficult than that of the juggler.

Reynolds deserves greater esteem than Richer. There will be more people who will be able to perform like Richer than paint like Reynolds.

Reynolds may have been incompetent in his profession, but he had a harder task-master to obey i.e. Nature. A child can be trained to become an acrobat, but not so to become a painter. Many Haydons and Hoppners (contemporary painters for whom Hazlitt had little admiration) may be produced through instruction and training, but they would be lacking the genius of Reynolds. This is where mechanical skills end and fine arts begin.

Check your Progress

Whom does Hazlitt consider more superior and why?

The spiritual beauty and the communing with the divine, which is ephemeral, resides in our hearts. But to capture all these ennobling qualities in art can be done only by a genius. Such harmony emerges from within and cannot be taught or sought outside. If one tries to do so, artistic cohesion is lost. Such splendid creations, such sublime art, can only be perceived in the mind's eye.

A true artist is one who can interpret the language of Nature with its manifold meanings in relation to different objects and situations. The eye alone cannot differentiate the subtle nuances of colour in a painting. Only when seen from the core of the heart, the colours become enlivened. Hazlitt adopts lines from a letter to Walpole by Thomas Gray to explain his point.

The exalted, exquisite and sublime part of art can be perceived only when Nature is seen through the medium of sentiment and passion. This is because all objects take shape through our emotions which are fastened in inseparable links. Only the Muse can explain such mystical connections. The sensibility awakened thrills every nerve and cell of the body.

Stop to Consider

You can see how at first Hazlitt applauded the proficiency of the juggler saying that he is equal to none. Then he turns round to say that fine arts are superior to mechanical performances.

This power is genius. Genius is unverifiable. The closest to measuring mechanical excellence in painting may be seen in the handling of colours by certain Dutch painters. The brush strokes may appear faultless, but

after a certain point, despite the excellence, it falls short of taste and genius. The human mind falters, as if lost in a strange road or engulfed in thick mist. He finds himself in a pitiful state of ignorance, with more failures than triumphs. Just as Satan in *Paradise Lost* lies stunned in Hell after his Fall, the Dutch painter trudges along strenuously in search of victory.

Cleverness is the natural ability to do a thing which requires no effort or practice. It is a ready skill, as is seen in people making puns, epigrams, extempore verses and mimicry. Cleverness is associated with smartness.

Accomplishments are acquired qualities and can be easily exhibited like, dancing, riding, fencing and music. These can be acquired by anybody having interest as well as the means to pursue them. Hazlitt here makes mention of a person, who in all probability was Leigh Hunt. If the latter would have been born in an estate with a large annual income, he would have ended up being the most accomplished gentleman of his day, because of his graceful manners and generous disposition. He would have been a popular man, an agreeable companion, written enjoyable things, engaged in debate, played card games, sung songs and led the orchestra. He could be comparable to Rochester without his vice or a modern-day Surrey. This individual is too versatile to stick to a single profession. Neither is he so dull as to join politics, nor too light-hearted, or heedless to make money.

Stop to consider

Earl of Rochester was a courtier of Charles II. He was a writer of love lyrics but notorious for his profligacy.

Henry Howard was the Earl of Surrey, a courtier in the court of Henry VIII. He introduced blank verse into English poetry. Along with Sir Thomas Wyatt, he also composed the first English sonnets.

Talent is the ability to do anything that requires application and hard work, like, writing a critique, making a speech or studying law. Talent is voluntary power whereas genius is involuntary.

The difference between an ingenious man and a great man is that the former can show his cleverness in worthy or insignificant things, whereas the latter will show his inventiveness only in weighty matters. For eg. Themistocles who was a great Athenian general could transform a small city into a glorious one.

Check your Progress

According to Hazlitt, what are the differences between cleverness, talent, genius, accomplishments and ingenuity?

A person is great who has mighty powers of influence over others. His greatness cannot remain hidden. Greatness emerges from one's immense inner potential and pervades everywhere to the boundless limits of time and space. Greatness radiates in all directions in ever increasing circles. If greatness is restricted to a single lifetime, then that person is only half-great. Greatness extends into eternity.

People can acquire temporary greatness. For eg. a king who is considered a great man, is not in any real sense, great. He is just a ruler administering his kingdom, exercising unlimited powers as long as he lives. Anybody in his place can do the similar work. However, this is the idea of greatness that is imprinted in the minds of common folk. No wonder the country girl was disappointed when she saw a king, who had the likeness of an ordinary man.

Greatness is when great power is directed to fulfilling noble purposes. A great person's thoughts are nobler than himself. A person can perform an astounding task and do multiple calculations in the mind. This will display his physical and mental acumen. Such mind-blowing acts, however, cannot capture the imagination. Admiration is always founded on actual, undeniable proofs. When a mathematician finds a solution to a problem, he adds to existing knowledge. Therein lies his greatness.

Stop to Consider

See how Hazlitt explains through numerous examples what are the attributes of a great person.

Similarly, a poet achieves greatness in the sense that he leaves an imprint on the minds of his readers through his creative imagery. A person like Jedediah Buxton will be soon forgotten despite possessing an uncanny ability for mental calculations. But a person like John Napier will be forever remembered for his invention of logarithms.

Those people have claims to greatness who have made contributions to society, whether they be philosophers, conquerors, inventors or geniuses

in their respective fields. Hazlitt here names Shakespeare, Newton, Bacon, Milton, Cromwell, and even Moliere and Cervantes as great men for their distinguished merits. Their achievements will never be lost to posterity.

An astute chess player is not a great man because he has not contributed anything to the world. His greatness is short-lived, it dies with him. Same is the case with other skills. Hazlitt wonders if actors have any claims to greatness. In this regard, Mrs. Siddons, a British actress, is an exception. Her brilliant portrayal of many Shakespearean women characters leaves a lasting impression. Otherwise, a man who excels in his profession need not be a great man, unless others can delve deep and understand the influences at work which go into making him a great professional. A medical man like John Hunter is a great man because of his surgical skills just like the precision of Michelangelo's art.

Stop to consider

Lord Nelson was an Admiral of the British navy who defeated the French in the famous Battle of Trafalgar (1805).

Sir Humphry Davy was a scientist who invented the safety lamp.

Hazlitt did not care much about Lord Nelson or Sir Humphry Davy because he did not feel benefitted by their contributions. The comments made by fanatics or polemical writers always have limitations. Again, a rich man is considered great only by his dependents. Similarly, a lord is considered great because of his renowned lineage.

There can be two viewpoints in this matter which the author explains through narrating the reactions of two bishops visiting St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. The first bishop, on first entering the cathedral, was intimidated by the grandeur and magnificence of the structure. But gradually his mind was able to incorporate the enormous proportions of the place. and he felt at ease. The second bishop, on the other hand, felt dwarfed by the majestic edifice. This is how great and little minds work. The first bishop is comparable to Cardinal Wolsey, who was a famous minister in the court of Henry VIII. The second bishop is likened to a begging monk. With the exception of Moliere, Rabelais and Montaigne, Hazlitt finds the French to having little minds.

Stop to consider

Moliere was a celebrated French writer of comedies.

Rabelais was a famous French Renaissance writer.

After his long digression, Hazlitt brings himself back to track and proceeds to conclude by quoting an article from the *Examiner*. The article celebrates the death of John Cavanagh, a famous fives-player of his times.

Stop to consider

Fives is a ball game played by hand in an enclosed court in singles and doubles.

The article says that Cavanagh was such a brilliant player that his demise will leave a vacuum in society. He is the unrivalled master of the game. People may think that striking a ball against a wall may be a matter of little significance compared to delivering speeches, writing poetry or making money. But the game provides the best exercise for the body. It gives repose to the mind as well. At the moment the game is played, all other concerns of life are forgotten. The only focus is on striking the ball. Such mental and physical adroitness keeps one youthful.

Cavanagh was a specialist, who was very sure of his movements and ability. The ball was always under his control and he seemed to be able to direct it at will. With his agility and skilfulness, he could easily defeat his opponent. Just as an orator is never at a loss for words, Cavanagh could read precisely what force and direction was required by the ball. He never lost his cool, was never indecisive, never clumsy and never deviated from his target. He was a game changer who could beat his adversary even when the other was at the point of winning. He could challenge two players together, or play with his left hand and still win.

Stop to Consider

See how Hazlitt describes in detail and with examples the extraordinary competence of the player.

By profession Cavanagh was a house-painter. On one occasion, he was invited to play by a person who did not recognise him. Cavanagh was winning point after point leaving the other baffled. He did not understand how after giving his best performance he failed to score. Later, when he recognised Cavanagh, he realised the futility of his attempts and immediately surrendered.

The only person who could match with Cavanagh's blazing strokes was the racket-player, John Davies. It appeared to the spectators that the ball followed him rather than he the ball. He could play simultaneously with four players and emerge the winner. He was not only a racket-player but also an exceptional tennis and fives player.

Cavanagh died of a rupture in his blood vessel which left him infirm for the last two or three years of his life. He seemed to be recovering when suddenly death carried him off. Everyone who knew him was grief-stricken. He was a fervent Catholic whose tribute consisted of lines adapted from Wordsworth.

SAQ

What does Hazlitt mean by great minds and little minds? Exemplify from the text.

Why does Hazlitt consider an artist to be superior to a performer of mechanical tricks?

What is greatness according to Hazlitt? Give examples.

5.6 Summing Up

An attempt has been made here to fulfil the objectives of the study. An introduction to the author has been provided for better understanding of the life and the spirit of Hazlitt's time.

The literary tradition of the previous age is touched upon as well as the changes in theme and style of writing brought in by the new Renaissance. The social, economic and literary background is given so that the context of writing is understood by the student. This is followed by enumerating the characteristic style and the subject matters chosen by the author. An elaborate explanation of the text is given so that the student can read it before the examination without having to go through the main text again. There are pauses where the student is made to ponder on certain aspects and also self-questioning to check the progress. The bibliography provided below will be of help to the more enthusiastic learner.

5.7 References and Suggested Reading

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Unit 6

William Hazlitt: The Indian Jugglers

Supplementary Unit

Unit Structure :

6.1 Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 How to Approach Hazlitt

6.4 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

6.5 Critical Reception

6.6 Summing Up

6.7 References and Suggested Reading

6.1 Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Appreciate Hazlitt's prose style
- Understand Hazlitt's situation in contemporary climate
- Answer questions based on Hazlitt's prose
- Gain an understanding of Hazlitt's critical reception

6.2 Introduction

Hazlitt was a famous English essayist of the early 19th century. To understand him one has to delve deep into the spirit of his times, the social and literary background as well as the influences that had gone to the making of the man. Hazlitt is also to be studied keeping in mind the history of the development of the essay as a literary form.

The history of essay writing can be said to begin with Montaigne in 16th century France. Montaigne was a philosopher during the time of the French Renaissance who started writing essays on subjective matters in his collection entitled *Essais* (1580). He was influenced by Cicero, Horace, Seneca, Socrates and Virgil among others. Humanism, which was a characteristic feature of the Renaissance, finds expression in his writings. Montaigne was also known for his open and frank manner of

voicing his thoughts.

The tradition of Montaigne was carried on by Francis Bacon, who can be said to be the earliest English essayist. His *Essays* (the first edition of which appeared at the end of the 16th century), are specimens of wisdom gained from the author's own experiences and insights. The impersonal essays of Bacon are a contrast to the subjective essays of Montaigne. As Bacon was a moralist, his essays are didactic in nature. As to his style of writing, he chose the Senecan style discarding the Ciceronian style with its embellishments. His is a compressed, concise style known for its brevity and lucidity.

Thomas Browne was a 17th century English writer known for his work *Religio Medici* among others. Browne was influenced by the scientific mode of enquiry expounded by Bacon. He also refined upon the Senecan style adopted by Bacon and wrote in a graceful language. Browne's prose is known for its rich texture. Unlike Bacon, he used circumlocution in developing a topic or an idea. He made countless references to the Bible, ancient mythology and classical history. He also infused his writings with Latinisms which give evidence of his erudition. There is something musical in his sonorous prose.

The greatest achievements in the genre of English essay writing of the 18th century were the contributions made by Richard Steele and Joseph Addison. These two writers were the pioneers of the Periodical Essay. This was the period of the Restoration. Just like the Restoration playwrights who sought to ridicule the artificiality and false pretensions of the people of the times through their Comedy of Manners, so also Steele and Addison intended to expose the false arts of Restoration life through their articles in magazines. Both these writers used the medium of prose to write on the topics of the day, including gossip of the clubs, politics, the contemporary news, fashion, literature, theatre and the like. Along with featuring life in London, these writers also incorporated the old-fashioned country life. The essays of Addison and Steele were especially addressed to the middle class with the intention of popularising morality among the masses.

Steele came up with the idea of publishing a journal on a regular basis to include his light essays. The resultant was the *Tatler*, the first number of which appeared on April 12, 1709. It immediately gained immense popularity. However, it was discontinued after about two years, and on March 1, 1711, the *Spectator* made its appearance. Steele was himself regarded as Mr. Spectator and Addison gave a sketch of his character. The Spectator Club was introduced with a lot of fictional characters constituting the members of the club.

Hazlitt learned from each of these forerunners. He especially followed

the style of Montaigne, writing on subjective themes. There is the note of the autobiographical in him. In this he is similar to Lamb, who can be called the father of the autobiographical essay. Hazlitt was interested in a broad range of subjects. Unlike Montaigne or Bacon or even the periodical essayists, he did not resort to sanctimonious moralising.

Like his antecedents Bacon and Browne, Hazlitt made abundant use of quotations in his writings. Bacon's essays reveal brevity and compactness of thought. Hazlitt, too, sometimes made use of epigrams. But most of the time he wrote with ease, without

bothering himself with length or space. He allowed himself sufficient room for the expansion of his thoughts. Sometimes his language was argumentative when he tried to convince the reader. He wrote with deep feeling in an informal style. He may be lacking the conciseness of Bacon, the resonance of Browne and the humour of Addison, but Hazlitt wrote with an openheartedness that reflected the Romantic Revival of the early 19th century.

6.3 How to approach Hazlitt

At first glance, prose looks easier to comprehend than poetry. This is because prose follows the natural flow of speech used in everyday life, without the metrical structure and the figurative language of poetry. A prose piece is expected to have more clarity than poetry.

However, this does not mean that all prose writers make use of the same style of writing. There may be different variations adopted by different prose writers according to the choice and suitability of their themes. The selection of vocabulary, structure of sentences and logical sequencing are determined by the kind of writing, whether a piece is a simple narrative, a personalised account or an exposition of a profound philosophy.

The essay is a form of prose writing where the author develops an idea, and using argument and analysis comes to a conclusion. The subject matter of an essay can be anything. The style of essay writing can be either formal or informal.

In the genre of the Personal or Familiar essay, Hazlitt is the foremost master in English. As an essayist he belonged to that English tradition of writing that runs through Steele, Addison and Johnson. But he was equally influenced by Bacon, Browne, Walton and the French writer, Montaigne. It was Montaigne who had popularised the essay as a literary genre.

Hazlitt owed his writing career to Coleridge who was his friend and whom he greatly admired. Both were literary critics who also understood

the importance of writing in journals. Hazlitt was a child of Romanticism, like the great poets Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. Just like these poets, he was also inspired by the ideals of Rousseau. Moreover, he was inspired by the American ideas of democracy and freedom as well as the radicalism of Napoleon whom he held in very high esteem.

The restricted world of his 18th century predecessors had limited the possibilities of literary outpourings. But with the Romantic Revival, originality of thought and spontaneity in the expression of emotions became the hallmarks of any creative activity.

Hazlitt was interested in a wide range of subjects like painting, poetry, philosophy, politics, dramatic criticism, human skills and the world of Nature. He had tried his hand at painting before stepping into the world of literature. Some of his delightful essays include *On Going a Journey*, *On the Pleasures of Painting*, *On Reading Old Books*, *My First Acquaintance with Poets* and *The Indian Jugglers*. Other than these endearing topics, Hazlitt also wrote on serious and more formal topics like, his discourses on Sir Joshua Reynolds and his observations on the sonnets of Milton.

Hazlitt's essays were autobiographical in nature. They expressed his subjective impression of things, his likes and dislikes, his opinions and prejudices. The informal style of the Personal Essay opened up many possibilities to record his interest in a variety of things like books, sports, pictures and the theatre. In his essays Hazlitt tried to converse with his readers, trying to open up their minds to things he was passionate about.

In the essay *The Indian Jugglers* Hazlitt chose to describe the Indian juggler who performs with astonishing meticulousness. From a detailed description of the manoeuvres of the juggler, he goes on to talk about his own incapability to accomplish anything of worth. The author discerns the differences between cleverness, talent, ingenuity, accomplishment, genius and greatness. He also explains with examples the workings of great and little minds. The essay ends with praises for a deceased fives- player, who was an unsurpassed master of the game.

Starting in a light vein on a seemingly trivial subject, Hazlitt moves on to serious thought-provoking analysis of what is real art. The dexterity of the mechanical performer is contrasted with the creative finesse of the artist, whether he is a painter or a poet. The expertise of the mechanical performer could be acquired through rigorous and consistent practice over a long duration of time. But artistic excellence can neither be taught nor acquired. It has to radiate from within the inner core of the creator's heart. One can see how the author proceeds from one thought to the other carrying the reader with him.

One important aspect of Hazlitt's essays is the abundance of quotations and references he brings in to substantiate his writing. These references are extracted from the works of early writers like Milton, Addison, Goldsmith, Shakespeare and so many others. At the same time, he also refers to contemporary personages with the intention of sometimes satirising them, or sometimes praising them for their merits. Though the satirical vein runs through his writings occasionally, his satire is never bitter or scathing like Pope.

In the present essay, Hazlitt borrows lines and ideas from myriad writers like Sophocles, Horace, Shakespeare, Milton, Addison, Pope, Goldsmith, Gray and Wordsworth. He also makes direct and indirect references to a number of people like John Opie, Peter Pindar, Richer, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Robert Haydon, John Hoppner, Leigh Hunt, Earl of Rochester, Surrey, Themistocles, Jedediah Buxton, John Napier, Newton, Sir Walter Scott, Bacon, Cromwell, Moliere, Rabelais, Montaigne, Cervantes, Mrs. Siddons, John Hunter, Michaelangelo, Lord Nelson, Sir Humphry Davy, John Cavanagh, Henry Brougham, George Canning and John Davies.

Hazlitt refers to all these personages to show comparison and disparity. His admiration and disapproval of them finds clear expression. For example, he holds some of these people in very high esteem for their remarkable gifts to mankind, such as, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Shakespeare, Newton, Bacon, Milton, Moliere, Cervantes, Cromwell, John Hunter, John Napier, John Cavanagh and John Davies. At the same time, his disapproval of some others also finds expression. For example, he does not have very high regard for Robert Haydon, John Hoppner or George Canning. Again, he was not much impressed by the achievements of people like Lord Nelson or Sir Humphry Davy. This shows the prejudice of the man. His bigotry also finds evidence in his denunciation of the French, with the exception of Moliere, Rabelais and Montaigne, as possessing "little minds".

His essays project to the reader the passion and conviction which the author tries to convey. Sometimes he does so in such a way that he tends to be repetitive. In the present essay, he goes on describing the skill and prowess of the juggler to the point of tedium. This discloses his argumentative style. Unless and until he convinces the reader, he carries on with his suppositions. He also makes use of comparisons. He compares the rapidity of the movement of the brass balls in the hands of the juggler to planets, meteors, flowers, ribbons and serpents.

Again, as Hazlitt follows his heart as he writes, sometimes while pursuing a line of thought, he digresses from the main point. In this essay, he goes on explaining the attributes of a great man with numerous examples

almost forgetting to end the essay. He excuses himself for digressing and returns to conclude the essay.

Hazlitt was a most productive writer, but humour seldom finds place in his writings. His essays are, more or less, serious in nature. The congenial good humour of Chaucer is missing. But despite the shortcomings, what gives charm to Hazlitt's writings are his liveliness, passion, eagerness and enthusiasm. His keen sense of observation and eye for detail finds evidence in the vividness of his descriptions. Hazlitt's essays are striking for their felicity of perception and frankness of expression.

6.4 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

1. How was Hazlitt influenced by the spirit of his times and his association with the writers of his age?

Hazlitt lived at a time when many changes were occurring in the political, social and economic lives of the people. It was the time of the American War of Independence (1775-1783), the French Revolution (1789) and the Napoleonic Wars culminating in the defeat of the conqueror in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. The ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity flooded the intellectual minds all over Europe, with Rousseau taking the lead in attacking the existing social order. Hazlitt along with Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey were inspired by these ideals of freedom and democracy. But soon the optimism gave way to disillusionment.

Sweeping changes occurred in society as a result of the continuous wars which drained the economy. There was rise in the price of corn which adversely affected the lives of the bulk of working population. The Industrial Revolution, though led to increase in production, also sounded the death knell of the cottage industry as well as the smaller industries. As a consequence, the old social fabric disintegrated, leading to the rise of a new urban community. The agricultural sector was also affected with increasing mechanization in the cultivation process.

Migration of people took place from the village to the town in search of livelihood. Villages were now no longer self-sufficient. A new industrial class of workers, like factory hands and miners emerged. The increase in population also led to out-of-country migration and eventual colonisation of new lands like Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

On the one hand, there was the rise of the middle class, and, on the other, the upper class grew richer. Wealth increased for the landed gentry because of their huge margins of profits. It also brought prosperity to the engineers and other skilled personnel working in industries. The

dichotomy between the rich and the poor, the owners and the workers increased. There was also a rise in the standard of living and growth of education.

Against this backdrop of social security brought in by increase of wealth, adequate time and space for leisure unfolded. This was, therefore, the age of the literary pursuits of such distinguished writers like Jane Austen, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Shelley, Keats and so many others. Most of these writers along with Hazlitt had explored the writings of their predecessors. An interest in literary criticism also cropped up among the writers. Wordsworth's *Preface to the Literary Ballads* (1798), Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817) and Hazlitt's criticism of the Shakespearean characters were produced.

This was the age of Romanticism which was a revolt against the neo-classical poetry of the eighteenth century. The end of the century saw the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) which was a joint venture of Wordsworth and Coleridge. This anthology marked a fresh departure from the conventional literary standards of the yesteryears. Their poetry brought about originality and spontaneity missing in the earlier poetry of Dryden and Pope. It opened up new possibilities to include the vast range of subjects hitherto impeded by the limitations of the previous age. Along with poetry, this was also the age of the landscape painters. In the field of essay writing too, the new literary movement had its impact. The Periodical Essay which was invented a century earlier reached its artistic excellence in the essays of Addison and Steele. Essay and literary criticism gained ground in prose writing.

Hazlitt's contemporary, Charles Lamb, explored the essay form which he found to be most suitable because of its informality. He made use of this form of writing as an intensely personal thing to express his thoughts and feelings, his character and opinions, and his likes and dislikes. He rose to fame for his *Essays of Elia* (1823) which was a series of essays that started being published in the *London Magazine*. Other prose writers of Hazlitt's time were Leigh Hunt, Thomas De Quincey and Thomas Love Peacock. Journalistic writing also became popular during this time. Hazlitt's first contributions were published in *Examiner*, the editor of which was Leigh Hunt.

Some aspects of contemporary English thought found reflection in two of the most famous publications of the day, the *Quarterly Review* and the *Edinburgh Review*. The latter, with its Whig affiliation, started its publication in 1802. The former was a totally Tory organ founded in 1809. Hazlitt made contributions to the *Edinburgh Review*. Many writers of the time gained wide readership through their publications in other

periodicals like *Examiner*, *Morning Chronicle* and *London Magazine*.

This was the time of the rising middle class and expansion of education. This resulted in the setting up of more printing and publishing houses. Increase in the reading public generated book clubs, reading rooms and circulating libraries. The publisher is now on the lookout for new writers and started commissioning them to contribute to their printed columns. The equation between the publisher and the writer became solely one of profit. The emergence of the professional writer happened at this time unlike the earlier occasional writer. Hazlitt himself took to writing as the sole means of livelihood despite undergoing struggling phases in his entire writing career.

So, it can be seen how Hazlitt's writings were conditioned by the social scenario of his times and how his association with the contemporary literary figures moulded his literary career.

2. Consider Hazlitt as the master of the familiar style.

Hazlitt is the master of the familiar style or the informal style of writing. He adopted this style from Montaigne. This style is one which is devoid of all ornamentation and grandiloquence. He writes simple, lucid prose. He invites the reader as one invites a guest and tries to make him feel comfortable. This is done by endorsing a conversational idiom which makes the reader feel at ease. There is absolutely no pretentiousness, no pomposity and no new coinages. Everything is written in a natural manner easily understandable by the reader.

In his own words Hazlitt describes his style as one which "...utterly rejects not only all unmeaning pomp, but all low, cant phrases, and loose, unconnected, *slipshod* allusions. It is not to take the first word that offers, but the best word in common use; it is not to throw words together in any combinations we please, but to follow and avail ourselves of the true idiom of the language. To write a genuine familiar or truly English style is to write as anyone would speak in common conversation, who had a thorough command and choice of words, or who could discourse with ease, force, and perspicuity, setting aside all pedantic and oratorical flourishes."

As the essay starts, the reader is carried off to the charming world of the Indian juggler. With no elaborate introduction, the author starts straight away and describes at length how the juggler rotates the four brass balls with his hands. The vividness of the description leaves the reader fascinated as he/she luxuriates in the visual imagery generated. All this is done through the evocative language.

However, his style is not monotonous. It varies from subject to subject. The reader travels with him as he proceeds from one thought to another, from one theme to the next. In philosophical matters he uses a sombre style, whereas in subjective matters he writes with intensity of feeling. In his descriptions he selects words which give clear ocular impressions.

There is a boldness in his manner of writing which is a reflection of his fiercely independent spirit. He proceeds with a sense of deep conviction which he tries to impose upon the reader, as if trying to convince him to agree to his propositions and reasoning. In order to achieve this, he goes on explaining to the point of being repetitive. Sometimes, he becomes argumentative and forceful, propelling the reader into accepting his analysis and rationale.

Another distinctive feature of Hazlitt's style is his abundant use of quotations. He borrows from writers of all ages from the ancients to his contemporaries. Either he uses quotations from the works of the different writers, or misquotes from them to draw similarities with what he is trying to say. His essays are interspersed with lots of references.

[Refer to answer of ques. no. 3]

Hazlitt is however, not very careful about sentence construction. His sentences are long and loosely constructed. Sometimes, when he follows a train of thought, he tries to incorporate everything within a single sentence as if a break will interrupt the flow. As he describes the manipulating of the four balls, he makes many comparisons which make the sentence grow to the length of a paragraph. Similar is the case with his long paragraphs. He lacks the art of dividing his material into proper paragraphs. He deviates from the main point through frequent excursions into apparently unrelated matter. His ramblings can sometimes become tiresome.

Despite the flaws, one has to agree that there is honesty, energy and eloquence in his writings. The unconstrained writing makes Hazlitt a friend of the reader.

3. What, according to Hazlitt, is genius? How is it different from cleverness, talent, accomplishment and ingenuity? Why does Hazlitt consider an artist to be superior to a juggler?

According to Hazlitt, creative power is genius. It is an involuntary power which an artist possesses. Creativity requires originality. It is different from mere imitation. Neither it can be acquired even through repeated practice.

The performance of the Indian juggler who can easily keep four brass balls up in the air and the rope-dancer, Richer, who can balance himself on a tight-rope, provide visual delight for the spectators. Such acts are worthy

of enormous acclaim. It makes one marvel at the immense human potential to reach such measure of brilliance. But the performer does it all with ease, grace and merriment. He is almost amused by the incredulous looks in the eyes of the audience. A perfect synchronisation of eyes, limbs and the body are displayed. Such superb acts are the result of long years of trials, applications and devoted practice. Here there is something extraordinarily remarkable which any average person will fail to accomplish.

Yet the acrobat or the juggler falls short of the real creative artist. Hazlitt gives the example of the paintings of Sir Joshua Reynolds. His level of excellence cannot be obtained by any mechanical performer. A juggler or a rope-dancer can carry out stupendous feats. But there are limitations as to their merits. Their mastery can be gained by anybody having interest in the act, and who is willing to put in long years of rigorous and diligent efforts.

But to reach the heights of Reynolds's perfection one has to have an inner talent, an unbridled spontaneity and a divine faculty. These things cannot be taught or imparted through training. An artist creates by imitating Nature, which itself is perfect and unblemished. A true artist can transcribe the language of Nature in the right spirit and capture it in his creation. This power is *gusto* according to Hazlitt. An imaginative and original work is suffused with divine inspiration and deep feelings.

In a mechanical performance, the success or failure is visible to the eye. One can be awe-struck looking at the amazing moves, the balance and the astuteness. The eye alone can pronounce judgement in such cases.

But in the case of fine arts, the beholder has to have greater faculties of examination and understanding. In such a case, the eye is just the medium. What really determines the true worth of the piece is the sensitivity arising from the core of one's inner being. The emotions triggered within the heart of the respondent, the awakening of a feeling of exhilaration at having witnessed such brilliance make fine arts a more sublime form of art. Not only the creator, but also the admirer has to have greater faculties of refinement and taste. There exists an inextricable connection between the mind and the heart both in the artist and the viewer.

In the case of a juggler or an acrobat, the fear of defeat, danger and disgrace gives impetus for a flawless output. A failure can even result in physical injury. But there is no such fear in the artist. Perhaps his only fear is losing his imaginative capability or his creative inventiveness. This power is termed *genius* by Hazlitt, and it is in no way similar to the expertise of the mechanical entertainer.

Genius is, however, not cleverness. Cleverness is a natural ability possessed by some people to do certain things. For example, a clever person can instantaneously come up with intelligent words and expressions. He can make puns, epigrams, extempore verses and do mimicry. A clever person has a ready intellect.

In complete contrast to it, is accomplishment. Accomplishment is always acquired. One can be an accomplished player, dancer or musician. However, one should have an interest in that field and must be willing to pursue it sincerely. An interested person should also get the right opportunity and means to learn from the masters. Here Hazlitt gives an example of a person known to him who had all the potential to be a most accomplished gentleman of his age. Had he the means to pursue his interests he would have excelled in debate, games and music.

Talent is somewhat similar to accomplishment in the sense that it requires hard work to bloom. For example, one can be talented in writing a critical piece, delivering a speech or studying law. A talented person is a gifted person. It is voluntary power.

Hazlitt says that “ingenuity is genius in trifles, greatness is genius in undertakings of much pith and moment”. An ingenious man will exhibit his power in all kinds of matters irrespective of significance or insignificance. But a truly great man will show his innovation and originality on matters of import.

Thus, Hazlitt explains the qualities and nature of each of these abilities.

4. What, according to Hazlitt, are the attributes of a great person? What are great minds and little minds?

According to Hazlitt, a great person is one whose has great powers of influence over others. His activities can shape the destinies of nations and produce far-reaching consequences. His influence is immense and extends to all eternity. The contributions of a great man are never forgotten but cherished by people for generations to come. Greatness originates in a person and radiates in all directions. It cannot remain confined within a limited boundary.

As Hazlitt says, “Greatness is great power, producing great effects”. The greatness of a person can never go unnoticed, neither can it remain hidden. The noble objective of a great person is to make valuable contribution to society, to leave the world a richer place. A great man always cultivates and nurtures lofty, sublime thoughts, thoughts that extend beyond his own self. His contributions are worthy of admiration and appreciation by one and all alike.

The author then gives a number of examples to illustrate greatness. A good poet is a great person because his poetry leaves a lasting impression upon the minds of the readers. A mathematician who has solved a problem is a great person because his successful research has added to knowledge. He cites the example of John Napier who has invented logarithms. Similarly, Shakespeare, Newton, Milton, Cromwell, Bacon, Cervantes and Moliere are great in their respective fields. The doctor, John Hunter, is great because of his expertise in performing surgeries just like Michelangelo is great because of his precision in art. The Athenian general of ancient times, Themistocles, was a great man as he converted a small city into a great one.

If the greatness of a person remains restricted to only a single lifetime, then that person cannot be considered to be a great man. Such a person is only half great. Again, temporary greatness is not real greatness. A king is not a great man simply because he is a king. He may have authority over his subjects and his kingdom. Anyone given such command to rule can do so. There is nothing great about it. Just as a village girl was disappointed at seeing the king who looked like any other man, so also, the idea of greatness associated with royalty is a misconception.

Hazlitt gives many more examples to elucidate his point. A rich man is regarded as a great man only by his dependents. A lord appears to be great because of his famed ancestry. But such people are not great because they have not in any way enriched the world by their contributions. A coxcomb can never aspire for greatness. Similar is the case of a polemical writer.

There may be very gifted people who can have exceptional qualities. Their extraordinary calibre can win them a lot of applause. For example, a person like Jedediah Buxton had the unique ability to do mathematical calculations in the mind with accuracy and rapidity. A skilled chess player can be admired for his brilliant moves. But both these people cannot be called great men for the simple reason that they have nothing to contribute for the betterment of society. So, their achievements would soon be forgotten.

There is another category of persons who had benefitted others through their acquirements. Hazlitt here gives examples of Lord Nelson and Sir Humphry Davy. Nelson, the British admiral, won accolades for his country by defeating the French in 1805 in the famous Battle of Trafalgar. Sir Humphry Davy also became famous for his scientific invention, the safety lamp. Both these men won recognition for their successes in their respective fields. Yet Hazlitt was not impressed by their activities as he felt them to be too limiting. Hence, according to him, they lack greatness.

Hazlitt explains that there exists two kinds of human minds, great mind and little mind. These two kinds of minds do not operate the same way. A great mind can accommodate perceptions of a bigger magnitude than a little mind. He illustrates this with yet another example. Two bishops were visiting St. Peter's Basilica in Rome for the first time. On first stepping inside the cathedral, the first priest was wonderstruck by the majesty of the whole edifice. But, as he gradually wandered along, he could absorb the immense dimensions of the whole place in his mind. Soon he started to feel at home within the interior of the grand structure.

But just the opposite happened in the case of the second priest. This fellow was so disconcerted by the imposing structure that he felt tiny and insignificant. His mind felt unequal to take in the surroundings, leaving him with a feeling of discomfiture. The first bishop is compared to Cardinal Wolsey who was a famous minister in the court of the English monarch, Henry VIII. The second bishop is likened to a begging friar. The author says that, with the exception of Moliere, Rabelais and Montaigne, the French people in general have little minds. This shows that Hazlitt does not hold the French in very high esteem.

Thus, the essayist enumerates the different qualities that constitutes greatness. Unlike a little mind, a great mind has unlimited capacities, muses on lofty ideals, works for greater societal benefits, commands power over others and leaves impact that lasts into eternity.

6.5 Critical Reception

William Hazlitt's writings won the acclaim of many later writers and critics. Some of the comments provide a better insight into the man and the writer.

According to George Sampson, 'His [Hazlitt's] collected works occupy about six thousand printed pages, none of which are completely unreadable, most of which are exceedingly readable, and many of which are perpetually readable' (*The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*). Commenting on his style, Sampson also says in *Hazlitt: Selected Essays* that, 'Hazlitt's frequent epigrammatic brilliance is never false glitter. Some later essayists have been tempted to say brilliant things, not because they are true but merely because they are brilliant. Hazlitt is guiltless of this bid for applause'.

Oliver Elton talks about Hazlitt's spontaneity and says that his quotations '....do not sound dragged-in or hackneyed, but rather gracious and racy, because they are as much a part of the writer's mental furniture as

his own diction' (*A Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830, Vol. II*).

J. Zeitlin in his Introduction to *Hazlitt on English Literature* sums up Hazlitt's style as 'easy yet incisive, lively and at the same time substantial, buoyant without being frothy, glittering but with no tinsel frippery, a style combining the virtues of homeliness and picturesqueness'.

David Daiches in his *A Critical History of English Literature, Vol. IV*, says that 'Hazlitt wrote what he thought on life as on letters, the mood and subject varying between good-natured observation, rapt reminiscence, irascible complaint, vivid description, enthusiastic demonstration of literary quality, and many others. His celebrated "gusto" was real: he had a relish for experience and the literary skill to convey it'.

One of the greatest novelists of the 19th century, Robert Louis Stevenson, rightly says of Hazlitt that 'Though we are mighty fine fellows now-a-days, we cannot write like William Hazlitt'.

6.6 Summing Up

It is hoped that the purpose of this unit to guide the student in a better way is served. The probable questions and answers will be of great help to the student to attempt the questions in the examination. A thorough reading of the answers will equip the student with adequate knowledge to attempt any question on the subject. The suggested reading links will provide further information, if pursued, by the eager student of literature. This exam-oriented study material is expected to benefit the learner.

6.7 References and Suggested Reading

Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature, Vol. IV*. Allied Publishers Limited. Evans, Ifor. *A Short History of English Literature*. Penguin Books.

Ford, Boris, ed. *From Blake to Byron, Vol. 5 of The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Penguin Books.

Legouis, Emile. *A Short History of English Literature*. Oxford University Press. Natarajan, Uttara, ed. *The Hazlitt Review, Vol. 5*. The Hazlitt Society.

Rogers, Pat, ed. *An Outline of English Literature*. Oxford University Press.

Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford University Press. Trevelyan, G. M. *English Social History*. Penguin Books.

The student can consult the following works for further study:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25600348>

<https://www.sheilaomalley.com/?p=61663> <https://www.cairn.info/revue-etudes-anglaises-2013-1-page-55.htm>

<https://sites.udel.edu/britlitwiki/william-hazlitt/>

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BLOCK 2

Unit 1

Wordsworth's 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*

Unit Structure :

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introducing the Author
- 1.3 Reading the Text
- 1.4 Key Concepts
 - 2.4.1 The Creative Imagination
- 1.5 Ideas in Practice
- 1.6 Summing Up
- 1.7 References/Suggested Readings

1.1 OBJECTIVES

This Unit aims at giving you a fair idea of Wordsworth's work as a critic. While your study will focus only on Wordsworth's famous 'Preface' to the *Lyrical Ballads*, you will be taken through some of the accompanying background and history. Thus, by the end of the unit, you should be able to

- *name* some of Wordsworth's contributions to critical debates
- *explain* the significance of Wordsworth's work
- *describe* Wordsworth's status as a critic

1.2 INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR

Wordsworth's criticism as put forth in his prefaces to the *Lyrical Ballads*, marks an exposition of Romantic principles which are basic to the movement as a whole. His literary criticism is contained in "the Prefaces of 1800 and 1815, the Appendix of 1802, the Supplementary Essay of 1815, the three essays upon epitaphs and the correspondence" and these writings contain ideas like: "the disapproval of poetic diction, the idea of imitating rustic speech, the concept of poetry as the overflow of feelings". Wordsworth was critical of the Augustan tradition even

though in actual fact he had personally known both Pope and Dryden. Wordsworth admired Milton and Spenser and as Prof. Wellek remarks, there is a curious paradox here - "in a curious way, . . . at first sight Wordsworth sounds like a naturalist defending the imitation of folk ballads and rustic speech . . . But actually Wordsworth assimilates Spenser, Milton, Chaucer, and Shakespeare to his concept of "nature" without making them over into primitives". You must understand this within a proper frame; Wordsworth asked for a poetry that would reflect the simple language of simple of men, but as other critics like Coleridge pointed out, this is not as simple as it sounds. Rustic speech may not evoke poetic language so what Wordsworth meant must be seen only in the literary context. Certainly, Wordsworth was the inheritor of traditional values and thus his admiration of the earlier great poets would helped to create his notion of what was 'simple' and 'natural'.

Wordsworth's rejection of the poetic diction derived from the 18th century and his turning towards spoken language gave rise to an animated debate. This established poetic diction had already become outworn and Wordsworth found diverse reasons for his stand. Much can be, and has been, made of Wordsworth's adoption of the "natural language" of men. As Wellek points out, "At times, Wordsworth's "rustic speech" becomes difficult to distinguish from generally human speech, emotional language, purified for the purposes of the poet." However, he also thought that poetic language reflects a "state of vivid sensation" and that the poetic language currently employed "falls short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions".

From the discussion he carried on, we can see a kind of primitivism at work in Wordsworth's propositions. But again, we must distinguish this from a thorough-going brand of primitivism which looked back to a past golden age. Wordsworth never completely held such a belief although, at the same time, he connected poetry to childhood and a more primitive form of society, particularly an agrarian society.

He displayed a concern for folk poetry-despite his classical training --- and had a high regard for Robert Burns, even writing in ballad stanzas and in folk forms. Although he saw poetry as arising out powerful feelings, he also saw it as stemming from "emotion recollected in tranquility". The process itself is such that there is a paralleling of the

original emotion recollected. Thus he recognised the presence of consciousness in the creative process.

1.3 READING THE TEXT

Among the preliminary remarks made by Wordsworth, you should note that he attempts to justify his reasons for having departed from current fashions - "Poems so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed." He proceeds to give a word of explanation for his choice of subject, the purpose behind the poetic venture, and what had been hoped for in the poetic exercise.

SAQ:

By what name do we know the style typical of poetry written at the end of the 18th century? Which major poetic works were published then?
(40 + 30 words)

.....
.....

The phrases that stand out (5th paragraph) are, "incidents and situations from common life", "a selection of language really used by men", "a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect", "tracing . .the primary laws of our nature" and "the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement". The word "association" should remind you of David Hume and his concept of the association of ideas. In 1749, David Hartley (independently of Hume) brought out his version of associative theory in which he showed clearly that simple sensation gave rise to all the complex processes and contents of the mind. Soon this concept of association was incorporated into conceptions of the literary imagination.

Stop to Consider

Hartleyan Associationism

From *Literary Criticism: A Short History*, W.K.Wimsatt & Cleanth Brooks

" "Association" ... was for the age of reason something which acted as a kind of intermediate justification of emotions . . . The first main sense attached to the term "association of ideas" when it was launched by John Locke in the fourth edition of his Essay, 1700, was very much like that which the word now has for the ordinary user. It meant a connection between ideas which has occurred a number of times or some one memorable time, yet is not thought of, or should not be thought of, as always or necessarily occurring."

We should observe that Thomas Hobbes had talked about "train of ideas", David Hume had announced his doctrine of association in his Treatise of 1739, and David Hartley put forth his doctrine in his Observations on Man in 1749. "The several Aristotelian principles of association– that is, likeness and difference, cause and effect, contiguity in space and time– with which Hume began his discussion – were at a stroke reduced by Hartley to a single mechanical principle of contiguity in time . . . Hartley made that contiguity a character not of things as known by the human subject but of sensory vibrations and of their "miniature" reproductions . . . in the "medullary" substance of the brain. For each unit or simple item of experience, a vibration of a certain sort and a vestigial reminder of it. If several of these experiences happened to occur together often enough, the recurrence of a single one of the group stimulated from outside would set up a reminiscential jangle of the others."

"During the 18th century . . ."association" was in the air. It was a smart term in the vocabulary of moral and aesthetics theorists and litterateurs. It was system of gently persuasive laws of connection between out ideas . . . by which Hume hoped to advance moral philosophy to the stage where some century earlier physical science had moved ahead of it."

"One....application of associationism proceeded upon what in ancient times might have been called the principle of "synecdoche", or part for whole. . . The associational way of explaining the force of skillfully chosen particulars in description was to say that certain particulars were extremely potent in evoking a cloud of further particulars in the imagination of a reader. ...As Addison had put it in *Spectator* No.417:

" . . any single Circumstance of what we have formerly seen often raises up a whole Scene of Imagery, and awakens numberless Ideas that before slept in the Imagination; such a particular Smell or Colour is able to fill the Mind, on a sudden, with the Picture of the Fields or Gardens, where we first met with it, and to bring up into View all the Variety of Images that once attended it. Our Imagination takes the Hint, and leads us unexpectedly into Cities or Theatres, Plains or Meadows." "

The internal structure of this famous discussion by Wordsworth, considered to be the equivalent of a manifesto of Romanticism, shows his method of proceeding to later amplification of each of the points introduced in the beginning: the question of his selection of subjects, the

issue of the social role of language and the related significance of poetic diction, and the status and personality of the poet. Wordsworth's poetic attempt was directed by a deliberate choice of subject and language: "common life" in a language "really used by men". Again, the treatment called for an imaginative "colouring" so as to show everything in "an unusual aspect" which would make them interesting. We see that "common life" turns to "humble and rustic life" as this is the condition favouring a "plainer and more emphatic language" for the "essential passions of the heart". The poet's search for a better poetic language than currently in vogue gives us several elements: simple life as opposed to an over-refined one; plain, unadorned language instead of an artificial and ornate one; language infused with passion or language capable of conveying emotions. Wordsworth was protesting contemporary standards of poetic language.

The problem of language appropriate to literary writing had been much debated in the preceding century, particularly so in the wake of neoclassical admonitions as to what should be the proper poetic diction. Samuel Johnson wrote that there was "before the time of Dryden no poetical diction." Neoclassicism did not give license to affected speech but set its own strictures regarding the use of the polite idiom. Here, Wordsworth is advocating the adoption of unadorned speech but he is also turning to the rural community for new inspiration. He argues that those "essential passions of the heart" give rise to the "manners of rural life" and that such a rural life makes these "elementary feelings" "more easily comprehended" and makes them "more durable". The reason is, "in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature." What is Wordsworth arguing for, and arguing against?

"It is worthwhile remembering that . . . Wordsworth was reacting immediately not so much against Spenser, Milton, and Pope, the poets who had created English poetic diction, as against his own now anonymous contemporaries who wrote the *mélange* of dictions which was then poetic staple." (Wimsatt & Brooks) As Wordsworth seeks to explain and clarify his objections to the language of established poetic diction, he also touches upon the relation of poet to society and the impact thereof on the language to be used in poetic composition. His endeavour had been, in his poems, "to bring my language near to the language of men" and in so doing he marks out the similarity of prose

and poetry --"It may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." Such statements later were controverted by Coleridge. However, Wordsworth is firm on describing the social functions of poetry. Earlier in the essay Wordsworth had perceptively expressed his condemnation of the contemporary state of society which made people long for superficial excitements.

SAQ:
Which critics have stressed the social responsibilities and functions of poetry? (70 words)
.....
.....

The conditions of rural life in which men are in direct contact with the beautiful and lasting forms of natural objects give rise, in Wordsworth's view, to "a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation." The argument thus turns upon the social responsibilities of the poet. "What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? - He is a man speaking to men: ...He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature. And thus the Poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure, which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies, converses with general nature, ..." We find it remarkable to note that Wordsworth's concern with the relationship of poet to reader prompts him to claim that "Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men."

Check Your Progress

1. Explain the significance of rural man in Wordsworth's articulation of poetic theory.
2. Elaborate Wordsworth's conception of the man-nature relationship in his famous 'Preface.'
3. How far would you agree that Wordsworth's arguments regarding poetic language is necessarily an argument for the theoretical foundations of poetic practice? Support your answer with references to Wordsworth's 'Preface' to the *Lyrical Ballads*.

Again, Wordsworth turned against the "triviality and meanness" of contemporary poetry by naming a "purpose" behind his work thus bringing in his famous dictum that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply." We can perceive here not only how poetry is exalted through its association with the best conditions of social rural life, but also how it flows from the wellspring of deep emotions and thought. The poet himself is seen in the highest terms - a concept we have already noted as basic to Romantic thought. The poet is marked out from the ordinary by extraordinary "organic sensibility" and the faculty of philosophical thinking. In line with this estimation of the Poet, Wordsworth proclaims one of the ideas central to Romanticism, that "Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge". It is also infused with pleasure and enjoyment. The pleasure that Wordsworth associates with poetry is not of the usual kind; it is partly dependent upon metre, as it is also the pleasure of the special perception of "similitude in dissimilitude". It is a complex pleasure made up of many features, some of which is based on the connection between poetry and emotions. So we find that "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the

emotion...is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment."

SAQ:

We can see that Wordsworth is making a strong plea for a new poetic diction. Do you think that he is also setting up a distinction between language in rural ("natural") surroundings and that in an urban ("artificial") setting? Or is he looking at a language purified of all ornamentation? (50 + 50 words)

.....
.....

Wordsworth's 'Preface' thus involves a comprehensive statement of the various aspects of poetry and poetic diction. What is remarkable is that it articulates so fully some of the basic tenets of Romanticism. You should be interested in reading Coleridge's critical response to this essay and the points he contested. These show up the weaknesses in Wordsworth's argument but they do not take away from the philosophy of composition that he sets out in it.

1.4 KEY CONCEPTS

Wordsworth's concept of the imagination was not as extraordinarily clear as with Coleridge. Wellek explains this: "Wordsworth disconcertingly vacillates among three epistemological conceptions. At times he makes imagination purely subjective, an imposition of the human mind on the real world. At other times he makes it an illumination beyond the control of the conscious mind and even beyond the individual soul. But most frequently he takes an in-between position which favours the idea of a collaboration, 'An ennobling interchange / Of action from within and from without.'*[The Prelude]*".

1.4.1 THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION

The Aristotle conception of poetry made probability or possibility a basic question of poetic theory. However, it is important to remember that this did not mean a simple conformity to the objects of external reality. For a philosopher like Thomas Hobbes, poetic truth meant a correspondence to nature as we know it. How much of the unfamiliar, supernatural world could be drawn into poetry was an issue of some debate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We can perceive the significance of the question itself if we take up a couple of comments; David Hume observed that "To draw chimeras is not, properly speaking, to copy or to imitate. The justness of the representation is lost, and the mind is displeased to find a picture, which bears no resemblance to any original." You can see here that Hume is inserting a moral value into poetry as mimesis. The presence of words like "justness" and "displeased" carry moral values of what *should* be or *should not* be. If art, literature or poetry is to be morally meaningful, it must show nature as it is. Chimeras do not occur in the world of familiar so they cannot be imitated in poetry.

Dr. Johnson said that reading the ancient poets was tedious and oppressive due to their allusions to mythology. Yet, at the same time, he conceded that in *Paradise Lost* such allusions added to the variety. Gradually, however, the question also included the problem of justifying the inclusion of the unfamiliar and the strange in poetry. This justification came through the neo-classical principle that poetry imitates nature in order to achieve its ultimate purpose of moving and pleasing the reader. This manner of justification gave way over time to the idea that if certain effects are to be achieved in poetry, this must be in line with what the reader expects.

The discussion thus continued on the question of the psychology of poetic illusion. The issue at stake now turned on the degree of the marvelous that could be incorporated into poetry without stretching it beyond the limits of credibility. Even this, however, did not mean that eighteenth-century poetry favoured myth or magic. A newer concept that emerged in the criticism of the period saw the poem no longer as 'imitation' but as a second 'nature' in the realm of which the poet appears to be god-like, a creator. The idea was not new since Sir Philip Sidney

had already mentioned it (in the sixteenth century) in his remark that the poet moves into "another nature" where he creates "forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demigods, cyclops, chimeras". Addison developed this argument in his *Spectator* (no.419), on "The Pleasures of Imagination" where he points out that the poet moves away from the world of nature as known to us, and invents a world which is valid in its own terms. As he said, poetry "makes new worlds of its own", the poet invents a world which is analogous to the one we know.

SAQ:

How would you receive the view that the "supernatural machinery" of eighteenth-century poetry is replaced in Romantic poetry with an immanently 'divine' spirit in nature? (Much can be said on both sides of the issue!) (80 words)

.....
.....

You can understand the drift of this extended debate by considering what Abrams tells us: "Following the suggestion in Addison, succeeding commentators,...specifically took the creative indoors and delegated it to the faculty of imagination. A prime source of the concept of 'the creative imagination' - which elevates the imagination above the reason and all other faculties by its hidden claim that this is the mental process reenacting God-was the endeavour to account for fantastic poetic characters which are most utterly 'original', because they had to be invented without the assistance of prior forms in sense." It is easy to see why the next stage in the discussion equates the poet with God-like powers of creating out of nothing. What we can sense here is that once the poetic world is de-linked from references to the external reality, it becomes a matter of internal coherence and organisation. Thus the poetic world is placed at a distance from the empirical world and fresh distinctions between "rational truth" and "poetic truth". The German poet, Goethe, thus distinguished between 'artistic truth' and 'natural truth'.

For the English Romantic poets of the early nineteenth century, the creative imagination lifts poetry to another plane: "It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos . . It creates

anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration."

Coleridge makes the metaphor of creation central to his ideas. What he says at the end of Chapter XIII of the *Biographia Literaria* ("The primary Imagination . . .") includes the new notion-- that the mind perceives. As Abrams explains: "The result is a triple parallel. At its base is the ceaseless self-proliferation of God into the sensible universe. This creative process is reflected in the primary imagination by which all individual minds develop out into their perception of this universe, and it is echoed again in the secondary, or re-creative imagination which is possessed only by the poet of genius. As early as 1801, Coleridge had written that the perceiving mind is not passive, but "made in God's Image, and that, too, in the sublimest sense, the *Image of the Creator* . . .". Three years later he added that the poetic imagination is also "a dim analogue of creation---not all that we can *believe*, but all that we can *conceive* of creation."

Stop to Consider

Primitivism

Prof. M.H.Abrams explains some of Wordsworth's basic assumptions in his criticism:

Human nature was assumed to possess uniform characteristics, "its passions and sensibilities no less than its reason, .. everywhere fundamentally the same". The question, we should ask here is, is it the same across cultures and across time? With respect to the idea that 'primitive' human nature is untainted by artificially-motivated longings and passions, is entailed the problem of seeing human 'nature' as either moving away from a state of nature as society grows more complex (chronological primitivism) or 'human nature' as more pure' in culturally 'primitive' societies which are not over-refined. Prof. Abrams names two kinds of thinking on the issue: theorists of "cultural primitivism" believed that "the elemental and uniform-and, therefore, the normal-aspects of human nature and products are to be found not only in 'chronological', but in 'cultural' primitives, including people dwelling in civilized nations but insulated by caste or rural habitat from the artifice and complications of culture." As we are told, this was the reason for the esteem granted to poets who "were either peasants or proletarians-Stephen Duck, the Thresher Poet; Mary Collier, the Poetical Washerwoman; Henry Jones, the Poetical Shoemaker-from whose ranks the one aspirant to make good was the Poetical Plowboy, Robert Burns."

Wordsworth was not a "chronological primitivist", being more inclined more towards a form of "cultural primitivism" on the grounds that "Wordsworth's cardinal

standard of poetic value is 'nature', and nature, in his usage, is given a triple and primitivistic connotation: Nature is the common denominator of human nature; it is most reliably exhibited among men living 'according to nature' (that is to say, in a culturally simple, and especially a rural environment); and it consists primarily in an elemental simplicity of thought and feeling and a spontaneous and 'unartificial' mode of expressing feeling in words."

In 1802, two years after the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, he wrote:

"I answer, human nature as it has been [and ever] will be. But, where are we to find the best measure of this? I answer, [from with]in; by stripping our own hearts naked, and by looking out of ourselves to[wards men] who lead the simplest lives, and most according to nature; men who have never known false refinements, wayward and artificial desires, false criticisms, effeminate habits of thinking and feeling, or who having known these things have outgrown them."

To this passage Abrams adds from Wordsworth's other statements: "To find 'fair representative of the vast mass of human existence,' we must leave the class of 'gentlemen, professional men, ladies'; we must 'descend lower, among cottages and fields, and among children.' "

What you should note here is the potential for radical revaluations of standard views of not only language as the symbol for social relations, but the critique of contemporary society and the tentative tolerance of exterior notions of civility and cultural refinement.

1.5 IDEAS IN PRACTICE

You can see the ideas we have looked at above in the writings of the poet. Although Wordsworth objected to the poetic diction derived from the eighteenth century, he himself used many of the linguistic mannerisms and formations of the earlier century. But when he talked of the "natural language" of men, Wordsworth was not on sure ground. If he meant rustic speech, he did not show such usage in his own poems. He also modified much of this rustic speech. Sometimes he would distinguish between the different kinds of speech as used by people of different origins and background. Sometimes he used as "rustic speech", a general form of language purified for poetry. Thus Wordsworth also recognised selection as essential for poetic uses of language. However, his assertion that poetic language is language in a "state of vivid sensation" shows his original recommendation. He laid down that when poetic language is properly selected, it "must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures."

Stop to Consider

Prof. Abrams draws our attention to an interesting feature of Romantic poetry:

"Certain major poets of the Romantic Age . . . incorporated into their writings myths and imagery which are recognizably esoteric in origin. They used such elements, however, as symbolic conveniences, "metaphors for poetry." The older view of the world helped them to define the malaise of their own time, and they sometimes adopted its mythology to project and dramatize their feeling that they did belong in the intellectual, social, and political milieu of their oppressive and crisis-ridden age. This sense of being alien in a world which had been made by man's own unhappy intellect also manifested itself in a wide-spread revival of the traditional plot-form of the wanderings of an exile in quest of the place where he truly belongs; although, . . . with differences that demarcate sharply the various Romantic quests both from the Plotinian odyssey and the Christian pilgrimage."

Wordsworth believed that the rhetorical figures used in the 18th century were distortions of the original language, as the original language was spontaneous. In a sense, for Wordsworth, the language of poetry falls short of this original language especially as it lacks the passion of the language used by men in former times. Poetic language cannot convey what is uttered in real life by men acting under pressure, with passion. To that extent, poetic language cannot match these "emanations of reality and truth." But the early poets used the language actually spoken by men because the occasion which demanded the use of such language was presumably heroic or extraordinary. But Wordsworth was also affected by a regard, like his contemporaries, for folk poetry. On the whole, given that Wordsworth was sensitive to his times and even admired many of the poets of the 18th century, the actual language used in real life came to be different from what was 'natural'. Where poetry was regarded as arising from powerful feelings, Wordsworth saw it as expressing the self, as a release of emotions.

Wordsworth's views on poetic diction are based on the assumption that art and nature are at odds with each other. Throughout his Preface this assumption is at work just as it is made explicit in his long critical essay, *Upon Epitaphs* (1810, 1876). In the third part of his essay, he declares, "I vindicate the rights and dignity of Nature". Alexander Pope had formulated "True Wit" as being "Nature to advantage dressed". So "true expression" would be the appropriate dressing and ornamentation of thoughts. By Wordsworth's standards, however, all forms of such wit are false. For Wordsworth, language cannot be the dress of thought since

rhetorical dressing can only distort "genuine" poetry. For him, figures of speech are justifiable only when connected to passion. The typical diction used by the eighteenth-century poets, he considered to be 'artificial', the product of "false refinement or arbitrary innovation", divorced from natural laws, replacing the natural and universal language of human beings. For Wordsworth, poetic language springs from frequent application of figures of speech, mechanically adopted, to "feelings and thoughts with which they had no natural connexion whatsoever". Poetic language, in view of this argument, thus was different from the real language of men in any situation.

A.C.Bradley has observed that in the poetry of the Romantics, "the center of interest is inward. It is an interest in emotion, thought, will, rather than in scenes, events, actions...." The lyric poem was at the centre of Romantic poetical theory. Wordsworth and Coleridge both looked to the lyric poem for good poetry. The forms of the lyric poem, --song, elegy, and ode--- were all cultivated by the poets to a high degree. As Abrams points out, there was a tendency to collapse the "I" of the lyric with the "I" of the poet as person, the poem expressing experiences and those states of mind which could be supported with the testimony of private diaries and letters. This was the principle on which Wordsworth required his readers to read his *Prelude*, and *The Recluse*. The poet stands at the centre of Romantic poetry as well as its criticism.

Check Your Progress

1. What is the status of the poet in Wordsworth's conception of poetry? Support your answer with textual references.
2. Comment on the centrality of the poet in Romantic poetic theory. Illustrate your thesis with references to Wordsworth's 'Preface' to the *Lyrical Ballads*.
3. Elaborate on the main features of Wordsworth critical work with particular emphasis on his arguments for a new poetic language.

It seems no accident then that Wordsworth's *Prelude* is, as Wellek observes, "a versified autobiography of 8500 lines". In Book Three of the poem, he says

".....Of genius, power,
Creation and divinity itself

I have been speaking, for my theme has been
What passed within me. Not of outward things
Done visibly for other minds - words, signs,
Symbols or actions - but of my own heart
Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind."

In connection with his understanding of poetic language, you can understand better the poet's concerns if you see what Wordsworth, in his "Note to 'The Thorn' "in the *Lyrical Ballads* , wrote: "It was my wish in this poem to show the manner in which such men cleave to the same ideas, and to follow the turns of passion (always different, yet not palpably different) by which their conversation is swayed. I had two objects to attain: first, to represent a picture which should not be unimpressive, yet consistent with the character that should describe it; secondly (while I adhered to the style in which such persons describe), to take care that words - which in their minds are impregnated with passion - should likewise convey passion to readers who are not accustomed to sympathize with men feeling in that manner, or using such language. It seemed to me that this might be done by calling in the assistance of lyrical and rapid metre. It was necessary that the poem, to be natural, should in reality move slowly. Yet I hoped that by the aid of the metre, to those who should at all enter into the spirit of the poem, it would appear to move quickly." You can see here that Wordsworth saw the capacity of language to evoke, or to reproduce through association perhaps the range of feelings and ideas attributed to the 'rural' folk.

Later in the "Note", he adds: "There is a numerous class of readers who imagine that the same words cannot be repeated without tautology. This is a great error. Virtual tautology is much oftener produced by using different words when the meaning is exactly the same. Words - a poet's words more particularly - ought to be weighed in the balance of feeling, and not measured by the space which they occupy upon paper. For the reader cannot be too often reminded that poetry is passion: it is the history or science of feelings. Now every man must know that an attempt is rarely made to communicate impassioned feelings without something of an accompanying consciousness of the inadequateness of our own powers, or the deficiencies of language. During such efforts there will be a craving in the mind, and as long as it is unsatisfied the speaker will cling to the same words, or words of the same character."

Stop to Consider

"The Thorn" (composed between 19 March and 20 April, 1798)

(23 stanzas, 253 lines)

Stanza VI:

"Now would you see this aged thorn,
This pond and beauteous hill of moss,
You must take care and choose your time
The mountain when to cross.
For oft there sits, between the heap
That's like an infant's grave in size
And that same pond of which I spoke,
A woman in a scarlet cloak,
And to herself she cries.
'Oh misery! Oh misery!
Oh woe is me! Oh misery!'

Stanza VII :

"At all times of the day and night
This wretched woman thither goes,
And she is known to every star
And every wind that blows;
And there beside the thorn she sits
When the blue daylight's in the skies,
And when the whirlwind's on the hill,
Or frosty air is keen and still,
And to herself she cries,
'Oh misery! Oh misery!
Oh woe is me! Oh misery!'

1.6 SUMMING UP

Having read through this unit you should be well schooled in some of the basic assumptions of Wordsworth's poetic creed. You would have learnt of his conception of poetic language and its origins. It should seem remarkable to you that there is a whole philosophical theory that underpins this conception. In the final analysis, no poetic theory can be significant unless it is moored to conceptions of social relations. The Romantic poets and critics, let us remember, had the entire catastrophe of the revolutionary turmoil in France behind them. The 'Reign of Terror' that grew from these revolutionary beginnings pressed thinkers to re-conceive what had seemed like a new age in 1789. How we should understand the relations between human society and the rest of the environment was a concern that compelled thinkers to considerations of "nature" and perception. In this sense Romantic thought is exciting and

invigorating as it radically re-orientes the contents of older forms of thinking. So while, today, Wordsworth may seem limited in the light of later Victorian developments, his criticism reveals those features that make such intellectual departures possible and refreshing.

1.7 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

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Unit 2

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (Chapters IV, XIII and XIV)

Unit Structure :

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introducing the Author
- 2.3 The Context
- 2.4 Reading the Text: *Biographia Literaria* (Chapters IV, XIII and XIV)
- 2.5 Form and style
- 2.6 Major Themes
- 2.7 Critical Reception
- 2.8 Summing Up
- 2.9 References and Suggested Readings

2.1 OBJECTIVES

This unit undertakes a discussion of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's seminal work *Biographia Literaria*, particularly its three chapters, namely, the fourth, the thirteenth, and the fourteenth. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Appreciate *Biographia Literaria* as an important nineteenth-century prose work.
- Estimate the significance of the text as a testimony of Coleridge's creative and intellectual growth and development
- Familiarise yourself with the form and style of Coleridge's prose work.
- Understand the major preoccupations of Coleridge with respect to poetry and philosophy.
- Evaluate the role and reception of the work within the English critical tradition.

2.2 INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR

Born on 21 October 1772 in Ottery, St. Mary in south-east Devonshire, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was the youngest among his nine brothers and a sister. His father, John Coleridge, was employed as a vicar of a parish and was also a teacher at a grammar-school. As a child, Coleridge was nervous and under-confident, and he chose to engage himself mainly in reading books, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Arabian Nights* being one of his most favourites. Early exposure to reading enabled him to develop a well-refined sensibility much before his mature years. As he himself noted in one of his letters, “because I could read & spell, & had, I may truly say, a memory & understanding forced into almost an unnatural ripeness, I was flattered & wondered at by all the old women— & so I became very vain, and despised most of the boys, that were at all near my own age—and before I was eight years old, I was *a character*” (*Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 1347–1348; quoted in Hill 2). You would be intrigued to know that Coleridge showed early signs of a complex bent of mind where there was a constant sense of insecurity bothering him at a time when he was equally exhibiting “an impetuous and articulate brilliance” (Hill 2) of mind and external conduct.

The fact that he started reading books from various genres right from childhood also led to his recognition of the significance of perception and imagination, as would be emphasised strongly in the “literary biography” that we are going to study in this unit. He began his formal education at the age of three in 1775 at Dame Key’s Reading School from where he joined Henry VIII Free Grammar School in 1778. However, three years into his school education, his father passed away suddenly, and the young prodigy was left in the charge of Parson Warren at the Ottery school. In July 1782, he was admitted to the Christ’s Hospital school at Hertford, and, nine years later, in 1791, entered Jesus College, Cambridge. While at Cambridge, in 1793, he took a sudden decision to enlist himself in the King’s Regiment, 15th Light Dragoons, and even adopted a new name for the purpose—Silas Tomkyn Comberback. This was an abortive attempt, and he duly returned, after a lot of hassles, to Cambridge the following year. His interest in studies, however, waned gradually, and he left the university in 1794 without completing his degree.

“The Light Dragoons was first raised in the middle of the 18th century and quickly became noted for their scouting expertise and courage. Since then, the regiment’s reputation has grown through the key role it played in high profile deployments, from the Napoleonic Wars to World War II.” (<https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/corps-regiments-and-units/royal-armoured-corps/light-dragoons/>)

“One of the more spectacular experiments to emerge from the early Romantic movement was the idea of ‘Pantisocracy’ which was the brain-child of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, assisted by his fellow poet and friend Robert Southey, who with youthful enthusiasm devised in 1794 a highly ambitious utopian scheme for an egalitarian society. Akin in many ways to setting up a hippie commune in the 1960s, the intention was to abandon the prejudices and constraints of life in England and, armed with the principle of anarchy and the assumption of human perfectibility which had been recently articulated by William Godwin in *Political Justice*, establish a community on the banks of the Susquehanna River, Pennsylvania. That the project came to nothing, and remained confined to the purely theoretical, may be unsurprising, but its failure came at a heavy personal cost to Coleridge, and cast a shadow over the rest of his life.” (<https://wordsworth.org.uk/blog/2015/09/02/coleridge-and-the-pantisocratic-pipe-dream/>)

In these last months at the University, he was particularly attracted to the novel concept of “pantisocracy,” derived from the Greek word *pantisocratia* meaning “equal power for all,” which he devised in association with Robert Southey, whom he met in Oxford during his walking tour of Wales in June 1794. At that time, Southey was a student of Balliol College, and the two of them planned founding a “communistic agrarian–literary settlement on the banks of the Susquehanna River in exotic Pennsylvania” (Bloom 1), in the model of an ideal–utopian society envisioned in Plato’s *Republic*. Under the raging passion of this newfound vision, Coleridge even planned his marriage with Sara Fricker with the hope of having her as his companion in America. However, soon differences began to emerge between him and Southey over the feasibility of fulfilling the pantisocratical dream in America—Southey

felt that movement to America would be too drastic, and it would be fitting instead to try out the scheme somewhere nearer home, possibly at Wales. Coleridge, as someone who was hitherto passionately attached to the plan, felt somewhat deceived and disheartened. The unhappy aftermath of the dream was, however, short-lived, as Coleridge was soon going to meet somebody whose presence and ideas were going to engage him and to keep him preoccupied for the rest of his life. He was none other than William Wordsworth whom he met for the first time in Bristol in September 1795.

In October 1795, Coleridge married Sara Fricker—the union was supposed to be a part of the pantisocratical scheme, as mentioned earlier. The scheme did not materialise; however, Coleridge kept his promise of marrying Sara, and the couple settled down happily in Clevedon. By that time, he had decided to take up writing as his full-time occupation, and, to that effect, published a collection of political writings entitled *Conciones ad Populum*, a poetry collection *Poems on Various Subjects*, and also a periodical called *The Watchman* which ran from March–May 1796. On 19 September, he and Sara were blessed with a son who was named David Hartley Coleridge. By the end of that year, the couple had moved to a small cottage in Lime Street, Nether Stowey. It is here that, in the spring of 1797, Wordsworth came visiting, and in the same year, he and his sister settled down at Alfoxden, a place close to Stowey. With the two poets staying close by, there commenced a highly productive phase of friendship between them in terms of literary output. As Hill notes, the period from the summer of 1797 to the spring of 1798 was a period of high poetic creativity for Coleridge, for he composed during this period a great number of poems that established his reputation as a prominent poet of the age. These poems included “This Lime-Tree Bower,” “The Ancient Mariner,” “Frost at Midnight,” “The Nightingale,” “Christabel (part 1),” and possibly also “Kubla Khan” (Hill 10). The year 1798 also witnessed serious and protracted discussion between Wordsworth and Coleridge on the significance of nature and the supernatural, their influence upon the imagination, and consequently, their efficacy as subjects of poetry—all these deliberations resulted in the publication of the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in the month of September. Around the same time, Coleridge also developed a strong interest in German philosophy, and, together with the Wordsworths, they decide to embark upon a tour of Germany. In fact, both Coleridge and Wordsworth were touring Germany when the *Lyrical Ballads* was

published back in their country. In Germany in February 1799, Coleridge entered the University of Göttingen. To quote Hill:

He attended J.F. Blumenbach's lectures on physiology and natural history, became acquainted with J.G. Eichhorn, who was among the foremost of German Biblical scholars, studied Gothic and Old High German under the supervision of T.C. Tychsen, an eminent linguist, devoted himself to acquiring a thorough grounding in the history of German literature, and assiduously collected materials for the critical biography of Lessing that he proposed to write as the first-fruits of his German labours. (11)

He returned to England after spending nearly eleven months in Germany. By this time, the Wordsworths had moved to the north of England. Coleridge visited them, and, together with them, he toured the Lake District. It was around this time that he met the family of Thomas Hutchinson, and, particularly, with his sister Sara Hutchinson, with whom he fell hopelessly in love during the autumn of 1799. By the end of the year, he moved to London for a few months during which he worked for the newspaper *Morning Post* and also translated Schiller's dramatic trilogy, *Wallenstein*. The year 1800 saw the publication of the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* with a preface by Wordsworth. By July in the same year, Coleridge left London and moved to the North to be with Wordsworth. He took up his residence at Greta Hall, Keswick, by the river Derwent, and situated only at a distance of twelve miles from Wordsworth's abode at Grasmere. Here, another son was born to the Coleridges whom they named Derwent. The years at Keswick were not the most fruitful or happier for Coleridge. On the one hand, the extreme cold weather of the North had an adverse impact upon his health. Consequently, he started taking larger doses of laudanum (opium extract), which further led to severe mental complications. On the other hand, his wife, Sara, was not happy being away from her parental family and friends in the South—added to that, Coleridge's apparent negligence of household duties and his spending more time at Grasmere rather than being at home worsened her plight. As far as Coleridge was concerned, his personal and familial problems also affected his literary output. As Hill states,

He could complete nothing he started—‘Christabel’ was still a fragment, for example, and his ‘Life of Lessing’ no more than a reiterated promise—and he became increasingly convinced that his Muse (if not indeed a chimera) had been suffocated and forever silenced by his abstruse philosophical studies. Endowed with great gifts and abilities, he had produced nothing commensurate with his own or his friends’ expectations of him. At the age of twenty-nine his life had fallen into the sere and yellow leaf, and he began to think of himself as a mental voyager shipwrecked in infinity. (14)

In order to recover from his abject situation, Coleridge embarked upon a ship bound for Malta in 1804, and, for a period of two years, he travelled across Malta and Italy, and returned to England. His condition, however, remained the same. In 1806, he parted ways with his wife and started living with the Wordsworths in Leicestershire. He soon moved to London where he was, without a fixed vocation, engaged in journalism and also delivering lectures on poetry. He gave an important series of lectures on the “Principles of Poetry” at the Royal Institution in London during the first half of 1808. Subsequently, he also undertook the publication of twenty-seven numbers of *The Friend: A Literary, Moral, and Political Weekly Paper*, a new periodical, which ran for a period of about eleven months (Bloom 204; Hill 15). However, in 1810, there was a break in his friendship with Wordsworth which continued for eighteen months. In the meantime, Coleridge kept writing in Daniel Stuart’s periodical *Courier*, in addition to delivering lectures on poetry and Shakespeare. He was reconciled with Wordsworth in May 1812; however, as Coleridge admitted to his other friends, the earlier feeling of empathy and intimacy of friendship was no longer there.

You may like to know that there are a number of films and TV series made on the lives of the Romantic poets. Some of them are: *Clouds of Glory: William and Dorothy* (1976), *Clouds of Glory: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1978), *Pandaemonium* (2000), and *The Romantics* (2006).

Struggling with his severe addiction to opium, Coleridge, in 1816, sought refuge with James Gillman and his wife Anne, who together looked after the poet for the rest of his life. The years 1816—

1820 presented another phase of fruitful literary productivity on the part of Coleridge. A new volume of poetry, containing his poems like “Christabel,” “Kubla Khan,” and “The Pains of Sleep” was published by John Murray in 1816. The year 1817 saw the publication of *Biographia Literaria* and a compilation of Coleridge's poems called the *Sibylline Leaves*. At the same time, he continued delivering a number of lectures on literature, history, and philosophy. At a later stage of his life, he also composed two important treatises called *Aids to Reflection* (1825) and *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829) (Bloom 205; Hill 17). He breathed his last on 25 June 1834. The impact of his life and personality upon his friends and followers could be gauged from these words of Charles Lamb articulated in deep lamentation: “His great and dear spirit haunts me Never saw I his likeness, nor probably the world can see again. I seem to love the house he died in more passionately than when he lived What was his mansion is consecrated to me a chapel” (quoted in Hill 18).

2.3 THE CONTEXT

As you must have noticed already, *Biographia Literaria* was published in 1817. However, the very idea of writing a “biography” had taken shape in the mind of Coleridge almost twenty years earlier, during his tour of Germany in 1798–1799. As part of his endeavour to give a tangible expression to his exposure to German intellectual tradition, he had proposed to compose a biography of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), the famous German writer, critic, and philosopher of the Enlightenment era. What was intended to write, however, was not particularly a biography, but a project which looked at the “explication and dissemination of general truths which Lessing had articulated in a manner and with an authority that Coleridge considered beyond his own capacity” (Hill 206). The “biography” remained unwritten while Coleridge left Germany, and, subsequently, his focus shifted from it towards an “Essay on the Elements of Poetry.” This shift was obviously marked by his growing association with Wordsworth, and their energetic discussions on the nature and subject of poetry consequently enabled him to develop his own concepts and theories on the same. The essay, however, was still not written. Instead, something similar got written in its place by Wordsworth as the preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1800. Since Wordsworth already articulated what they both had thought about poetry at that point, and

Coleridge stated that the preface was the result of their joint discussions, therefore there was no immediate possibility of the latter writing a separate essay on the subject.

However, by 1802, more pertinently, after the publication of the third edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in the year, Coleridge was realising that certain differences in opinion had emerged between their respective ideas on poetry. These disagreements centred on subjects like poetic diction, versification, and the differences between fancy and imagination (Hill 210). Here, we need to recognise the fact that Coleridge was trained in the methods of German intellectual thinking and had consequently developed deeper psychological insights on the intricacies of poetic experience. All these had happened by the end of 1803; however, for the next ten years or so, Coleridge still could not bring himself to make his personal statement on poetry. In our introductory section, we had read about the terrible times of his life and his personal–psychological problems that diverted his attention throughout the period. It was in the year 1815 that Coleridge decided to write a “general preface” on the “Principles of philosophic and genial criticism relatively to the Fine Arts in general; but especially to Poetry” to be prefixed to a collective edition of his poems from 1795 to that time (Hill 212). This general preface, after much anxiety and deliberation, was expanded to become what came to be known as *Biographia Literaria*, finally published in the year 1817. The same year also saw the publication of his poetry collection entitled *Sibylline Leaves* and his two *Lay Sermons*.

In the “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1802, this is what Wordsworth had written at the beginning about his “friend” Coleridge: “For the sake of variety, and from a consciousness of my own weakness, I was induced to request the assistance of a Friend, who furnished me with the Poems of the ANCIENT MARINER, the FOSTER-MOTHER'S TALE, the NIGHTINGALE, and the Poem entitled LOVE. I should not, however, have requested this assistance, had I not believed that the Poems of my Friend would in a great measure have the same tendency as my own, and that, though there would be found a difference, there would be

2.4 READING THE TEXT: *BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA* (CHAPTERS IV, XIII AND XIV)

The central themes and concerns of *Biographia Literaria*, published in two volumes, is aptly stated by Hill in these words: “(a) a statement of Coleridge’s principles in politics, religion, philosophy, and literary theory; (b) a philosophic investigation of the *principles* governing poetry and criticism; and (c) the practical application of these principles, once established, to the poetry and poetic theory of Wordsworth” (224–225). We can see that Wordsworth’s theory of poetry remained a major preoccupation for Coleridge—yet the work should best be seen as an exposition of the poet’s attempt to integrate his own growth and development as a poet with his thoughts on the principles of poetic composition. In the present unit, we shall be looking at three important chapters from the work. The subject explored in the three chapters, namely the fourth, thirteenth, and fourteenth, comprise the *Lyrical Ballads*, fancy and imagination, the power of imagination in unifying diverse images, and most importantly, Coleridge’s deeper meditations on the interface between poetry and philosophy and his consequent departure from the poetic principles espoused in the *Lyrical Ballads*. In the following paragraphs, we are going to undertake a discussion on these three chapters.

The fourth chapter of *Biographia Literaria* is titled “The *Lyrical Ballads* with the preface—Mr. Wordsworth’s earlier poems of fancy and imagination—The investigation of the distinction important to the fine arts.” Focussing his attention on the *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge puts forward a few assumptions which the readers of the poems might have had with reference to the poet and his general approach towards poetry. It may be noted, in 1815, a new edition of Wordsworth’s poems had appeared in two volumes. It contained a new preface in the beginning and a supplementary essay at the end of the first volume. Furthermore, the preface to the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* was reprinted at the end of the second volume thereby providing to his readers an unbroken account of his theory of poetry. This situation prompted Coleridge to provide an urgent rejoinder not only to Wordsworth’s general theory of poetry, but also to the latter’s constant rejection of the essential differences between fancy and imagination. The unique characteristics of these two aspects of human sensibility formed a core component of Coleridge’s theory of poetry, and, therefore, in this

particular chapter of *Biographia Literaria*, he is drawing attention towards the apparent discrepancy between Wordsworth's theory on the one hand and the poet's own poetic practice on the other.

In 29 July 1815, Coleridge had written to a friend stating that, "I have given a full account(raisonne) of the Controversy concerning Wordsworth's Poems& Theory, ... I have done my Duty to myself and to the Public, in (as I believe)completely subverting the Theory & in proving that the Poethimself has never acted on it except in particular Stanzas whichare the Blots of his Compositions" (quoted in Hill 213).

In the same chapter, Coleridge nostalgically recollects his first "encounter" with Wordsworth way back during his Cambridge days in 1794, when he came across his first publication entitled *Descriptive Sketches*, and he notes that, "seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced" (Coleridge, *BLI*: 56). He notes that the language of the poem was not only strange and powerful, but also "knotty and contorted", and the overabundance of images coupled with a complicated style of composition demanded a lot of efforts from the readers in understanding the poem. This, according to Coleridge, constituted a feature of Wordsworth's early poetry. However, he clarifies that Wordsworth soon refined his style, and this was well evident in one of later poems, called "Lines on-re-visiting the Wye," which was comparatively more reflective and closer to human sensibility, and where the obscurities surrounding his early poetry had wholly disappeared. Coleridge met Wordsworth in person sometime in September–October 1795 and heard him recite his then unpublished poem called "Guilt and Sorrow." It is important to note at length as to what effect this poem exerted upon his feelings and judgement.

It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the *atmosphere*, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dewdrops. (Coleridge, *BLI*: 59)

According to Coleridge, Wordsworth's poetry possessed the fine quality of unifying feelings and thoughts in poetry accompanied by a truthfulness of observation and the power of imagination to modify the "objects observed" in such a manner as to instil them with new glow and freshness. However, the attention of Coleridge is soon drawn towards an important distinction that, he thought, Wordsworth disregarded in his theory of poetry. In his preface to his 1815 twin volume, Wordsworth had stated that, "[t]o aggregate and to associate, to evoke and to combine, belong as well to the Imagination as to the Fancy" (quoted in Hill 215). He states,

Repeated meditations led me first to suspect, (and a more intimate analysis of the human faculties, their appropriate marks, functions, and effects matured my conjecture into full conviction,) that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or, at furthest, the lower and higher degree of one and the same power. (Coleridge, *BLI*: 60–61)

Coleridge notes that fancy and imagination are two distinct conceptions with their unique set of meanings. However, they have often been confused as having the same meaning, and, more crucially, they have been seen as constituting the same faculty of the mind, albeit differing only in degrees. He recognises that Wordsworth had it amongst his purposes to study the impact of fancy and imagination upon poetry and also to observe their diversities. His objective, in this regard, would be to "investigate the seminal principle" and thereby present an "intelligible statement of [his] poetic creed; not as [his] *opinions*, which weigh for nothing, but as deductions from established premises" (Coleridge, *BLI*: 64–65). This chapter thus is an exposition of Coleridge's early and subsequent responses to Wordsworth's formulations on poetry and sets the base for him to further his own argument on the poetic imagination and his more nuanced perspectives on the distinctions between fancy and imagination. We shall now move on to Chapter XIII where Coleridge will briefly attempt to define and classify the above-mentioned conceptions.

In Chapter XII of the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge outlines his opinion on the soul and its organs of sense: "These (the human

faculties) I would arrange under the different senses and powers: as the eye, the ear, the touch, &c.; the imitative power, voluntary and automatic; the imagination, or shaping and modifying power; the fancy, or the aggregative and associative power; the understanding, or the regulative, substantiating and realizing power; the speculative reason, *vis theoretica et scientifica*, or the power by which we produce or aim to produce unity, necessity, and universality in all our knowledge by means of principles a priori....” (Coleridge, *BL I*: 193)

In Chapter XIII, entitled as “On the imagination, or esemplastic power,” Coleridge makes a further distinction between primary imagination and secondary imagination. He defines primary imagination in these words: “The primary IMAGINATION hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM” (Coleridge, *BLI*: 202). The secondary imagination is defined likewise: “The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead” (ibid.). On the other hand, fancy is primarily concerned with “fixities and definites.” He states: “The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association” (ibid.).

With respect to the above definitions and distinctions provided by Coleridge, we need to understand that he was trying to emphasise upon the active role of the mind in perceiving and processing external images in order to create vivid impressions of feelings and thought. In this way, Coleridge was reacting against the empirical philosophers like Locke and Hume who had theorised the mind as a passive entity. The primary imagination is basically a subconscious process, an innate faculty of the mind, to perceive things from the outside world. The

“thoughts” inherent in the mind from before and the “things” perceived from outside together combine and coalesce in order to engender newer conceptions of reality. This is what Coleridge calls the “*esemplastic*” or the unifying/assembling powers of the imagination. Also, as Hill notes, the association of the primary imagination with the “eternal act of creation” has a “theological as well as aphiosophical dimension ... [and therefore] the activity of the perceiving mind is an analogue, at a finite level, of the eternally generative activity of God” (232). The secondary imagination refers to the imaginative capacity of the poetic mind. It therefore signifies a higher state of imaginative conception *vis-à-vis* the primary imagination. We can say that primary imagination is a faculty of the mind which is common and accessible to everyone, whereas secondary imagination is that special mental sensibility possessed by poets and philosophers. Secondary imagination also has the power to “dissolve, diffuse, dissipate, in order to re-create” i.e., it deconstructs the combination of “thoughts and things” brought about through the primary imagination thereby making us aware about its “constructed” features and then ends up juxtaposing the components again, but in an entirely new and innovative style. Through secondary imagination, we experience the elements of truth and nature, not as universalistic assumptions, but rather as manifested in their particularities conjured by the poet’s mind. As being different from both primary and secondary imagination, fancy, on the other hand, is the faculty of mind that merely combines the images acquired by the mind without necessarily blending or integrating them into a unified whole.

“Esemplastic is a qualitative adjective which the English romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge claimed to have invented. Despite its etymology from the Ancient Greek word *πλάσσω* for “to shape”, the term was modeled on Schelling’s philosophical term *Ineinsbildung* – the interweaving of opposites – and implies the process of an object being moulded into unity. The first recorded use of the word is in 1817 by Coleridge in his work, *Biographia Literaria*, in describing the esemplastic – the unifying – power of the imagination.” (<http://www.artandpopularculture.com/Esemplastic>)

In order to emphasise upon his careful distinction between “reason” and “understanding” as an important component of the “philosophic

discipline,” Coleridge refers to Milton and puts forward a passage from the *Paradise Lost*:

-----“both life, and sense,
Fancy, and *understanding*; whence the soul
Reason receives, and REASON is her *being*,
DISCURSIVE or INTUITIVE; discourse
Is ofttest your's, the latter most is our's.
Differing but in *degree*, in kind the same.

Paradise Lost, Book V.(Coleridge, *BL I*: 109).

In Chapter XIV, included in the second volume of *Biographia Literaria*, entitled “Occasion of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and the objects originally proposed—Preface to the second edition—The ensuing controversy, its causes and acrimony—Philosophic definitions of a poem and poetry with scholia,” Coleridge, at the very outset, states “two cardinal points of poetry” which he and Wordsworth were frequently in discussion: (i) “the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature,” and (ii) “the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination” (Coleridge, *BLII*: 5). In the first case, the poetry would engage in exciting the sensibility through conjuring images of dramatic or even supernatural brilliance—the poet will attempt to show the “truthfulness” or the “naturalness” of such impressions as would appear to the readers of poetry as real. On the other hand, the second case of poetry would focus on subjects chosen from ordinary life, consisting of characters belonging to a rural or pastoral life—the poetic mind will introspect on the deeper aspects of such a lifestyle, meditating upon its apparent simplicity and yet the modifying powers of imagination would aid in adding a charm of novelty to the whole enterprise. It was on these two conceptions of poetry that the entire plan of *Lyrical Ballads* was contextualised.

Coleridge took upon himself the responsibility of composing poetry (of a supernatural and romantic nature) under the first case, where his objective would be to incite human belief and interest towards enabling for “these shadows of imagination” that “willing suspension of disbelief” that constituted “poetic faith” (Coleridge, *BL II*: 6). On the other hand, Wordsworth chose, for his poetry, subjects that belonged to the everyday life and make them appear new and unfamiliar to his

readers by “awakening [their] mind’s attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us” (ibid.). It is with these shared objectives that both the poets began working on the proposed volume of poetry. On his part, Coleridge composed “The Ancient Mariner” and envisioned a few other poems to be composed within his chosen poetic worldview. Wordsworth too stayed true to his genius and composed a few poems in his “impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction” (ibid.). However, Coleridge soon brings into discussion the “preface of considerable length” that Wordsworth added to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800. He contends that he never concurred with “many parts of this preface, in the sense attributed to them, and which the words undoubtedly seem to authorize”; instead, he raised his objections to them, in terms of being “erroneous in principle” and also being in contradiction “both to other parts of the same preface, and to the author’s own practice in the greater number of the poems themselves” (ibid. 7–8). Therefore, in the chapter under discussion here, Coleridge endeavours to clarify his position *vis-à-vis* his association with Wordsworth with the *Lyrical Ballads* project. He does that by attempting to define, first—what is a poem, and second—what is poetry, in kind and essence.

Coleridge begins by placing the “poem” as a work, first in relation to philosophy and then to its close cousin, prose. The study of philosophy, according to him, consists of two parts or procedures: first, to individually differentiate and study its distinguishable parts, and, second, to put them back to where they co-existed within the unified body of the philosophical system. A prose work, like that of a poem, is composed of similar elements, and certain additional features like metre or rhyme mark the distinctiveness of poem as being different from prose. However, he refuses to believe that poetry is distinguished from prose merely by the use of metre or rhyme in the former. Therefore, keeping in mind the larger objective of such creative works as a poem and emphasising upon their enduring ability to convey a sense of pleasure, Coleridge provides the following definition of a poem:

A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having *this* object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with

a distinct gratification from each component
part.(Coleridge, *BL* II: 10)

For Coleridge, a “legitimate” poem is one in which the constituent parts provide mutual support and facilitate convincing explanations to each other’s existence within the harmonious whole. He particularly focusses on the “poetic journey” that a reader should be inspired to undertake—a poem should be enjoyed and appreciated not for the sake of a few “striking lines or distiches” or by any sense of ending it promises, but rather for the totality of the aesthetic pleasure it has the power to excite.

As far as the definition of poetry is concerned (the second question above), Coleridge asserts that a poem, of whatever length—long or short, will not necessarily qualify as poetry. In order to be called poetry, all the parts constituting the existence of the poem in question should be composed in harmony with each other. However, he soon states categorically that the answer of the question—what is poetry?—is organically connected with another question—what is a poet? For him, “it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet’s own mind” (Coleridge, *BL* II: 12). The poet, according to Coleridge, energises the whole soul of man and ensures a harmonious co-existence of its diverse faculties, each according to its merit and dignity. This is done by the poet with the help of that “synthetic and magical power” to which Coleridge gives the name of imagination. The power of imagination is manifest in its ability to bring about a “balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities” (*ibid.*), while at the same time, upholds the everlasting glory of nature and poetry.

At the end of Chapter XIV, Coleridge takes up three stanzas from the poem entitled “OF THE Original, Nature and Immortality OF THE SOUL” by Sir John Davies (1569–1626) and slightly alters them to suit the description of the “poetic imagination.”

"Doubtless this could not be, but that she turns
Bodies to spirit by sublimation strange,
As fire converts to fire the things it burns,
As we our food into our nature change.

From their gross matter she abstracts their forms,

And draws a kind of quintessence from things;
Which to her proper nature she transforms,
To bear them hght on her celestial wings.

Thus does she, when from individual states
She doth abstract the universal kinds;
Which then re-clothed in divers names and fates
Steal access through our senses to our minds.”(Coleridge, *BL* II: 12–13)

You can access the original poem by Davies by following this link:
<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A37239.0001.001/1:9?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>.

2.5 FORM AND STYLE

We have noted earlier that the genesis of *Biographia Literaria* could be traced to a biography of Lessing that Coleridge wished to write during his intellectual–philosophical sojourn in Germany. That biography soon turned into an essay on the various elements of poetry that Coleridge was supposed to write as part of the *Lyrical Ballads* project. However, as we have seen, none of these materialised into actuality—they only remained at a conceptual level for almost a decade-and-a-half when Coleridge finally decided to write a preface on his own in order to voice his differences from Wordsworth and also to articulate his personal views on poetry. That preface finally got extended to a full two volume of a “literary biography.” Therefore, what we can notice within the basic framework of the work is the constant presence of Coleridge, the author. Moreover, as we have had ample evidence of it, the presence of Wordsworth could also be discerned through its pages. As Lawrence Buell notes,

[T]he *Biographia* can be seem (sic) as progressing steadily, if irregularly, by laying the autobiography and philosophical groundwork, in volume one, for the climactic appraisal of Wordsworth in volume two. The

Biographia is at once the story of Coleridge's intellectual debt to Wordsworth, his disagreements with Wordsworth, and—most importantly, perhaps—his discovery of the era's greatest poet, the precise quality of whose genius Coleridge seeks to establish and proclaim. (400–401)

Looking at the overall structure of the work, it is seen that the chapters I to IV constitute an autobiographical section where Coleridge talks about his pre-Wordsworth days, of Rev. James Bowyer, the headmaster of the Grammar School at Christ's Hospital, who made him read Homer, Virgil, Ovid, the Greek tragic poets as well as Shakespeare and Milton. He talks about the early influence of Mr. Bowles's sonnets upon him. Chapter IV, as we already have seen, talks about his experiences of meeting Wordsworth, the *Lyrical Ballads*, and his early visions of the uniqueness of fancy and imagination. Chapters V to XII deal with the critical history of epistemology, ranging from the law of association and its history from Aristotle to Hartley, moving through the system of dualism propounded by Descartes and also touching upon Kantian philosophy towards elucidating the influence of German idealism upon his thoughts. Chapters XIII and XIV, as we have gone through them, are concerned with Coleridge's exposition of his theory of poetry. Chapter XV attempts a critical analysis of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. In chapter XVI, Coleridge details out the differences between the poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and those belonging to the "present age."

From chapters XVII to XXII, he returns to his favourite subject of examining the poetic tenets of Wordsworth *vis-à-vis* the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, including his own expositions on metre and diction. The remaining chapters (including one called "Satyrane's Letters" preceding XXIII and XXIV) express Coleridge's opinions on the reception towards his poems and other writings—he emphasises upon the essential truthfulness of his thoughts and opinions and thereby exhorts his readers to accept him with an openness of mind and spirit (Buell 400; Hill 225–240). It may be mentioned at this point that a large portion of the second volume of *Biographia Literaria* (from chapters XIV to XXIV) had to be composed under the printer's demand of making the second volume "proportional" to the first in terms of pages. Coleridge's style of writing throughout the chapters from both the volumes alternated between being autobiographical and personal to being poetic and philosophical. At

times, his writing style seem difficult to comprehend owing to the juxtaposing of these multiple styles of composition. However, as he himself stated throughout the work, true meaning resides in the totality of the work—the final product always being more than the sum of its components.

2.6 MAJOR THEMES

A major theme of *Biographia Literaria* is Coleridge's response to Wordsworth's theory of poetry. On the one hand, the work could be seen as a "monumental tribute" to Wordsworth by his friend and collaborator Coleridge; on the other hand, the same work aspires to assert the creative and intellectual "independence" of Coleridge from the "genius" of his friend. One important theme of the work consists in the author's endeavour to emphasise upon the active role of the mind in giving a distinct shape to the raw impressions it receives from the external world. In this regard, he goes one step further than Wordsworth to specifically define the concepts of fancy and imagination as powerful faculties of the human mind. He then divides imagination into primary and secondary imagination and studies their respective attributes and points of origins in ordinary human and poetic minds. Another important theme persistent almost throughout the whole work is Coleridge's receptiveness to the critical tradition of literary studies and interpretation. He takes up the responses of the critics and readers towards Wordsworth's poetry seen in the light of his preface. He defends his friend and highlights the merit of the latter's creative genius and its output, while at the same time, does not desist from conveying his own opinion of the same. In the course of our reading of the selected chapters above, we have explored in detail a few major themes pertaining to the work under discussion here. Coleridge attempts also to understand the position of poetry as an intellectual discourse *vis-à-vis* other disciplines, but mainly philosophy, religion, and politics. Seen from this perspective, *Biographia Literaria* thus also acquires an interdisciplinary significance and relevance in its own right.

2.7 CRITICAL RECEPTION

Within *Biographia Literaria* itself, Coleridge expresses his opinions regarding his own work. He refers to it as an "immethodical ...miscellany" and a "semi-narrative" (Coleridge, *BL* I:64, 110). It is

noteworthy that many critics took these words at their face value and often criticised the work likewise as lacking a coherent structure and a unified theme or principle. In this connection, Lawrence Buell states an obvious explanation for such a state of reception of the work: “[T]he *Biographia* does not seem to meet its own criteria for poesis, criteria which in large part through Coleridge’s influence have become accepted as basic postulates of modern Anglo-American literary criticism, at least until recently” (399). There are certain questions raised by Coleridge in relation to poetry like whether it constitutes “an harmonious whole,” where “the parts ... mutually support and explain each other” (Coleridge, *BLII*:10–11). It has been a point of contention whether he adhered in principle to what he had preached in the course of his book. Among modern critics, T.S. Eliot considered the work to have been composed under the “state of lethargy” caused by the “the disastrous effects of long dissipation and stupefaction of [Coleridge’s] powers in transcendental metaphysics” (quoted in Hill 222).

It was only in the 1950s that George Whalley attempted to undertake a serious attempt to analyse the underlying thematic structure of the work. Rejecting the view that the work was hastily composed, he strove to prove that the subjects explored in it had been present in the mind of Coleridge for a long time. Furthermore, he emphasises on the centrality of Wordsworth as a persistent engagement of the writer throughout his composition of the work (Hill 222). As Whalley observed, “The centre of the philosophical critique arose from Wordsworth’s poetry and was intended to elucidate it” (quoted in Buell 400). Therefore, one of the major preoccupations of the work consisted in Coleridge’s elaboration of what he found problematic in Wordsworth’s theory of poetry. And therefore, along with the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, the *Biographia Literaria* has been crucial to developing a complete understanding of the creative and intellectual traditions of Romanticism in English literature.

2.8 SUMMING UP

In this unit, we have attempted to read and understand one of the major prose texts of English Romanticism, the *Biographia Literaria* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This work, as we have come to realise, was closely associated with the personal development of Coleridge as a poet and a philosopher. This was a work whose conceptualisation went through

various mental manifestations spread over a period of close to twenty years and finally found expression in the form of a “literary biography.” We briefly explored this aspect in our discussion of the context to the work. Subsequently, we undertook a discussion on the three prescribed chapters of the work. We saw how Coleridge initially matured as a poet–intellectual and then carved his own path following his disagreement with certain propositions formulated by Wordsworth in his revised and expanded preface to the third edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1802. We read about his theorisation on the concepts of fancy and imagination, the latter further divided into primary and secondary imagination. We also saw how Coleridge attempted to put forward his own definitions of a poem and poetry in general. In the subsequent sections, we explored the form and style of *Biographia Literaria* followed by discussion on the major themes and the critical reception of the same. An autobiographical and a philosophical strain run through the body of the work and aptly reflect Coleridge’s mental and intellectual struggle as he attempted to articulate his poetic creed both as a response and a refutation of select propositions from Wordsworth’s poetic theory.

2.9 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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Unit 3

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (Chapters IV, XIII and XIV)

Supplementary Unit

Unit Structure :

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Situating the Poet and His Text: Samuel Taylor Coleridge and *Biographia Literaria*
- 3.3 His Other Important Works
- 3.4 Summing Up
- 3.5 References and Suggested Readings

3.1 OBJECTIVES

This unit undertakes a supplementary discussion of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's seminal work *Biographia Literaria*, in the context of his times and his other important works. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand Samuel Taylor Coleridge's position as a poet and a theorist of poetry
- Situate the text *Biographia Literaria* as Coleridge's response to Wordsworth's theory of poetry
- Know about his other important works

3.2 SITUATING THE POET AND HIS TEXT: SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE AND *BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA*

Having gone through the earlier unit on Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* and the prescribed chapters, I hope you have acquired a fair idea about his visions on poetry and the associated concepts of language, metre, and diction. In this unit, we are going to explore a little further regarding his stature as a prominent poet and a theorist of poetry of the Romantic period and also of English literature in general. We have seen how the idea of composing *Biographia Literaria* evolved over a period of two decades and essentially reflected Coleridge's progress as a poet, a

critic, and a philosopher as he ruminated over the complex purposes of poetry in conjunction with other arts and sciences, namely, politics, religion, and also psychology. Now let us see how his ideas could be contextualised within the larger development of the Romantic sensibility in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature. As M.H. Abrams notes, “[b]ecause of their hospitality to ideas from many sources, romantic critics in fact exhibit greater diversity in philosophical presuppositions, descriptive vocabulary, dialectical motifs, and critical judgments than the writers of any earlier period” (*The Mirror and the Lamp* 100). One reason for this could be the direct exposure of the Romantic poet–critic to the derivations of the European Enlightenment, particularly, the German branch of the same. We have seen the impact of German philosophy on Coleridge’s intellectual life in the earlier unit. Furthermore, the Romantic poet–critic was also acutely self-conscious about his theoretical formulations on literature and, more importantly, the effect of a highly sensitive genre like poetry on the psychology of the poet and the readers alike. That is why, we may argue, a lot of emphasis and attention was placed on the successive levels of imagination and thought. In this regard, Wordsworth’s preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1800 played the role of a “romantic manifesto” in proposing a set of crucial propositions regarding the basic characteristics and functions of poetry. Even though contemporary and later critics, including Coleridge as we have already seen, refused to accept all of them at face value, yet these propositions constituted the base of Romantic criticism of poetry and of literature in general.

M.H. Abrams provided a list of the basic assertions made by Wordsworth that not only offered a definition of poetry from his perspective, but also laid the groundwork for further criticism in this regard. Those assertions are as follow:

- (1) Poetry is the expression or overflow of feeling, or emerges from a process of imagination in which feelings play the crucial part.
- (2) As the vehicle of an emotional state of mind, poetry is opposed not to prose, but to unemotional assertions of fact, or ‘science.’
- (3) Poetry originated in primitive utterances of passion which, through organic causes, were naturally rhythmic and figurative.
- (4) Poetry is competent to express emotions chiefly by its resources of figures of speech and rhythm, by means of which words naturally embody and convey the feelings of the poet.

- (5) It is essential to poetry that its language be the spontaneous and genuine, not the contrived and simulated, expression of the emotional state of the poet.
- (6) The born poet is distinguished from other men particularly by his inheritance of an intense sensibility and a susceptibility to passion.
- (7) The most important function of poetry is, by its pleasurable resources, to foster and subtilize the sensibility, emotions, and sympathies of the reader. (*The Mirror and the Lamp* 101–103)

Poetry, as per the Romantic sensibility, was seen primarily as produced by the imagination and dominated by an overabundance of feelings. While Wordsworth perceived this as a more or less uniform phenomenon, Coleridge further classified the capacity of the mind in receiving and responding to external images by means of fancy and imagination, and the latter, again as primary and secondary imagination. There was then the question of placing poetry *vis-à-vis* the form of expression that was reliant on fact and observation, instead of feelings. While this distinction has often been extended to mean a straightforward dichotomy between poetry and prose, Wordsworth endeavoured to see this instead as a difference between the “philosophical” nature of poetry and the “matter-of-factness” of science. Coleridge, on the other hand, as we saw in the earlier unit, championed the ideal of “pleasure” as the “immediate object” of poetry, not truth (Coleridge, *BL* II: 10). As far as the origin of poetic utterance is concerned, the Romantic poet–critic went beyond Aristotle’s idea of “imitation” being the prime motive of poetry towards seeing it as a consequence of “passion excited by real events.” Coleridge similarly believed poetry to be “the instinctive utterance of feeling”, yet a “less remarkable language of prose” as far as its early forms were concerned (Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* 101). For Wordsworth, ordinary language could very well constitute the language of poetry, provided its subject is chosen wisely, which will then naturally and fittingly arouse the passions necessary to elevate the stature of the language and make it come alive with metaphors and figures. In this respect, Coleridge recognised Wordsworth’s ability to unify passionate feeling and deep thought within his poetic mind. Accompanied by his modifying powers of imagination and observation, Wordsworth could, as Coleridge argued, imbue everything, whether old or new, familiar or unfamiliar, with a new glow and freshness— “[t]o carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood” (Coleridge, *BL* I: 59). More than the subject of poetry, it was Wordsworth’s “original genius” that, according to Coleridge, seemed to be at work here.

In their respective ways, both Wordsworth and Coleridge endeavoured to move away from the contrived and mechanical expressive idiom of eighteenth-century poetry. In its place, they spoke in favour of using a linguistic idiom that springs forth freely and spontaneously from the mind of the poet and then impresses upon the sensibility of the listeners with equal passion and sincerity. Coleridge also emphasised upon the presence of a harmonising principle unifying the parts of a poem to the whole thereby giving a sense of totality to the entire poetic experience. Even though both Wordsworth and Coleridge talked about the interface between mind and nature through poetry, their respective points of emphases were different. Coleridge appreciated the fact that Wordsworth promoted a “lofty, yet prideless impartiality in *poetry*, [which] he might hope to have encouraged its continuance in *real life*”, thus resembling a “mixed congregation [of Christians] rising or kneeling before their common Maker” (Coleridge, *BL* II: 104). However, Coleridge also raised his objection to the aforementioned conception of poetry since he felt that in order to preserve the uniqueness of poetry as being different from prose and also from philosophy, it is necessary to keep the focus on its “immediate object” which is “pleasure.” It is only through the employment of pleasure that the poet, according to him, can edify and enlighten his readers towards a moral purpose. He therefore asks: “[H]ow is the moral effect to be produced, by merely attaching the name of some low profession to powers which are *least* likely, and to qualities which are assuredly not *more* likely, to be found in it?” (ibid. 105). It is the duty of the poet, through his own persona, to provide pleasure as well as moral education, and to invoke within us such sentiments that would enable us to appreciate the goodness and wisdom of genius. This led to the championing of the idea of an ideal poet as one who should, according to Wordsworth, be endowed with a “lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness” and is aware fully of the “spirit of life that is in him” (quoted in Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* 102). Coleridge, true to his first-hand exposure to the intellectual tradition of the Enlightenment, pronounced that, “[n]o man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher” (Coleridge, *BL* II: 19). He considered poetry to be the ultimate fruition of all human endeavour, both intellectual and emotional. And this constituted the most significant function of poetry—it energises the soul of the poet and his/her readers alike. The end of poetry, for Wordsworth, was to excite as well as to please with an overabundance of feelings. Coleridge gave importance to the “synthetic and magical power” of imagination to bring together “opposite or discordant qualities” to envision poetry in its harmonious totality (Coleridge, *BL* II: 12). So, as we can see, Coleridge went on to

refine or make additional adjustments to many of Wordsworth's propositions on poetry. Those ideas were subsequently modified and reinterpreted in the light on new criticism and theories.

3.3 HIS OTHER IMPORTANT WORKS

Harold Bloom classifies the poetic achievement of Coleridge into two broad categories: the "daemonic" group of poems and the "conversational" group of poems. Under the first category of daemonic poems, he places three most famous poems of Coleridge, namely, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," and "Kubla Khan," along with his late fragments "Limbo" and "Ne Plus Ultra." The second category, called the "conversational" poems, includes "The Eolian Harp," "Frost at Midnight," and irregular odes like "Dejection" and "To William Wordsworth" (3). We have already noted in the earlier unit the fact that the period from the summer of 1797 to the spring of 1798 constituted a fertile period of poetic composition for Coleridge, and the "daemonic" group of poems mentioned above were composed during this period. In this section, we shall undertake a brief discussion on a few selected poems from the above. As C.M. Bowra noted with respect to the significance of these two years in the poetic career of Coleridge,

[I]n 1797 and 1798 he wrote three poems which no one else could have written and which he himself was never again to equal or approach. At this time something set all his powers to work and brought to the surface all the hidden resources of his conscious and unconscious self. The dreamer was able to give a concrete form to his dreams, the omnivorous reader to fuse the heterogeneous elements of his reading into magical combinations, and the critic to satisfy his own exacting ideas of what a poem ought to be. (52)

While it is difficult to say for certain as to what were the reasons behind this sudden and short-lived phase of poetic exuberance on the part of Coleridge. One strong reason, as we all have guessed, is the newfound presence of Wordsworth in his life which often helped him realise and organise his thoughts in a coherent way. We also know that there were discussions between them that led to the publication of the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in the month of September 1798. The discussion ranged from various topics, including the significance of nature and the supernatural. It may be noted in this regard that, among the well-known Romantic poets, it was only Coleridge who had a sustained engagement

with the supernatural, which “appealed to him with a special power and was responsible for his finest work[s]” (Bowra 52). And all the three poems, namely, “The Ancient Mariner,” “Christabel,” and “Kubla Khan,” are concerned with the supernatural, in their own ways, wholly or partially. We must also remember that, as part of their plan for the

According to Bloom, “[t]he daemonic poems break through the orthodox censor set up by Coleridge’s moral fears of his own imaginative impulses. Unifying the group is a magical quest pattern that intends as its goal a reconciliation between the poet’s self-consciousness and a higher order of being, associated with divine forgiveness; but this reconciliation fortunately lies beyond the border of all these poems” (3). Similarly, the conversational group “verges on a kind of vicarious and purgatorial atonement in which Coleridge must fail or suffer so that someone he loves may succeed or experience joy. There is a subdued implication that somehow the poet will yet be accepted into a true home this side of the grave if he can achieve an atonement” (ibid. 4).

Lyrical Ballads, both Wordsworth and Coleridge had divided their respective subjects of poetic composition. Wordsworth sought to address subjects from everyday life and to imbue them with new and unfamiliar colours so as to reawaken the human sensibility towards the elements of beauty and wonder inherent in them. Coleridge, on the other hand, chose subjects and incidents that originated in the supernatural and the romantic, and his object was thereby to excite the senses towards the possibility of such events happening in real life. This was by no means an easy task for Coleridge—he had to carefully guard himself against producing poetry that would end up producing only fear and horror. He had to sound and seem convincing, as to be accompanied by a human touch which was so important for the joint poetic enterprise involving him and Wordsworth.

With reference to “The Ancient Mariner,” Bowra claims that, “[t]he triumph of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ is that it presents a series of incredible events through a method of narration which makes them not only convincing and exciting but in some sense a criticism of life” (55). The idea behind the conceptualisation of the poem originated in a strange dream recollected by John Cruikshank in which he saw the image of a person doomed under a curse for committing a crime and also of a “skeleton ship with figures in it”—to the imageries of this dream, Wordsworth added the anecdote on the killing of the albatross, which he

had only recently read about in Captain George Shelvocke's *Voyage round the World by the Way of the Great South Sea* and also the suggestion that the ship be navigated by dead sailors (Bowra 54; Hill 104). Apart from these limited but crucial interventions by Wordsworth into "The Ancient Mariner," the poem essentially remained the invention of Coleridge himself and, in which, he went beyond the stock figures and metaphors of Gothic literature to add a "human" element to the narrative. For one thing, the action takes place not within a castle in the style of medieval Gothic literature, but out there upon a ship sailing on the limitless seas. In a way, Coleridge redefined the concept of the "supernatural" through the poem by contextualizing it within a new setting with new characters. It was as part of his plan to arouse the belief and conviction of his readers that he sought to associate the supernatural elements of the outside world with a wide range of human emotions, namely, "guilt and remorse, suffering and relief, hate and forgiveness, grief and joy" (Bowra 56). The protagonist of the ballad-poem, the ancient mariner or the old navigator, embodied the conflicting sensibilities within the human mind, and also acted as the prime harmonizing factor between the natural and the supernatural within the larger narrative of the ballad-poem.

"Kubla Khan" holds a special significance among Coleridge's poems, first because of the circumstances of its composition, and, second, with respect to its status as "a vision," "a dream," and "a fragment." The preface to the poem contains the story of its birth, according to which, Coleridge, under a dose of anodyne (a painkilling drug), fell asleep in his chair while he was reading about Kubla Khan's palace in Purchas's *Pilgrimage*. He was in deep sleep for about three hours or so, and, in his dream, he had a "poetic" vision whereby he composed about two to three hundred lines of poetry based on what he was reading before falling off to sleep. Immediately after waking up, he sat down to write down what he had mentally composed during his dream, when suddenly he was interrupted by a visitor from Porlock who engaged him in a conversation for about an hour. When Coleridge returned to his desk to resume his writing, he realized that, apart from retaining some eight to ten lines and images from the dream vision, the rest had vanished from his memory. Consequently, the poem remained supposedly incomplete, and the images drawn by the poet remained only suggestive in their meaning and implications. An important component of this narrative is the use of opium by Coleridge to cure pain resulting from severe physical and mental illnesses he was suffering from. Apart from its medical use, there also seemed to be a direct connection between opium and imagination. In his book *The Milk of Paradise: The Effect of Opium Visions on the Works of DeQuincey, Crabbe, Francis*

Thompson, and Coleridge, M.H. Abrams remarked that, “[t]he great gift of opium to these men was access to a new world as different from this as Mars may be; and one which ordinary mortals, hindered by terrestrial conceptions, can never, from mere description, quite comprehend. It is a world of twisted, exquisite experience, sensuous and intellectual...” (4). While modern medical studies tend to underplay the decisive impact of opium consumption towards expanding the imaginative world of the poet/consumer, Alethea Hayter (quoted in Hill 77–78) argues that the influence of opium will only be successful if the person concerned has a strong creative imagination in the first place. It can never claim the place of innate imagination. Therefore, in terms of our understanding of Coleridge’s own formulations regarding the “synthetic and magical power” of imagination, we can argue that “Kubla Khan” is a vivid testimony to the poet’s own progression from a primary state of imagination towards the higher and loftier stage of the secondary imagination. The very act of his assembling together the lines and images visualised in his dream is reflective of the poet’s power to “dissolve, diffuse, dissipate, in order to re-create” in an entirely new and innovative style. Even though acquired from various sources, including Purchas’s *Pilgrimage* and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, the lines and images reproduced in the poem are revealed in their particularities as envisioned by the poet’s mind. As Watson noted in his book *Coleridge the Poet*, “‘Kubla Khan’ is a poem about poetry” (quoted in Hill 95). The construction of the pleasure-dome and the garden in Xanadu under the orders of Kubla Khan, on the one hand, and the description of the mighty fountain forcing its way out from the deep romantic chasm amidst the green hill across a cedarn cover, on the other hand, symbolise the coming together of the natural and the artificial, as envisioned by Coleridge towards the end of Chapter XIV of the *Biographia Literaria*.

The third poem of Coleridge we are going to discuss, “Dejection:An Ode,” (1802) was a lengthy and moving verse-letter to Sara Hutchinson, with whom he was hopelessly in love during the autumn of 1799. Compared to the years 1797 and 1798 during which he had composed the two poems discussed above, the circumstances surrounding the composition of “Dejection:An Ode” changed drastically by the spring of 1802. A number of factors accounted for his sorry state of affairs like physical illness, opium addiction, growing disaffection with conjugal life, and, most importantly, a terrible feeling that he had lost his creative powers of imagination. The original poem was a long one comprising 340 lines and had, as its subject, the twin themes of Coleridge’s lost imaginative power and lost love closely interwoven to produce a poignant exposition of his crisis of mind and body. However, he soon realised the necessity of editing out the personal references, and

the resultant poem was reduced to 139 lines mainly dealing with poetry and the loss of imaginative power (Gupta 249; Hill 174). The poem is divided into eight stanzas, and, in the sixth stanza, Coleridge states his present state of predicament when he says: “But now afflictions bow me down to earth;/ Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth, / But oh! Each visitation/ Suspends what nature gave me at my birth, / My shaping spirit of Imagination” (*Romantic Poets* 253). The poem was no doubt one of loss and deprivation; yet Coleridge was still conscious of the cognitive powers of the human mind. As against Wordsworth’s emphasis on “associating” ideas in a state of excitement, which was based on Hartley’s doctrine of the “association of ideas,” Coleridge stressed upon the shaping and modifying powers of imagination and recognised the presence of two faculties operating in the poetic enterprise: one passive and works by association, whereas the other is active and characterises poetic imagination (Hill 179). The second one, according to Coleridge, is most vital for the composition of poetry. The closing stanza of the poem comprises the invocation to “gentle Sleep! with wings of healing” so as to infuse a feeling of joy and rejoicing into the poetic endeavour. The poem “Dejection: An Ode” then signifies his coming-to-terms with the supposed “loss” of this creative faculty and its subsequent restoration to its rightful place in his creative and critical mindscape.

David Hartley and the Association of Ideas

“The core of Hartley’s discussion and the center of his interest was not the generation of ideas from sensation, but the association of sensations with one another and of ideas with one another. By means of association, simple ideas run into complex ones. In explaining and proving this proposition, Hartley listed five cases of the association of simple ideas of sensation: where sensation *A* is often associated with each of the sensations *B, C, D*, at last *A* alone will associate *b, c, d* with one another; where sensations *A, B, C, D* are associated together in various combinations, *A* will raise *b, c, d* and *B* will also raise *a, c, d*; where sensations *A, B, C, D* represent successive impressions, the ideas come closer together than the sensations did, and the ideas are associated almost synchronically at the end; where compound impressions $A+B+C+D$ leave compound miniatures $a+b+c+d$, association becomes perpetually closer; when ideas a,b,c,d have been associated in any of the above ways, if *a* is raised, *b,c,* and *d* will be raised and associated together still further (*Observations on Man*, I, 73–74). In each case the association would take place automatically and mechanically” (Ober 446–447).

3.4 SUMMING UP

In this unit, we have attempted to follow up with the earlier unit on *Biographia Literaria* by undertaking a discussion on the poetic theories of both Wordsworth and Coleridge. We have particularly looked at Coleridge's refinement of and addition to Wordsworth's thoughts on nature of imagination and subjects of poetry. In the course of the unit, we have also analysed a few poems composed by Coleridge, namely, "The Ancient Mariner," "Kubla Khan," and "Dejection: An Ode" from the perspectives of their respective histories of composition and, more importantly, their contribution towards the attestation and furtherance of Coleridge's poetic theories elaborated in his *Biographia Literaria*. The purpose of this unit has been to add further to our reading of Coleridge's poetic biography *vis-à-vis* the Romantic theories of poetry in general and of Wordsworth in particular, and also to examine how Coleridge's ideas as a theorist of poetry extended to his own position as a poet and vice versa.

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Unit 4

Dorothy Wordsworth: Selections from the *Grasmere Journals*

Unit Structure :

- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Dorothy Wordsworth: Biographical Sketch
- 4.4 Dorothy Wordsworth as a Woman Writer
- 4.5 Reading the Text
- 4.6 Summing Up
- 4.7 References and Suggested Reading

4.1 Objective

This unit aims to acquaint the students with the journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, simultaneously enabling them to understand the significance of the lesser known woman writer's works in the context of the socio-cultural atmosphere of her time, as well as the crucial contribution of her imaginative powers as well as her dedicated support in the development of William Wordsworth's poetic imagination and output.

By the end of this unit the student will be able to appreciate:

- The significance of the unpublished works of Dorothy Wordsworth
- Her distinctive powers of observation and experience of nature
- Her detailed sketches of ordinary human lives in the lake district
- The influence of her observations and sensory experience of nature and life on William Wordsworth's art
- Dorothy Wordsworth's place in English literature

4.2 Introduction

Dorothy Wordsworth (1771-1798) was an English author, poet and diarist. She was the younger sister of the well-known English Romantic poet William Wordsworth. Except for a handful of poems, Dorothy Wordsworth did not publish her writings during her lifetime. Most of her works were published posthumously and her readership has been increasing only since the late twentieth century. She maintained journals during the periods 1798 and then during 1800-03 which are now known as the *Alfoxden* and *Grasmere Journals* according to the respective place of residence of the author during their composition. The posthumous publication of the *Journals* has secured abiding interest in Dorothy Wordsworth's writings due to their lyrical recounting of the day to day lives in the Wordsworth household while also providing insights into the unfolding of the creative journeys of several literary luminaries of the time. They have also established her as a distinctive voice among the few women writing during the largely male dominated literary space of the Romantic Period in English literature. The selections for this unit have been taken from Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals*.

4.3 Dorothy Wordsworth: Biographical Sketch

Born in Cockermouth, Cumberland on Christmas Day, 1771, Dorothy Wordsworth was the only girl among the Wordsworth siblings, the third among five children. One of her brothers, also her favourite, went on to become the celebrated English poet, William Wordsworth. Their mother died when Wordsworth was six and thereafter, she spent most of her growing years with various relatives, which became a period of long separation from her brothers. She initially lived with her maternal aunt in Halifax till the age of 15. She spent the next two years with her grandmother at Penrith. Thereafter, in 1778, she moved into her maternal uncle's home near Norwich, where she lived until the winter of 1793/4. She continued to live with various relatives until the Spring of 1794 when she lived for a few weeks with her beloved brother, William. In July 1797, Dorothy and William Wordsworth moved to Alfoxden where they lived close to S.T. Coleridge. She accompanied William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge during their travels to Germany from where they returned in 1799. On 20 December, 1799, she and William Wordsworth rented a place at Grasmere, in the famous Lake District of Cumbria where they continued to live together until William Wordsworth's death in 1850.

During the period following her mother's death, Dorothy Wordsworth was separated from the company of her brothers, except during the latter's occasional school holidays. She missed their company very deeply, which she has expressed in several letters written during this time. She was reunited with William Wordsworth in 1795 while living at Dorset and then at Somerset during 1797-98, since which time they became inseparable companions for the rest of their adult lives. Dorothy Wordsworth never married and after William Wordsworth's marriage to Mary Hutchinson in 1802, she continued to live with them.

The companionship between Dorothy and William Wordsworth was a long and fruitful one and it is now acknowledged as having been very crucial in the production of William Wordsworth's poetic works. Dorothy Wordsworth had no ambitions to be a published writer herself, although the various unpublished writings she left now prove the unique imaginary powers and Romantic sensibility she possessed and which had obvious influence upon her brother's poetic engagements as well. Scholarly speculations on William Wordsworth's works in this context has also come to understand that much of the 'emotions recollected' that Wordsworth describes to be shaping his poetic pieces could indeed be, partially if not fully, the recollections of moments and experiences by his sister. William Wordsworth's works are full of references to the influence on his poetic works and experience of the companionship, collaboration and insights of his sister. The following lines serve as an example:

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears; And humble cares, and delicate fears; A heart, the fountain of sweet tears; And love, and thought, and joy.

('The Sparrow's Nest', ll. 17-20)

Very few of Dorothy Wordsworth's writings were published during her lifetime. Her works began to receive readerly and scholarly attention only since the last part of the previous century. It is her journal writing which has mainly attracted much of the readership. Wordsworth journaled her daily activities, experiences and impressions during her stay at Alfoxden, Somersetshire in 1798 and at Grasmere between 1800-1803. She was living with William Wordsworth during both the periods. It is these journals which have particularly inspired curiosity and attention among her readership and the extracts in this unit have been taken from her *Grasmere journals*.

Stop to consider

Although Dorothy Wordsworth's collaborative influence upon William Wordsworth's poetic works and sensibility is widely acknowledged today, it would be wrong to read her works with the sole aim of understanding the poetic output of William Wordsworth. Her works contain much merit as excellent writings on their own too.

Besides the *Alfoxden* and *Grasmere journals*, Dorothy Wordsworth has left behind a substantial body of writings, which includes *Journal of Days Spent in Hamburgh* (1798), *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (1803), *A Narrative Concerning George and Sarah Green* (1808), *Journal of a Tour on the Continent* (1820), *My Second Tour in Scotland* (1822), and *A Tour on the Isle of Man* (1828).

In 1829 Dorothy Wordsworth fell seriously ill and spent the rest of her life as an invalid, in the care of her brother's family. She died in 1855 near Ambleside.

4.4 Dorothy Wordsworth as a woman writer

Dorothy Wordsworth is today read not only as a companion to William Wordsworth but as a unique Romantic writer in her own right. However, why she never aspired to be a published writer is a question that has puzzled posterity. The question is often approached from the perspective of gender difference. It should be remembered that Dorothy Wordsworth did not receive the opportunity to have the kind of formal education that her brothers did. During their formative years, while William Wordsworth attended university and traveled the continent, Dorothy Wordsworth mainly stayed within the domestic confines at the places of her various relatives. She was full of admiration for her brothers' more rigorous education and upon their recommendation she would read 'the Iliad, the Odyssey... Fielding's works, Hayley's poems, Gil Blas (in French)...Milton's works, Goldsmith's poems, [and] other trifling things'. (Newlyn, 26) She was also widely read in English literature. However, the lack of a formal education is not a determining factor in whether or not a person of any gender becomes a published writer.

Yet, Dorothy Wordsworth seems to have always resisted or casually

dismissed advice and suggestions to publish her writings, although most of her travel accounts were circulated within her circle and their literary merits were almost unanimously appreciated. Theories have been constructed suggesting that she was entirely devoted to supporting her brother's poetic ambitions and she did not want to be his competition. Edmund Lee, in the first biography of Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Story of a Sister's Love* has praised her for consecrating 'her life to her brother's good, relinquishing for herself everything outside him in such a way that she became absorbed in his own existence'. (Wilson, 26)

The question of whether she herself could be a poet had crossed Dorothy Wordsworth's mind after all. At one point in the journal she writes,

I had many exquisite feelings, and when I saw this lowly Building in the waters, among the dark and lofty hills, with that bright, soft light upon it, it made me more than half a poet. (*Grasmere Journal*, 18 March)

Yet, Dorothy Wordsworth composed less than 20 poems and only five of them were published during her lifetime, as part of her brother's poetic volumes. Her collected poems were published by Susan Levin in 1987. Most of her other writings were published only in the late twentieth century and besides her *Journals*, the other writings still lack a wide readership. At one point, Dorothy and William Wordsworth were in fact planning to support themselves through writing but as their fortunes improved, Dorothy settled into a life of retirement. Although her writings betray no ambition of being a public author, Dorothy did regularly revise most of her journals and other accounts. Yet, her apparent 'self-immolation' in the service of the fulfilment of her brother's literary genius has recently invited much scholarly speculation. While certain scholars have understood it from the perspective of the phallogocentric bias in language (Homans), others have pointed out the unavailability of 'a ground, a territory for writing' for nineteenth century women writers like Dorothy Wordsworth (Alexander).

Nevertheless, the publication of the *Alfoxden* and *Grasmere Journals*, although posthumously have secured a lasting place for Dorothy Wordsworth in English literature. Ernest Selincourt has called her 'probably the most remarkable and the most distinguished of English prose writers who never wrote a line for the general public' (Wilson, 16) Besides William Wordsworth, Dorothy Wordsworth's presence and interactions helped shape the works and imagination of other contemporary Romantic writers such as S.T. Coleridge and Thomas De Quincey. Moreover, Dorothy Wordsworth's writings have influenced and shaped the work of later writers as well, particularly Virginia Woolf

in formulating her idea of ‘moments of being’. Woolf found in her writing a vivid recognition of the way in which ‘inner visions’ are embedded in the texture of daily life, from where they can be ‘call[ed] to mind at any time in their distinctness and in their particularity’, so that they ‘come back stilled and heightened’ and capable of offering ‘consolation and quiet’. (Newlyn 158). In fact, Dorothy Wordsworth’s narrative style in the *Journals* anticipated Woolf’s stream-of-consciousness

4.5 The Context:

4. Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Grasmere Journals* were written between 1800 and 1803. The *Journals* were edited and published by William Angus Knight in 1897. The journal records of the four days prescribed for study are representative of Wordsworth’s exquisite powers of description and observation, while detailing the lived realities in and around the Wordsworth household. Lyrical descriptions of nature and highly empathetic records of the hardships and misfortunes of neighbours and country people often merge with images of William Wordsworth’s creative process. However, it must be noted here that autobiographies must not be read as histories or as absolute facts. Anca Vlasopolos warns against reading the textual images of Dorothy and William Wordsworth produced by the *Journals* too literally. Journals like any other form of literary composition, should be read as constructed narratives and one must remember that the images and glimpses of the lives of Dorothy Wordsworth, as well as any other figure presented in the *Journals* are products of literary self-fashioning and should be treated as such.

4.6 Reading the Text:

4.6.1 Nature

The ubiquitous presence of nature is the most conspicuous part of Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals. The *Grasmere Journals* are a record of the immersion of the Wordsworths’ lives in nature and vice versa. In fact, the profound and overwhelming presence in and of nature defines the personal and creative existences of the Wordsworth siblings during the Grasmere period and beyond, evidence of which may be found as much in the *Grasmere Journals* as William Wordsworth’s poetic practice and philosophy. This is how a typical day in Dorothy Wordsworth’s life and a journal entry for the day begins:

When I undrew my curtains in the morning, I was much affected by the beauty of the prospect & the change. The sun shone, the wind had passed away, the hills looked chearful, the river was very bright as it flowed into the lake. The Church rises up behind a little knot of Rocks...Bees, in a row in the garden under the wall. (*Grasmere Journals* Friday 16th April, 1802)

The highlight of almost every day in Dorothy Wordsworth's life was walks and excursions in the countryside of the Lake district. It is not just in the company of William Wordsworth and Coleridge but the *Journals* contain descriptions of her solitary walks as well. Her journal entry for May 14, 1800 records her wandering walk back home after bidding farewell to her brothers William and John Wordsworth:

I walked as long as I could amongst the stones of the shore. The wood rich in flowers. A beautiful yellow, palish yellow flower, that looked thick round & double, & smelt very sweet

– I supposed it was a ranunculus – Crowfoot, the grassy leaved, Rabbit-toothed white flower, strawberries, geranium – scentless violet, anemones two kinds, orchises, primroses. The hackberry very beautiful, the crab coming out as low shrub.

While these walks formed an essential part of William Wordsworth's creative exercise, the records of her experiences of the sentient world encountered during the walks are evidence of the unusual intimate absorption in nature of Dorothy Wordsworth's consciousness. Her sensitive perception of every little wild flower she encounters on her way back is testament to her heightened consciousness of every beat and nerve in nature. Her remarkable powers of perception and expression of natural details have been universally acknowledged by Dorothy Wordsworth's scholars. Her biographer Ernest de Selincourt has remarked that Dorothy Wordsworth had a much 'quicker response' than that of William Wordsworth 'to the sights and sounds of the world about her' which she articulated 'simply and faithfully' and with an 'infallible sense of...detail' (Selincourt, 1, 78, 153). Around the same time, Virginia Woolf noted Dorothy Wordsworth's suggestive abilities: Even in such brief notes one feels the suggestive power which is the gift of the poet rather than of the naturalist, the power which, taking only the simplest facts, so orders them that the whole scene comes before us, heightened and composed, the lake in its quiet, the hills in their splendour. (Woolf, 151)

Stop to consider

Long walks through natural landscape and the wilderness was essential to the creative development of the Wordsworths and Coleridge. Can you connect the urban turn in modern poetry to the growth of industrialization and simultaneous a loss of connection with nature?

4.6.2 Nature as Home

Nature occupies prominent and pervasive space in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journals* because of the exquisite natural setting of the Lake district where the Wordsworths dwelt and which held profound significance in their lives. Early orphan hood and related misfortunes in the lives of the Wordsworth children had a huge impact on their psyche during their growing years and the longing to find or return to a 'home' remained a defining element in their youth. A constant preoccupation with finding and securing a sense of home was fundamental in Dorothy Wordsworth's life and writings. She constantly expressed this yearning for a home of her own, usually one she imagined sharing with her favorite brother in her letters to her childhood friend Jane Pollard. Therefore, when they finally settled into Alfoxden and later Dove Cottage, it fulfilled a long-preserved desire to belong to a space which was not only in geographical proximity to their childhood home in northern England, but shared a similar kind of landscape. During their stay at Alfoxden, in her letters to Mary Hutchinson, she had paid Alfoxden her highest compliment, by linking it with the lost land of her childhood: "There is everything here; sea, woods wild as fancy ever painted, brooks clear and pebbly as in Cumberland, villages so romantic; and William and I, in a wander by ourselves, found out a sequestered waterfall in a dell..." (Newlyn 327-328). It was this appeal to their nostalgic yearning for a home that endeared the countryside of the Lake district to the Wordsworths and being a constant part of it became essential to their sense of security and sustenance. Thus, the communion with nature that is evidenced in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journals* carries deep personal significance for the duo as well.

At certain points, the descriptions of the landscape found in the *Journals* are coloured by Dorothy Wordsworth's personal mood as well. The following lines from her entry in the *Grasmere Journals* on May 14, 1800 are an example: "I sate a long time upon a stone at the margin of the lake, & after a flood of tears my heart was easier. The lake looked to me I knew not why dull and melancholy, and the weltering on the shores seemed a heavy sound." However, most critics have viewed Dorothy Wordsworth's engagements with and descriptions of nature to be quite faithful and detached. Virginia Woolf has

noted this of her: “Dorothy...noted what was before her accurately, literally, and with prosaic precision...Her first concern was to be truthful - grace and symmetry must be made subordinate to truth.” (Woolf 149-151). Susan Levin has also observed Dorothy Wordsworth’s intense desire to faithfully “put...down what she sees” (Levin 12). Frances Wilson has characterised Dorothy Wordsworth as a mere “channel through which perceptions pass, like streams”. (Wilson, 26) Pamela Woolf has observed that Dorothy Wordsworth ‘cultivated neither personality, nor ideas; she kept with the visible scene’ as if she were ‘trapped, almost imprisoned, by the appearance of things’ (Woolf 61-70).

4.6.3 Nature and Self effacement

These scholars have seen this accurate representation of her environment by Dorothy Wordsworth as an extended part of the self-effacement she had displayed in her personal association in her brother’s poetic and personal lives as well. What she practiced in her personal life manifested itself in her writerly persona as well. This characteristic in her writing has even been equated with John Keats’ concept of ‘negative capability’. In fact, her ability to negate her own personality in these writings has been contrasted with those of William Wordsworth who has been criticised as the ‘egotistical sublime’. This acquires particular significance in view of the fact that Dorothy and William Wordsworth mostly experienced these moments in nature together which went on to inspire simultaneous writings by each.

4.6.4 Nature and Spirituality

Others have tried to understand Dorothy Wordsworth’s ability to erase her own presence from her descriptions in terms of the deep immersion in nature that apparently led her to achieve a union with the surroundings where her own separate existence became dissolved and immaterial. Suzanne Stewart has argued that the self-effacement found in Dorothy Wordsworth’s natural descriptions are manifestations of a mystical submersion in nature that she constantly sought and experienced. She states that being in nature was a deep spiritual experience for Dorothy Wordsworth: “Once ‘inside’ nature, so to speak, she sees beyond it: that is, she discovers, in mystical terms, something hidden and transcendent, and that, I think, makes her relationship to nature quite spiritual” (Stewart 69). According to Stewart, it is Dorothy’s self denial abilities that allows her to experience this spiritual communion with nature and ‘Dorothy’s ‘watching’ clearly extends considerably beyond what she experiences with her senses, for she intuits what she cannot see and hear: an essence within nature, a spiritual force” (Stewart 73).

Stop to consider

William Wordsworth has acquired the description of being the 'high priest of nature'. In fact, the association with nature has deep personal and spiritual significance for both Wordsworth siblings at many different levels. It was not just the physical space of Alfoxden or Dove Cottage that finally restored a sense of home to the siblings troubled by a sense of homelessness throughout their youth. It was the return to the constant embrace of nature that they found in the Lake country that provided them with the true sense of having found an affective and spiritual 'home'.

4.6.5 Landscape and a painterly imagination

Although Dorothy Wordsworth's capacity to dissolve and negate her own personality in her descriptions of the natural world have been universally appreciated, she did evolve a distinctive style in the *Grasmere Journals*, a 'poetics of prose', in Lucy Newlyn's words. (Newlyn 346) Although her faithfulness and restraint in natural descriptions have been widely accepted, there is a distinctive pattern in her descriptions as well.

The following moonscape from the *Grasmere Journals* is an evidence of Dorothy Wordsworth's exquisite pictorial imagination:

It was the moon and moonlight seen through hurrying driving clouds immediately behind the Stone man upon the top of the hill on the Forest side. Every tooth and every edge of Rock was visible, & the Man stood like a Giant watching from the roof of a lofty castle. The hill seemed perpendicular from the darkness below it. It was a sight I could call to mind at any time it was so distinct. (*Grasmere Journals* Nov 24, 1801)

Such picture-making ability of Dorothy Wordsworth in her *journals* has been widely acknowledged and praised, but her word pictures do follow structures, which are mainly determined by a distinctive aesthetic that she had been developing overtime. While her *Alfoxden Journals*, written during a period when she was much under the influence of Coleridge, display the influence of a Gothic style, the *Grasmere Journals* imbibe the influence of the picturesque tradition in her aesthetic sensibility and pictorial descriptions. As Nabholz has argued, "When she was examining the natural scene, she was looking for harmonious visual compositions which brought into unity varied and intricate parts - in effect, the definition of pictorial composition developed in the picturesque literature of the eighteenth century. These

standards first become strikingly evident in the *Grasmere Journals* (i.e. 1800-1803); indeed, it would appear that from the time of her settled residence in the Lake Country in 1799, Dorothy was developing the aesthetics of natural observation which were to direct her response to landscape throughout the rest of her life". (Nabholtz 120) In the same context, Robert Con Davis had stated that "In the aesthetic model of the picturesque, the viewer's emotional involvement is in bondage to the principles of organization and harmony taken from landscape painting. The viewer stands in a fixed space outside of the natural scene and sorts the visual components into a graphic hierarchy of focused figures and unfocused background areas". (Davis 45). Thus, it would be wrong to assume that Dorothy Wordsworth's pictorial descriptions are completely 'truthful' and value neutral, for her word-pictures are structured along patterns of organization and narration just as any landscape painting would do. Lucy Newlyn too agrees that as a person who was well acquainted with the picturesque thought and tradition, Dorothy Wordsworth's writings do display painterly inclinations in line with them, but then she cultivated an independent aesthetic of her own. (Newlyn 328)

Stop to consider

Landscape representations in painting as in literature, or in any art for for that matter, are never objective mimetic portrayals of a natural scenery. The artistic representation/intervention entails a process of subjective selection and narration that leads to the artistic product becoming a value laden entity.

4.6.6 Portraits of country people

Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journals* are not just about her non-human surroundings, but vivid descriptions of the rural poor encountered by the Wordsworths during their walks, at their doorstep or within the household are a frequent component, especially in the *Grasmere Journals*. Wordsworth has been praised for her sympathetic and unjudgmental portraits of the country folk although she mostly desists from making any direct or implied comment upon the social or political circumstances of the times as a whole. In fact, the sketches of the rural folk in the *Grasmere Journals* brings out the narrative capabilities of Dorothy Wordsworth, although her narration was oriented more towards faithful representation rather than imaginative elaboration.

4.6.7 Tales of Empathy

According to Lucy Newlyn, Wordsworth's preoccupation with chronicling the lives of the poor stems from the Wordsworth siblings' personal experience of hardships and dispossession in the early part of their lives. (Newlyn 331) Thus, in the *Grasmere Journals*, although there is a sense of comfort at having finally settled into the 'home' that Dorothy had been yearning to have with her beloved brother, there is a simultaneous awareness and empathy with less fortunate souls whose lives are haunted by poverty and homelessness. Virginia Woolf writes of her passion for understanding and recording the lives of the poor and the suffering:

The rich and the great she would let pass—they interested her no more than cathedrals or picture galleries or great cities; but she could never see a beggar at the door without asking him in and questioning him closely. Where had he been? What had he seen? How many children had he? She searched into the lives of the poor as if they held in them the same secret as the hills. (Woolf 154)

4.6.8 The poetry of rustic life

Dorothy Wordsworth's interest in the lives of the rural folk is clearly in consonance with William Wordsworth's poetic philosophy of finding material for poetic composition in rustic life. For Dorothy too, then, "The poor had their poetry as the hills had theirs" (Woolf 154). The fact that William Wordsworth freely borrowed from his sister's *Journals* during the composition of several poems that contain rural human characters is now commonly known. Pamela Woolf points out that the express purpose of Dorothy Wordsworth's very detailed portraits of the country poor may in fact have been the facilitation of her brother's poetic sketches. The *Grasmere Journals* were in fact begun around the time William Wordsworth formulated his theory of poetry, and his opinion that poetry should pick out its subjects from low and rustic life where:

the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that situation our elementary feelings exist in a state of greater simplicity and consequently may be more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of rural occupations are more easily comprehended; and are more durable; and lastly, because in that situation the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. (Wordsworth and Coleridge 236)

It was after William Wordsworth shared his views on the subject of poetry he was looking to with her that Dorothy started including such accounts in her *Journal*, for the stated purpose of her journal writing is to ‘give Wm pleasure by it’. Thus, the account of the leech gatherer was recorded retrospectively as an afternote to her entry for October 3, 1800 after “he talked much about the object of his Essay for the 2nd volume of LB” in the morning of the same day. It was after well over a year that William Wordsworth used her account as material for his poem ‘Resolution and Independence’. However, unlike the first version of the poem, which allowed a more central position to the figure of the leech gatherer, in the revised version of William Wordsworth’s poem, it is the poet persona and his disturbed self that takes centre stage and the leech gatherer is pushed to the background as a symbolic presence.

Dorothy Wordsworth’s empathy for the suffering heart is evident in her record of the episode from 24 November 1801, when she sends some spare goose to Peggy Ashburner and receives honey as a gesture of heartfelt gratitude from the latter. Dorothy Wordsworth is touched by the profuse gratefulness her small act of kindness produces and she quotes from William Wordsworth’s ‘Simon Lee’ to express her sad sympathy for Ashburner’s unfortunate grateful heart: “alas the gratitude of men and c.” (Alas! The gratitude of men/Has oftener left me mourning). Dorothy records parts of the account given by Ashburner of her family’s misfortunes and she puts Peggy’s words in direct speech in the local dialect which lends it a sense of immediacy and authenticity, which, however, gets lost when later Wordsworth turns the account into material for a poem and presents Peggy’s words in middle class idiom, producing a contradiction to his own vow of selecting rustic ordinary speech for the language of his poems. Significantly, Dorothy Wordsworth discontinued recording such portraits of the poor as well as the journal keeping after Wordsworth’s attention was diverted from the composition of such poems to his ambitious project of *The Prelude*, for which such inputs from Dorothy Wordsworth was no longer required. (Woof 2003) However, Dorothy’s accounts of the suffering and the destitute in her letters and other writings helped raise support and aid for their rehabilitation on several occasions.

Stop to consider

Dorothy Wordsworth frequently alluded to phrases and episodes from literary works including those of her brother, in her *Journals* as well as letters, which shows the extent of her readings and knowledge as well as her love for literature.

4.6.9 The charity of moral obligations

Yet, it might be too simplistic to assume that Dorothy Wordsworth was in complete empathy with the poor when she encountered their sad narratives or later wrote them down. As Alexis Easley points out, Dorothy Wordsworth's attitudes towards the poor, especially the female vagrants that she encounters and sketches in the *Grasmere Journals* are determined by dominant notions of morality and femininity in circulation during her time. Thus, in her account for May 14, 1800, of the pauper woman who had recently buried her husband and three children, Easley detects an initial hesitation and examination of the woman before Dorothy Wordsworth decides whether she stands up to the codes of middle-class moral behavior laid down for women and deserves her sympathy. Besides, As Easley points out, Dorothy Wordsworth's acts of charity and innocent sympathy may be inspired by rules of conventional decorum for middle class women of the time, rather than a spontaneous feeling for the poor, which necessitated assuming a position of moral and social superiority rather than complete identification with the latter (Easley 1996).

Irrespective of the true motivations lying behind Dorothy Wordsworth's sketches of the rural folk, Dorothy Wordsworth's writings provided a repository for the community's oral traditions and inadvertently serve as an interesting record of the oral history of the North Western English countryside.

Stop to consider

Oral history is a method of studying and recording historical information about individuals, families, communities or important events through conducting interviews of people who have either directly experienced those events or have inherited memories of them. Oral history is particularly useful and suitable for recovering past events which do not possess written record or evidence.

4.8 Summing Up

Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journals* provide us insight into the intricate workings of the creative process in the writerly lives at the turn of the nineteenth century. Although on the face of it, the life she records in her

Journals appears to be one dominated by banal domestic concerns, it contains originality of insights into human life and experience of nature that place her lyrical powers at par with those of her poet brother. Her writings remained unpublished during her lifetime, but today they are read as specimens of a unique models of affiliation rather than individual achievement, while also raising crucial questions regarding the place of women in literature.

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Unit 5

Dorothy Wordsworth: Selections from the *Grasmere Journals*

Supplementary unit

Unit Structure :

- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 How to Read Dorothy Wordsworth
- 5.3 The World of Dorothy Wordsworth
- 5.4 Influence upon William Wordsworth
- 5.5 Summing Up
- 5.6 References and Suggested Reading

5.1 Objectives:

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Learn how to read Dorothy Wordsworth and , especially, her Grasmere Journals
- Know about Dorothy Wordsworth’s preoccupations and sensibilities
- Assess her influence on William Wordsworth

5.2 How to Read Dorothy Wordsworth

In fact, the extracts in this unit can be seen to contain frequent abbreviations, dashes and irregular punctuation, lending it a sense of vividness and immediacy. The style is also quite compressed and it is full of local terms and idioms.

Scholars have also noted Dorothy Wordsworth's use of metrically regular phrases in her *Journals*, besides the more obvious presence of figurative language. At several points in the *Grasmere Journals*, Wordsworth inserts sentences written in iambic pentameter and although less frequently, in iambic tetrameter as well. As one scholar has noted, "Across the full span of the *Grasmere Journal*, Dorothy experiments with a wide range of metrical patterns, building poetic units out of more than one sentence, or breaking a single sentence down into subsidiary clauses which sound like poetic lines when they are read aloud." (Newlyn 157)

The journals contain strikingly intense and detailed description of every natural object and ordinary people that Dorothy Wordsworth encountered during the long walks and everyday activities at Grasmere in or without her brother's company. Note the following description of natural objects from the extract: "The wood rich in flowers. A beautiful yellow, palish yellow flower, that looked thick round and double, and smelt very sweet – I supposed it was a ranunculus – Crowfoot, the Rabbit-toothed white flower, strawberries, geranium – scentless violet, anemones two kinds, orchises, primroses. The hackberry very beautiful, the crab coming out as a low shrub." The delighted lived experience of the tiniest wild flowers around her provide evidence of Dorothy Wordsworth's distinctive romantic sensibility. The intensity with which she perceived every small object around her is highly remarkable, which has been a distinctive trait of all romantic poets of her time, including her brother. In reference to her capacity for this joyful intense

apprehension of natural objects, Coleridge had called Dorothy Wordsworth “a perfect electrometer – it bends, protrudes and draws in, at subtlest beauties and most recondite faults.” She seems to be acutely awake to every tiny object and event around her and she captures them in vivid detail in her journals. Her intense apprehension and observation of the lived world around her inspired her brother to observe and describe the world through similar eyes. William Wordsworth has paid tribute to his sister’s passionate sensitivity in “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey”:

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

My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read My
former pleasures in the shooting lights

Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while May I
behold in thee what I was once, My dear, dear
Sister!

The *Grasmere Journals* display Dorothy Wordsworth’s sensuous response to every element of country life in the Lake district. They also reveal her lyrical powers and originality of vision as well as expression. Both William Wordsworth and Coleridge are known to have in fact adapted phrases and lines and even borrowed her style from Dorothy Wordsworth’s writings while composing their poems.

Dorothy Wordsworth’s sensitivity was not just limited to the non-human world. Her journals record the lives of ordinary people and village folk with a striking degree of empathy. Her observation of rural life and the personal misfortunes of the ordinary people supplemented the engagement with rural life in William Wordsworth’s poetry. Her description of the leech gatherer, which inspired William Wordsworth’s

eponymous poem contains a detailed description of the struggles and misfortunes of his life, which have not been treated with as much detail in William Wordsworth's poem, but is definitely evoked with the same intensity and pathos found in the sister's account. Similar sketches of the rural poor of post-enclosure and wartime Britain populate her journals and bear evidence of her deep sympathy for their struggles and hardships.

Stop to consider

Do you find a correlation between Dorothy Wordsworth's preoccupation with the lives of the rural poor and the subject of William Wordsworth's poetry as enunciated in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*?

The Grasmere journals also record Dorothy Wordsworth's love for her brother. At several points she describes her concern for her brother's personal well-being. The journals also contain references to William Wordsworth's creative process and her concern for the strain it puts upon him. Her concern for her brother is more than a spontaneous feeling for the poor, which necessitated assuming a position of moral and social superiority rather than complete identification with the latter (Easley 1996).

Irrespective of the true motivations lying behind Dorothy Wordsworth's sketches of the rural folk, Dorothy Wordsworth's writings provided a repository for the community's oral traditions and inadvertently serve as an interesting record of the oral history of the North Western English countryside.

Stop to consider

Oral history is a method of studying and recording historical information about individuals, families, communities or important events through conducting interviews of people who have either directly experienced those events or have inherited memories of them. Oral history is particularly useful and suitable for recovering past events which do not possess written record or evidence.

which they saw theme were very different. Whatever Mary saw served to start her mind upon some theory, upon the effect of the government, upon the state of the people, upon the mystery of her own soul...Dorothy never rallied against “the cloven hoof of despotism.” Dorothy never asked “men’s questions”...So while Mary dashed her head against wall after wall, and cried out, “Surely something resides in this heart that is not perishable – and life is more than a dream,” Dorothy went on methodically at Alfoxden noting the approach of the Spring.” (Woolf 149). Although it would seem from this comparison that Dorothy Wordsworth chose to surrender to the randomness of a quotidian life, to an ordinary existence confined within the plainness of the everyday moment and a passive submersion in a life of quiet domesticity and custom, there is more to Dorothy Wordsworth’s life and that represented in her *Journals* than what immediately meets the eye.

Home and community occupy the very centre of Dorothy Wordsworth’s world as well as her *Journals*. But it is this domestic space which provides meaning and structure to the simultaneous personal and creative lives of the Wordsworth household. Although the *Journals* are made up of random staccato bits of information from all aspects of the Wordsworths’ lives, it does emerge into a pattern and a coherent whole. Suzanne Stewart believes that the *Grasmere Journals* are equal part an account of the Wordsworths’ domestic lives as also natural description. Stewart recognizes this dichotomy to be a reflection

of Dorothy Wordsworth's acknowledgement of the duality of life itself. However, Dorothy Wordsworth seems to be seeking an escape from the ordinariness of the everyday by capturing bits and moments of life in her *journals* which almost amount to an equivalent of William Wordsworth's 'spots of time'. Thus, Dorothy Wordsworth did not reject domestic life for an aesthetic one, she seemed to require the former for the latter. (Stewart 83) For Dorothy Wordsworth, the domestic and aesthetic experiences seem to have reached an organic unity in the form of her journal keeping.

Talking in the context of Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journals*, Pamela Woof writes, 'There are no rules and structures for diary writing, as there are not for living: we take the fast and slow of it as it comes.' (Woof 2002 ix). Woof made the comment in the light of Wordsworth's *journals* which follow the pace and patterns of her life at Alfoxden and Grasmere. They record bits of the everyday events in the Wordsworth household, the domestic affairs, the visitors, walks and explorations, natural sceneries encountered and creative endeavours, all in the form of an intricate chain of events, each of which is inseparable from each other. It is within the affairs of her primarily domestic sphere that she fits in all these other related components, producing an account as random as life itself.

In spite of clearly possessing the sensibility and genius for it, Dorothy Wordsworth did not actively aspire to be a writer. She had once written in a letter that she 'should [much] detest the idea of setting myself up as an Author' (Woof 1986, 95). This passivity in Wordsworth has been studied and understood variously by scholars. Virginia Woolf contrasts her to Mary Wollstonecraft, a contemporary figure, who experienced and reacted to the world around her radically. "Both kept a record of their travels; both saw the same places, but

the eyes with

which they saw theme were very different. Whatever Mary saw served to start her mind upon some theory, upon the effect of the government, upon the state of the people, upon the mystery of her own soul...Dorothy never rallied against “the cloven hoof of despotism.” Dorothy never asked “men’s questions”...So while Mary dashed her head against wall after wall, and cried out, “Surely something resides in this heart that is not perishable – and life is more than a dream,” Dorothy went on methodically at Alfoxden noting the approach of the Spring.” (Woolf 149). Although it would seem from this comparison that Dorothy Wordsworth chose to surrender to the randomness of a quotidian life, to an ordinary existence confined within the plainness of the everyday moment and a passive submersion in a life of quiet domesticity and custom, there is more to Dorothy Wordsworth’s life and that represented in her *Journals* than what immediately meets the eye.

5.3 The World of Dorothy Wordsworth

5.3.1 Home and community

Home and community occupy the very centre of Dorothy Wordsworth’s world as well as her *Journals*. But it is this domestic space which provides meaning and structure to the simultaneous personal and creative lives of the Wordsworth household. Although the *Journals* are made up of random staccato bits of information from all aspects of the Wordsworths’ lives, it does emerge into a pattern and a coherent whole. Suzanne Stewart believes that the *Grasmere Journals* are equal part an account of the Wordsworths’ domestic lives as also natural description. Stewart recognizes this dichotomy to be a reflection of Dorothy Wordsworth’s acknowledgement of the duality of life itself.

However, Dorothy Wordsworth seems to be seeking an escape from the ordinariness of the everyday by capturing bits and moments of life in her *journals* which almost amount to an equivalent of William Wordsworth's 'spots of time'. Thus, Dorothy Wordsworth did not reject domestic life for an aesthetic one, she seemed to require the former for the latter. (Stewart 83) For Dorothy Wordsworth, the domestic and aesthetic experiences seem to have reached an organic unity in the form of her journal keeping.

5.3.2 Journaling as a domestic-creative confluence

As Heinzelman argues, the *Grasmere Journals* 'articulates and sustains the idea that the equating of creativity and work is necessary to the success of domesticity, the inverse of which William presumes as axiomatic.' (Heinzelman 21) He further shows that 'Dorothy uses her *Journal* to place her brother's work of writing within a calendar of fluid household labors -reading, sewing, baking, giving alms, mending, writing, conversing, walking, eating - her own writing of the journal being a sleeping, writing bonding force between them but not the only or principal locus of household attention.' (ibid 22) It is as an essential activity among other household duties of baking, gardening, walking and socializing that Dorothy Wordsworth faithfully transcribed William Wordsworth's poems. It was while Dorothy Wordsworth and Molly Fisher were making William Wordsworth's waistcoat by the fire that the latter reads out from Spenser to them. It is through housekeeping that Dorothy Wordsworth could establish a deeper and more permanent bond to the land that provided a physical and spiritual home to the Wordsworth siblings. It was through her domestic interactions that she could freely communicate with the rustic neighbours, accounts of which sustained William Wordsworth's creative practice. The *Grasmere Journals* embody 'The belief that living itself was a form of

experiment, in which personal and political commitments could be put into practice, [and] was an essential part of the way the Wordsworth household functioned' (Newlyn 333). Thus, domesticity and an active creative-intellectual life were never two mutually exclusive exercises in Dorothy Wordsworth's life or her *Journals* but mutually constitutive and associative practices.

5.3.3 Poetry and creativity

Dorothy Wordsworth detested the idea of ever becoming an author, but as Pamela Woof has pointed out, it was her fate that whatever writing she left behind would come to be so widely read after her death (Woof 1986, 95). Already as a young girl, as she herself has listed in her communications, she received from her brothers a great number of books for reading, including the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, Fielding's works, Hailey's poems, Gil Blas, Gregory's Legacy to his Daughters, Shakespeare's plays and the Spectator. She had also read also Milton's works, Dr. Goldsmith's poems, Robert Burns. Although she never received a classical education like her brothers, she was well read in English literature from Chaucer to Shakespeare and during the Grasmere period being read to or reading aloud was a regular activity in the Wordsworths' home. She could read Italian, French and German as well. Thus, Dorothy Wordsworth was sufficiently equipped to be a creative companion in the lives of her brother and S.T. Coleridge.

5.3.4 A collaborative-creative exercise

Dorothy Wordsworth was constant presence when Coleridge and William Wordsworth evolved their theory of poetry and set about applying it in their allotted practice. That Dorothy Wordsworth's

journals provided events, images, sensations and even phrases for their poetic compositions has already been discussed. It is well known that Dorothy's journal keeping provided a valuable resource for many poems by William Wordsworth which were inspired by her evocative condensed memoirs of stimulating moments experienced in nature. Thus, the poem 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' was actually composed more than two years after the actual experience of witnessing a long belt of daffodils along the shore of a lake while the siblings were exploring Ullswater on April 15, 1802. This is how Dorothy Wordsworth records the beautiful vision they came upon in her journal entry for the day:

I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing. The wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot and a few stragglers a few yards higher up but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity and unity and life of that one busy highway...The Bays were stormy & we heard the waves at different distances & in the middle of the water like the Sea.

It is quite evident from a look at Dorothy's passage that not only did her account provide a mnemonic resource for William Wordsworth's poetic creation of an inspired moment 'recollected in tranquility' but it even provided him with the choice phrases and images for crafting his poem. William Wordsworth has been criticized by scholars for presenting it as a deeply personal poem, based on a lonesome wandering excursion when in fact, it was produced out of a shared experience, shared sensations and shared metaphors of verbal expression with his sister.

5.3.5 Collaboration and Authorship

However, more recent scholarship has tried to understand Wordsworth's reliance on and apparent egotistical lack of acknowledgement of his sister's creative contributions in the shaping of his poetic works through a re-examination of the traditionally held idea of Romantic authorship as a solitary exercise. As the case of the poem discussed above shows, creativity was a communal and associative practice in the Wordsworth household. Pamela Woof has confirmed 'how much Dorothy and Wordsworth talked to each other, told their experiences' and how frequently those experiences were recorded in actual words they heard each other use.

Reading aloud was a house hold habit, as was collecting and relaying local stories (Newlyn 333-34). Conversations were an essential part of this creative process in the Wordsworth home and often acted as a catalyst for the associative process that was central in the composition of prose and poetry by either siblings. Thus, Lucy Newlyn suggests understanding the function of Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journals* not as a 'source', over which she should be owed absolute intellectual rights, for a finished poem, but as the locus of a vital creative exchange between the siblings which furnished entry points into 'associations that gathered around incidents, places and people over days, months or sometimes years' (Newlyn 160). Shared experiences and conversations over them with Dorothy Wordsworth were not contributive towards William Wordsworth's creative development alone; if the *Grasmere Journal* was central in William Wordsworth's creative experience, so was the *Alfoxden Journal* in that of Coleridge. The *Alfoxden Journal* too acted as a common collaborative resource for communal use among

the Wordsworth siblings and Coleridge. Thus, as Newlyn points out, much of the creative output among the three in 1798 or the Alfoxden period depended upon three-way conversations among the three and ‘the boundaries separating one writer’s work from another’s breaks down under these ‘workshop’ conditions, and conventional assumptions about authorship come under question’ (Newlyn 2011, 229).

In fact, the notebooks that Dorothy Wordsworth used for her journal keeping were ones that had already been used by William Wordsworth for noting down his drafts. (Newlyn 2013, 148) Thus, it truly becomes impossible to separate the creative experiences of the siblings from one another. It was a complex creative-collaborative existence they shared which was perpetually mutually inspiring in creative-intellectual terms. William Wordsworth has frequently acknowledged his crucial indebtedness for his sister’s presence in his personal and creative life. In ‘Tintern Abbey’, he alludes to her as a friend, sister and muse whose presence has been vital in his creative development. He has elsewhere acknowledged Coleridge and Dorothy Wordsworth as the two most important figures to whom he had been most indebted intellectually (Newlyn 2011, 232). In fact, the correspondences between Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal and William Wordsworth’s poetry may amount to more than simply a case of influencing each other in terms of style and content. William Wordsworth’s well known rejection of any fundamental distinction between the language of poetry and that of prose might in fact have been a result of his admiration and appreciation of the intense lyrical powers of Dorothy Wordsworth’s prose compositions.

5.3.6 A silent ‘electrometer’

Jonathan Bate has deduced an ecocritical interpretation of William Wordsworth's tribute to his sister in 'Tintern Abbey'. While the poet persona casts himself in the position of a mere tourist, he concedes the capacity for ecological wisdom of the woman, his sister (Bate 150). However, William Wordsworth's tribute to his sister in this poem and elsewhere has received much criticism as well in feminist readings of his works. Dorothy Wordsworth's presentation in his poems as a listening presence and the lack of a dialogic role allowed to her persona, has been read as an extension of the gender roles of the time, where women were assigned a restrictively passive, receptive space. Elizabeth Fay has drawn attention to the fact that although Dorothy Wordsworth's intellectual presence was crucial in the development of the creative discourses in the lives of the coterie of male poets surrounding her, yet, her voice remained submerged and repressed. Fay points out:

De Quincey remarks on the quality of her valuable conversation, yet her voice is so valuable it must be repressed. W. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Samuel Rogers, and De Quincey all provide descriptions of D. Wordsworth's keen eye for detail and her sensitivity and taste, yet none records what she actually said that was of intellectual interest, nor did she herself. Even in

William's addresses to her, she is represented foremost as listening, and voiced but in a naturalized key. If the power of her voice threatens, the very form of the address acknowledges that power, addressing her voice yet continually deferring her speech. (Fay 113)

In spite of divergent scholarly views on Dorothy Wordsworth's creative output or the lack of enough of it, her *Journals* have brought lasting glory for their author, both in terms of unveiling the intricate dynamics within Romantic literary production and also in terms of their merit as

Stop to consider

Ecofeminism is a sub field within ecocriticism that combines ecological and feminist outlooks, founded on a fundamental philosophical premise of an intrinsic connection between women and the earth.

excellent creative pieces in their own right.

5.4 Influence Upon William Wordsworth

The companionship between Dorothy and William Wordsworth and its role in the creative production process in William Wordsworth's poetic career remains the focus of any engagement with Dorothy Wordsworth's life and writings. The *Grasmere Journals* indicate the collaborative creative process that Dorothy Wordsworth was a willing part of. Dorothy Wordsworth's journals have also acted as autobiography and biography of her celebrated brother's creative journey.

Dorothy and William Wordsworth were born only 18 months apart. After the initial separation due to their parents' death, Dorothy and William Wordsworth were reunited in 1787. In her letters written till this period, Dorothy Wordsworth constantly expressed her deep attachment to her brothers, especially that of William. Her affection and attachment were reciprocated and Dorothy and Wordsworth became an inseparable pair and it became a mutually nourishing association. It led to a lifelong companionship that both valued deeply. In one of his early poems, 'The

Vale of Esthwaite' (1787), William Wordsworth records his deep brotherly affection and fondness for his sister:

Sister, for whom I feel a love What warms a
Brother far above,

On you, as sad she marks the scene, Why does
my heart so fondly lean? Why but because in you
is given

All, all, my soul would wish from Heaven? Why
but because I fondly view

All, all that Heaven has claimed, in you?

William Wordsworth acknowledges his gratitude for his reunion with his sister later in his *Prelude*:

Now, after separation desolate

Restored to me, such absence that she seemed A
gift then first bestowed.

Dorothy Wordsworth remained unmarried and spent most of her adult life with William Wordsworth. She continued to be a member of the Wordsworth household after her brother's marriage to Mary Hutchinson and helped in raising their children. Dorothy Wordsworth discontinued writing the *Grasmere Journals* a few months after William Wordsworth's marriage in October 1802. But she continued to be a valuable family member and a living companion in William Wordsworth's life.

Besides, Dorothy and William Wordsworth were also regular traveling companions. The *Grasmere Journals* are full of descriptions of routine

walks, long walking expeditions in and around the Lake District. The three weeks' expedition in Scotland which led to several of William Wordsworth's best-known poems, were written a long time after Wordsworth had returned from Scotland. His memories from the trip which supplied the material for his poems were supplemented and often refreshed by Dorothy Wordsworth's tour diary of the trip on which she had accompanied William Wordsworth and Coleridge. Her journal entries capture the sights and sounds of the countryside with remarkable originality and vividness. One such example is the encounter the siblings had with a wild patch of daffodils during one such walking tours made in 1802:

I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about & about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness & the rest tossed & reeled & danced & seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the Lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing.

The obvious resemblance to William Wordsworth's famous poem on the daffodil sighting in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" written two years after the event, is owing to the fact that he borrowed freely from the notes and impressions of natural objects and sketches of country people that he found in Dorothy Wordsworth's journals. Similarly, the poem "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802" borrows from Dorothy Wordsworth's phrasing and vision. She wrote of their sight of the Thames from the Westminster Bridge in her entry for 31 July 1802:

It was a beautiful morning. The city of St. Pauls, with the river, and a multitude of little boats, made a most beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge. The Houses were not overhung by their clouds of

smoke, and they were spread out endlessly yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a fierce light, that there was even something like the purity of one of nature's own grand spectacles.

Stop to consider

Travel writing is a genre of writing with a large body of growing scholarship dedicated to studying travel narratives. Do you think the *Journals* can be read as travel narratives? How does traveling as a woman in nineteenth century Europe lend uniqueness to Dorothy Wordsworth's writings?

Such frequent analogies between Dorothy and William Wordsworth's writings owes to the fact that writing for them was mostly a collaborative creative process. This was especially true during the Alfoxden and Dove Cottage period which was the most productive time in William Wordsworth's career. Dorothy Wordsworth acted as an amanuensis for her brother and frequently copied out his poems. Her presence in William Wordsworth's life was that of an inspiration, as well as an intellectual-artistic companion. Coleridge had described her as 'Wordsworth's exquisite sister' and it was the shared experience of life and nature and more often than not Dorothy's delicately crafted articulation of these experiences in her journals that often contributed to the creation of William Wordsworth's celebrated poems. Lucy Newlyn explains the collaborative project that the Wordsworth siblings' simultaneous creative efforts constituted:

It appears that more was involved in the Wordsworths' collaboration than a simple division of labour, with Dorothy undertaking the documentary 'fieldwork' in her journal, and William transforming prose into poetry. The Grasmere journal served not just as a reliable record but as a kind of conscience, reminding both writers of the obligations they owed to details of time, place and circumstances. (163)

Often the diction of William Wordsworth's poems would match the diction of Dorothy Wordsworth's prose, which not only reminds one of Wordsworth's rejection of any fundamental distinction between the language of poetry and prose, but also provides evidence of the high esteem William Wordsworth had of the poetic quality of his sister's prose. In both the philosophy and practice of writing then, the siblings were truly intellectual-artistic counterparts.

5.5. Summing Up

The *Grasmere Journals* were not written by Dorothy Wordsworth for public reading or publishing. They were personal recounting of her experience of the world around her and the intended reader for these records were perhaps no one besides William Wordsworth, which is evident when she writes "I resolved to write a journal of the time till W and J return, and I set about keeping my resolve because I will not quarrel with myself, and because I shall give Wm pleasure by it when he comes home again." It becomes quite apparent from her stated aim that William Wordsworth received much pleasure and placed much value on the close descriptions of life and nature in the Lake District that he found in Dorothy Wordsworth's writings. As many of the events recorded in the journal were experienced by the sibling duo together, Dorothy Wordsworth does not bother to provide elaborate descriptions and explanations of the events and persons she recounts, for much of it would already be familiar to her intended reader.

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BLOCK 3

Unit 1

Thomas B. Macaulay :Minute on Education 1835

Unit Structure :

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introducing the Author
- 1.3 The Context
- 1.4 Form and Style
- 1.5 Reading the text: Macaulay's *Minute on Education 1835*

- 1.6 Critical Reception
- 1.7 Summing Up
- 1.8 Glossary
- 1.9References and Suggested Reading

1.1 Objectives:

This section is an attempt to make the readers familiar with the text of Macaulay's *Minute on Education* which he had presented on 2nd Feb 1835. This section will also cover the background of the *Minute*, the social happenings and the context around which the *Minute* was written. To let you know, those were the trying times for India and Indian Education particularly, under the British Governance and Macaulay's *Minute* served as the most important document in eliminating Indian based education in India and bringing in English language as a medium of instruction and sciences and especially European Literature as the basis of learning. Macaulay's *Minute* was also responsible for the amendment of the English Education Act 1835, formulated by Lord Bentinck, the then-Governor General of India. By the end of this section, the readers would be incorporated with the history of the *Minute*, its

aftermath and how English as a language and medium of instruction came into being in India. This unit aims:

-To *give the students knowledge* about the changing system of education during the British rule

-To *make the students aware* of how English as a language came into being in India

-To *let the students be familiar* with the historical facts and incidents that led to the drastic

change in education policy in India.

1.2 Introducing the Author:

Born on 25th October 1800, Thomas Babington Macaulay was a 19th century British Historian, a Whig politician, an essayist and poet. He was also known as the 1st Baron and he is considered to be the pioneer of western education in India. His *Minute on Education* proved to be a course-changing document in the history of Indian Education. He was also known for his *History of England, 5 Vol* (1849-61).

Macaulay was born in Rothley Temple, Leicestershire, England. Macaulay from his very childhood was noted as a child prodigy asking philosophical questions to his father. At the age of eight, he wrote a compendium of universal history and a romantic narrative poem 'The Battle of Cheviot'. He studied at a private school Hertfordshire and subsequently at Trinity College, Cambridge. Macaulay also wrote poetry in the early part of his career. His first published essay was on Milton in *Edinburgh Review*. At the later part of his career, he got more interested towards politics and law. In the personal front, Macaulay never married and had no children, rather his strongest emotional ties were with his two sisters. Other than just writing, he was also greatly involved in the politics of his time and marked remarkable contributions towards the society. He started as a Member of Parliament of Calne in 1830. He became famous by some of his speeches made as the Member of Parliament supporting the parliamentary reform prior to the Reform Act 1832, after which he became the Member of Parliament for Leeds.

Eventually, he became a member and later the secretary of the Board of Control, which supervised the administration of India by the East India Company. He was accepting these roles as he became the sole bread-earner of his family as his father could no longer support the family financially. He went to India in 1834 and served on the supreme council of Indian between 1834 and 1838. He reached India at a vital moment when the government of East India Company was being superseded by the British Crown. He played an important role talking about the liberty of the press and of the equality of Europeans and Indians before law. It was during this time that he wrote his famous *Minute on Education* supporting western education as a national system of education. Lord Bentinck, the then Governor-General of India had the same views as Macaulay and hence supported him in this endeavour. His *Minute* is perhaps solely responsible for Bentinck's English Education Act 1835. Other than this, Macaulay also devoted his final days in India in the creation of the Indian Penal Code as the leading member of law commission where he drafted a penal code that later became the basis of Indian criminal law which came into force in 1860. Interestingly, it also included Section 377, laws which criminalize homosexuality which has recently been dismissed by the Supreme Court of India.

STOP TO CONSIDER

If we come across both Macaulay's and Lord Bentinck's views regarding English education, they had similar views about the superiority of English. Do you think these views were ingrained into all Englishmen?

You should think and relate this view with the British colonization in India and how they all have grown up with a sense of superiority. Was this the reason why they had been colonizing many other countries? Try to analysis this.

In 1838, he returned to England and became the Member of Parliament for Edinburgh followed by becoming secretary for war in 1839 with a seat in Lord Melbourne's cabinet. In 1841, he became the basis of the 'copyright' which he had addressed as a matter of concern. After the fall of Lord Melbourne's ministry, Macaulay again started

devoting himself to his literary works and published his *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842) and a collection of *Critical and Historical Essays* (1843). In his later years, he had lost much of his interest in politics which made him lose his seat for Edinburgh and he found leisure to write again settling down to write his *History of England*, the first two volumes appeared in 1849. The third and fourth volumes of the *History* were published in 1855, when his health deteriorated. However, he got back his seat in the parliament for Edinburgh, but he hardly visited sessions or meetings. In 1856, he resigned his seat and in 1857, he was raised to peerage as Baron Macaulay. He died of heart attack in 1859 aged 59 at Campden hill and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The East India Company, also known as Honorable East India Company or English East India Company was an English company formed for the purpose of trade with East and Southeast Asia and India incorporated by royal charter on December 31, 1600. The company later got involved in politics along with trade and acted as an agent of British Imperialism in India from the early 18th century to the mid 19th century. During these times, the company was actively monopolizing most of the trade and also politics in India, but gradually, it lost all control upon commerce and politics in India. Its monopoly was broken in 1813 and in 1834, it reduced to a merely managing agency for the British government in India. After the Indian Mutiny in 1857, it ceased to exist.

Macaulay's policies of introducing western education in the mainstream India, at a later time were referred to as Macaulayism. He held western culture with high esteem and was a proud propagandist of the same. It was during his stay in India that he compared the Indian lifestyle and education to the western system of education and culture and deemed Indian culture as barbaric and inferior. After the publication of his *Minute*, there arose a debate among the Anglicists and Orientalists regarding the superiority of the western culture claimed by Macaulay. Although he attained a considerable position among his contemporaries as a litterateur as well as a politician, he could have gained more attention than what he received in his later years only that his health did not allow him and moreover, he had lost interest in most affairs at a certain point of time. But there were people who did not find him to be as great as he is claimed to be. He had faced his fair share of criticism

throughout his career. A liberal historian, Lord Acton, after reading his History of England four times described it as “a raw English schoolboy primed to be the brim with Whig politics”. In 1880, Acton put him as one of the three liberals (the other two being Burke and Gladstone) and he had advised Mary Gladstone in 1883 as quoted below:

[T]he Essays are really flashy and superficial. He was not above par in literary criticism; his Indian articles will not hold water; and his two most famous reviews, on Bacon and Ranke, show his incompetence. The essays are only pleasant reading, and a key to half the prejudices of our age. It is the *History* (with one or two speeches) that is wonderful. He knew nothing respectably before the seventeenth century, he knew nothing of foreign history, of religion, philosophy, science, or art. His account of debates has been thrown into the shade by Ranke, his account of diplomatic affairs, by Klopp. He is, I am persuaded, grossly, basely unfair. Read him therefore to find out how it comes that the most unsympathetic of critics can think him very nearly the greatest of English writers...^[49]

Some of Macaulay’s major works are listed below:

- *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1881)
- *Critical and Historical Essays*. 2 vols.(1843)
- *Speeches by Lord Macaulay, With His “Minute on Indian Education.”*(1835)
- *Lord Macaulay's Legislative Minutes* (1946)
- *The History of England, From the Accession of James the Second* (1849-61)

SAQ

What was Macaulayism? Why was it called so? (30 words)

Write a brief note on 'The East India Company' and its impact on India.
(50 words)

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Discuss Macaulay's political career and his achievements.
2. Comment on Macaulay's contribution in the formation of Indian Penal Code.

1.3 Form and Style:

Reading the *Minute* by Macaulay provides the readers with a clear picture of Macaulay's and might be all the Britisher's views on India and Indian education and culture. It can be called a prose work but not in pure literary sense. It is a kind of document presented by a member to his superior, advising him to consider the facts behind the thought. His style is quite blunt as he has outrightly criticized everything Indian openly and has confidently put forward his views on English being superior. He added lines like "I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." (*Macaulay, 03*). The quoted lines clearly hint towards the position and respect that he is willing to give to European literature. Moreover, his language is quite simple but authoritative. He presents arguments and justifications for every point

that he wants to be considered. To say the least, through his arguments and questioning style, he had accelerated and pushed forward something which was already meant to be. It was like, they found a justification of why English should be the language of the people and the conversion of his views into laws assured him a victory against the Orientalists.

1.4 The Context:

It was in the 15th and 16th centuries when the East India Company landed in India and started taking over most of the trades and businesses from the Indian and Mughals. After a period of time, especially after the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the company started seeing its decline and meanwhile the British leaders started taking over the leadership and governance of India. During its rule, the East India Company came up with an act of parliament of the United Kingdom which was known as the Charter Act of 1813 or the East India Company Act 1813. This act gave back the company most of its trades but not the monopoly of ruling India. This act asserted the Crown's sovereignty over British India and also allotted 1 lakh rupees of sum to be invested for education annually and also allowed the Christian missionaries to propagate English and religious teachings. Clause 43 of the Charter Act of 1813 which stated "It shall be lawful for the governor general in council to direct that out of any surplus which may remain of rents, revenues, and profits arising from the said territorial acquisitions, after defraying the expenses of the military, civil and commercial establishment and paying the interest of the debt, in manner hereinafter provided, a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India".

STOP TO CONSIDER

At this point, you should be clear with the meanings and the differences between the Anglicists and the Orientalists which are the most frequently used words in the chapter.

According to the dictionary, Anglicists are the people who have an authority on the English language and literature. It also refers to a name given by the people of other languages and cultures to the people who supports and promotes English language. During the British reign in India, the Englishmen and also the

Indians who supported English language and literature were called Anglicists. Another name for Anglicists is Occidental which chiefly means western or related to the West.

On the other hand, Orientalists, according to the Collins Dictionary means, people who studies the language, culture, history, or customs of countries in Eastern Asia. In India, Orientalists were the ones supporting the learning of vernacular languages in India. They were not in support of anything English in India. This led to a clash between these two groups after the British Invasion and their decisions and Macaulay's *Minute* became like a fuel to the burning fire.

Post this decision, there were many debates and discussions held among the Orientalists and Anglicists about spending the sum of money. The Orientalists were in favour of spending the money on Indian and native languages as a means of instruction for schools and colleges, whereas, the Anglicists were in favour of English as a means of instruction. It was in the midst of all these, Macaulay landed in India in 1834 as the first Law Member of the Governor-General's Council. After which, by 1835, Macaulay wrote his *Minute* expressing his strong opinions as to how, where and why the sum of money should be spent on education. Macaulay was a proud Englishman and was convinced of the superiority of English language and most naturally suggested in his *Minute* to spend the money on English education in schools and colleges, rather than reading Indian native languages and Arabic. He advised the government to spend the money only on imparting on western education and not on oriental education. In his *Minute*, he justified the use English as a medium of instruction and also teaching western education to Indians. Macaulay's proposal reached Lord Bentinck, the then Governor-General of India and he promptly accepted it. Lord Bentinck sanctioned the proposal given by Macaulay nevertheless he did not completely shut down the Oriental languages as proposed by Macaulay. This led to the formulation of the English Education Act 1835, where it was decided to spend the sum of money on teaching English language and western education in Indian schools and colleges. However, the students at the Calcutta Madrassa raised a petition against its closure, this quickly got support from a sum of masses and the Madrassa and its Hindu equivalent were therefore retained. It is said that, Bentinck did not completely support Macaulay's advise of shutting down the oriental languages because, he could feel an uproar from the orientalists' side

and in order to save himself and to pacify the uproar and backlash, he agreed upon not completely vanishing the oriental languages. And this is how English became one of the important languages in India, later becoming even the official language too.

SAQ

What were the decisions taken in The Charter Act of 1813 regarding education? (40 words)

How were the Madrassas and Hindu schools and colleges affected after the formulation of The English Education Act 1835? (50 words)

1.5 Reading the Text: Macaulay's *Minute on Education* 1835

As discussed earlier, the *Minute* produced by Macaulay as a Member of the Council of India proposes the study of English as a medium of instruction and its literature in schools and colleges. The matter of the discussion being how and where the sum of 1 lakh rupees allotted for the education of India should be spent. As in the Charter Act of 1813, the clause was quite unclear and it did not specify the 'subjects' on which the money is to be spent. Hence, it was assumed that the money would be spent on the learning of native languages including Arabic and Sanskrit. Macaulay vehemently opposes this assumption and puts forward his thoughts regarding this. He not only expresses his concern as an onlooker, but asserts his position in India and that he would 'warrant a change' through legislative act.

While reading the *Minute*, the readers would be quite convinced that Macaulay was proud of his language and literature and his comments on Indian languages and culture were a proof that he considered it far inferior than English literature and culture. He argues

that, for the overall development of India, English and the revival of English literature was necessary. According to him, studying Indian or native languages would in no way help the Indians to develop. Learning English would make the Indians superior than what they are now, hence, declaring English and English people superior than the Indians. He considers spending the sum of money in encouraging studies of Arabic and Sanskrit as 'downright spoliation', and questions the government about teaching such languages to the people which would prove useless in the long run. He wanted the government to spend the money in the most useful way and all the parties should agree to this point. He opines, "...the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are moreover so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them." (*Macaulay, 03*). Moreover, he favoured his argument by stating that English is a global language and is likely to become the language of commerce overseas. It is a key to modern knowledge which would help Indians to survive in the modern world, and clearly, Arabic and Sanskrit were not capable of imparting this knowledge to the people. Macaulay had a hard time believing that there is any kind of knowledge useful for the people in the native languages and literature, and states that:

It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England. (*Macaulay,03*)

Macaulay, here, vehemently criticizes almost everything Indian. He portrays the coming of English language and literature in India as a revival or a renaissance period. The same had happened in England in the 15th and 16th centuries when their English ancestors revived the Greek and Latin literatures. Had they been not revived, England and English people would not have been at such a position and for India English is what Greek and Latin was for England. Interestingly, in India, the government had to pay the students a stipend to read Arabic and Sanskrit, whereas, on the other hand many students were willing to pay money to read English. So, he stressed on this point to the government to consider. Besides, it was evident in the text that even some Orientalists were in favour of English teaching in India, which further extended the debate between the Orientalists and the Anglicists. He, further give examples of students who had studied in Sanskrit colleges to file

petitions to the government that they had wasted their best years in learning something which is not helping them to earn bread and hence, asks the government to compensate. So, he questions as to what is the use of learning such things which does not help an individual to be independent in life? He is also concerned about the money spent on the printing of books on Arabic and Sanskrit literature, in the last three years, a sum of sixty thousand rupees was spent which sadly did not yield even one thousand rupees. Further, Macaulay extends his argument by saying that the Arabic and Sanskrit books that are presently being read by the students are full of religious myths and superstitious beliefs. Moreover, he accepts that he didn't know much of Arabic and Sanskrit, but he had contemptuously put forward his doubts regarding the quality of teachings in these religious texts. He questions, We are to teach it because it is fruitful of monstrous superstitions. We are to teach false history, false astronomy, false medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion. We abstain, and I trust shall always abstain, from giving any public encouragement to those who are engaged in the work of converting the natives to Christianity. And while we act thus, can we reasonably or decently bribe men, out of the revenues of the State, to waste their youth in learning how they are to purify themselves after touching an ass or what texts of the Vedas they are to repeat to expiate the crime of killing a goat? (*Macaulay, 7-8*)

By the end, Macaulay urges to the Governor-General through his *Minute* to create a class of people who are 'Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in moral and in intellect'. He wanted these people to be trained in English language and literature so that they become an intermediary and they would carry forward their learning in English to the rest of the Indians in order to 'refine the vernacular dialects of the country'. This would help educate a large number of Indian populations and the tradition would go on in downward learning system. This system was termed as Downward Filtration Theory. He wanted this theory to be adopted for mass education in India. However, he also added that Sanskrit College in Banaras and Mahometan College at Delhi to remain as it is providing vernacular education provided that the pupils will themselves be solely responsible for their future and that they would not be given any stipend to study Sanskrit or Arabic. They will choose for themselves what they are going to pursue for their degree. He then added that, if his proposal be accepted by the government, he would happily continue to be part of the committee, but if it is rejected, he would resign from his post. He appealed the Governor

to look into the matter and reconsider his points for the development of India.

STOP TO CONSIDER

Throughout the analysis, it has become very evident that Macaulay had written his *Minutes* with an immense sense of pleasure and pride while asserting and justifying the superiority of English. You should consider the age and the kind of literary production the British were producing. Although, he refers to the classics and the scientific subjects but he stresses on English literature very much.

It was during the 18th and 19th centuries, the *Minute* was written. It was the time of Wordsworth and the Romantics, the abundant presence of nature was a sign of the romantics. Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* marked the beginning of the age. It was also the age of transition when the growth of urbanization began. Industrial Revolution brought drastic changes in the life of the English people which again led to emergence of rationalism making a departure from romanticism. Some other major writers were William Blake, P.B. Shelley, John Keats, Jane Austen etc. Moving forward towards the Victorian age where many masterpieces were written by writers like Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Robert Browning, Mathew Arnold, the Bronte sisters, Thomas Hardy etc. It must be kept in mind that the Age in which a text is written always serves the background of the text.

Macaulay's Minutes: Key Points

The key points that Macaulay had put forward in this *Minutes* were:

1. English should be the medium of instruction in schools and colleges as it is the best medium and a key to modern knowledge useful for the students according to Macaulay.
2. The Oriental learning or the vernacular colleges should be closed and even the publication and printing of Sanskrit and Arabic books should be banned.
3. That the illustration of vernacular languages should be used for the promotion of English education.
4. The grants or the sum of money preserved for the oriental learning should be utilized in the spread for English education rather than

spending it on for Sanskrit and Arabic languages which had no significance according to Macaulay.

5. The aim of education should be to develop such class of people who are Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinion, moral and intellect.
6. Downward Filtration Theory to be adopted for it would lessen the burden on the English people to teach English to the Indians throughout their life. Rather assigning the task to a group of Indians who would carry forward the English tradition.

A definite purpose of education was formed.

1.6 Critical Reception:

After the publication of Macaulay's *Minute*, Lord Bentinck, the then Governor-General of India (from 1828-1835) immediately passed on a resolution based on the *Minute*. The orders on the resolution were the investment of funds to be done on the learning of European literature and science among the native Indians hence promoting English language to be carried on in schools and colleges of India. However, Bentinck did not totally abolish schools and colleges of native learning, but decided not to give any stipend to the students for joining. The resolution also added that any vacant post for teachers in oriental learning would be filled only after the government find its expedient. This resolution created a history in India and it still forms the basis of education in the country. For Macaulay, it was his victory against the Orientalists who supported study and instruction in India in traditional languages. Critics say that, the resolution was the result of Macaulay's influence and his Minutes. An article in India Today talks about Macaulay's *Minute* and quotes what Vivek Srinivasan, a member of the Program on Liberation Technology at Stanford University and previous contributor to rights-based campaigns in India said that:

His characterisation of Indian languages and traditions is openly racist and represents an important danger that any discourse on institutions can get into. At the surface, it may look like the discourse on institutions today is different, especially with an emphasis in some quarters that societies are different and that each need to develop institutions that suit themselves. But we only need to scratch beneath the surface to see

manifestations of racism and notions of "White man's burden" that embody the discourse on institutions today. (*India Today Web Desk*)

His aim was to create a class of Indians who would be English in culture and education so that they could follow them and support their system. But the results of the resolution was two-fold: firstly the British raised themselves to a superior position by making the Indians believe that learning English as a language and its literature is the only way to develop themselves and secondly, they thought of creating a class of Indians who would support the British hence trying to outnumber the supporters of native languages. Macaulay's proposals were officially sanctioned in March 1835 and in 1837, English was made the court language. Apart from these, the *Minute* and the passing of the resolution further accelerated the clash between the Anglicists and the Orientalists. But, it was later pacified as Lord Bentinck's resolution did not completely abolish the vernacular languages whereas Macaulay wanted so. Macaulay even once said that a time will come when all the vernacular languages will die a natural death in India and only English will prevail. However, this prediction proved wrong as until now India is rich in its vernacular medium of instructions but yes, the major language is English. Analysing his ideas and assumptions, it comes to the fore that Macaulay firmly believed in the superiority of the West over the East both intellectually and aesthetically.

1.7 Summing Up

In conclusion we can say that in the minutes, clear and straightforward policy of education was adopted, lead to the opening of many English schools and colleges which forms the basis of education even until now. Indians got the opportunity to learn a foreign language which was supposedly superior to their languages and culture. It further helped the Indians to respond to the oppression of the British Raj in a much better and clear way. It laid the foundations of modern education in India- a shift from traditional indigenous educational system to a systematic modern education. However, it neglected mass education and Indian culture and religion. The *Minute's* publication and acceptance proved to fuel the burning fire of the clash between Orientalists and Anglicists. It bluntly criticized Indian education, knowledge and culture by calling it impractical and not useful in the real world. As a result of the *Minutes*,

vernacular and traditional languages took a back seat and many schools and colleges were closed. The Downward Filtration Theory created a distinction between the Indians as educated and uneducated.

Check Your Progress

1. In what ways, according to Macaulay, his plans and decisions will help or be beneficial to the 'native' Indians?
2. What do you mean by Downward Filtration Theory?
3. What were Macaulay's views on the Indian system of Education?

1.8 Glossary:

Appellation: the action of giving a name to someone or something

Bequeathed: pass on or leave something to someone else.

Contraction: a process of becoming smaller

Crusades: A series of religious wars directed by Latin Church in the Medieval period.

Cusa-grass: *Demostachya bipinnata* (scientific name), a type of grass.

Hieroglyphics: ancient Egyptian writing system

Legislative act: an act passed by the legislative body

Locke: John Locke (1632-1704) was an English philosopher and physician who propounded the Enlightenment Theory in the 17th century.

Lumber-rooms: a room where disused or bulky things are kept.

Madrassa: Islamic religious school

Milton: John Milton (1608-1674), an English poet and intellectual who made his place in the history of Literature throughout the ages. His works are the famous *Paradise Lost*, *Areopagitica*, *Lycidus* etc.

Newton: Isaac Newton (1642-1726/27), an English mathematician, physicist, astronomer, theologian and author. His contributions on Mathematics, physics and optics are something which is not unknown to anyone.

Nomenclature: the body or system of names used in a particular specialist field.

Pacha of Egypt: Ibrahim Pasha, the eldest son of Muhammad Ali, served as General in the Egyptian army.

Sanitarium: an institution for the preservation or recovery of health, especially for convalescence; health resort.

1.9 Reference and Suggested Readings:

Lalitha Krishnaswamy and N. Krishnaswamy: *The Story of English in India*

M. K Naik: *A History of Indian English Literature*.

Syed Mahmood: *A History of English Education in India*

Terry Eagleton: *The Rise of English*

Thomas Macaulay: *The Indian Education Minutes of Lord Macaulay (Collected Works of Thomas Macaulay)*

Unit 2

Thomas B. Macaulay :*Minute on Education 1835*

Supplementary Unit

Unit Structure :

2.1 Objective

2.2 How to Approach Macaulay

2.3 Other Essays by Macaulay

2.4 Other Study Suggestions

2.4.1 *Literary Theory* (The Rise of English) by Terry Eagleton

2.4.2 'Letters to Lord Amherst 1823' by Raja Ram Mohan Roy

2.4.3 'On The Education of the People of India' by Charles Trevelyan

2.5 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

2.6 Summing Up

2.7 References and Suggested Reading

2.1 Objective

The purpose of this unit is to provide the students with an idea of the types of questions on Macaulay's *Minute* that they would have to prepare for and also what might be the answers to them. In the previous Unit, the *Minutes* is analyzed in detail and you can at anytime refer to that while reading this unit. However, this unit would also attempt to help the students by briefing them some other suggested reading materials on Macaulay which would let them see and analyze Macaulay further more. Besides, reading just the *Minute* by Macaulay may give them the desired academic result but for an enhanced knowledge on the writer, it is always necessary to read a few other works of the same writer. It gives a better understanding of the views and opinions of the

writer. Keeping this in mind, this unit would also talk about some other works by Macaulay which will give you a broader view of Macaulay as a writer. While studying a text, a particular kind of approach towards a writer is very important. It should include the time period, his way of writing, his views and opinions towards something etc and this will be discussed in this unit as well.

At the end of the unit the students will be incorporated with:

- A direction to read and analyze the *Minutes* by Macaulay.
- Critical essays on Macaulay and his *Minutes*.
- Some other work by Macaulay
- An approach to study Macaulay

2.2 How to Approach Macaulay

Macaulay's writing career started when he became a fellow at Trinity College in 1824. In his stay, he triumphed himself as an orator and began his career as an essayist. He first made his mark with his essay "Milton," which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* of October 1825 ([1825–1844] 1963, vol. 1, pp. 150-194). He was much interested in politics, in his University days, he was a mild Tory supporter, but later he became a staunch Whig. Macaulay's writings had polished sentences, he disliked metaphysics and he loved history. He read and portrayed characters of history as a person who was his friend or relative. As a politician, he made his name with a series of speeches in favor of parliamentary reform, attacking such inequalities as the exclusion of Jews after he became the Member of Parliament got the pocket Borough of Calne in 1830. Besides these, while approaching Macaulay, you should keep in mind the sense of superiority inherent in him as a European. After reading the Minutes, it is very obvious that he keeps the 'whites' in a far superior place than the Indians, naturally diminishing everything that is Indian. The term 'Macaulay's Children' is used to refer to people born of Indian ancestry who adopt Western culture as a lifestyle, or display attitudes influenced by colonizers. The term "Macaulay's children" is usually used in a derogatory fashion and the connotation is one of disloyalty to one's country and one's heritage. His political writings were famous for their confident, dogmatic emphasis on a progressive model of British history.

So, while reading Macaulay, you have to consider him not only as a literary writer, but a staunch politician, historian, reformer whose writings are considered solely responsible for the reformation of Education system in India. His speeches as a Member of Parliament

have acclaimed many praises throughout the public. His notions regarding law formations also made him quite famous. He was also responsible for formulating certain laws in the Indian Penal Code of India. In all, it can be said that, reading Macaulay would prove to be an experience because, he seemed to be a versatile writer expressing his views on various topics in the society.

2.3 Other Essays by Macaulay

Some other essays by Thomas Babington Macaulay are *Critical, Historical and Miscellaneous Essays: Contributed to the Edinburgh Review* in 1843. It is a collection of Essays by Macaulay in 3 volumes. It consists of a number of essays that Macaulay had written on other great writers. Reading atleast few of these essays would help you see the writer in Macaulay. Until now, you have seen Macaulay only as a politician or a Reformer, but reading some of these essays would give you a glimpse of the literary side of Macaulay. This collection of essays basically consists of essays written on Milton, Machiavelli, Samuel Johnson, John Bunyan, Horace Walpole and also essays on some important historical events such as War of the Succession of Spain, Civil Disabilities of the Jews etc. These essays are kind of criticism and reviews of various works by the particular writers, the conditions in which they were writing. In his preface, he mentions that ‘These volumes contain the Reviews which have been reprinted in the United States, with a very few exceptions, which the most partial reader will not [viii] regret.’ (*Macaulay, XI*)

The preface also adds:

No attempt has been made to remodel any of the pieces which are contained in these volumes. Even the criticism on Milton, which was written when the author was fresh from college, and which contains scarcely a paragraph such as his matured judgment approves, still remains overloaded with gaudy and ungraceful ornament. The blemishes which have been removed were, for the most part, blemishes caused by unavoidable haste. The author has sometimes, like other contributors to periodical works, been under the necessity of writing at a distance from all books and from all advisers; of trusting to his memory for facts, dates, [ix] and quotations; and of sending manuscripts to the post without reading them over. What he has composed thus rapidly has often been as rapidly printed. (*Macaulay, XI*)

Therefore, reading some of the essays would help you to understand not only Macaulay as a writer, but you will also get a raw knowledge of some great writers and their writings.

2.4 Other Study Suggestions

Besides reading just the *Minutes* by Macaulay, it will be useful for you to read few more texts or essays related to this topic. The adoption of English in India was a major event in history which changed the course of the system of India. Many writers have written about this event and things that happened surrounding the event. In this section, there will be a brief discussion about few other books and essays that might help you better understand the context and Macaulay better.

2.4.1 *Literary Theory (The Rise of English)* by Terry

Eagleton

The first book to be read is ‘The Rise of English’, a section in his book *Literary Theory* by Terry Eagleton. This section mainly talks about the rise of English as a medium of instruction in England as well as in India. Here, he says that the rise of English was due to the failure of religion. According to him, apparently, English literature worked as a suitable replacement. For Eagleton, literature was an ideology. It cultivated the middle class people; infuse them with some values, emotions and experience. Terry Eagleton in his discussion of the rise of English traces that “English, as a Victorian handbook for English teachers puts it, helps to promote sympathy and fellow feeling among all classes’, another Victorian writer speaks of literature as opening a ‘serene and luminous region of truth where all may meet and expatiate in common” (*Literary*, 22). He also believed that English literature could impart universal and modern ideals into the readers mind. However, he not just only talks about India, he talks largely about England because during the 19th century, England was also going through a change of times, beliefs etc. As a result, studying English literature became important their too, in order to calm and pacify the people, especially the newly emerged middle class people.

STOP TO CONSIDER

Who is Terry Eagleton?

- Terence Francis Eagleton is an English literary theorist, critic and public intellectual born in 1943. He is also a distinguished Professor of English Literature within the Department of English and Creative Writing at Lancaster. His book *Literary Theory: An Introduction* was published in 1983 which was very successful. He has written and published more than forty books in his career. Some of his major works are: *Criticism and Ideology* (1976), *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (1976), *Saints and Scholars* (1987), *The Illusions of Post Modernism* (1996) and many more.

2.4.2 ‘Letters to Lord Amherst 1823’ by Raja Ram Mohan Roy

The second thing that you should look at is a letter written by Raja Ram Mohan Roy ‘Letters to Lord Amherst 1823’. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the pioneer of the Renaissance movement and the dealer of the Liberal Reformist group. He was one strong Indian personality among many Indians who supported the rise of English as a medium of instruction in India. It was a decade earlier than Macaulay’s Minute, but the topic of discussion was the same. Roy decided to write the letter to Lord Amherst when in 1821, Mr. H. H Wilson, a great Orientalist gave the idea of establishing a Sanskrit College in Calcutta (now Kolkatta) to which Raja Ram Mohan Roy opposed. He wrote the letter to Lord Amherst dated 11 December 1823 suggesting not to open a Sanskrit College. In the letter, Roy put forward his views on what he thought to be useful for the common people if they learn English and other sciences rather than just Sanskrit which would limit the boundaries of learning. He suggested that the learning of Arabic and Sanskrit is not helping the youths in their practical life, as the same was said by Macaulay in his *Minute*. Macaulay also said that the Indians cannot be educated by means of their mother tongue and they do not contain literary or scientific information. This debate indicated the growth of a new perception of English among people which paved the path of its growth and popularity as well as its importance. Many other reformists like Gandhi, Nehru and others used English strategically and deliberately to fight against colonialism. With these imperative things

ongoing during the time, India established a dense educational network with western curriculum based on instruction in English.

Roy was an ardent advocate of western education, sciences etc. He too believed that learning Sanskrit and religion only is not helping the country to develop. The people of India needed to stand equal against the British. However, his letter remained unanswered and Sanskrit college was being set up. His letter even raised a huge uproar and controversy among people which later was settled by Lord Bentinck's resolution as we have already discussed. It is important for you to read this in order to be aware of the situation in India during those times. That, it was not only Macaulay or the British who wanted to establish English in India, there were few learned Indians too.

STOP TO CONSIDER

As soon as we read the Letter by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, for at least once, it occurs in our mind why Roy was in the side of the Anglicists. Here, we have to consider the point that, although the views of Raja Ram Mohan Roy were similar to the British government in respect of the subject of the study, the objective was different. The British government wanted to introduce English education to impose their superiority and power on the Indians whereas Ram Mohan wanted to accept English education because he desired to modernize Indian society which would result in self-consciousness and ultimately lead to national awakening. He wanted the Indians to face the struggle in a better way being equal to them. Rather, it was a strategy to give a better response to the domination of the colonizers.

2.4.3 'On The Education of the People of India' by Charles Trevelyan

Another important text or report that you can read is 'On the Education of the People of India' by Charles Edward Trevelyan. It was an argument for how the natives desired English education and why the government was emphasizing on western education in India. He claims

that not only the British but also a group of Indians wanted English as their medium of instruction. He refers to the petition filed by some

students of Sanskrit colleges, to the government that they had wasted their best years in learning something which is not helping them to earn bread and hence, asks the government to compensate. This book outlines his arguments for European education and the English language.

The money that was decided to be spent in education was not spent until mid 1820s. In 1823, the General Committee for Public Instruction (GCPI) was set up to look into this matter. And in 1826, Trevelyan joined the Company Civil service as writer or administrator and in 1833, he was appointed as the chairman of GCPI. In the GCPI report of December 1831 states that:

A command on the English language and a familiarity with its literature and science have been acquired to an extent rarely equaled by any schools in Europe. A taste for English has been widely disseminated, and independent schools, conducted by young men reared in the vidyalaya, are springing up in every direction. (*GCPI Report*)

It emphasizes on the fact that how Indians also were wanting western education. Later some decisions were made as quoted, “In the Sanskrit College in Calcutta, European anatomy and medicine have nearly supplanted the native systems. At Agra and Delhi, the elements of geography and astronomy and mathematics are also part of the college course. To Madras, the Sanskrit college of Calcutta and the Agra College, also, English classes are attached, whilst at Delhi and Benaras distinct schools have been formed for dissemination of the English language....” (*GCPI Report*) Therefore, reading this book would help you to know the history of English in India better.

STOP TO CONSIDER

It is for important for you to note that Charles Trevelyan, 1st Baronet (1807-1876) was the brother-in-law of Thomas Macaulay. He was a British Colonial Administrator and Civil servant.

Try to find more about Trevelyan and the read the book for more information.

2.5 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

In the previous unit, there are already given some questions which are the most common questions on Macaulay. Those questions need to be discussed by the students. However, in this unit, you will be provided with some more questions and their suggested answers. It will be, however, the student's duty to elaborate and discuss the answers by themselves too.

Below are some questions and their suggested answers. But the students should not forget that the answers provided here would be a gist of what the answer should likely be, and not the whole answer. You will develop these into proper answers.

1. Comment on the debate between the Anglicists and the Orientalists. Did Macaulay's Minute settle the question between Orientalists and Anglicists or did it create further conflict?

Answer:

According to the dictionary, Anglicists are the people who have an authority on the English language and literature. It also refers to a name given by the people of other languages and cultures to the people who supports and promotes English language. During the British reign in India, the Englishmen and also the Indians who supported English language and literature were called Anglicists. Another name for Anglicists is Occidental which chiefly means western or related to the West.

On the other hand, Orientalists, according to the Collins Dictionary means, people who studies the language, culture, history, or customs of countries in Eastern Asia. In India, Orientalists were the ones supporting the learning of vernacular languages in India. They were not in support of anything English in India. This led to a clash between these two groups after the British Invasion and their decisions and Macaulay's *Minute* became like a fuel to the burning fire.

The clash between these two were, very clearly, regarding the subjects to be taught in the Indian schools and colleges and it was initiated by the decision of the Charter Act of 1813. The decision of investing of a set sum of money for Indian education comprising of Arabic and Sanskrit was opposed by the Anglicists. Macaulay's *Minute* was totally in favour of English education and his Minutes mentioned the 'uselessness' of Indian education. He urged Lord Bentinck to

completely stop Indian education. Lord Bentinck's with immediate effect formulated it as a law. However, he also decided not to completely abolish Arabic and Sanskrit in India leading to somewhat relief to the Orientalists. These arose violent controversies between Anglicists and Orientalists. But, the decision taken by the Governor-General left the Indian languages almost non-existent.

For this answer, you can refer to the previous unit where it is explained in details regarding the debate between the Anglicists and the Orientalists, its context and its aftermath. Also keep in mind to add what and how Macaulay's Minute contributed or vice versa in this debate. Try to add reasons and justifications for your answer.

2. What did Macaulay mean when he says that he wanted to create a class of Indians who are, 'Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in moral and in intellect'?

Answer:

Macaulay in his *Minutes* vehemently criticizes Indian system of education. His views are very clear and direct. He argued against the decision taken by the East India Company that it would continue funding for Arabic and Sanskrit education. He justified how English as a medium of instruction of education would be beneficial for the Indians. However, he also thought about the future of English education in India. He put forward the idea of Downward Filtration Theory where he wished to create a class of Indians who would be Indian in colour but his tastes, opinions would be English. This would help the English people to pass on the responsibility of teaching English to the other Indians in their absence. This would lead to a chain of Indian people learning and teaching English and also help to continue the tradition in the coming generations. Most interestingly, what Macaulay wanted and kind of 'predicted' the future of Indian people is still proving true except that the vernacular languages are co-existing peacefully and strongly.

(You need to elaborate these points and talk more about the theory and the meaning of what Macaulay meant when he said these lines.)

3. What, according to Macaulay, was the Indian system of education lacking? How could this lack be substituted?

Answer:

According to Macaulay, the Indian education system lacks modern knowledge. The Sanskrit and Arabic subjects did not teach anything more than religious scriptures and superstitions to the Indians. Instead, English education, according to him, is the key to modern knowledge and the development of India. He argues that he favoured his argument by stating that English is a global language and is likely to become the language of commerce overseas. It is a key to modern knowledge which would help Indians to survive in the modern world, and clearly, Arabic and Sanskrit were not capable of imparting this knowledge to the people. Macaulay had a hard time believing that there is any kind of knowledge useful for the people in the native languages and literature, and states that:

It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England. (*Macaulay, 03*)

He portrays the coming of English language and literature in India as a revival or a renaissance period. The same had happened in England in the 15th and 16th centuries when their English ancestors revived the Greek and Latin literatures. Had they been not revived, England and English people would not have been at such a position and for India English is what Greek and Latin was for England.

For this answer, you have to refer to the previous unit again. And, also you have to thoroughly read the *Minute on Education* without which you cannot get hold of the idea that he has incorporated.

2.6 Summing Up

To sum up, this unit is a mix of suggestions and contexts related to Macaulay. However, it does not adhere to just one text of Macaulay but tries to provide a spectrum of his political, historical and literary

writings too. This unit also gives other suggestions to the students of what to read other than just Macaulay's *Minutes* to better understand the coming of Western education in India. After reading both the units on Macaulay, the students will find themselves in a better position in answering any kind of questions related to Macaulay. As this unit also enriches them with few probable questions and their suggested answers to make it easier for the students to elaborate and answer them.

2.7 References and Suggested Readings:

Lalitha Krishnaswamy and N. Krishnaswamy: *The Story of English in India*

M. K Naik: *A History of Indian English Literature.*

Syed Mahmood: *A History of English Education in India*

Terry Eagleton: *The Rise of English*

Thomas Macaulay: *The Indian Education Minutes of Lord Macaulay*(*Collected Works of Thomas Macaulay*

Unit 3

Charles Darwin's "Natural Selection"

Unit Structure :

- 3.1 Objective
- 3.2 Introducing the author
- 3.3 Form and style
- 3.4 The context
- 3.5 Reading the text
- 3.6 Critical reception
- 3.7 Summing up
- 3.8 References and Suggested Reading

3.1 Objective

This unit introduces the learners to Darwin's "Natural Selection", which is a chapter of the author's ground-breaking book *The Origin of Species*. After going through this unit, it is expected that the learner will

- Understand what Darwin means by the term 'natural selection'.
- Distinguish Darwin's natural selection from other kinds of 'selections'.
- Contextualise Darwin and his book *On the Origin of Species* in the social and scientific environment of his times.
- Explore how the principles of natural selection affects the process of evolution of species.
- Understand how Darwin deviates from his contemporaries and predecessors in the field of studies in natural history.

3.2 Introducing the Author

While we introduce you to the author to you, it will be fascinating to know how the scientific writings of a man of science becomes an integral part of a curriculum developed for literature of cultural studies students. In fact, Charles Darwin is one of the most influential scientists that humanity has ever produced whose works have changed the way humans have been thinking about themselves and their surroundings. Popularly known for his theory of Evolution, Darwin's works have exercised lasting influence over not only the field of biology but also the diverse fields like religion, history, society and culture.

Born on the 12th of February, 1809 at The Mount House, Shrewsbury, Shropshire in England, Charles was the fifth among the six children of Robert Darwin. Charles lost his mother when he was eight years old. In the following year, he was admitted as a boarder student at Shrewsbury School located in his neighbourhood. His father Robert Darwin, who was a doctor by profession, wanted his son to follow the same profession and for that purpose enrolled him at the age of sixteen at Edinburgh University in Scotland. However, it was difficult for Charles to be at ease at the sight of blood and cruelty during the surgery procedures which resulted in abandoning his father's hope. Dissatisfied to know that Charles would not pursue a career as a physician, his father took him to Christ's College, University of Cambridge and enrolled him in a Bachelor of Arts course in order to prepare him as a clergyman. At this time, this was considered to be a wise career choice as Anglicans were well compensated for their work and the clergymen who took it as a responsibility to learn about God's existence were considered the most naturalists in England. However, Darwin's interest was much more in the study of natural history. He studied taxidermy with a liberated black slave from South America from whom he could come across fascinating stories about the South American rainforest. While he continued studying theology at Cambridge, his interest in the studies of natural history soon became his passion.

Darwin developed a new craze for competitive beetle collecting with his cousin William Darwin Fox. Through him Darwin later came in contact with the Reverend John Stevens Henslow, a professor of Botany and a specialist on Maths and Theology, and then enrolled himself in the later's natural history classes. Soon Darwin grew to the reputation of being Henslow's favourite student. Darwin also developed interest in the writings of William Paley who argues for the existence of divine design in nature. He also attended Robert Jameson's natural history class and

learned about stratigraphic geology. Besides that, he gathered some practical experience through assisting with work on the collections of the Museum at Edinburgh University. It was one of the largest museums in Europe at the time.

After the completion of his graduation at Christ's College with a bachelor of arts degree in 1831, his mentor Henslow recommended him for the position of a naturalist at the ship HMS *Beagle*. The ship was supposed to embark upon a five-year trip around the world for the purpose of surveying. Such a voyage was once in a life time opportunity for a young scholar and scientist like Darwin and this trip will prove to be a life changing experience for him. HMS *Beagle* started its journey around the world on December 27, 1831. In the course of the whole trip, Darwin could collect a variety of natural specimens, including birds, plants and fossils.

HMS *Beagle* was a coastal survey ship of the Royal Navy. It was the ninth ship to bear the same name. The ship was originally named as HMS *Barracouta*, but the name was later changed to HMS *Beagle* as a mark of honour for the ship where Charles Darwin travelled and did his initial research. The ship on which Darwin travelled was commanded by Captain FitzRoy.

The trip offered Darwin the unique scope to closely observe and experiment with the principles of botany, geology and zoology that he had learnt earlier. Darwin came across a wide range of geological features, fossils, and living species, as well as a diverse group of people – both native and colonial. Through practical and lived experiences, hands-on research and experimentations, he could test his learnt ideas against different specimens across the world. He meticulously gathered an immense number of specimens and notes that served as the foundation for his subsequent work, providing social, political, and anthropological insights into the places he visited.

After returning to England in 1836, Darwin along with Captain FitzRoy's started writing about their experiences and Darwin's findings were published in the *Journal of Researches*. These findings were later edited into the book called *Zoology of the Voyage of the Beagle*. These findings along with the overall experience and observations during the trip revolutionised Darwin's view of natural history and he contemplated something novel ideas that would challenge the established world order. His contemplations led him to develop a radical theory about the origin of living beings that would contradict the popular and established views of other naturalists at his time.

Thus came Darwin's theory of evolution that would declared that species survive through a process called 'natural selection'. Those who are successfully adapted or evolved to meet the changing requirements of their natural habitat can thrive and reproduce, while those species who fail to do so died off and perish. His observations of birds, plants and fossils led him to notice similarities among species all over the globe along with variations based on specific locations. Such observations paved the way for the theory of evolution whereby it is understood that the diversity of species at present times have gradually evolved from common ancestors. After years of research, Darwin was planning to discuss his findings elaborately in the form of a book. However, another researcher of his times named Alfred Russell Wallace, who conducted his experimentations in Malaysia, also surprisingly came to the same conclusions as Darwin. After meeting each other and thorough analysis of each other's findings, in 1858, both Darwin and Wallace publicly introduced their revolutionary theory of evolution in a letter that was read at a meeting of the Linnean Society. On November 24, 1859, Darwin published *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* where he offered a detailed explanation of his theory. This theory of evolution and the process of natural selection later became popular as "Darwinism." His other books include *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication* (1868) *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), *Insectivorous Plants*(1875), *The Effects of Cross and Self Fertilisation in the Vegetable Kingdom*(1876), *The Power of Movement in Plants* (1880) and *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms* (1881). Most of these books were very popular in his times and the copies were sold very fast after publication.

The Linnean Society of London, founded in 1788 and named after the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778) bears the reputation of being the world's oldest and active society devoted to the study of nature and natural history. The Society has a huge collection of botanical and zoological specimens as well as a rich library that offers resources for scientific and cultural research. At present, the Society continues its primary aim to inform and involve people in understanding, respecting and protecting nature through different events, research activities and publications.

On January 29, 1839, Darwin got married to his cousin Emma Wedgwood. Initially they lived in Gower Street, London, and in 1842 they moved to Down House in Downe. Here, they had ten children out of which three died as infants. Many of his children and their off springs would become famous people in their own means. Darwin doubted that

because of the closeness of his and his wife Emma's lineage, his children possessed certain health issues. Darwin would later take this as an example in writing about the disadvantages of inbreeding and the benefits of cross breeding.

Darwin and Creationism: During the time of Darwin most of the naturalists believed that all species either came into being at the beginning of the world or were created over the course of natural history. In either case, they believed that the species remained almost the same throughout their existence in the world. There was another popular notion about the existence and origin of species: Creationism, which refers to the religious view that all of nature was born of God. Darwin's findings and theory would posit strong contradiction against these notions.

Darwin died at Down House on 19 April 1882 due to heart related complications. He was buried in Westminster Abbey next to Sir Isaac Newton.

Check Your Progress:

1. What role did HMS Beagle play in Darwin's career as a natural historian and scientist? (50 words)

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2. How did Darwin conduct his research during his voyage? (50 words)

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3.3 Form and Style

As a student of literature when you came across a text like Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, which is fundamentally a book of scientific research written after years of investigations and experimentations in the interconnected fields of botany, zoology, geology etc., the first question you might face is about how to approach the text. Should it be treated simply as a book of science where the writer need not necessarily pay attention to the 'literary' dimension? Should one concentrate in evaluating its merit only on the basis of the literary aspect of the text while being blind to the content it tries to convey? Another question that we may be led to is whether it is worthwhile to evaluate the form and style of a text written predominantly for scientific purpose the same way we evaluate a work of fiction or other literary genres. However, the way Darwin writes in this book makes these questions easy to be tackled by the readers in the sense that though that book deals with ideas of natural history, botany and zoology, it is not at all unintelligible to the common reader. In fact, the theories propagated by Darwin in this book can be well understood by readers from all walks of life. This is one of the reasons behind the book's immense popularity throughout ages since the time of its publication.

As the writer of a book based on scientific studies on organisms and species, Darwin's writing is focused and lucid. He writes in a very clear-cut language that directly address the chief concerns of his discussions in all the chapters of the book. In that way, we can notice how he develops his arguments logically over a topic after thorough analytical discussion of the factors surrounding it. The logical development of his ideas is further intensified by his usage of numbering. Darwin differentiates each separate idea distinctly by using numbers. In order to illustrate his points, Darwin not only gives examples from his lived experiences but also takes help of imaginary situations. In fact, the chapter called "Natural Selection" is full of illustrations based on imaginary geological, geographical and climatic situations. Throughout the book, Darwin succeeds in retaining the attention of the readers by virtue of his gripping narration and focused writing. Another important point about his writing style is that his writing is never loaded with pedantic terms; he has the genuine ability to simplify the most complicated ideas so that even a layman can understand whatever he says.

One chief reason behind the simplicity of Darwin's writing is his abundant use of examples. In order to explain every point, Darwin offers ample examples from his vast repository of experiences. Such examples

rid the text of the possibility of being discretely difficult for the common reader. Apart from the use of different examples, Darwin also takes help of drawings in order to illustrate complicated matters. In fact, the drawings complement the examples he uses in the text.

Check your progress:

1. Can a scientist be a good prose writer? How do you see Darwin as a prose writer? (80 words)

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3.4 The Context

The social conditions of Europe that set the stage for Darwin’s research on natural sciences and natural history was marked the effects of colonialism and empire building. There was tremendous impetus on discovering and uncovering what was unknown in every field. The European naturalists in different botanical gardens and national zoosexperimented with various types of animal and plant specimens. Naturalists in the 18th century began systematic investigation of the fossil remains of various organisms. They compared the specimens of one time with those of different times and also with the living organisms available in their times. These studies led them to establish towards the first half of the 19th century that there had once existed entire families of flora and fauna in distant past which were no more in existence. Besides, there are many organisms in the present times that were not in existence in long past. The scientists could slowly develop with proper evidence the idea that the earth has witnessed large-scale biological change over millions and millions of years.

However, prior to this development of the notion of evolution, there had been many theories connected to the existence of diversity of species. One such theory is Fixism which holds that each living creature belongs to a single species alone. It further states that species are fixed; there is no transformation in species; species have never evolved since creation.

For many natural philosophers, God was the sole creator who created a definite number of species and the reason behind the existence of the innumerable varieties of species is nothing but hybridisation and mixing among the species created by God. Swede Linnaeus (1707–1778) was a major spokesperson of this theory. While the fixist theory had its own limitations, it remained unchallenged for long. Cuvier (1769–1832) in his comparative anatomy studies observed that fossils found in a deeper level of the earth differed more from current species than those in recent strata. He also observed that many species whose fossils are located in a deeper stratum have become extinct at the present times. However, he failed to challenge the fixist framework of thought in his observations.

Maupertuis (1698–1759), who is considered as a pioneering scientist in the field of genetics, in his study of heredity, suggested that species evolve throughout time. Buffon (1707–1788), with his theory of degeneration put one step ahead of the theory of Fixism by claiming that some species are the result of the degradation of initial “high-quality” species. For example, he assumes that the donkey is degenerated from the horse. Thus, the scientists came to this mutual consensus that large-scale biological change had taken place in the history of the earth, there were vast disagreement over the processes in which these changes had taken place. By the time Darwin started working, there had been numerous theories developed around the notion of the changes in biological species throughout the history of the earth. Most of these theories suggest that the changes in species take place as a result of responding to the environment and other organisms. However, Darwin differed from these theorists in his claim that evolutionary changes in species were based only on naturally occurring processes and not on any artificial external factors like environment and other organisms.

Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, in the 1810s, put forward his theory of evolution popularly known as Lamarckism. he proposed a theory of evolution based on two principles: the tendency towards greater complexity and the influence of surroundings. Here he showed how animals, individually, become more complex and better adapted to situations in course of time and pass these changes in traits onto their offspring. In the year of 1844, Robert Chambers in his book *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* illustrated how all forms of species or organisms are in undergoing the state of constant transformation. In his natural history, everything in existence develops from the previous forms. The works of all these thinkers and scientists did influence Darwin and helped him develop his theory of Natural selection which is, in other words, his own theory of evolution.

Check your progress:

1. What is Fixism? (30 words)

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2. What is the theory of Degeneration? (30 words)

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3.5 Reading the Text

As we start reading the chapter “Natural Selection”, it is worthwhile to take a glimpse of what Darwin discussed in the previous chapters in the book. It is the fourth chapter of Darwin’s ground-breaking book *On the Origin of Species* which is the product of Darwin’s years long research starting with his voyage on the HMS Beagle. The previous chapters titled “Variation under Domestication”, “Variation under Nature”, “Struggle for Existence” discuss issues starting from the causes of variations among species and within species to the variations within domesticated species and within nature a to the competition for existence among different species. Darwin explains how complex the relations of all animals and plants are throughout nature and how the struggle for life is often severe between species of the same genus and extremely severe between individuals and varieties of the same species. He also gives certain hints at the processes of Natural Selection and Man-made Selection in this complex chain of struggles for survival among species and individuals.

Darwin starts the chapter with the question how the struggle for existence will act in regard to variations and if the principle of selection can be applied in case of nature. He himself offers the answer that the principle of selection can be applied in case of nature most effectively. Darwin argues that Natural Selection is an inevitable outcome of three principles that operate in the world of nature. The first principle is connected to the idea of heredity that most characteristics of organisms are inherited from their predecessors or passed from parents to offspring. Darwin did not know the mechanism how characteristics got transferred

from generations to generations through the chain of heredity; but it was like a common knowledge during his time that characteristics get transferred from parents to offspring. The second principle is that every species tries to produce more offspring than are actually able to survive. Since resources for procreation and survival are limited, not every newborn can survive; but producing more can ensure the protection of the lineage. That is why capacity for reproduction in all organisms exceeds the quantity of resources that can support their numbers. This results in a form of competition for resources in each generation. The third principle is that offspring of the same species vary from one another in regard to traits and specifications. These variations within the offspring of the same species in the same generation are inherited. There will be tremendous competition for the limited resources among the different individuals with inherited characteristics. Individuals having characteristic variations best suitable for the conditions to compete with others will be able to survive and reproduce. Individuals having more effective variations to compete will survive and procreate more than individuals with weaker variations of inherited characteristics. Since the best will survive, they will transfer their characteristics to the next generation as part of heredity. Their traits will be better represented in the next generation. This process will ultimately lead to change in populations over courses of generations. Darwin calls this process of change in population as descent with modification. Thus, as Darwin argues, the process of natural selection results in greater adaptability of the population of a species or a group of species to its environment.

After examining man's power of selection in the third chapter of the book, Darwin focuses on the power of Natural Selection in this chapter titled "Natural Selection". He uses man-made selection as a tool to compare the process of natural selection. He argues that in the hand of man, after domestication and undergoing the process of man-made selection through selective breeding, organisms have almost become plastic in nature. On the other hand, in nature, all organisms are interconnected to one another in an extremely complicated manner. Whereas man, as a breeder, has the power to choose which species or organism will survive and reproduce, nature exercises its power by killing off individuals having characteristics that are not advantageous to life, and allowing to live and procreate those having characteristics advantageous to life. Nature rejects the qualities that are injurious and retains and develops those that are advantageous for the species under the local circumstances. On the other hand, qualities that are neither useful nor harmful will not be affected by nature and they will either remain fluid throughout the species or become fixed characteristic. This process of preservation of favourable variations and the rejection of

injurious variations by nature itself is termed as Natural selection by Darwin.

Man-made selection or artificial selection: Human beings often intentionally selects different species or varieties of the same species for cross-breeding in order to change characteristics of one species. Such methods are specially used in agriculture as well as animal farming. In such artificial interventions, the animal or plant don't have to fight with its fellow plants or animals for the opportunity to procreate or to survive.

While comparing between man's selection and natural selection, Darwin points out that nature has a key advantage over man's selections. Man, while selecting, can only be conscious of what is external and the visible qualities which is very limited to the complexity of the living organisms. His selections are based solely on this limited knowledge while nature selects on the basis of the whole machinery of life that comprises of the intricate complexity of interrelations among species:

“Man can act only on external and visible characters: nature cares nothing for appearances, except in so far as they may be useful to any being. She can act on every internal organ, on every shade of constitutional difference, on the whole machinery of life.” (81-82)

Darwin further claims that in man's hand species don't have to struggle much for their survival. The most fitting horse don't have to struggle to find a mate; the weakest animals are not killed by men; or even the weakest men don't simply die away in man's society without being helped or looked after or cared for. On the other and, in the hands of nature, “the slightest difference of structure or constitution may well turn the nicely-balanced scale in the struggle for life, and so be preserved.” (82-83) That is why he exclaims, “How fleeting are the wishes and efforts of man! how short his time! and consequently how poor will his products be, compared with those accumulated by nature during whole geological periods.” (83) Thus, Darwin speculates that the products of nature developed through the process of natural selection are truer in comparison to these produced by men through methodical selection. As such, the works of nature bear the stamp of ‘higher workmanship’. However, Darwin is cautious against the possibility of misinterpretation of this process of natural selection by a section of people as some divine act; he draws a fixed line between faith and fact and proposes that nature should be understood as the summation of different natural laws and sequences of events. Here Darwin tactfully dismisses the possibility of religious interpretation of the process of natural selection.

Check your progress:

1. How does man-made selection differ from natural selection? (60 words)

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2. Why does the capacity for reproduction in all organisms exceed the quantity of resources that can support their numbers? (40 words)

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Darwin offers examples of different types of insects, birds, animals that bear particular body colours which help them get protected from possible hunters or attackers. Leaf eating insects are green, bark-feeders are mottled-grey; the alpine ptarmigan look white in winter while the red-grouse gets the colour of heather and the black grouse gets of peaty earth. Similarly, the hawks are gifted with very good eyesight. What happens here is that all these qualities are developed as a kind of survival strategy. Such variations in qualities are conditioned by the climate, food, habitat and a lot of other factors. Darwin claims that “there are many unknown laws of correlation of growth, which, when one part of the organisation is modified through variation, and the modifications are accumulated by natural selection for the good of the being, will cause other modifications, often of the most unexpected nature.” (83) This is how, the process of natural selection is more flexible, uncertain and complicated than selection by men.

After the discussion of the variations and natural selection of traits for increasing the possibility of survival of a species, Darwin takes up the issue of Sexual Selection or the selection of traits that may make an individual attractive to the opposite sex. Sexual Selection does not mean any struggle for existence; it is a kind of competition or struggle among males for possession of the females. Unlike natural selection, the result of defeat by the unsuccessful competitor in sexual selection is not death but few or no offspring. In this kind of selection, though the most favourable variations of characteristics may not help an individual

survive, it helps the individual in having more offspring so that his lineage continues.

Sexual selection is less vigorous than natural selection. Generally, the strongest, healthiest and fittest male has got the most possibility of mating with the female counterparts and leaving highest progeny. Darwin gives examples of the gruesome fights between male alligators, salmon, and beetles in order to win the female. The same kind of fight can be seen in dogs, lions or even sheep and deer too. However, this process of sexual selection does not always depend upon the traits of strength or power or courage. In some birds like the rock-thrush of Guiana, birds of Paradise, the male develops beautiful plumage and he wins the female through the most gregarious display of his colourful plumage. In some other birds, the male attracts the female by singing. This is how, in the long course of successive generations, certain individual males have been having advantages, however slightest it may be, over other males, in terms of their strength, skill, courage, means of defence, or charms. They have successfully transmitted these advantageous characteristics to their offspring, especially the male ones.

Darwin uses examples of flowers, bees and birds to explain and analyse how variations in one species may be advantageous for another and thus they form shared traits that are beneficial for them. This is a kind of mechanism of the evolution of species in tandem. Illustrating a case of the pollination of flowers in a particular geographical location by humble-bees and hive-bees, Darwin argues that if somehow the humble-bees go extinct, then the corolla of the flowers will have to be modified enough to allow the hive-bees to collect pollen. Such modifications of the flower will take place in a very slow and a gradual manner. Besides there might be structural change of the bees too if they are dependent on only one variety of flower. Thus, a flower and a bee might slowly become, either simultaneously or one after the other, modified and adapted to each other in the most perfect manner, by mutual and slightly favourable deviations of structure.

While discussing the conditions favourable for natural selection, Darwin throws light on the importance of intercrossing. Individuals of one species mate with other individuals of the same species in order to procreate. Intercrossing plays an important part in nature in keeping the individuals of the same species, or of the same variety, true and uniform in character. However, with the changing demands of the geographical location and climate, only the most favourable characteristics are developed in the next generations. But it must be noted that the generational difference in characteristics within the same species is extremely minute to be noticed easily. This process of evolution is a

very slow process. The young produced through intercrossing develop so much in vigour and fertility over the offspring from long-continued self-fertilisation that they normally have a better chance of surviving and propagating their kind. Thus, in the long run the influence of intercrosses is always great.

Isolation is another important factor that play a key role in the process of natural selection. Darwin takes the example of a small, closed or isolated area, such as an island, to discuss this point. In such a confined space, the organic and inorganic determinants of life generally remain uniform. In such a location, with uniformity of geographical and climatic conditions, natural selection will tend to modify all the individuals of different species of the area in the same manner in relation to the same conditions. Even if there is any physical or climatic change in the geographical location, geographical isolation of the place will act efficiently in controlling or checking the immigration of better adapted organisms. As such, the place will remain open to all the already existing inhabitants to struggle for survival in the new and changed conditions. These new challenges will lead through the process of natural selection, the development of new varieties of the species or even utterly new species.

For Darwin, the process of natural selection does not necessitate any remarkable modifications of the breed. The basic features of one species that distinguish it species from a similar group are kept unchanged; what happens in natural selection is the strength of the species in terms of adaptive traits. This phenomenon can be well explained with the example of genes. At the moment of combination of two types of genes, the dominant and the recessive one, the dominant genes shape the features of a specific species. The new generation produced thus will not only inherit the assets of their ancestors but also display improved abilities and skills. This is how natural selection works.

While taking up the question of the process new species formation, Darwin opines that through Natural Selection, there is every possibility of the formation of new species. However, this is a very difficult and extremely complex and long process. This is a difficult task, in part, because where there is a variation that is advantageous and passed down to offspring, in nature and without the intervention of the breeders, there will be a tendency to reversion to the previous and dominate form. Isolation is an important factor in overcoming this tendency to reversion. The first type of isolation is differing birth and breeding seasons. Geographical isolation is the next type of isolation discussed by him. Small isolated areas may be the most beneficial for the production of new species, but the health of an existing species is ensured in a large

area where there may be many individuals and much opportunity for variation which may over time benefit the species as a whole.

Extinction of Species: Natural Selection favours those individuals who have the most advantageous characteristics or traits for survival and reproduction. Species that are devoid of these advantageous traits, and those who fail to advance or evolve with the changing demands of time and space, are crowded out by those having the most advantageous traits for survival. Such species may even become extinct. This possibility of extinction is much stronger in case of rare species in comparison to the common species. This happens because within the population pool of a rare species, there is less scope for variation and intercrossing, which will slow down the process of modifications or evolutions. “The truth of the principle, that the greatest amount of life can be supported by great diversification of structure, is seen under many natural circumstances. In an extremely small area, especially if freely open to immigration, and where the contest between individual and individual must be severe, we always find great diversity in its inhabitants.” (105)

Darwin next goes on to discuss the factor called the divergence of character that affect natural selection. The divergence of character conditions the varieties within the same species. Again, over the course of many generations and thousands of years, the divergence of character may grow to such extent that new species are formed. Traits or characteristics that are advantageous in the geographical and climatic context grow over time, while the other traits may die out and the varieties become extinct. “Natural selection, ..., leads to divergence of character and to much extinction of the less improved and intermediate forms of life.” (121)

Convergence of species: While Darwin stresses much on the discussion of the divergence of species, he brings forward the issue of convergence of species towards the last part of the chapter. Convergence of species is a phenomenon where related variations of species may converge into one. This phenomenon is somehow connected to the process of the extinction of species. Extinction takes place because of adverse climatic and geographical conditions, competition among individuals within a species or with another species. However, some species become extinct because they merge into another to form a new species. This process also takes thousands of years and multiple generations. Some naturalists consider this mechanism as an important reason for the existence of infinite number of species on the earth.

While the basic concept of Natural Selection centres round the idea of evolution, Darwin clarifies that the process of evolution is not same for

all species. With the passage of time species climb the ladder of evolution and while the earth is full of highly advanced species, there is no dearth of “lowly organized forms” in existence. Darwin admits that admits not much have been discovered about such species but from whatever is known about them it is clear that the highly organised life-forms cannot survive in situations where extremely primitive or lowly formed organisms survive. In fact, the highly developed species will prove to extremely delicate to these conditions in comparison to these lowly formed organisms.

Check your progress:

1. What is sexual selection? (30 words)

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2. What are the causes of the extinction of a species? (40 words)

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3. What is convergence of species? (30 words)

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4. What role does Isolation play in the process of natural selection? (40 words)

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Towards the end of this chapter, Darwin explains how all the species on the earth are somehow related to one another and are caught in an interconnected web. “It is a truly wonderful fact ... that all animals and all plants throughout all time and space should be related to each other in group subordinate to group, in the manner which we everywhere behold—namely, varieties of the same species most closely related together, species of the same genus less closely and unequally related

together, forming sections and sub-genera, species of distinct genera much less closely related, and genera related in different degrees, forming sub-families, families, orders, sub-classes, and classes.” (121) This interconnection among species further leads to the establishment of the theory of evolution and outrightly denies the conventional belief that all species are created separately and distinctly. Darwin illustrated this process of evolution through the image of a big tree. Every year the branches of the tree will bear new buds and leaves; those budding twigs will give birth to newer leaves and twigs in the next year. The way the leaves get replaced and the twigs get developed into branches in course of time, species evolve through the process of natural selection.

3.6 Critical Reception

Darwin’s ideas of natural selection are important not only in the context of the development of studies in natural history, ethnography, biology and geology, but also in the context of the changes in the European society in the nineteenth century. In the section on the context of Darwin’s principles of natural selection, we did discuss how his ideas of the evolution of species fall in the larger trajectory of the development of the same. In terms of its social dimension, Darwin’s principles of natural selection that would later be appreciated more in terms of its inherent notion of the survival of the fittest would be of tremendous importance in the context of the colonial Europe undergoing industrial developments and growth of capitalism.

While developing the theory of natural selection, Darwin holds that only the fittest, the strongest and the most adaptable creatures can survive in the changing habitat and procreate to give birth to generations of healthy and easily adaptable descendants. Though it is often seen that according to his theory only the species that are the most physically strong can survive through the changes in the environment, thorough reading of his essay can make it clear to us that Darwin gave more stress on the issue of adaptability. Species that are more adaptable to varied and changing environments are most likely to survive and regenerate. So, in his theory, physical strength is not the biggest issue compared to the other qualities that the species must possess or develop in order to be fit to survive. This is where his principles of natural selection are interwoven with the key principles of his theory of evolution. For him, evolution requires not only the development of new skills and capabilities but also the training and perfection of the already existing ones to become the superior member among the specified species.

As a student of literature when you approach Darwin's theory of natural selection, you must easily get inclined towards the socio-cultural dimension that the principles have. When we consider Darwin's theory at a deeper level than its biological and natural implications, we will find that his theory of natural selection offers tremendous opportunities for understanding how societies function, as well as for self-analysis and understanding of one's role and possibilities in one's society. It can further open our eyes for the lacks and strengths for upgrading one's social status. Although the principles of the survival of a species does not apply directly to human societies, there are a lot of similarities between the human and the natural world. The crude idea of weakening or even killing one's rival, competition within individuals for different sorts of power are the basic driving forces of most of the activities of the human society. In this case, Darwin's principle of natural selection proves to work well. However, it has to be clarified that the implications of Darwin's theory of natural selection is not the ultimate approach for understanding the specific behaviour patterns of an individual or a social group. But the principles will definitely explain how leadership within societies function and if someone is suited to be a leader or supposed to follow someone else's orders. With the help of Darwin's theory, we can understand how human behaviour can be generally divided into two large categories: the dominant and the subservient; the one having the features of the dominant leads while the other are being led.

The influence of Darwin's ideas of natural selection and especially his theory of the evolution of species was so deeply felt in the late nineteenth century Europe that these ideas soon surpassed the confinements of biological thoughts and penetrated deep into the socio-cultural dimension. Darwin himself did not comment much on any correlation between his ideas and human society. But he borrowed certain popular concepts of social science such as "survival of the fittest" from sociologist Herbert Spencer in order to explain his ideas. However, his ideas came to be extensively used in order to interpret, analyse and understand man's social and cultural behavioural patterns in the following decades. In fact, these ideas were used as methodological apparatus for social science research. Besides that, his ideas were also highly appropriated in the growth of the industrial and capitalist values and culture.

Social Darwinism, a concept developed in the later part of the nineteenth century, closely connected to the ideas of Herbert Spencer, is one important result of these developments in terms of its application in the

social domain. As a socio-cultural theory, it holds that the existence of conflicts among individuals, groups, classes, nations, countries is a natural phenomenon and such conflicts are essential for the growth and development of society. Social life is a site for continuous struggle for existence and there is always strong competition among different agencies for the same. In other words, Social Darwinism advocates for conflicts in human societies so that the best of human character and possibility can be achieved. With the growth of Industrial Revolution and capitalism, Social Darwinism has been strongly used to justify imperialism, exploitation of labour, poverty, racism, and social inequality. Social Darwinism also contributed to the development of eugenics; a concept that holds that selective breeding can be used in order to genetically develop human qualities.

3.7 Summing up

As we come to the end of this unit, you must have developed a fair idea about Darwin's principles of social selection and its situation in the larger scientific and socio-cultural context. As we sum up this unit, let us have a quick revisit of what we have discussed till now.

The core of Darwin's theory is that there are variations within nature and these variations are often random. Variations can be seen in individuals of a species, among different species, among different families or groups of living beings. Among these variations, some are more advantageous than the others. The next important point is that there is always a struggle for survival among individuals, species, groups etc. In such situation of competition, any advantage, however slight it may be, is important. In the long run, those organisms that have a slight innate advantage will survive more often than those that do not. Their advantages will be later passed to their offspring. Through this process, over a vast period of time, a population changes by the accumulation of small, but favourable advantages. Sometimes, in certain restricted conditions, species gradually change its characteristics in order to adapt to the new situations. Failure in adaptability may lead to extinction or formation of new species.

Darwin's theory of natural selection gained much popularity outside the domain of biological sciences and social scientists appropriated his ideas in order to understand human society and culture towards the later part of the nineteenth century. Starting from the justification of colonialism, industrialism and capitalism to the belief in eugenics, Darwin's ideas of natural selection made the nineteenth century Europe interpret man's social and cultural existence from various novel perspectives.

3.8 References and Suggested Reading

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Unit 4

Darwin's "Natural Selection" – Part II

Supplementary Reading

Unit Structure :

4.1 Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 Situating Darwin in Social Sciences and Humanities

4.4 'Natural Selection' and Social Sciences

4.5 'Natural Selection' in the context of Evolutionary thoughts

4.6 Social Darwinism

4.7 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

4.8 Summing Up

4.9 References and Suggested Reading

4.1 Objectives

This unit offers a critical study of Darwin's "Natural Selection" in the larger context of humanities and social sciences outside the confined domains of biological or geological or anthropological sciences. It is expected that after going through this unit, the learner will be able to

- Understand the possibility of employing Darwin's ideas in different schools of thoughts connection to social sciences and humanities.
- Situate Darwin in the larger scenario of social thoughts dominating the nineteenth century and well as the twentieth century.

- Explore different connotations of the term ‘social Darwinism’ with reference to different lines of thought.
- Realise the importance of studying Darwin’s theories by the students of literature, culture and social sciences.

4.2 Introduction

In the previous unit we have tried to read the chapter “Natural Selection” from Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* in the context of the book and the ideas of evolution and struggles for existence among species. Thus, our reading has been much more confined to the domains of biological, geological or anthropological studies. Through this chapter we have tried to situate Darwin in the larger context of the debates over the ideas concerning the differences and variations within species, the struggles for existence and survival among species, factors affecting formation of new species and extermination or extinction of existing species, as well as factors conditioning the evolution in species. While trying to understand the intricacies of the processes involved in the struggle for survival through natural selection, you must have observed that Darwin’s ideas can be appropriated in understanding the processes involved in different human activities and functions in the domain of politics, economics as well as social and cultural affairs.

This present unit will concentrate on the implications of Darwin’s ideas in the socio-cultural, economic and political spheres of human activities and thoughts. It is fascinating to see how Darwin’s ideas have transcended the limitations of biological or geological studies and found a fertile ground in different disciplines of humanities such as studies in religion, politics, economics, art, literature and culture. At the same time, Darwin’s theories have opened new avenues and methodologies in research in these disciplines within humanities. Apart from that his ideas concerning the struggle within species and evolution of species have thrown new lights upon the nature of the evolution of human society and

its foundations like religion, politics, arts and culture. Darwin's theories have increasingly been used as a scientific tool to investigate the nature of the socio-cultural and economic-political relations in human societies across nations at different time frames.

In short, this unit basically deals with the concept of 'Darwinism', 'evolutionism'. 'social Darwinism' etc. You must however be attentive to the fact that whatever we understand by the terms like 'Darwinism' or 'social Darwinism' have always been debated at different times by different scholars with varied ideological affiliations. In fact, the roots of these ideas in connection to their socio-political ramifications can be traced in scholars much prior to Darwin himself. As such, a study of Darwin's "Natural Selection" in the context of its applications the socio-political and cultural studies invites necessary consideration of ideas from different disciplines of studies that conditioned and moulded what we understand as 'Darwinism' and 'social Darwinism'. It is hoped that this unit will open the windows for the learners to approach Darwin comprehending all the associated complexities in the fields of humanities and social sciences apart from the interconnected disciplines like biology, zoology, geology and anthropology.

4.3 Situating Darwinin Social Sciences and Humanities

One primary question that baffles a reader who is trying to understand the importance of Darwin's ideas in socio-cultural thoughts is that of the employability of ideas basically developed from studying birds and animals and trees in the interpretation of human affairs. First of all, "Natural Selection" or the book *The Origin of Species* is essentially a work of biological or geological or anthropological sciences; it is a result of year long scientific investigations and observations on the part of the author. Besides, the major concerns of studies in this book are the animal-world or the world of nature. Even if somebody tries to bring issues connecting to human behaviour to be studied under the purview of

Darwin's theories, the scopes are very limited. At the most, Darwin's theory of natural selection may allow enhancing one's self-understanding from the strictly biopsychological point of view. It cannot directly bring into consideration of the socio-cultural aspect of human's lives. The biopsychological studies may determine the way people will behave and communicate in given conditions to a considerable extent; but such findings or estimations cannot be comprehensive and reliable. It is because there lies a vast gap between the world of nature and the human civilization. These differences are primarily conditioned by the existence of the concept of ethics and morals in the human world. Human's actions are considerably affected by ethics and morals apart from the biopsychological factors whereas in the animal kingdom the urge and ability to survive is the primary driving force.

However, it has to be accepted that there are much in common between humans and animals in the sense that humans themselves are a part of the animal kingdom. That is why there are instincts that are common in both humans and animals. The only difference is that most of the instincts or drives that are exhibited as vital to the animal world are reshaped greatly when applied to the realm of the human world, mostly due to the moral and cultural restrictions that people impose on themselves for the sake of keeping the fabric of society from tearing apart. As Darwin put it, "In social animals, it will adapt the structure of each individual for the benefit of the whole community; if the community profits by the selected change. What natural selection cannot do, is to modify the structure of one species, without giving it any advantage, for the good of another species" (Darwin, 1859, 5). Among people, the link between an individual and the community is very strong and is based on the policy of mutual support, which is strikingly different from the principle of 'struggle for survival' in the animal kingdom. As such, the theory of natural selection does not naturally fit in the study of human affairs. In order to employ the ideas of natural selection for such a cause, the whole set ideas of have to be redefined to be upgraded to fit the studies of the human race; taking it to a

completely new level. There is the necessity to introduce the sociocultural aspect to the process of natural selection because, unlike most of the other species, human nature comprises of not only biological but also social and cultural elements. The ideas associated with the term “Darwinism” are essentially based on this basic modification within this theory of natural selection. In other words, ‘Darwinism’ and ‘social Darwinism’ are ways of understanding and interpreting the human world by employing the theory of natural selection to societies and cultures of the human world.

Check your progress:

Mention a few academic disciplines apart from biological science where Darwin’s ‘natural selection’ can be applied.

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What are the fundamental problems in applying Darwin’s idea of ‘natural selection’ in human society?

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4.4 Natural Selection and Social Sciences

In his *The Origin of Species* Darwin himself expressed the speculation that his evolutionary principles of variation, inheritance, and selection might be applicable to the study of the evolution of human society, language, as well as moral principles and ethics. Several scholars after him realised that the principles of selection, variation, and inheritance

may have a wider applicability much beyond the scope of biological studies. One of these early scholars was Walter Bagehot, who in his essay "Physics and Politics, or, Thoughts on the Application of the Principles of 'Natural Selection' and 'Inheritance'" explicitly applied the principles of selection and inheritance to ideas and political institutions. William James considered the natural selection of ideas in human learning and in the development of science. Samuel Alexander and Benjamin Kidd wrote on the natural selection of ethical principles. Despite being limited in their scope, these thinkers were exceptional in bringing the Darwinian principle of selection into the social domain toward the end of the nineteenth century.

In the 1890s, David George Ritchie, an important scholar in this aspect, claimed that Darwinian selection could be applied to the evolution of ethical ideas. In his book *Darwinism and Politics*, Ritchie commented that in human societies "language and social institutions make it possible to transmit experience quite independently of the continuity of race" (1889, 59). In other words, cultural transmission functioned alongside, and in addition to, what today we describe as genetic inheritance. Ritchie again argued, "An individual or a nation may do more for mankind by handing on ideas and a great example than by leaving numerous offspring" (1889, 59). In the second edition of this book Ritchie argued that Darwinian principles of variation, heredity, and selection are applicable to the evolution of social institutions as well as to organisms. Ritchie further argued that there was not simply a process of struggle in society between individuals but also one between different "social organisms" including the family, social organizations, nations, and so on. This second-level struggle vastly complicates the processes of social evolution and selection. However, there are vast difference between the processes of selection in the natural world and in human society. For instance, selection in the natural world works through the extermination of the unfit. In contrast, in the social sphere, it is not simply through the slow and deadly process of natural selection that the various elements in human civilization have been produced, preserved, and diffused. In

social evolution a great many habits are due to imitation and not to instinct, i.e., they are transmitted in the social inheritance of the race, and are not dependent on heredity, in the biological sense. For Ritchie, this developed capacity to imitate involved a degree of consciousness and reflection. In these circumstances both "the habit may be changed without the extinction of the race . . . customs and institutions may perish without the necessary destruction of the race that practiced them," and "customs and institutions may be handed on from race to race, and may long survive the race from whom they originated" (170). The most important contribution of Ritchie in implementing Darwinism in the social sphere is in recognizing that the units of replication or selection could be social entities such as customs and institutions, rather than individuals alone.

Check your progress:

Mention the names of the early important writers who applied Darwin's ideas in social sciences.

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Write a short note on the contribution of David George Ritchie in applying Darwin's idea of 'natural selection' in social thoughts. (100 words)

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Other important writers who tried to implement Darwin's idea of 'natural selection' in the studies of societies during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century include Thorstein Veblen, James Mark Baldwin, Albert Galloway Keller, etc. Veblen tried to employ Darwinism in his attempt to understand the relationships between economic institutions and cultural evolution. Baldwin, who was a pioneering psychologist, tried to employ Darwinism to human psychology. His key contribution lies in his extension of the theory of natural selection to the studies of human development and learning. al life. Keller was enthusiast about establishing 'natural selection' as a fundamental theory of social evolution. He argued that the processes of selection of social mores and of tradition as the factor of social evolution correspond to heredity in organic evolution.

4.5 'Natural selection' in the Context of Evolutionary Thoughts

Though Darwin's idea of 'natural selection' is intricately connected to the ideas concerning the evolution of species, Darwin cannot be considered a pioneer in the field of evolutionary thoughts. The same thing can be applied in case of the fields of social sciences and humanities outside the domain of biological sciences. There has been a long tradition of evolutionary thinking in the social sciences; the induction of Darwinian thoughts has brought significant changes in the different strains of evolutionary thoughts.

Evolutionary propositions about cultural and social development were prominent in the writings of philosophers like Bernard Mandeville, David Hume, and Adam Smith much before the publication of *The Origin of Species*. Though many of these earlier writers used metaphors or analogies from the natural world in their explanations of the social phenomena, their thoughts were generally far distanced from biology. These early evolutionary social scientists argued that the cultural

phenomena prominent around them were not the result of any well-articulated plan by human beings, or by any superior power like God, for instance. They believed that the prevailing structures of social formations were the result of somewhat myopic processes that had been operating over long periods of time. For example, Mandeville described the evolution of warship technology as the process of accumulation of incremental additions and modifications over years without any particular or defined program guiding that evolution. Hume advocated that a similar process had shaped the body of law and political institutions that prevailed in his era. Adam Smith in his discussion of the progressive division of labour in pin making and the associated development of mechanized production does not refer to an overall and larger evolutionary design. He adheres to the argument that cultural and social order and systematic progress can occur without any overall design. What is important here is that, long before Darwin, these authors established that complex and efficacious outcomes could be the result of an evolutionary process operating over long periods of time, without any overall designer, whether human or divine.

The primary difference between Darwin and these earlier evolutionists lies in the fact that Darwin at least put forth a particular mechanism or a broad process behind evolution, though he was particularly talking about the evolution of species. These earlier authors did hint at the possibility of specific mechanisms involved in the evolution of the phenomena they were addressing, but they failed to specify those mechanisms. Darwin, while developing his notion of evolution, did draw inspiration from some of such social science writings. That is why he himself proposed that his theory of evolution would be applicable beyond the scope of biology, and might well address issues concerning changes over time in language, moral ideas, and the structure of human groups. Later thinkers like Walter Bagehot, William James, Thorstein Veblen, and others, supported this view that Darwinian mechanisms of evolution apply not simply to biology, but also to psychological, mental, epistemological, moral, social, cultural and political evolution.

Check your progress:

Mention the names of the important evolutionary thinkers preceding Darwin.

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In which fundamental point does Darwin differ from the earlier evolutionary thinkers?

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It is interesting to note here that in the late 19th century and early 20th century most of evolutionary social science writings in Europe had a strong nationalist and racist conditioning. This attitude prompted most of the contemporary social scientists to shy away from adopting ‘objective’ ideas from biological science. Richard Hofstadter, who was an influential critique of social Darwinism, warned his fellow social scientists of the dangers of employing ideas from biology in their discipline. During this period, for a considerable time, there was a conscious departure from Darwinian influence in the evolutionary theorisations about cultural and social change. For example, we can look at Joseph Schumpeter and Friedrich Hayek, two important evolutionary theorists in the first half of the twentieth century. Both developed important evolutionary theories; Schumpeter theorised the dynamics of competition in modern capitalist economies, and Hayek worked upon the evolution of social orders. Interestingly, both explicitly rejected the possibility of their theories being connected to biological evolutionary thoughts. Hayek, however, towards the end of his career in the second half of twentieth century, began to explore the commonalities between his evolutionary principles on culture and that of biology.

During the last quarter of the 20th century, there can be seen some new interests growing in evolutionary theorizing among scholars of social sciences. A good portion of these thinkers are strongly influenced by Darwin. Of late, evolutionary theories have become integral in research works on a variety of different aspects of culture and society. In anthropology, there is a growing interest in studying cultural and social structure as the result of a process of variation, and selective retention of different traits contributing to individual and group survival – a parallel way in which Darwin put forth in his ideas of natural selection in his *Origin of Species*. Similarly, Darwin's evolutionary ideas have been employed in the study of languages, especially in the evolutionary theorizing about how human languages change over time or how relationships between languages change.

Darwin and language

Darwin in his *The Descent of Man* (1882) argued for a co-evolution of language and vocal organs, and, more importantly, of language and the brain. Darwin gives examples of words expressive of various complex situations in the imitation of musical cries by articulate sounds. He also opines that there is a constant struggle for survival amongst the words and grammatical forms in each language. Both humans and animals have the capability to create images, though the degree of capability varies on the basis of differences in the symbolizing faculties. Even small children form images before acquiring language, but the level of complexity is low and it increases with their acquisition of language.

4.6 Social Darwinism

'Social Darwinism' as a literary and theoretical term has remained the subject of considerable controversy among students of social sciences. At the same time, it is also one of most popularly used term among scholars who use it for diverse purposes, both in line with and against Darwinian thoughts employed in social sciences. Darwin never used this

term, neither did any of his contemporaries. The term was first used in the late nineteenth century as a derogatory term specially aimed to critique those thinkers who used Darwinian theory to justify a competitive ethos for racial supremacy or economic power. Many social thinkers, including those who adopted Darwinian evolutionary theory in their works, expressed their concern over the way that Darwin's theory was being used to give scientific colour to social views they did not subscribe to. Besides, Darwin's ideas were also used to make social injustice and inequality and even violence as scientifically justifiable. Thus, the term 'social Darwinism' appeared first as representative of the distortion of Darwinian theory when applied in social sciences.

Talcott Parsons, one of the most influential sociologists in the first half of the twentieth century, is among the very first thinkers to bring the term 'social Darwinism' into academic writings. Parsons in his monumental book *Structure of Social Action* (1937) advocated the applicability of the Darwinian concepts of variation and selection to social evolution. He extended the usage of 'social Darwinism' from its previous ideological associations so as to encompass anyone who believed in the application of Darwinian concepts of variation and selection to social evolution. With Parsons the meaning of social Darwinism began to change. Now, social Darwinism would refer not only to doctrines of race struggle or war, but also to any application of Darwinism or related biological ideas to the study of human society.

Social Darwinism and Racism

Social Darwinism is often connected with the legitimisation of racism. Darwin once warned himself not to use the terms 'higher' and 'lower'; but he later ignored his own advice. In *The Origin of Species*, he repeatedly used these terms. In his *The Descent of Man*, he clearly portrayed some human races as superior or higher and others as inferior or lower. Such acknowledgement makes it justifiable the oppression one race by another. Again, the notion of 'fitness' in the phrase "survival of the fittest" as something desirable and valuable raises ethical issues over the valuation of certain races over others. Although white racism predated Darwin, and humans were classified by racial

type well before Darwin, his 'natural selection' model could be used to justify conquest and repression of subject peoples and to draw up evolutionary ladders which placed peoples efficient in war and trade above others.

One example can be taken from the subjugation of the aborigines in Australia. Henry Reynolds in his book *Frontier, Aborigines, Settlers and Land* (1987) claims that Australians were in the grip of a single quasi-scientific racial ideology which can be accurately described by the phrase 'social Darwinism'. According to him this doctrine informed popular prejudice and structured the policy of colonial government in their dealings with Aborigines.

Richard Hofstadter, one of the first major critics of employing Darwin's ideas from 'biological science' in social sciences, extensively spoke on social Darwinism. In his classic text *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1944) he connected social Darwinism with attempts by various thinkers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to use Darwinian theory to justify or promote human competition. For Hofstadter, social Darwinism was a reactionary creed, largely associated with the promotion of racism, nationalism, and competitive strife. Hofstadter claimed that in the early phases social Darwinists tended to emphasize laissez-faire economic theory and individualist competition, but later in the nineteenth century, their focus shifted more towards racial or national competition. Many social Darwinists considered racial extermination as a crucial and legitimate factor in the collective struggle for existence in human societies and cultures. Such perspectives legitimised violence in the form of racial or national oppression and discrimination. One must not forget that during this period, many European nations strived to become colonial superpowers. Social Darwinism was a necessary strategic device for legitimising such competitions for power. Around the time of World War I, most of the literary appearance of the term 'social Darwinism' were used to associate it with militarism and war. World War II consolidated the base of this concept on a very solid ground. The menace of Nazism in terms of gross violence stimulated critiques of social Darwinism. The usage of

this term increased dramatically in number. Most historians following Hofstadter have defined social Darwinism as an attempt to justify or, in other words, promote human competition for resources as a necessary, natural phenomenon. This is what they considered the human struggle for existence.

Check your progress:

How did the two World Wars influence the changing meaning of the term 'social Darwinism'?

(100 words)

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On what analogy was justification of racial violence considered as social Darwinism? (40 words)

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There has never been any self-declared school of social Darwinism or social Darwinists. The term within itself embodies quite contradictory concepts. For example, the term originally appeared as part of an ongoing debate over the proper uses of concepts from biological sciences for understanding human society. However, since the 1940s, around the Second World War, the term was widely used to dismiss any applicability of biological ideas in social sciences. By the end of the Second World War, thinkers from diverse social and political thoughts

ranging from leftist Darwinists like Petr Kropotkin and Thorstein Veblen to individualists and economists like Spencer and Sumner to militant nationalists and racist biologists like Ernst Haeckel were all categorised under the umbrella term ‘social Darwinism’. Thus, the term remains ambiguous, often self-contradictory and confusing.

In the second half of the twentieth century, thinkers like Robert Bannister, Donald Bellomy, and others have attempted to revisit and revise certain propositions within the ambiguity within the term ‘social Darwinism’. They opine that certain accounts of social Darwinism have embodied a number of myths in the sense that the label ‘social Darwinism’ connects Darwinism with a number of ideological propositions that do not follow logically from Darwin’s scientific theory and were not advocated by Darwin himself. So, they proposed that it would be better to discontinue the uncritical use of the highly ambiguous and imperfectly grounded phrase ‘social Darwinism’.

Mike Hawkins, another important scholar of social sciences, in his book *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought* (1997) offers quite a comprehensive definition of social Darwinism. For Hawkins, social Darwinism can be understood with the help of a set of five presuppositions. They are: (1) all living organisms, including humans, are governed by biological laws; (2) population pressure causes struggle for existence among all organisms, including humans; (3) physical and mental traits which are advantageous spread well because their possessors survive and reproduce more than others; (4) selection and inheritance determine the production of new species and elimination of others; (5) the laws of evolution as well as struggle for survival apply not only to changes of physical traits in organisms, but also to human society, morality, religion and other cultural domains. The significance of Hawkins’ definition of social Darwinism lies in the fact that it insists on distinctly Darwinian elements and their applicability in various disciplines of studying human societies and culture.

There were a lot of thinkers who did not utterly follow Hofstadter's or Hawkins' rendering of social Darwinism. For a section of thinkers, the concept of social Darwinism should be expansive enough to include all attempts to apply Darwinism to the study of society. Thus, such definition of social Darwinism would not only encompass all of Hofstadter's social Darwinists but also various kinds of Darwinian socialisms and even eugenics. There is a fundamental difference between social Darwinism and eugenics in the fact that eugenics advocates artificial selection and social Darwinism promotes natural selection. Some thinkers embraced both social Darwinism and eugenics to serve their own purposes. They often applied social Darwinism to justify competition between races and prescribed eugenics within their society for winning the racial struggles. Again, there are other thinkers who opted for only one of the two or, at least, prioritised one over the other.

There is another important unresolved aspect of the debates concerning the definition of social Darwinism. There are disagreements among scholars over the 'prescriptive' and 'descriptive' nature of social Darwinism. Some scholars assume that social Darwinism must be prescriptive, not merely descriptive; i.e. according to them social Darwinism must justify or promote particular social or economic ideas. For Hawkins, social Darwinism includes any scientific attempts to describe society in Darwinian terms without any necessary judgments or prescriptions accompanying the descriptions. Similarly, many other thinkers believed that Darwin himself, along with most other scientists embracing Darwinism, merely described evolution without prescribing any policies based on their scientific theories. In this view, social Darwinism used for the purpose of legitimising economic or racial competition was an illegitimate and unscientific extrapolation from Darwin's purely descriptive account of evolution. However, the other pole to this position assert that Darwin himself and his contemporary Darwinians did propose policies based on Darwinian science. Darwin and many other Darwinists in the nineteenth century embedded the

notion of progress into their biological theory. By establishing the evolutionary process as progressive, Darwin and many other Darwinists prescribed natural selection for the progress of society.

4.7 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

1. Discuss how Darwin's "Natural Selection" affected the intellectual environment on Europe, especially in connection with research in social sciences and humanities?

(Hint: Possibilities in "Natural Selection" in the field of humanities and social science --- Darwin within the evolutionary thinkers --- social Darwinism --- critics of social Darwinism --- justifying evil in the name of science --- Racism, colonialism, competition for economic power --- influence of the two Wars)

2. Try to locate Darwin's theory of evolution in the history of evolutionary thoughts.

(Hint: Evolutionary thoughts of Darwin's predecessors like Bernard Mandeville, David Hume, Adam Smith etc.--- Darwin's difference from his predecessors --- Darwin's scientific model in evolution of species --- appropriation of Darwin's evolutionary model in social science --- Europe with nationalist and racist conditioning --- cultural evolution through competition --- application in language, anthropology... --- critics of social Darwinism)

3. What is social Darwinism? How has social Darwinism influenced thoughts in social science and humanities?

(Hint: Basic definitions of social Darwinism --- how concepts vary from one another --- Different critical standpoints by thinkers of different times --- Talcott Parsons, Richard Hofstadter, Mike Hawkins etc --- appropriation of the expression "survival of the fittest" to justify Racism,

colonialism, violence --- legitimising competition for economic, political power --- World Wars and anti-war stance --- post war appropriations.)

4.8 Summing Up

As we come to the conclusion of this unit, you must have understood why Darwin's "Natural Selection" has been the site for so much debates on diverse areas concerning humanities and social sciences. At the same time, it has also become clear why there are diverse approaches to the implementation of Darwin's ideas in studies in social sciences. Different historical moments and periods have conditioned different approaches of application of Darwin's ideas. Similarly, the concept of social Darwinism is an equally debated topic over the last one and a half century. The ambiguities, confusions and contradictions within the concept have not been settled over the long period of time. While in the beginning years, the term 'social Darwinism' was used with a sense of censure against the misinterpretation of biological science for the purpose of legitimising evil, in course of time the same term was pronounced with positive flavours for studying social phenomena using biological ideas.

It is hoped that after completing this unit, the learner will try to find traces of Darwin's ideas in literature and social history of England and Europe, particularly during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Such practice will ensure better understanding of Darwin's "Natural Selection" as a text of great socio-cultural and historical value. Further, it will help understanding some of the important characteristics that defined literature and culture in the late nineteenth century, Victorian England and Europe as a colonial powerhouse.

4.9 References and Suggested Reading

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Unit 5

John Seeley: “How We Govern India”, “Mutual Influences and England and India”

Unit Structure :

5.1: Objectives

5.2: Introduction to the Author

5.3: Contextualizing the Text

5.4: Form and Style of the Essays

5.5: Essay Vs Lecture

5.6: Reading the Lecture: How We Govern India

5.6.1: Title of the Essay

5.6.2: Analysis of the Text

5.6.3: An Imperial Justification vis-a-vis Truths about India

5.6.4: Comparison and Analogy

5.6.5: Glossary

5.7: Reading the Lecture: Mutual Influence of England and India

5.7.1: Title of the Essay

5.7.2: Analysis of the Text

5.7.3: Presence through Absences

5.7.5: Glossary

5.8: Summing Up

5.9 References and Suggested Reading

5.1 Objectives

The primary objective of this particular Unit is to acquaint ourselves with two lectures delivered by the British Historian and Political Analyst John Seeley namely *How We Govern India* and *Mutual Influence of England and India* taken from the book *The Expansion of England*. Apart from the textual analysis of both the lectures which will

remain an integral part of the Unit, there will also be an attempt to situate the lectures within the context of British colonial rule in India and thus to explore the manner of interpretations a reader can associate with the lectures so as to study them under Post-Colonial backdrop. It is sincerely hoped that a sincere study of the Unit will help in the following ways:----

- To learn to read written lectures as texts for further understanding of issues like imperial project, oriental outlook and narrative subtlety.
- To posit the lectures in the historical lineage of colonial rule in India.
- To feel intellectually motivated to take up more such historic-political lectures for enhancement of critical acumen.
- To make a distinction between how an author writes and through this process of writing s/he propagates.

5.2: Introduction to the Author

Born in 1834 to a publisher and a semi-established author publishing books under more than three pseudo names Robert Benton Seeley, the essayist of our present discussion John Robert Seeley was by flesh and blood an Englishman — being educated at City of London School, having been awfully interested in history, politics and theology and getting recruited as a classical tutor at Christ's College, Cambridge — he established himself finally in 1863 as a Professor in Latin at University College, London and soon turned out to be a distinguished figure for more than one reason. When exactly Seeley decided to establish himself as a writer of such thought-provoking and influential book as *The Expansion of England* cannot be ascertained, but his career as a Professor definitely honed up his skills and expertise that he exhibited in the later years through his creations. As known, Seeley was so meticulous a Professor in preparing his lectures and notes for his students that he would never mind forgetting his appointed session with the Head of the educational institute he worked in.

SAQ

- a) Why do we find the acronym KCMG near Seeley's name?
Is it related to some kind of honour conferred upon him?

b) How do you estimate the role of the family and educational background in shaping Seeley's imperial view?

On more than one occasion, both publicly and among his peers he announced himself first to be Radical in matters of education proven by the fact that he brought considerable reforms to educational policies and pedagogical approaches; secondly to be Liberal in politics as evident from both his phenomenal book *The Expansion of England* and his identification of reading of history as the panacea of all existing political hullabaloo; and to add up one more aspect to the characteristic features of this personality is to witness him as an Orientalist in philosophy. Published in 1865 an anonymous book titled *Ecce Homo: A Survey in the Life and Work of Jesus Christ* stirred controversies among the people, especially in the ardently religious community as it annoyed them with the critical account of Jesus Christ's morality from a historical point of view. Needless to say that the anonymous figure was John Seeley who, of course, denied its authorship even till 1895. It is quite engaging to note that almost in similar fashion his father Robert Seeley too preferred staying anonymous in certain cases and accordingly got his books published in several names like Jackson, Harrow, Halliday etc.. Six years later after his joining into University College, London John Seeley tied his matrimonial knot with Mary Agnes Phillot and in the same year he was appointed at the University of Cambridge as a Professor of Modern History. In 1883 Seeley published his most important book *The Expansion of England* followed by the posthumously published *The Growth of British Policy*.

Stop to Consider

Despite writing a book which could have brought him into popular sight, the author concerned refused to give his name to it. His father too exemplified the same. Forget the issue of his father; was it a conscious effort on Seeley's part to avoid controversy so as to remain in the good book of the religious fraternity? One can here easily relate the religious dimension with the colonial expansion the British had in India. Is it far easier to use religion rather than anything else to control over so large a country like India?

Did Seeley, after initiating his liberal and humanist consideration in a candid fashion in *Ecce Homo*, gradually succumb to religious and institutional affiliation, so much so to keep himself away from anything anti-authoritarian?

Even when the teacher was alive, the notable Japanese political thinker Inagaki Manjiro, who had been Seeley's student, in 1890, dedicated his book *Japan and the Japanese View of Eastern Question* to him. It shows the popularity he enjoyed among his students. Two years after his death in 1895, the history library of Cambridge University was named the Seeley History Library in his honour. Once he stated "history without politics descends to mere literatures". It will, therefore, be an enticing experience on our part to examine whether or not his creations really descend to mere literatures. He will talk on history, he will employ historical framework to answer political queries and thus he will elevate his narrative far beyond "mere literatures". "mere literatures", however, in the present literary engagement of debunking high brow and low brow cultural binaries, invites debate and discussion. Similarly, the present two lectures written during colonial time also renders sufficient avenues for laying upon themselves post-colonial and probably post post-colonial lenses to view the literary-historical landscape in intellectually more delightful a manner.

Check your Progress

1. Attempt a short biographical sketch of John Seeley.
2. What kind of Englishman Seeley was? Comment on his ideological and historical outlook.
3. Don't you think book *The Expansion of England* is also an intellectual invasion for the expansion of England in the real sense of the term? Discuss with examples and illustration you find in the two prescribed essays.

5.3: Contextualising the Lectures

Disjoining the word "context" will give you "con" and "text" which can be understood as connection to the text. No text, whether it is a newspaper article or an advertisement or a fiction or as lecture as in the present case, is in vacuum and no author is an Atlas. That a writer would step outside his/her time and space and would take up the burden of writing without any consideration of the spatio-temporal circumstances she has been living in is a complete unfeasibility, a chimerical impracticality. So, contextualization is important. Under the same umbrella argument, both Seeley and his book *The Expansion of England*

have to be contextualised. During the precedent time i.e. Georgian era ranging from 1714 to 1837, including the Romantic Age from 1798 to 1832 of course, the British Empire expanded sizeably to colonise a good number of countries. No doubt, the defeat of the French leader Louis XIV in the 18th Century played a crucial role in the imperial expansion of Great Britain, a country which was earmarked as a “country where the sun never sets”. The Crimean War that took place between Russia and the alliance of France, UK and Sardinia had its own residual in the decade-long (from 1853 to 1956) political history; by 1870, thanks to the upshots of Industrial Revolution, Great Britain became the most highly industrialised and the most rapidly urbanised country of the world and by 1880 though it was almost the end of cultural and intellectual traces of the Victorian Age and the initiation of Aestheticism, Seeley took no step backward from exhibiting the common tendency of British legacy in order to aim at the destiny which, as he and his fellow imperialist thinkers considered, was reserved for them. He had already theorised the need of using history for the practical purpose of political sustenance and supremacy and accordingly it was the high time for him delivering two remarkable lectures at Cambridge University — one in the autumn of 1881 and other in the spring of 1882, later modified and published in book form in 1883. The book *The Expansion of England* along with the subtitle “Two Courses of Lectures” consists of 16 lectures (8 lectures each in Course I and Course II) out of which lecture IV and lecture V, both from the second course are the primary concerns in this Unit. Contextually speaking, there are as many as three assumptions at work in the formation of the book. First, since the British had been triumphant over 16th Louis of France in the last century, it is almost a politically justified (moral) duty for them to spread the domination over as many number of countries as possible. In the second place, Seeley had quite radical an approach on political issues, characterised by the conviction of looking at them historically, the book was conceived as an illustration of the same approach. “Politics and history are only different aspects of the same study”, he commented and his book, particularly the narrative tone and implied philosophy behind such narrative, is the concrete proof of combining these two disciplines of study for the benefit of the concerned. The third assumption relates the Indians, though the interest of the Indian were not at all taken into account, those interests which were fulfilled remaining by-product of that larger imperial venture. The author clarifies his position by stating that “It may be fairly questioned whether the possession of India does or even can increase our power or our security, while there is no doubt that it vastly increases our dangers and responsibilities.” So, ruling or governing India, logically as well as historically, had been a political imperative, or else India remains uncivilized — an aspect which is seen proved over and again in the text

of the essays we are going to deal with in details. Compared to the recent urbanization Great Britain had achieved on account of Industrial Revolution, India was uncivilized and underdeveloped and as “the most responsible race” of the world, extends the (colonial) hand for our upliftment.

Stop to Consider

Did the historical events shape the narrative approach and authorial ideology or vice-versa? It is indeed a matter of thoughtful concern to decipher what are purely historical and what are the things purely narrative, if such purity really exists. In fact, history too is a narrative and every narrative tends to re-shape history in order adjust it with the ideology the authorial voice has been propagating.

Seeley had laid the plinth upon which the narrative structure of the colonial expansion and imperial domination can be framed. This foundation of the book seems to ultimately lay the foundation for the sustenance and prosperity of English rule in the subsequent decades. The book gets opened with the following line thus: “It is a favourite maxim of mine that history, while it should be scientific in its method, should pursue a practical object.” As suggested by the title “Tendency in English History”, the very first lecture of Course I focuses upon such ideologies and perspectives that assist them for colonial intention. While the fourth lecture under this Course elaborates upon the old colonial system, the fifth lecture attempts an analytical study on how the New World order shaped and designed the rapid development in the field of science and technology. The analysis of the fifth lecture opened up newer vistas of commercial war and also finer phases of expansion, indicated by the titles of the next two lectures, namely “Effect of the New world on the Old” and “Commerce and War” respectively.

The first lecture of the second course titled “History and Politics” examines the inter-connectedness of the disciplines Seeley was peculiarly interested in and the words which prepares the ground for the next lectures are — “I have pointed this out in order to remove the perplexity which must be caused by the statement that England conquered India, that is, a population as large as that of Europe and many thousand miles off, and yet that England is not a military state, though this enormous conquest was achieved by England without any exhausting effort and without any expense.”

SAQ

- Estimate the role of Industrial Revolution in the expansion of colonial rule further? (You can base your answer on the development of Railways and other modern machineries)
- Mention the assumptions on which Seeley's book is based? Would you like to support them or add something more to the list of assumptions.
- Do you find a kind of strategy in preparing the content page of the book *The Expansion of England*? Argue.

5.4: Form and Style of the Essays

Written in a style thematically historical yet technically persuasive, both the essays describe and propagate at the same time. After initiating the lecture "How We Govern India" by referring to the miraculous nature India is normally associated with, the author turns to historical allusions for help in establishing his argument, thereby substantiating his assumptions about India and also about colonialism in India. In the middle part of the lecture the author shows sufficient, almost in-depth knowledge about India which indirectly allows him to appropriate and generalise various things about the land and its people. Developed with instances of using smart tautology and rhetorical epigrams; the lecture sounds argumentative in nature, finally making itself stylistically coherent as towards the end it reverts back to the issue of India being miraculous he referred to at the beginning.

Stop to consider

Do we really know what tautology is? Though tautology is not considered to be a good-quality rhetorical device, the English essayist used it almost deliberately. Is there any hidden agenda behind this?

The next lecture "Mutual Influence of England and India" too follows the method of description and argument: apparently it describes how the culture and social appeal of one country influence the other, though argument-wise the author maintains the logic of cultural materialism all the way. Once again the author takes refuse to historical

events, the invasion of Zinghis Khan and the Greek conquest of the East being two such examples to prove his point culminating in a crucial question thus:----- “England had broken the toils that threatened to imprison her. But how far was she, who had so stoutly refused to be influenced by India, entitled to influence India in her turn?”

Check your Progress

- a) Had the form of writing these essays different, say, a travelogue, would they have been equally popular?

5.5: Essay Vs Lecture

When a person writes a piece of writing, s/he is audible but not visible and therefore the communication conducted through non-verbal mediums like body language, paralanguage are missing. In contrast to an essay, a lecture comes up with totally a different framework — it has audience just in front of the speaker who can manage his kinesics, tempo and temperament according to the public feedback s/he receives so instantly. If the same lecture is now transformed into an essay, it will have altogether a different dimension: it will be characterised by the salient features of an essay without totally avoiding the kinesics, tempo and temperament the speaker used variably while delivering the lecture. While there is no scope of going back to the instances and examples already cited by the speaker in a lecture, the essay covering the same lecture leaves the scope of revision. This perhaps is the reason why in both the essays there are a number of occasions for repetition either with or without repetition.

5.6: Reading the Essay: How We Govern India

Seeley’s lecture, now available in the form of the essay as taken from his *The Expansion of England* can be studied in details in the following sub-division which can further be comprehended either as individual section as per the area of expected questions or in combination.

5.6.1: Title of the Essay

The title of an essay or a poem can be thematic, may be metaphorical at one point of time or descriptive at other point of time, and it talks a lot about how meticulous the author is while selecting the diction for the title. Despite the fact that the tense used in the title is present, the title takes the readers back to a duration which is past, bygone, the time of colonial rule in India. In 1883 when the book *The Expansion of England* was published, the Englishmen were very much here controlling our country and hence instead of “governed” the author uses “govern”. On the face of it the essay then attempts to throw light on the administrative mechanism and executive power-structure that were operative for carrying on and carrying out the domination. At the same time, the title also implies a kind of confidence on the part of the English historian who does not seem to conceal any fact lying hidden on the ways of governance. To borrow a couple of ideas explicated in the course of the essay, India though was a country in terms of its topographical and political existence, it is almost as large as the whole of the continent of Europe, yet some “we” referring of course to the British from United Kingdom, which is so small a geographical locale so to speak, could and would govern India. A somewhat deep probe into the title brings in a derogatory insinuation because of the equation between a handful of “we” and a full whole country “India”, the verb in present tense “govern” multiplying the tension even more.

Stop to consider

Imagine that an Indian political analyst is writing an essay like this. What are the changes that would have taken place in the words in the title? One can, however, go through certain passages from Forster’s *A Passage to India* and Nirad Chandra Choudhury’s *A Passage to England* before settling down with any decisive thought.

Question that helps

- a) Write a short note on the title of the essay “How We Govern India”.

5.6.2: Analysis of the Text

The lecture in the form of the present essay gets unfolded with the author's consideration of the nature of relation between India and England whereby he seeks to detect if there was any sort of miracle causing or affecting the relation between these two geographically distant countries. It is almost a pre-condition on the part of any colonial author to consider that in "that region", i.e. in India nothing happens ordinarily; the cause-effect dichotomy here is quite extraordinary as everything about it is somewhat miraculous. To invade that miraculous land to make an effort to colonise it will inversely validate the heroic qualities and natural genius for governance for which the British are popularly known. Within the first two paragraphs, thus, the author manages to put the "goodness" of the British against the "strangeness" (miraculous!!) of our country so that he can enquire whether his government of India is miraculous in that sense.

Again the author goes on to prove that certain hypotheses which he took up about India are later found to be baseless. According to his analysis, neither India has a nationality in the proper sense of the term nor that absent nationality was in any way conquered by India. As pointed out by Seeley, compared to each and every nation of Europe characterised by their respective form of uniformity, say, it is colour, language or cultural affinity or preferences, India has no unifying factor of that kind. This dearth of nationality is inversely proportionate to the number of languages we have in our country — the more the languages, the more the identities and then consequently less the degree of nationality. Neither Hindi prevalent in north and central India nor Tamil or Telegu used by a large section of people in south India nor Sanskrit inherent to Indian mythology and cultural roots is common to all. Seeley identifies one more element missing from Indian context i.e. sense of a common interest and the habit of forming a single political whole. With diverse political interests India appears to be a chariot driven by a large number of horses pulling it to all different directions — powerful yet passive, numerically strong yet technically frail. Excepting the truly Hindu organisation Mahratta Power, there is no unifying force at work; even Brahminism too did not pass into patriotism. The author comments in no less effective words thus: "Perhaps its facile comprehensiveness, making it in reality not a religion but only a loose compromise between several religions, has enfeebled it as a uniting principle".

Stop to Consider

It is more than one hundred and thirty five years since the publication of the book in 1883 by Seeley. In spite of making so many complacent claims about the heritage, culture and patriotism of the land, has the land really acquired any form of nationality as such? If not, one can apprehend how far anticipating Seeley was in this regard.

In the sheer absence of nationality, in the shameful dearth of any unifying force, India seem to lose its freedom and a foreign writer has courage enough to remark that in India the most oppressive governments had already continued their rule for centuries and that the means of resisting rebellion did never arise to enter into the habits of the people, because the Indians were accustomed to obedience.

Check your Progress

- a) Identify the major arguments presented in the essay.
- b) What are the reasons, as observed by Seeley, responsible for India's submission to foreign power? Enumerate.
- c) Explain the statement "I find great populations cowering in abject misery for centuries together, but they do not rise in rebellion".

5.6.3: An Imperial Justification vis-a-vis Truths about India

It has already been indicated that as the author belongs to the West and as he represents the colonial perspective to observe and interpret the East, his essay will necessarily be swayed over by such perspectives. In the process of putting forward a justification of the British imperial venture, the author makes certain assumptions and frankly speaking, all such assumptions are detrimental to the image and values of India as a nation. For instance, as long as it is difficult to identify any form of common unifying factor to bind all the varieties rife throughout the country, no nationality is plausible. A logical approach, however, invites self-analysis that reveals some un-admitted truth about our land and its issues.

Stop to Consider

We have almost been madly in love with our nation India. Is our patriotism on the wrong way? Do we really need a mirror from a foreign writer to see ourselves reflected to identify the loopholes in matters of nationality, if it is really there?

This section has been named “An Imperial Justification vis-a-vis Truths about India” where the expression “vis-a-vis” balances the wrongdoing of imperial justification with the truths we, as Indians, normally tend to avoid. The essay from that standpoint is a self-critical mirror to reflect and refract numerous loopholes. “It appears then that India is not a political name, but only a geographical expression like Europe or Africa. It does not mark the territory of a nation and a language, but the territory of many nations and many languages”, Seeley writes and these “manyness”, no matter how many times a jingoist assures on “unity in diversity” fails to help formation of nationality. Despite the fact that India is as large a country as a continent, yet it can very tactfully governed by foreign power for centuries. Forget about nationality supposed to be achieved through linguistic affinity or topographical proximity, having three different names to denote the same country — India, Bharat, Hinduston — exposes a lot more against the typical traditional take adopted by the nation-lovers. We are “accustomed to audience”; we have the inherent acceptance of “passive submission”; we have no “single political whole”; we have not yet developed the “habit of criticising government”; we are far removed from “rebellious” against foreign power subjugating us and therefore perhaps we celebrate the independence from the British in all flying colours, lest we do not have much sources of colours and we do not actually have much to celebrate upon. Caliban complex is all we have and we cannot help it.

Questions that help

- a) Reproduce, after the essayist, the factors which work against the formation of nationality in India.
- b) Show how radically the essayist has altered some of our notions in respect to our own nation? Comment.
- c) Who is Caliban? How does this character represent the colonised?

5.6.4: Comparison and Analogy

Since the author John Seeley was a historian, since he was the man after whose name a section of library at Cambridge University has been honoured, it is almost inevitable to find his essays loaded with relevant comparisons and analogies drawn from different historical sources. In the third paragraph of the essay a parallelism has been drawn between India and Italy, only to conclude that whereas Italy had made itself free, India could not. The author referred to various pages of history detailing upon Mogul Empire and the turnabouts wherefrom it was quite easier on the part of clever Englishmen to turn the political authority. Comparison is also at work when the author asks the readers to read the history of the Russian Czars in the sixteenth century. He raised the question “Why did a great population submit to the furious caprices of Ivan, the Terrible?” and the answered it by stating that the Russian had been so trampled for two centuries by the Tartars that they had acquired the habit of passive submission — a lacunae which is not that dissimilar from the condition of the Indians.

Questions that help

- a) Identify three comparisons applied by Seeley in the essay.
- b) “The essay is also a historical document of the pre-independent India.” Explain.

5.6.5: Glossary

tour de force: a mission or performance accomplished with great expertise, sometimes even in a forceful manner

Mahmoud of Ghazni: the first independent ruler of Turkic dynasty from 999 to 1030.

Vasco de Gama: A well known Portugese explorer who came to India through sea route in 1490s.

Aurungzebe: The sixth Mughal emperor ruling over Indian subcontinent for period of 49 years.

Zoroastrianism: One of the world’s oldest religious practices founded in Iran.

esprit de corps: a common, identical sentiment among the members of a particular group.

5.7. Reading the Lecture: Mutual Influence of England and India

By intention and implication this fifth lecture included in the second course of the book *The Expansion of England* is in fact a continuation of the same argument Seeley put forward in the previous essay discussed above. In other words, talking about the mutual influence between the two countries paves some more “by-lanes” through which the stallion of colonialism can be driven into. Expansion of England is seemingly geographical, but it is undeniably commercial, technically political and inherently ideological.

5.7.1: The Title of the Essay

If one looks for the synonyms of the term “mutual” s/he will get words like “interactive”, “common”, “reciprocal” and the like. All such synonyms presuppose that the areas they are concerned with are of equal stature, one complementing the other, the other reciprocating the first. Here in this title “India” is kept alongside England interconnected by the word “mutual” — England influencing India paralleled with India influencing England, at least as far as the title of the essay implies. The implied author of the text of the second essay seems to relate the things otherwise. Whatever the influences are, it is Great Britain which is at the driving seat while the Indian issues take a back seat. To follow the thinker Michael Foucault is to find a power-structure operative in all sorts of relations; when the narrative is presented by one from the dominant class, it is bound to suffer from master-slave dichotomy. Mutual influences are there, but they are never at the cost of loss of even an iota of English interest. From that point of view, the title of the essay is either unjustified or misleading.

Stop to Consider

Title given to any form of writing prepares the readers for a kind of narrative that, whether knowingly or unknowingly, is persuasive. Beyond what is observed apparently, most of the titles, if chosen thoughtfully, remain metaphorical.

Can you remind yourselves of the respective titles given to the essays written by Bacon, Hazlitt and Charles Lamb?

5.7.2: Analysis of the Text

As the author announces at the beginning, in the last two lectures he was engaged in showing that the conquest of India and the government of it by English had nothing wonderful about them. The wondrous character he apprehended is now dysfunctional and here he seeks to do away with anything miraculous wrongly associated with the mutual influence of England and India. The third paragraph proudly proclaims that compared to those in Mughal Empire, there was higher level of intelligence, morality and philanthropy among the British — a level which indirectly validated their colonialism in India which, just like a submissive, servile body of some subdued countrymen needed to get shifted from one to another foreign power.

Validating the point further Seeley negates the irreplaceable position of liberty in politics and based on his advocacy of studying history not for pleasure, rather for learning administrative instructions to run a smoother mechanism, liberty is to be accompanied by and celebrated with “other good things” like nationality, civilization. Seeley’s earlier lecture “How We Govern India” had already rightfully proved the sheer absence of any profound nationality in India; this time civilization is brought under the direct scrutiny of imperial lenses, resulted in the comment as follows: “Now in estimating the civilization of India we must begin by taking account of this fundamental distinction of race. The dark-skinned race is in many parts not civilized, and ought to be classed as barbarous.” There is no doubt that India created poetry and philosophy, it initiated science, it developed Buddhism, but the Aryan race to which the Indians originally belong “did not make so much progress in India as in Europe” and the civilization had to be gradually progressive: from barbarianism to Mussulman and from Mussulman to the arrested and half crushed civilization of a gifted race. This third stage of civilization removed long-standing evils of Indian condition, though at the same time it introduced new forms of evils as well.

Stop to Consider

As known, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, both situated in undivided India too were civilizations. Long years after such civilizations, India, as observed by the English eyes, were still lacking in civilization. Was it really necessary for a country to be considered civilized only when the West recognised it so?

Coming much closer to what the title of the essay suggested, the author takes into account the reaction which at the beginning India threatened to have upon England. The threat was quickly avoided, rather averted and this reversal was caused by the immediacy in which the colonisers had percolated down to each and every aspect of Indian political and social framework.

Questions that help

- a) What did seem to be wondrous in the relation between India and England?
- b) What are the stages of civilization in India as observed by Seeley? Discuss.

5.7.3: Presences through Absences

Though sound philosophical by its title, this section devotes itself to throw some light on how Seeley's essay, by pointing out certain lacking or absences in India made a provision to establish the ideological supremacy of British Empire. He first negated the mysticism which he himself attributed to India, he also considered the Mogul Empire to be a good specimen of bad political system, he later on also detected "less-civilized", "semi-civilized" status of Indian condition and thus, both politically and ideologically he made it possible for the British to carry out what they had been doing so far. The Seeleyian approach to history brought so many other good things of politics that the issue of liberty had been almost marginalised; both nationality and civilization were found obsolete and absent and hence there was the presence of British influence upon India. It is made almost what is called "white men's burden" to ensure its presence in India in all spheres of life — social, political, ideological, cultural — so that (innuendo intended) the absences of India could be mitigated, managed and manhandled. The British adopted, adapted and then turn adept to become omnipresent (notably, omni-present) in "absent" India.

Stop to Consider

There is always a confusion regarding the use of hyphen in between the two words "post" and "colonial". While the hyphenated one carries a historical legacy of what has been colonial, the separated one declares its independence from the historical baggage and put itself forward only as a theory.

Questions that Help

- a) How do you assess the role of ideological background of a writer? You can take the help of certain illustrations found in the present essay.
- b) Is it correct to conclude that India is still colonised from the cultural and educational point of view? Analyse.

5.7.4 Glossary

American Revolution: Occurred during 1765 to 1783, American Revolution is a political and ideological attempt to free America from the English colonisers.

Diadochi: Not to be confused with Dindochi, a locality in Mumbai, India. “Diadoshi” are the Generals, mainly from Macedonia, Egypt, Babylonia and Persia who fought among themselves after the death of Alexander the Great.

B.H. Hodgson: Brian Houghton Hodgson was one of the classical naturalists who worked on birds and mammals found in the Himalayan range and Nepal.

M Aurelius: Marcus Aurelius was a Roman Emperor who is remembered very often for his work *Meditations* detailing upon the format and mechanism of state governance.

Hellenism: A philosophical and ideological practice of following and imitating Greek culture.

Macaulay: Lord Macaulay was a British Historian who based on the English model developed a similar format of education in India.

5.8 Summing Up

In this Unit is we have discussed two lectures , *How We Govern India* and *Mutual Influence of England and India*, both taken from the book *The Expansion of England*. Textual analysis, as you have learnt , will avail you nothing worthwhile if you do not contextualize them in

specific historical situations. In the case of Seely, this context is that of the British colonial rule in India. The very intent and context of the texts under consideration will require you to read them from a post-colonial perspective. In the supplementary unit, we shall discuss in some detail how the peculiar colonial mindset of the writer informs the ideas expressed in these texts.

5.9: References and Suggested Reading

Edward Said: *Orientalism*

Edward Said: *Culture and Imperialism*

Seeley: Course I of Lectures from *The Expansion of England*

E M Forster: *A Passage to India*

Nirad Chandra Choudhury: *A Passage to England*

Walt Whitman: *Passage to India*

Shakespeare: *The Tempest*

Franz Fanon: *The Wretched of the Earth*

Unit 6

John Seeley: “How We Govern India”, “Mutual Influences and England and India”

Supplementary Unit

Unit Structure :

6.1 Objectives

6.2: Before you Read

6.3 : Analysing Contexts, Understanding Texts

6.4 :Key Issues

6.4.1: From *How We Govern India*

6.4.2: From Mutual Influence of England and India

6.5 : Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

6.6 summing Up

6.7 References and Suggested reading

6.1 Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Sensitize yourself to the political position of John Seely
- Understand the political context of the texts and how these are crucial for understanding the texts
- Explore issues crucial to the texts
- Prepare for examinations with tips for answering important questions

6.2 Before you Read

Look at this funny, yet thought-provoking dimension of writing!! This Unit has been titled “Before you Read” and now the content of the Unit will supposedly follow. You have already read “Before you Read” before you actually have started reading the content. The point is every

written piece is tricky, every text is inter-textually intertwined with politics, history, psychology, commerce, culture, irony and societal framework, every text is persuasive in its own style; even the simple introductory expression “Before you Read” too is a propaganda — may be the writer of the line wants you to lead you according to his wish, almost ignoring how YOU want to move forward.

Now on a serious note, let’s read “Before You Read”. You will soon understand how the idea of the above paragraph is connected with the essays we are going to handle. The moment we open the pages of an essay or any literary work, we tend to be careful regarding its author, because as students we want to form certain notions about the author’s characteristic features of writing so that it becomes easier for us to approach the text and also to attempt the questions in the ensuing tests. Accordingly we shall look for the name of the author John Robert Seeley of the essays here. Unfortunately nothing much is commonly known about Seeley and as a careful student you will first gather the preliminary information about the author, especially the location he belongs to. From the previous Unit we shall get such information out of which you will focus more on the fact that he is from England so as to let yourself think how just he will remain while describing something colonial or imperial associated with India. Examine his educational and professional background, look through his academic preferences, analyse his advocacy of anything English or Christian (See “Introduction to the Author”), seat back and reflect how such an Englishman will approach the issue of British governing India and with what sort of philosophy he will write. Please don’t forget that every written text is persuasive just as “Before you Read”. Whether you are convinced or not, whether Seeley admits it or not, this is a maxim following which we will begin to explore all the possible dimensions of the given texts.

Stop to consider

- Whenever there is a discussion on intertextuality we must acknowledge Julia Kristeva who explains the areas through which intertextuality is achieved. In relation to intertextuality above, as witnessed, there are as many as seven elements by which a written text gets affected. The idea of bringing these seven elements is inspired from the five to seven elements Kristeva pointed out: translation, calque, pastiche, plagiarism, parody, quotation and allusion.
- Think of a poem without the mention of any poet anywhere and assess the difficulty you will be facing under such circumstances. You can make an experiment in this direction by asking two of your friends to write critical appreciation of a single (preferably a lesser known one) poem — one will get the name of the poet and the other

will not and see the differences. Once you get a kind of result of your experiment you can come back to the primary argument presented here in “Before you Read”. Funnily enough, you have read so much before you have actually started reading.

6.3 Analysing Contexts, Understanding Texts

One of the primary pre-requisites of understanding a text, as long as our academic interests are concerned, is an adequate analysis of the context and backdrop against which the text is set. Here the context is one of Victorian England expanding its colonial empire far and wide in the world. The students are requested to take note of the preceding historical events, particularly those before the publication of the book *The Expansion of England* in 1883.

Let us then try to understand the context of the essays, in fact, the context of the entire book with the help of the questions raised under the following four points:---

- a) **Effect of Louis XIV’s defeat and Crimean War:** Didn’t the defeat of Louis XIV of France and the repercussions of the Crimean War open up new avenues of thinking in regard to controlling mechanism and colonial expansion?

- b) **Industrial Revolution:** Without Industrial Revolution would it have been possible on the part of English empire to control the colonies and run the government with the help of the recent developments in the areas of science and technology?

- c) **History for the sake of Politics:** If an author chooses to choose the historical events conducive for explaining the power and prowess of the British race and chooses to illustrate those historical events for gaining political and colonial hold, won’t it be a case of interpretive manipulation?

- d) **Silent India or Silenced India:** Under a condition where India as a nation remained silent with no resistance of any kind, will a progressive race like British hold themselves back from silencing Indian voice and thus overshadowing Indian civilization, negating Indian nationality, nullifying Indian uniqueness?

Stop to consider

- In the recent years in Seminars and Conferences, in Refresher Courses and in our Department of literatures, we talked extensively on Subaltern Literature, Dalit Literature, sometimes called Fourth World Literature. Here is a provision for us to analyse

India of 1880s and 1890s retrospectively as the voice of the other, if not subaltern as such.

- Seeley interpreted history for political benefit. Not exactly for political benefit, but for intellectual and theoretical reason New Historicism also employs historical contexts. Should we, therefore, make an attempt to situate the prescribed essays under the light of New Historicism so as to discover new parametres of understanding?

For the Indians ideally there was the urgent need of resistance and revolt which were evidently absent. Along with resistance and revolt, representation too is an element missing from Indian context. As if the responsibility of representing India was entrusted in the ‘gentlemanly’ hands of certain English historians and political thinkers. With some exaggeration it can be commonly said that Englishmen played three different roles ----- as trader, as thief and as translator. Metaphorically speaking, from all sides ---- commercially, materially and intellectually Indians fell prey before that regime and as the readers of the lectures consequently we too may have been misappropriated by a British like Seeley!! He delivered his lectures and his lectures compiled under two different courses in the book *The Expansion of England* seemed to decide the fate of colonialism in India for the next couple of decades. Both the lectures, allotted specifically as texts are taken from the second course of lectures and all the students studying these two lectures as texts have to make it a point to at least have a look of the entire book (available online, PDF can also be downloaded). Only after looking at the entire book and only after identifying the strategy of arranging the content of lectures the students will be able to do justice with the given texts. For instance, while the first course of lectures elaborated upon the history of colonial expansion on the face of changing world order, the lectures included in the second course get more specific in terms of the colonial expansion in India. How the English conquered India as touched upon by the third lecture of the second course has been presented almost as an accepted past. Students may note the difference of tense in naming the titles of the lectures ----- one “conquered”, i.e. past, the other “govern” i.e. present. Taken together, once it is conquered it would be being governed by them. Here a handful of Englishmen are the “we” who from a distance of half a world managed to govern a large country as Europe, the continent. Where does the reason lie? Unfortunately, once again, the reasons are all provided by the Englishman Seeley. So, as the readers of post post-colonial time, you will have to be cautious about reading the text of these two lectures.

6.4 Key Issues

In this section we shall attempt to understand the prominent issues as dispersed in different paragraphs of each essay. No issue can actually be separated from the others; the concerned students be requested to think of the answers to the probable questions in combination of more than one or two issues as well, they are intertwined with one another so as to fulfil Seeley's mission of expanding English colonialism in India to be religiously followed by the colonisers to carry on and carry out and carry forward the mission further. By the way the students can take the help of the paragraphs hereunder to have a proper grasp of the lectures and also to prepare the answers to the questions included towards the end of this Unit.

6.4.1 From How We Govern India

Halo of Strangeness: To have a fascination about a distant place is a common trait of human psychology. Seeley however, took up this issue of strangeness as a medium to employ history and then to address the miraculous character India was usually identified with. Everything about the region called India, when comprehended from English point of view, was miraculous and the traditional historian ordinarily used this sort of "strangeness" about some place(s) to explain away the perpetual halo of extraordinary causation that took place there. The author of the essay is quite different in this case ----- he assigned no halo of strangeness around India, though through his narration did shape a halo of (English) brightness against which the flickering existence of India's interests were found to be totally overshadowed. As such, there was nothing miraculous about English government that had been operative in India; mystery was missing even from its existence in terms of its language, community feeling, nationality; religious affinity, despite being swayed over by Brahminism and Hinduism, bore no exotic attributes.

English virtues Vs Indian Vices: It is simply an equation of contrast. The more of Indian vices can be detected the more of English virtues can be ascertained and vice-versa. There is perhaps no better 'mathematician' than Seeley who highlighted all the heroic qualities and natural genius of Englishmen against the plethora of negativities in

India: there is no proper sense of nationality amongst the Indians because there is neither one language binding them all nor any single religion instilling affinity among the inhabitants; Indians were totally lacking in inculcating any common greater interest; that the inhabitants of the colonised India would develop the habit of a single political whole was almost implausible etc. According to Seeley, it was only under the British regime that the Indians had started developing some kind of national feeling under compulsion; it was only due to the loss of political freedom that they had begun forming some sort of political consciousness.

Nation without Nationality: To prove that India was not a nation so to speak, nor India had any nationality was sufficient to justify the British governance here. As described by the author, they (the Englishmen) were “accustomed to see the map of Europe divided into countries each of which is assigned to a peculiar nationality, of which a special language is a badge”. The concept, according to him, was wrong because the common assumption that every country with a name of its own has a nationality is actually baseless. Unlike England which would never like to be governed by France, unlike France which would never allow any German group to invade with the respective sense of nationality of their own, Indian population did not constitute a pure form of nationality. If one contrasts dignified pedigree of nationality in European countries with that of India, the latter did not seem to have any. The reasons behind such sheer absence of nationality, as enlisted by Seeley, are as follows:--

a) **Variety of Language:** Indians do not speak one language- this is the maxim around which Seeley had attempted to form the strongest argument of the essay. Though most of the northern parts of India speak Hindi and though the Philologists had discovered affinity between Sanskrit and other Indian languages, almost every other state had its own language. If the dialects belonging to various languages are not taken into account, languages are so varied and so large in number that Hindi, unlike Roman Language which united countries, could not keep the native speakers united. Besides, Bengali and Marathi, Gujarati and Telegu, Malayalam and Assamese are so much different from each other, no matter how strongly we talk about unity in diversity, achieving nationality is almost impossible a task. It was already abstract in nature, coming to terms with Indian contexts; it appeared to be a chimerical impracticality.

b) **Largeness of the Territory:** Seeley writes, “It appears then that India is not a political name, but only a geographical expression like Europe or Africa. It does not mark the territory of a nation and a

language, but the territory of many nations and many languages.” Technically speaking, India is the name of a country, but geographically it covers as large a territory as a continent does and there is nothing like unifying force to keep various distant parts of the territory connected. While Italy, despite being divided by organisational ideologies, was ultimately “one” by nationality, India did not and could not have that “oneness”.

c) **No Common Political Interest:** Beyond party politics the citizens of every country are expected to have certain degree of common political interest, especially for the welfare of all. Without a single political whole, no definite political ideology and aspiration can be formed and without that no interest common to all residing in this large country with so much of variety in cultural heritage can be practically fulfilled. A sincere student, in this connection, may consult certain parts relating to state apparatus as mooted by Louis Althusser and may decipher into the distinction between the approaches of state mechanism.

d) **No Common Religion:** Seeley pointed out that if India had only one religion, it would have been slightly easier to attain some degree of nationality. Listening to this the author seems to advocate the formation of country based on religion which is not very true, rather his effort was just simply to show that simultaneous existence and rife of more than five to six religion ----- Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism ----- “enfeebled” the “uniting principle” required for nationality.

e) **Habitual Submission:** That India is lacking in common political interest was sufficient to conclude that India did not have any political consciousness and there was perhaps no need of repetition that without a thoughtful and reasoned political consciousness, love of independence could never be inculcated. How, after all, that love of independence could be felt and exhibited? As prudently studied by Seeley, for a considerably long duration India had been under the rule of the Mogul. That duration along with its dominating attributes had become so much an integral part of Indian consciousness that revolt and resistance, as hinted earlier, could pose no challenge to the colonisers from Great Britain. The habit of criticising the government for any wrongdoing was already absent; Indians before the struggle movement for independence against British were both apparently and inherently, both politically and psychically, submitted to submission, suppression and domination. With a hindsight it must also be added that in the process of approaching Seeley’s lecture critically from a post post-colonial perspective, a good number of truths (See the point “Truths about India in the main Unit),

though painful for and insulting to us, should also be generously admitted.

6.4.2 From Mutual Influence of England and India

The wondrous character which the author associated with India in the previous essay, this time has been treated differently. In regard to the mutual influence between India and England the writer admits that “there is a sense in which it is not only wonderful, but far more wonderful than is commonly understood. It is wonderful rather in its consequences than in its causes. Subsequently the issues as enumerated below are dealt with either in isolation or in combination of one or two.

New Approach of Studying History: Compared to the eventful, adventurous chronicles of war, certain straightforward, placid histories of war such as that of American Revolution were not studied properly and attentively. Similarly, if the marvellous nature usually associated with English empire in India had been removed, there would be nothing much left. As disclosed by Seeley, when the British turned their thoughts to towards Indian empire, they received the impression that it was not intrinsically more interesting than the average of such overgrown Asiatic despotisms. It was only because of having a higher level of intelligence, morality and philanthropy than the Mogul empire that they could start the governance. The author afterwards redirected his approach of studying history into a phase of political gain. Though normally there is a tendency of rejecting the histories if not helpful for promoting liberty, the author had altogether a different approach and attitude. Along with liberty, in accordance with Seeley’s political philosophy, political gain or solution to political crisis also determined the effectiveness of studying history. The Englishmen were not expected to study history simply for the pleasure of reading it, rather for discussing new ideas and strategies for political growth and the resultant changes. For the author, if history was proficient in providing instructions required for power mechanism and if such history could teach new lesson, no other historical narrative could actually impart, then those histories were necessarily to be meticulously studied and scrupulously followed.

Definition of Civilization: Almost in a pompous tone Seeley declared, “There need be no question about the general fact that the ruling race in British India has a higher and more vigorous civilization than the native races” and to prove that fact he argued that the European civilization

was the product of the united labour of the European races held together and animated by the spirit of the ancient world while in contrast to that Indian civilization was lagging far behind. The author sounded blatantly racist when he commented that “Now in estimating the civilization of India we must begin by taking account of this fundamental distinction of race. The dark-skinned race is in many parts not civilized and ought to be classed as barbarous.” Next he devised the divisive method of distinguishing between the proper Hindu races and the great Mussulman immigration. Following his statement will mean that a sort of semi-civilization was at work; certain strong virtues were very much present among them, but all the same those virtues compromising of certain ideas and views were not sufficient for the modern forms of society. Obviously, Indian population showed considerable aptitude for civilization ----- it was humane and intelligent, the customs born out of this place grew into laws and later consolidated in codes, this was the birthplace of the notion of division of labour, it created poetry and philosophy of reputed forms, it also propounded some fundamental ideas of some beginnings in science, it was the origin of religious reform called Buddhism, but despite all, it was something inferior to that of Europe. If any of you want to explore the reason behind such generalization, s/he will have to consider the following:----

- a) Indian civilization was lacking in the capacity of writing its own history.
- b) It did not at all pay any attention to documentation.
- c) For certain known and certain unknown reasons the religious reform of Buddhism too fell heads over heels.
- d) Tyranny of the priestly caste turned out to be a major barrier on the path of forming modern civilization.
- e) There was no great or solid political system to imbibe in that colonial India.

At best one could call it a city-civilization, not a civilization in the fullest sense of the term. At this juncture the students are requested to take special note of the three stages of civilization in India as explained in the previous Unit. The same ideas are not repeated here.

Bi-fold Instruction: Towards the last part of the essay the author maintained that there were two most interesting chapters emerging out of the mutual influence between India and England. The first of these two instructive chapters was about how a mischievous reaction from India upon England was tactfully prevented; the second was about how European civilization even after much delay and hesitation resolutely had been brought to bear upon India. These two instructions, of course as shaped by the essayist, underlined the primary argument centring

round the superiority of the English race in comparison to the submission of the Indian.

6.5 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

1. What kind of Englishman Seeley was? Comment on his historical and ideological outlook as reflected from the given essays. 5+7=12

Hints to Answer: For the answer to first part of the question, find out the points from “Introduction to the Author” part, particularly those which showed his family and educational background. Examine how he looked at history and historical events. Then focus on how Seeley used the study of history for solution to political issues, he employed his theory while analysing the history of pre-colonial India and also while describing the “absence” of Indian civilization as such. Do consult the parts “Presence through Absences” and “Definition of Civilization” to prepare a well-designed answer.

2. Show how radically the essayist has altered some of our notions about our own country. 10

Hints to Answer: In the initial paragraph of your answer, concentrate on how radical Seeley had been in terms of politics and English imperialism. You can then take the help of the section “Analysis of the Text” (on both the lectures) from the first Unit and of “English Virtues Vs Indian Vices” from this Unit to prepare your answer.

N.B.: You can try your hand to prepare for some short notes on the topics such as “Stages of Civilization”, “Political tour de force”, “Variations of Spelling used by Seeley” based on the reading of the essays.

Tips to the Students

- The students are advised to go through the questions enlisted in the boxes titled “Questions that Help” and to prepare answer beforehand taking examples and illustrations from the prescribed essays. If a question concerns only the first lecture i.e. “How We Govern India” you better concentrate only on the explanations you have come across while studying that lecture, not the other one. The same rule applies to the question concerning the second lecture “Mutual Influence between England and India” also. You can, however, take the help of one or two ideas from the other lecture to substantiate and strengthen your argument further.
- When you are writing the answer to a long question carrying 5 or more than 5 marks (below 8) for the answer, you are expected to begin the answer with an introduction. Whether to add one more paragraph as conclusion is to be decided by the way you are organising your answer, not mandatory.
- If the question is separated into two parts, make sure that you are answering the question in minimum two parts; if question has three parts, your answer should also necessarily have three parts.
- If the question carries 8 or more than 8 marks you are advised to put one introduction at the beginning and a conclusion at the end.
- Read the question thrice and try to gauge what exactly has been asked. Concentrate more on whether the answer is seeking “comment” or “discuss” or “explain” and accordingly frame your answer. Commenting, discussing, explaining are not all same.
- When you are specifically answering to the questions from these two prescribed lectures, you have a special advantage of remaining critical without submitting much to what the essayist has said. You can take a post colonial point of view, of course, without overlooking the truths the essayist has exposed about India and Indian civilization.

6.6 Summing Up

Seeley had been a professor of history exhibiting his radical theory of applying history for sorting out political issues, if possible, for political gain also. At the first level, expansion of English colony in India was simply a commercialised venture, though the imperial leaders took no time to visualise India as an English colony to be dominated and suppressed. For those leaders Seeley’s work appeared to be handbook

validating the colonialization, thereby inspiring (instigating?) them for the expansion. By 1883 the Victorian Age was about to be over, yet the Victorian sentiment of situating themselves upon a privileged and pioneering pedestal was still influential. Seeley's essays are the typical instances of the imperial ideology propelled and propagated through a careful selection of supporting historical events and explications.

6.7 References and Suggested reading

Edward Said: *Orientalism*

Edward Said: *Culture and Imperialism*

Seeley: Course I of Lectures from *The Expansion of England*

E M Forster: *A Passage to India*

Nirad Chandra Choudhury: *A Passage to England*

Walt Whitman: *Passage to India*

Shakespeare: *The Tempest*

Franz Fanon: *The Wretched of the Earth*

BLOCK 4

Unit 1

Matthew Arnold's *The Study of Poetry*

Unit Structure :

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introducing the Critic
- 1.3 Reading the Text
- 1.4 Key Concepts
- 1.5 Ideas at Work
- 1.6 Summing Up
- 1.7 References/Suggested Readings

1.1 OBJECTIVES

As you study the historical background of literary criticism, albeit with a special focus on selected important figures, you must learn not only to identify the topics that critics raise for more discussion but also to place these topics against the whole backdrop of what critics have largely been engaged in studying. That is, both the larger picture together with the smaller one must be clear to you. As you work through the unit given below, you should be able to *relate* Arnold's thoughts with other Victorian discussions of art and literature *explain* the topics that Arnold discusses *explore* the range of ideas that Arnold deals with.

1.2 INTRODUCING THE CRITIC

Matthew Arnold is a critic who seems to speak in a language close to our own times. In other words, very often his preoccupation with the status of poetry, his analyses of contemporary society and even his manner of expressing it shows him to be even urgently projecting a world which is post-Victorian. In a sense, he is critical of his society because he sees its weaknesses and these weaknesses, according to his vision, disable it from addressing the future with competence. You should understand that Arnold can be considered as a humanist who, through his literary criticism, attempts to address larger issues of social trends and current attitudes.

Some of the issues that Arnold takes up for consideration had been given some thought even by earlier thinkers. But what Arnold does is to re-consider some of these older problems with fresh insights as also to bring up some newer areas of thought.

We remember Arnold as poet, critic and educator. His father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, was headmaster at Rugby, one of the most prestigious public schools of England, and was famous for having initiated some educational reforms. Arnold is a social and cultural critic deeply involved with cultural malaise in his society. Matthew Arnold was educated at Rugby and Oxford. He became Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1857; during this decade, the 1850s, he wrote most of his poetry. His social and literary criticism appeared in *Essays in Criticism*, (first series; 1865), *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), *Essays in Criticism* (second series; 1888), and *Literature and Dogma* (1873).

SAQ

What is the particular tenor of Arnold's critical statements? (50 words)

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.....

1.3 READING THE TEXT

This was the ' General Introduction' to *The English Poets* (edited, T.H. Ward) of 1880. Later on, it was included in his *Essays in Criticism* of **1888**. Today, for us, post-Derrida, and under the looming shadows of global recession and global warming, Arnold's essay sparkles with vigour, confidence and the assurance of the Victorian critic. The hope he sees in poetry is extremely high, perhaps understandable when seen as coming after the Romantic vision of the exalted status of poetry as a source of authentic knowledge. "More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete ; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. "You should observe that now here in this essay does Arnold talk of poetry as affording us ordinary pleasure. We can almost recall what Philip Sidney had said in his "Apology for Poetry "regarding poetry to be the highest form of learning.

Arnold's emphasis on this point begins his search for the proper criteria to judge poetry with. In this essay, Arnold places great emphasis on seriousness. He is anxious to separate the good poetry from the bad: "if we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry, we must also set our

standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence. "This concern entails the definition of poetry as well : it is "a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty". In order to get "the best poetry" that will provide the criticism of life, it is imperative that the critic be aware of what is the best to be obtained from poetry. He argues against the pitfalls of the "real estimate" of poetry -- the "historic estimate and the personal estimate, both of which are fallacious. "The pervasive sense of history that nineteenth century promoted is felt by Arnold to interfere with aesthetic criteria. Arnold is, here, an advocate of aestheticism who sees art as measurable only by standards innate to itself. This colours his argument: "The course of development of a nation's language, thought, and poetry, is profoundly interesting; and by regarding a poet's work as a stage in this course of development we may easily bring ourselves to make it of more importance as poetry than in itself it really is, we may come to use a language of quite exaggerated praise in criticizing it; in short, to over-rate it."

The other ' estimate' is equally pernicious, although often deglutible. This is "the fallacy caused by an estimate which we may call personal." Arnold is often aware of the arguments that may run counter to his own. So when he rates the different kinds of classics, he acknowledges the possibility of overlooking the "real classic" although he does not clarify what the term covers. Arnold's terms make the definition difficult: "To trace the labour, the attempts, the weaknesses, the failures of a genuine classic, to acquaint oneself with his time and his life and his historical relationships, is mere literary dilettantism unless it has that clear sense and deeper enjoyment for its end." The investigation of 'historic origins' however leads away from the true enjoyment of poetry, turning our attention to features that do not constitute the "benefit" of poetry in reality.

SAQ

When do the two kinds of fallacious estimates become active - in the consideration of modern or the ancient poets? Can you find the reasons for this? (60+40words)

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Arnold is clearer in drawing out the ways in which the two kinds of fallacies operate: the poets of the past tend to tempt us to an historical estimate, while the judgment of poets of the present traps us with a personal estimate. The first kind of entrapment is to be seen when anachronistic comparisons are made--- Caedmon equated with Milton; Taillefer's chant compared to epics. Arnold returns criticism to the established classics: Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton. When we come to his reasons for making these writers as the arbiters of our literary taste, then we are brought to ideas which are abstract. He mentions "the very highest poetical quality" which is to be found in the writers named earlier but he leaves it to us to consider the contents of that "quality". He admits the possibility of confusion: "Critics give themselves great labour to draw out what in the abstract constitutes the characters of a high quality in poetry. It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples; -- to take specimens of poetry of the high, the very highest, quality, and to say: The characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed there. They are far better recognized by being felt in the verse of the master, than by being perused in the prose of the critic. "We might tum around and find Arnold in practice surrendering to the same 'historical' estimate that he warned us of. For us today, Arnold's critical terms—the "in fallible touch stone"—are far too abstract to help us. After the 'close reading 'techniques of the New Criticism of the twentieth century, we make far greater use of textual hair-splitting (Eliot

gave the name "lemon-squeezer" criticism). For Arnold's dictum to be successful, the study of poetry must first be based on extensive knowledge of the Graeco-Roman heritage, and knowledge of the great canons of western literature.

In the next few paragraphs, (1.383 onwards) Arnold brings round his discussion to the question of French romance-poetry by Christian of Troyes and the application of the "historical estimate". For us, the discussion of Chaucer's status as an English poet is highly interesting for the light it sheds on the relation of English poetry to French traditions in the context of the historical relations between these two nations. However, Arnold rates Chaucer below Dante: "And yet, I say, Chaucer is not one of the great classics. He has not their accent. What is wanting to him is suggested by the mere mention of the name of the first great classic of Christendom, the immortal poet who died eighty years before Chaucer,-- Dante." What Arnold names as Chaucer's weakness is a lack of the quality by which poetry achieves its high purpose-

- "The substance of Chaucer's poetry, his view of things and his criticism of life, has largeness, freedom, shrewdness, benignity; but it has not this high seriousness. "Yet Arnold reveals an eclecticism in his judgment: "He has poetic truth of substance, though he has not high poetic seriousness, and corresponding to his truth of substance he has an exquisite virtue of style and manner. With him is born our real poetry." By the "real estimate", Chaucer has "sterling value".

SAQ

How would you distinguish between the "real estimate" and the "personal estimate"? (60 words)

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Arnold's estimate of the work of Dryden and Pope is striking: "Though they may write inverse, though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose. "Gray is rated as 'classic' but these valuations become more difficult as Arnold ranges over the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries: "We enter now on times where the personal estimate of poets begins to be rife, and where the real estimate of the mis not reached without difficulty." Robert Burns is taken up for consideration as Arnold attempts to show the workings of his method of estimation of poetry. Surprisingly, Arnold does not seem to be affected by his own inconsistencies: Burns's poetry is not 'classic', nor is the poetry "a criticism of life and a virtue like theirs; but a poet with thorough truth of substance and an answering truth of style, giving us a poetry sound to the core. "Arnold remarks that" perhaps it is by the perfection of soundness of his lighter and archer master pieces that he is poetically most wholesome for us". We could re-frame his argument to show that while Arnold works with an acute sense of what makes poetry classic, he does not clarify the practical steps by which we can evaluate new writing. This last is perhaps the most critical operation that a critic conducts. The subjectivity implicit in literary judgment is clearly brought out by Arnold but he does not frame the method by which this subjectivity can be overcome, if at all. If the subjectivity could be seen as the consequence of a complex aggregate of various factors, Arnold does not attempt to outline. One reason may have been that Arnold was also implicitly concerned to bring to therefore the epistemological status of poetry, particularly within the wide scope of social transition.

Check Your Progress

1. Describe the context of Arnold's criticism and show the larger concerns

which he tried to address.

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2. Outline Arnold's conception of poetic worth.
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1.4 KEYCONCEPTS

We need to refer to Arnold's conception of poetry itself. When he called poetry "criticism of life", he did not implicitly confuse poetry and philosophy, or creativity and criticism. Arnold did, elsewhere, state that "no one will be much helped by Wordsworth's philosophy of Nature, as a scheme in itself and disjoined from his poems. "He was clearly far from confusing systematic philosophy with the world-view that poetry embodies. He did revise his early definition of poetry as "criticism of life" by adding to it the condition that it is "criticism of life" "under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty." The dictum stemmed from his understanding that rather than being a source of enjoyment only, poetry (or literature) is additionally a source of knowledge. His hopes for poetry being "immense", Arnold called for "high seriousness" (his translation of Aristotle's 'spoudaiotes') if poetry had to be great. The phrase seems, at first glance, to imply heavy sobriety but as Wellek points out, Arnold's "high seriousness" was not meant to imply "church yard solemnity". Arnold thought of poetry as being next to religion-- but poetry, as being infused with "joy" and "healing power", capable of speaking to the "great primary human affections". For these qualities he valued the poetry of Words worth and Goethe, also Thomas Gray and Shelley. At the same time, he denied Chaucer's verse the distinction of having 'high seriousness'.

Poetry, for Arnold, was "simply the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things". It was "the most delightful and perfect form of utterance that human words can teach". Poetry's role is to interpret the natural world and the moral world. He held that "poetry is interpretative both by having natural magic in it, and by having moral profundity. In both ways it illuminates man; it gives him a satisfying sense of reality; it reconciles him with himself and the universe." Arnold was clear in his understanding that poetry is not merely didactic. He quoted from Milton to show that poetry should be "simple, sensuous, passionate". Thus he saw poetry as the product of emotion and reason, or imagination and reason-- "imaginative reason." It was partly from such a conception that Arnold devalued the poetry "conceived and composed in [the poets] wits", as in 18th-century poetry. Genuine poetry is, for him, "conceived and composed in the soul". For Arnold the "inward" capacities of a human being were of the utmost importance in the face of the threat received from modern-day mass civilization which equated wealth and success with industrial output. In this connection, Arnold's notion of "culture" assumes a vital role.

In "The Function of Criticism", Arnold gives to the critical faculty a lower status than the creative. He proposed that "A time of true creativity...must inevitably be preceded amongst us by a time of criticism". The two faculties are balanced in the overall effect of their complementary roles. He suggested that "the creation of a modern poet... implies a great critical effort behind it". This was true of poets like Sophocles, Pindar, Shakespeare and Goethe who received a "current of ideas" through critical effort. The fact that the English Romantics did not have a comparable intellectual framework caused deficiencies in their work—they "did not know enough"—and there as on for this could be found in the French Revolution which did not have the "disinterestedly intellectual and spiritual" character of movements like the Renaissance and the Reformation. The job of criticism is to bring in "the best that is known and thought in the world, and... into making this known" so as to "create a current of true and fresh

ideas". Arnold prescribes the limits of criticism: it should be free of political, practical interests. Its purpose is to lead us "towards perfection, by making [our minds] dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and the absolute beauty and fitness of things". Religion and politics lead the critic astray and the critic must also beware the vice of insularity, looking to "Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result; .

Whose members have, for their proper outfit, a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity, and of one other". Criticism maintains its detachment from the practical sphere by "following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. "It does not lend itself "to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas."

When writing of the Greeks, Arnold observed that Homer wrote in the "grand style". This description was applied by him again while referring to Milton. He commented, that "the grand style arises in poetry, when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject". In his important essay of 1880, "On the Study of Celtic Literature and On Translating Homer", Arnold is preoccupied with "style" or "manner" along with "matter" and "substance". We should see here that Arnold was clearly moving towards articulating the problem of the relation of form and matter. It has been shown by later critics that Arnold's idea of the "grand style" is reminiscent of the 'sublime' as expounded by Longinus. You should recall that in the Longinian sense, the 'sublime' was connected to what was felt or expressed by a 'great soul'. This meaning becomes clear when Arnold's description of other poets like Sophocles or Keats is taken into consideration.

The grand style calls for a subject of matching proportions. Such a style "arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject". Of this kind two examples are obvious: Homer and Milton. Since this norm of the grand style points to the

relation of form and content, Arnold shows Wordsworth's achievement as "a balance of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution". Arnold's contention is that "a congruity between conception and expression, which when both are poetical, is the poet's highest result." However, Arnold declines to give a definitive idea of the "grand style".

The judgment of poetry, for Arnold, as he shows in "The Study of Poetry" can be conducted with the help of "infallible touchstones" consisting of "short passages, even single lines". Later critics have shown the weakness of Arnold's argument here because where form and content must, in combination, provide the total experience of good poetry, we cannot seriously consider extracts from a work in isolation. However, Arnold cautions against applying the concept of "touchstones" mechanically: "these few lines, if we have tact and can use them, are enough even of themselves to keep clear and sound our judgments about poetry, to save us from fallacious estimates of it, to conduct us to a real estimate. "He agrees that a difficulty will be encountered in applying such 'touchstones' to poetry which is different or very dissimilar. In "The Study of Poetry", Arnold gives us eleven 'touchstones' from Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Milton. Such touchstones are of not great use in practical criticism but Arnold justifies his recommendations on the grounds that they can be instrumental in "mobilizing our sensibility, for focusing our relevant experiences in a sensitive point, for reminding us vividly of what the best is like".

1.5 IDEAS ATWORK

As Prof. Wellek explains, Arnold's critical work is often brought within the label, Kultur philosophy, on the grounds that it is centered on the "apology for culture, are statement of the Greek ideal of paideia modified by Christianity; he makes a defense of the study of the

humanities against the growing encroachments of scientific and vocational training; he gives a satirical picture of the Anglo-Saxon middle classes :their Philistinism and the irreligion with its anti-aesthetic bias; he provides a defense of poetry and literature, a defense of the critical spirit and the exercise of criticism; and finally---thought his part of his activity is most dated-he advocates a non-dogmatic religion."

Arnold's influence continues into the work of Irving Babbitt, T.S. Eliot, F.R. Leavis, and Lionel Trilling who also attempted to place the role of criticism in the wider context of social critique. "Culture", from the Arnoldian perspective, is "a study of perfection". Rather than see this in a limited frame, Arnold rounds up the various components that are included in meaning of the term; culture thus "moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good". Since 'culture' encompasses both the intellectual and the moral dimensions as a social force, it operates, for Arnold, in a positive sense in an industrialized society whose only motives center on profit and mechanical gains. To an extent, culture works like religion, which is constituted by the "voice of the deepest human experience". Both religion and culture aid the cultivation of inwardness. Culture, according to him, "places human perfection in an internal condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality". Arnold famously declares: "Not a having and a resting, but a growing and a becoming, is the character of perfection as culture conceives it; and here, too, it coincides with religion".

At times, as Wellek expresses, "We may feel that Arnold loses all perspective when he tries to extend the claims of literature and voices the hope that it will replace religion." But we should remember that Arnold's main contribution comes in the justification of criticism. For Arnold, criticism means "the critical spirit in general, the application of intelligence to any and all subject. "Perhaps we should be sensitive to the associations and meanings that Arnold adjoins with the term, criticism.

Arnold gave profound support to what he called "disinterestedness" in criticism. While the normal usage of the term may point to detachment, for Arnold it brought in ideas other than aloofness or escapism. For a critic like him, who was involved in the polemics of his time, 'disinterestedness' caught the range of critical attitudes he upheld-"a denial of immediate political and sectarian ends, a wide horizon, an absence of prejudice, serenity beyond the passions of the moment. "What he proposed as the aim of criticism-"the endeavor.

. .to see the object as in itself it really is" - would be facilitated through 'disinterestedness' which was based on the instinct to inquire of "the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind."

Arnold sought the free circulation of ideas and intellectual curiosity. He considered the English to be too insular and provincial and looked to an openness towards French and German ideas. Of Arnold's own learning; Prof. Wellek opines that "Arnold's own "curiosity" may have fallen far short of the ideal of Goethe's world literature (to which he alludes),but one should recognize that Arnold knew his Homer and Sophocles in the original, welcomed Leopardi, Heine, and Tolstoy, and was steeped in the French criticism of his time. (He knew not only Sainte-Beuve and Taine, but also Planche, Nisard, Villemain, Scherer, Vinet, Saint-Marc Girardin, and many others.).. But while one should admit that he was no Sainte-Beuve, Dilthey, or Croce (he was, after all, a poet and a busy inspector of schools), he read Greek and Latin, German and French (and some Italian), and knew enough for a critic who does not even pretend to be a professional literary historian or classical philologist." These remarks should awaken us to the demands of both understanding the business of the scholar as well as to bring to us the refreshingly first-hand reading of Arnold!

What kind of theory of criticism did Arnold discuss? He did say that "the great art of criticism is to get oneself out of the way and let humanity decide." Arnold seemed to have favoured interpretation and

description in the practice of criticism. For him, Sainte-Beuve stood as a perfect critic: "a critic of measure, not exuberant; of the center, not provincial; of keen industry and curiosity, with 'Truth'(the word engraved in English on his seal) for his motto; moreover, with gay and amiable temper, his manner as good as his matter." Criticism was, in a way, a preparation for creation as it helped to cull information. In his later years, however, Arnold emphasized the judicial function of criticism: the "real estimate" thus is to be preferred over the historical and the personal estimates (in "The Study of Poetry"). The personal estimate is the assessment arising out of the experiences of our personal histories, and therefore purely subjective. What is the fallacy of the historical estimate? This is slightly more complex, as Wellek explains: "It is the overestimate that comes from seeing a work as a stage in the development of literature, especially in the early development of a national poetry. "He is critical of the attempt to acquaint oneself with the circumstances of historical relationships that surround a genuine classic because it amounts to "dilettantism"-unless it has the purpose or aim of deeper enjoyment behind it. Today, we may not appreciate the significance of the "real estimate" but Wellek argues the case that, in the first instance, Arnold may have wished to be free of his own historicism which could spell the relativization of values, and in the second instance, to reject the claims of the antiquarian historians of his time. As we find out from Wellek, Arnold" thinks the Chanson de Roland, medieval romances in general, and Marat overrated, and he protests against the German worship of the Nibelungenlied."

Check Your Progress

1. Consider Arnold's principles of literary evaluation as aspects of his socio-cultural concerns.
2. Explain Arnold's emphasis on "disinterestedness" as a critical concept.

3. Explain Arnold's thesis regarding the various fallacies that entrap critical judgment.

You will find it interesting to know that Arnold himself was imbued with the historical spirit. This was to be seen in his inaugural lecture at Oxford (in 1857), "On the Modern Element in Literature" in which Arnold conceived of sequences of literatures in terms of sequences of nations and ages judged through their political and intellectual achievements and their life and vigour. The literatures, rated according to their 'representativeness' of the age and the nation, were measured on such 'adequacy' of expression. As Wellek explains, "Such an "adequate" literature is then pronounced to be "modern", regardless of chronology." What Wellek has to tell us may be of interest to you—for instance, In Arnold's scheme English 18th-century literature appears as "a provincial and second-rate literature," in contrast to the French literature of that age, "one of the most powerful and pervasive intellectual agencies that have ever existed," and one that "fulfilled a great mission victoriously." Arnold recognizes the historical importance of English 18th-century literature as a reaction to the poetic exuberance of the Elizabethan Age and as the creator of a sober modern prose style. And, in a letter, he admitted that Pope's poetry was "adequate to Pope's age--that is, it reflected completely the best culture and intelligence of that age. "But it" was a poor time after all. ".The English romantic period is similarly considered as lacking in "intellectual atmosphere." English poetry of the first quarter of the century ... "did not know enough."

Stop to Consider

A biographical viewpoint

A comment by Prof. Wellek should help you to a better understanding of

the significance of Arnold's critical ideas. Today, his essays are a staple in our curricula and we often miss out on his best contributions. Partly, this has happened through the mechanical summing up of various editorial commentaries. But Wellek gives us a rare insight into the critic himself through the following paragraph:

"Arnold's stereotyped phrases and formulas are unfortunately the best remembered side of his criticism. He knew it himself and treated his pet phrases with proper irony. In a Liverpool Address(1882)he draws his accepted image as a "nearly worn-out man of letters," with a frippery of phrases about sweetness and light, seeing things as they really are, knowing the best that has been thought and said in the world, which never had very much solid meaning, and have now quite lost the gloss and charm of novelty. The range and variety of Arnold's criticism belie such a superficial indictment."

1.6 SUMMING UP

By now you have attained some familiarity with the set of issues that Arnold dealt with in the course of his critical writings. As you can see, Arnold's concern was with the business of critique in his surroundings. His work discovers for us how effectively social critique makes its home in literary criticism. No literary theory can evade the deeper problems of the status of literature in society. If at one level, we agree that literature reflects what constitutes the bases of society, at another level it affects the higher planes at which society wishes to see its image. Arnold seems to have been deeply aware of the question of knowledge where literary critique is concerned. This would lie at the heart of his equation of poetry with religion. It is also notable that Arnold disagreed with the claims of bourgeois philosophy which concentrated on utilitarian attitudes. To that extent, the cultural critique that Arnold advances is an attempt to go beyond the purely "literary". At the same time, there is some justice in the observation that

Arnold does not engage in practical criticism itself but rather attends to the philosophy of criticism. As others have said, he is in deed a "propagandist" of criticism without the literary repertoire that is necessary to carry forward the actual practice of criticism. However, it is also correct that his stature as a critic is incontestable.

1.7 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

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Rene Wellek: *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750 - 1950*,

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Unit 2

Walter Pater: *Leonardo da Vinci*

Unit Structure :

2.1 Objective

2.2 Introducing the Author and his Works

2.3 The Context

2.4 *Studies in the History of the Renaissance: A Critical Introduction*

2.5 Reading the Text: *Leonardo da Vinci*

2.5.1 Analyzing the Text

2.5.2 Aesthetic Impressionism

2.5.3 Leonardo's Turn to Nature and Human Personality

2.5.4 Religious Aspect of Leonardo

2.5.5 Anti- antiquarianism in Pater's essay

2.5.6 *Legions of Grottesque: Pater on Mona Lisa*

2.5.7 Pater's Prose Style

2.6 Summing up

2.7 Glossary

2.8 References and Suggested Reading

2.1 Objective

After going through the unit , you will be able

- To frame accurate opinions about the complex critical views of Walter Pater. It will open the windows for fresh and independent interpretations.
- To historicize Walter Pater and his works for better understanding of the age and context.
- To understand Renaissance in terms of Walter Pater's ideas in particular.

2.2 Introducing the Author and his Works

Walter Pater, a prominent art critic, prose writer and novelist was born in Shadwell in 1839. His father Richard Pater, who was a medical practitioner died at an early age leaving Walter Pater to live a life full of struggle and hardships. Pater started his education life in 1853 in Kings School Canterbury. From King's School, he shifted to Queen's College Oxford. Right from his school life, he earned the reputation of being a sober and serious reader. Gautier, Swinburne, Flaubert, Baudelaire were among his early favorites. During his stay at Oxford, he visited to his sisters in Germany where he got his fascination for the study of German philosophy and literature. Amid these impressions Goethe's vision and works encouraged him a strong inclination of transcendental philosophy. His inclination to Hegelian ideas of historical evolution of individual subject can also be noted. His intensive study of German philosophy during his tenure at Queen's College at Oxford can also be related to his inclination to German philosophy and literature. In 1865, he visited to Northern Italy, Pisa and Florence, which created a sense of great interest in his mind for the great Renaissance painters and artists and their works. His fascination and understanding of the Renaissance was well expressed in the essays anthologized in 1873 as *Studies in the History of Renaissance*, where a total number of ten essays about some of the prominent Renaissance artist and their works has been collected together and had been revised a good number of times. Each of the essays has well exemplified Pater's approach to art and human life in general, which is at stark contrast with art critics and historians preceding and contemporary to Pater. For instance, his approach can well be placed in contrast to that of John Ruskin, one of the proclaimed critics of the contemporary period; contrary to approaching art and literature from the point of view of didacticism and objective accuracy, Pater has emphasized the matter of beauty and individual experience in the analysis of art. Essays on Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Winckelmann and others along with the highly loaded Preface and Conclusion had raised great debate among the contemporary critics as Pater had deliberately deviated from the ongoing norms of art criticism. Though *Renaissance* got a mixed reception, its strategic significance to the history of art criticism can still be realized.

After the controversial and mixed reception of *Renaissance* follows the publication of *Marius the Epicurean* in the year 1885. It is a historical and philosophical fictional work set in Rome where Pater's ideas about aesthetics and religion get well elaborated exemplification. It

can be considered to be a bildungsroman where the story of the spiritual and philosophical development of the protagonist Marius who was a young Italian working in the court of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, has been accounted. Told in Pater's unique poetic style this work becomes epitome of aesthetic movement and its influence can well be explored upon the writers belonging to the Aesthetic and Decadent school in the following late Victorian age. The importance rendered on the contradictions of thought of character, internal conflict, impressionist understanding of matters by the character etc. has also created space and rational to regard this novel as a forerunner of the modernist psychological novels championed by novelists like Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad and D.H. Lawrence.

In 1878 Pater had published a semi-autobiographical fictional sketch entitled *The Child in the House* recounting his childhood memories in *Macmillan's Magazine*. This genre has been called *Imaginary Portraits* which is characteristically featured with a sense of scepticism about the boundary between fact and fiction. Between 1885 to 1887 another four imaginary portraits had been published by Pater in the same magazine: "A Prince of Court Painters", "Sebastian van Storck", "Denys L'Auxerrois" and "Duke Carl of Rosenmold". All these historical/biographical sketches based on the turning points in the life of some of the great painters, sculptors and philosopher had been anthologized in 1887 as *Imaginary Portraits*. Rather than giving importance in plot based description, Pater has given attention to explore "the aesthetic quality and philosophical repercussions of experience upon a sensitive and circumspect temperament." Psychological studies of the fictional character set in historical setting has blurred the demarcating line between what is personal and what is historical, which is a unique contribution of Pater in the literary art of revisiting and reconstructing history. It is to be noted that idealization of character figure is secondary to the writer's emphasis on exploring the inner contradictions of the character in terms of circumspect conflict between tradition and innovation, faith and doubt and so on and so forth. Hence the Victorian conflict has well be assimilated with modernist sensibility in these fictional works that makes them unique work of art.

STOP TO CONSIDER:

Pater's subjectivist and impressionist views towards life and art was once severely condemned by critics like T.S.Eliot in favour of classical depersonalized objectivity. But Pater's critical approach has also been well recognised by contemporary critics (e.g. Denis Donoghue in *Walter Pater: Lover of Strange Souls*) as the precursors of modernist literary sensibility. Hence the question should occur to you how and to what extent Pater has deviated from his contemporary Victorian Sensibility. Try to give some thought in this respect.

The theoretical framework stated in the *Renaissance* gets its practical exemplification in the collection of heterogeneous essays published in 1889, namely *Appreciations with an Essay on Style*. Along with an essay on style, a good number of essays on some prominent English and French poets and writers and their works have been collected together ranging from Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Coleridge, D.G.Rossetti to Feuillet. It is interesting to notice that style in literary texts has not merely been apprehended by Pater in terms of some objective formal criteria as he asserts: “*The soul is the element of personality in style. It is the peculiar spirit of which the artist is made of. It is from this quality that we can know a writer from his works. It is in this sense that style is the man.*” His *Plato and Platonism* was published in the year 1893, where Pater is mainly concerned with the literary views of Plato and his works and the dialectical aspects of Plato’s philosophy has been greatly ignored. Other important works like *Greek Studies* (1895), *Miscellaneous Studies* (1895) were published posthumously.

SAQ

What are the major preoccupations of Walter Pater in his critical prose works? (Within 50 Words)

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2.3 The Context

Two years back to the birth of William Pater i.e. in 1837, Queen Victoria ascended to the throne of England and the reign of Victoria ranging till 1901 is known as the Victorian Age in the socio-cultural life of England. This period is often considered as one of the most prosperous and stable period characterised by industrial development,

progress of science and socio-cultural change. The unprecedented industrial development has created a huge working class paving the way to a class-structured society. All these changes demanded and eventually imported some new socio-cultural values and a stark sense of contradiction between traditional and emerging values can easily be apprehended as a part of Victorian sensibility.

Along side of the industrial development, progress in science can also be regarded one of the most significant event of the period. Most prominent of all the scientific developments of the age is the theorization of evolution by the great scientist Charles Darwin, who published the famous epoch making book *Origin of Species* in 1859. In this book Darwin has scientifically proved that the origin and development of all the species including man is not a divine phenomenon, but rather is part of a evolutionary system. A particular species survives and evolves by overcoming all the adverse forces of nature and the hence its survival is a natural process. Victorians were also fascinated by the emergent discipline like psychology and the physics of energy. Such kind of emerging scientific temperament created the great debate of the age namely the conflict between religion and science, which can be apprehended in broader sense as the conflict between faith and doubt.

All though, the Church of England had been the authoritative religious institute of the age, yet significant departures could be realised in terms of the emergence of Methodism, the Oxford Movement and Evangelicalism. Church-going was part of the daily life of most of the Victorians, yet the changing endeavour of the age also invited a sense of reappraisal the religious issues and institutions. Religious preoccupation and moral stand point remained as integral part of the Victorian society, but the emerging tendency of scrutinization of the inherent religious and moral values had reached its peak towards the end of the period when the Modernist thinkers and writers found such interrogation as a resourceful ally.

The conflict between faith and doubt, the new socio-cultural fabrications and other social sensibilities were also well exemplified by the contemporary art and culture. Literature, being one of the potent factors of social production, emerged as a faithful presenter of the spirit of the age from where they all emanated. Take the example of novel which was the most dominant literary genres of the Victorian period. The novelists tried their best to depict ‘reality’ surrounding them: “*The novelists responded to the changes taking place in contemporary society-the railways, the shifting of population because of the industrialisation, the influence of mechanisation on the lives of the people, the rise of educational opportunities, urbanisation etc. were all represented in the novels of the nineteenth century.*”(Choudhury: 2005: 228). Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855), Charlotte Bronte’s

Shirley (1849), Charles Kingsley's *Yeast: A Problem* (1848), Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854) and *Bleak House* (1852) are some of the examples where realistic descriptions of the plight of the working classes and of poverty and inequality caused by the typical structural fabrication of the society can notably be observed. These novels are classified as the *Condition of England Novels*. The moral decadence of the period was also presented faithfully by the novelist where the themes like prevalent criminal activities, the condition of woman etc. had been carried out. The Newgate Novels depicted the criminal activities of the period; Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838) bears some of the echo of the features of the genre. Novels like *Vanity Fair* (1848), Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1892), Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850) exemplified the dualities of womanhood in terms of the stereotypical projection of woman as 'angel in the house' in one hand and 'fallen woman' in the other hand. These dualities show the conflict of the prevailing patriarchal values with the changing sensibilities in terms of the social position of woman in the Victorian period. This transition was well captured by the contemporary novelists.

Not only had the novelists, Victorian poets had also shown keen interest in recapturing the age along with preoccupations in their verses. Alfred Tennyson's poem *In Memoriam, A.H.H.* (1850) was an elegy to his friend Arthur Henry Hallam, but the tone and treatment of personal grief was not similar with that of the preceding Romantics. Hence the grief at the death of his friend gave him a space or rather a reason to explore the mysticism and veil of faith and doubt embracing human life and existence. The prevailing conflict between faith and doubt or that between science and religion was well expressed by lines like: "By faith, and faith alone, embrace / Believing where we cannot prove;" The merge of classical and emerging modern values creates a sense of inconsistencies characteristic to the Victorian minds; this type of moral inconsistencies was brought to the fore by Matthew Arnold in poems like *Dover Beach* (1867). The **Pre-Raphaelites** school of poetry and art showed the emerging trend of divorcing art and poetry from the growing degraded social realities of the time. Their emphasis on merge of beauty with mysticism, nature with symbolism in the line of the painters existed before the age of Raphael represented a prevalent approach of life and art characteristic to the late Victorian mind. Walter Pater has also been associated with the Pre-Raphaelites by the critics in terms of his fascination for beauty and nature. His understanding of the Renaissance painters and artists in the *Studies in the History of Renaissance* can be spelt especially in this regard. (This point will be discussed in some details in the following section.).

Debate regarding religious matters, reorienting philosophy in the changing endeavour, scientific matters is some of the major pre-

occupations of the major prose writer of the age. We have already talked of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which was epitome of the scientific writing and the growing scientific sensibility of the Victorian mind. The essays of John Henry Newman and Walter Pater were characteristic of the religious argumentation that was on the air of their time. The inconsistencies around religion and morality were well expressed by Pater; consider the following section:

Fundamental belief gone, in almost all of us, at least some relics of it remain—queries, echoes, reactions, after-thoughts; and they help to make an atmosphere, a mental atmosphere, hazy perhaps, yet with many secrets of soothing light and shade, associating more definite objects to each other by a perspective pleasant to the inward eye against a hopefully receding background of remoter and ever remoter possibilities. (*Pater, Miscellaneous Studies*)

Carlyle and Arnold's emphasis on the cultural reconfiguration, John Ruskin's views on the economic aspects of society, philosophical and critical observation of art and society by J.S.Mill and Walter Pater somehow all together drew us to the consideration how all of them used to be keenly concerned to the socio-cultural atmosphere surrounding them.

SAQ

What were the major events responsible for the emergence of the new endeavour in the social and cultural life of the Victorian period? (Within 50 Words)

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What were some of the common themes exhibited in Victorian Literatures? (Within 50 Words)

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Check Your Progress

1. Discuss the socio cultural background of Walter Pater and his time.
2. To what extent, do you think, Pater can be observed in terms of the sensibility of the period when he lived?

2.4 Studies in the History of Renaissance: A Critical Introduction

In the year 1865, Walter Pater had made a tour to Florence, Pisa and Ravenna-this visit was so significant in terms of the role it played to develop keen interest in the mind of Pater towards European Renaissance art and artists. In the following years three of his important essays were published drawing on the subject of Renaissance artists and their works namely *Leonardo da Vinci* (1869), *Sandro Botticelli* (1870) and *Michelangelo* (1871). All these three essays along with other seven essays were anthologized in the form of a book namely, *Studies in the History of Renaissance* (1873). The collection was subsequently revised with addition to some other essays and a Conclusion. All the essays collected in the anthology primarily incorporate the lives and works of major European Renaissance artists ranging from 13th Century to the 18th Century and thereby explores the divergent preoccupations of Renaissance art. Pater has presented the subject of the book in concrete terms at the very Preface of the book:

“The subject of the following studies are taken from the history of the Renaissance, and touch what I think the chief points in that complex, many sided movement.”(Studies: xi)

The temporal and geographical perspective to look at the history of Renaissance by Pater is exceptional from some point of views. Firstly he has moved back to “*end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century*” in order to explore the origin of the great movement, to be placed in his own words “*Renaissance within the limits of the middle age itself*” (Studies:1). Starting the anthology with the twelfth century French anonymous fictional story *Aucassin et Nicolette*, Pater has incorporated an essay on Winckelmann, the 18th

Century German archeologist and art historian at the very end of the collection; hence the extended the history of Renaissance to 18th century. Pater has rationalized the incorporation of the essay on Winckelmann in the preface itself as *“he is the last fruit of the Renaissance, and explains in a striking way its motive and tendencies.”*(Studies: xiv). The pan-regional nature of Renaissance has also been taken into consideration while selecting the artist and their works for discussion-the regional variants of Renaissance have been taken into keen observation but Pater’s aim was to explore *“its general spirit and character.”* Taking in view of his aim in his mind he debunked the traditional and taken for granted tendency of centralizing Italy in their discourses pertaining the history and nature of Renaissance. On the contrary, Pater was of the opinion that the Renaissance began and ended in France and the fifteenth century Italian artists’ back to antiquity was not the whole but only a part of what was called and understood as Renaissance:

“The word Renaissance indeed is now generally used to denote not merely that revival of classical antiquity which took place in the fifteenth century, and to which the word was first applied, but a whole complex movement, of which that revival of classical antiquity was but one element or symptom. For us the Renaissance is the name of a manysided but yet united movement, in which the love of the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, the desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life, make themselves felt, prompting those who experience this desire to seek first one and then another means of intellectual or imaginative enjoyment, and directing them not merely to the discovery of old and forgotten sources of this enjoyment, but to divine new sources of it, new experiences, new subjects of poetry, new forms of art.”(ibid: 2)

Thus fascination for beauty, intellect and imaginative enjoyment was also accompanied by a set of inconsistencies as in Pater’s view Renaissance was not characterized only by its love for antiquity but also by exploration of new possibilities and approaches in art, poetry and indeed life in general.

STOP TO CONSIDER

We have already discussed about the moral inconsistency that was the characteristic feature of the Victorian mind and life in the preceding unit and have referred how contemporary writers including Pater were highly influenced by the Victorian sensibilities. The bleakness caused by the conflict between classical and modernist values were well expressed by the late Victorian writers and poets. Hence can we relate Pater’s apprehension of Renaissance in terms of conflicting preoccupations with the inherent Victorian sensibility of the author? Give some thought to it as it will lead us to historicize the work under discussion.

In the first chapter he has explored the French legacy of the high Renaissance of the fifteenth century through the discussion of the two prose romances of the twelfth century France, *Amis and Amile* and *Aucassin and Nicolette*. Pater concludes that it is in their “*spirit of rebellion and revolt against the moral and religious ideas of the time*” that these tales prefigure that later “*outbreak of the reason and the imagination,*” the high Renaissance of fifteenth century Italy. (Studies:15). The second chapter is on the Italian philosopher **Pico Della Mirandulla**. Pico, whose writing exemplified another very important aspect of Renaissance particularly in terms of the religious aspect; the attempt of the Italian scholars of the fifteenth century to reconcile Christianity with the religion of Greece. But Pico and his contemporary philosophers’ effort to reconciliation went in vain as they lacked the historical sense of development in Pater’s term. Their effort was thus stuck in mere “*allegorical interpretations.*” Thus Pater concludes:

“I said that the Renaissance of the fifteenth century was in many things great rather by what it designed or aspired to do than by what it actually achieved. It remained for a later age to conceive the true method of effecting a scientific reconciliation of Christian sentiment with the imagery, the legends, the theories about the world, of pagan poetry and philosophy. For that age the only possible reconciliation was an imaginative one, and resulted from the efforts of artists trained in Christian schools to handle pagan subjects; and of this artistic reconciliation work like Pico’s was but the feebler counterpart.” (Studies: 35-36)

The next essay on **Sandro Botticelli**, though Pater observed Botticelli as a inferior artist in comparison to Leonardo or Michelangelo, but the unique qualities that made him stood distinct were also kept in view in the course of discussion. The naturalistic approach was observed in his paintings where a great sense of human nature and the surrounding could be realized. But according to Pater it was not the only virtue of Botticelli as the naturalist approach in him was unique and peculiar which makes him a visionary artist:

“the genius of which Botticelli is the type usurps the data before it as the exponents of ideas, moods, visions of its own; with this interest it plays fast and loose with those data, rejecting some and isolating others, and always combining them anew. To him, as to Dante, the scene, the colour, the outward image or gesture, comes with all its incisive and importunate reality; but awakes in him, moreover, by some subtle structure of his own, a mood which it awakes in no one else, of which it is the double or repetition, and which it clothes, that all may share it, with sensuous circumstances.”(Studies: 43)

The realist in Botticelli didn't represent matter as it was in reality but his own mind and perspective were also made to play their part to make the represented object a new form. In the chapter **Luca della Robbia** he discussed about sculpture in general and particularly the works of Luca. According to Pater the limitation of sculpture is that it tends towards a *“hard realism, a one sided presentment of mere form.”* The Greece sculptors were also suffered from this limitation by emphasizing and depicting the types rather than the individual and hence all the possibilities of exemplifying the artist's own mood and individuality were minimized. In search of the resolution he drew attention to the fifteenth century Italian sculptures especially those of Tuscany represented by Luca and others, who in his opinion, achieved *“a profound expressiveness”* by working in low relief earth wave, the subtle dimension of the line serving as the means of overcoming the special limitation of sculpture. Such methodology allowed them to convey the artists' peculiar and inner mood rather than losing to the types. Hence Pater prioritised the individuality over the universality, which is one of the characteristic features of the Impressionist school of criticism of which Pater was one of the eminent forerunners.

In the essay *Poetry of Michelangelo*, Pater's aesthetic and impressionistic approach also got revealed, as it seems that the whole analysis is done in terms of the personal impression that Michelangelo's poetry left on the mind of the reader, i.e. Pater himself. One more interesting critical approach of Pater expressed in the essay is his overwhelming effort to relate the works of the artist or the poets with artist's personal experiences and traits along with the age from where he/she emanates. The autobiographical account of Michelangelo and the association of his life events-experiences with the evolution of his artistry seen in the essay are to be noted in this regard. A sense of incompleteness is central to the works of Michelangelo but it doesn't hamper their appeal as it enables him in mystifying beauty that led to the exemplification of *“the brooding spirit of life.”* In the essay *Leonardo Da Vinci*, Pater moved from sculpture to painting of Leonardo and

showed how an aesthetic of art for art could be realized in the works of Leonardo with a sense of mysterious reclusion in art and a shocking co-existence of attachment and alienation. Pater was fascinated by Leonardo's deep understanding of human nature, fusion of beauty and terror, "*legions of grotesque*" and his sense of experimentation:

"Poring over his crucibles, making experiments with colour, trying by a strange variation of the alchemist's dream to discover the secret, not of an elixir to make man's natural life immortal, but rather of giving immortality to the subtlest and most delicate effects of painting, he seemed to them rather the sorcerer or the magician, possessed of curious secrets and a hidden knowledge, living in a world of which he alone possessed the key."(Studies: 99-100)

Though the discussion of the works of French poet, **Jaochin du Bellay**, Pater had reasserted the divergent nature of Renaissance; the peculiar traits of the Northern version of the movement had been realized minutely in the essay with special reference to the poetry of Jaochin. Jaochin's object was "*to adjust the existing French culture to the rediscovered classical culture*" and for this purpose he pleaded for the use of French vernacular with its rediscovered graces. It led him to mould a new form of poetry with ample instances of experimentation in forms, which was modernist by tone in Pater's view. The essay on **Winckelmann** is the single longest one in this collection. Though Pater has justified the incorporation of this particular discussion yet there is lots of debate for incorporating Winckelmann in his discussion of the history of Renaissance. Beginning with the life events of Winckelmann, his homosexual sexuality, paganism and hypocritical Catholicism were emphasized. His appreciations of ancient art were also discussed thoroughly. But the great part of the essay is that portion that is bestowed upon the discussion on Greek art; Pater's effort was to explore the virtues of Greek art as the standard of European taste.

To sum up it is observed that Pater was trying to plead a new critical standpoint rejecting the Arnoldian classicism, which is clear enough from his remark in the Preface, where Arnold's advocacy for classical objectivity has been reviewed back:

'To see the object as in itself it really is' has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly."(ibid: viii).

The Victorian medievalism as exemplified by Carlyle and Ruskin was also severely contrasted by Pater taking the aim of developing the Aesthetic approach of criticism. The critical stand taken in the discussion of the life and work of the Renaissance aptly exemplifies the aesthetic critical approach. Pater's subjectivity, emphasis on the individuality of the artist and poets, rejection of religious orthodoxy, fascination for beauty and so on and so forth are characteristic of aesthetic criticism, of which he was the most prominent exponents.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss how the Victorian values were rehearsed by Pater in his study of the Renaissance?
2. Do you think that Pater has put forward some new temporal, geographical and theoretical perspectives to the understanding of Renaissance? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Discuss the tenets of Aesthetic Impressionism with special reference to Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*.

2.5 Reading the Text: *Leonardo da Vinci*

As a result of his tour to Europe in 1865, where he had covered cities like Florence, Pisa and Ravenna which were once the centre of Renaissance art and culture, William Pater's interest in Renaissance grew high. In the following year i.e. in 1866 an essay titled *Metaphysics of Coleridge* was published in West Minister Review. This essay was followed by another very significant essay *Leonardo da Vinci*, which was published in the same magazine in the year 1869. The essay was later anthologized in the *Studies in the History of Renaissance*, which was first published in the year 1873. The essay is one of the best specimens of Pater's critical traits and the marked poetic prose style especially revealed in the passages devoted to *Mona Lisa* is still regarded as one of the most potent fragments of English prose. In the course of debunking the taken for granted interpretation of Leonardo and his artistic faculties, he severely reacted to the overwhelming antiquarianism found by Leonardo's critics. Taking an anti-antiquarian approach Pater tried to explore the other possible ways of interpreting Leonardo bringing forth the latter's life and individual traits in the discussion of the works of art. Pater was highly touched by Leonardo's fascination for beauty and nature, his understanding of human nature,

mixing of beauty with “*legions of grotesque*”, symbolism and his psychological evocation exemplified through his work of art.

2.5.1 Analyzing the Text

The essay on Leonardo da Vinci begins with a reference to Vasari’s **Vitae** and Carlo Amoretti’s monograph on Leonardo published in the year 1804. Pater found that the interpretation of Leonardo found there didn’t stand up to examination. Though Pater didn’t reject Vasari’s legend on Leonardo, but he embroidered the existing legends and made a try “*to reach through it a definition of the chief elements of Lionardo’s genius. The legend, corrected and enlarged by its critics, may now and then intervene to support the results of this analysis.*” (Studies: 92) Thus the purpose of the essay was made clear by Pater at the very outset. Analysing the essay will make us understand Pater’s additions and preoccupations in the study of Renaissance art in general and those of Leonardo in particular. The major aspects of the essay will be discussed in the following units.

2.5.2 Aesthetic Impressionism

Aesthetic Impressionism is a critical approach that questions the overwhelming preoccupation of objectivity in criticism. Rather the personal perception and impression of the individual towards the text under consideration is regarded as the driving force in critical analysis. Walter Pater is often considered as one of the earliest exponents of this school of criticism and his ***Studies in the History of Renaissance*** is a significant instance of such kind of critical stand. The basic theoretical framework of Aesthetic Impressionism is well discussed at the Preface:

“The aesthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces, producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar and unique kind. This influence he feels and wishes to explain, analysing it, and reducing it to its elements. To him, the picture, the landscape, the engaging personality in life or in a book, La Gioconda, the hills of Carrara, Pico of Mirandula, are valuable for their virtues, as we say in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem; for the property each has of affecting one with a special, unique impression of pleasure. (Studies: ix)

That is why Pater has tried to see the man Leonardo and his works in the present essay not in terms of the typically accepted views, but in terms of what he put as, “*what I understand by the word*”. Hence the predominantly associated classical antiquity, to a great extent, has been overlooked in his interpretation-“*Antiquarianism has no more to do*” (Studies: 92). Rather he put the possibilities by admitting that critics may“*analyze for himself the impression made on him by those works, and try to reach through it a definition of the chief elements of Leonardo’s genius*” (idem).

In the course of the development of the artist in Leonardo, Pater has discovered his development from a “*cheerful objective painter*” to a painter smitten by “*love of the impossible*”, who always engaged himself in exploring the mystic beauty of nature and human being peeping deep inside. This aspect of Leonardo is associated with the anticipation of modern mechanics. Pater himself was fascinated by Leonardo’s such kind of fascination which added a special and unique sensation over his audiences and it seems all the analysis in this essay by Pater was highly influence by this personal feelings that Leonardo’s art drew on his mind.

2.5.3 Leonardo’s Turn to Nature and Human Personality

As we have already put Pater was not merely concerned with the antiquarianism and classical objectivism in Leonardo. Rather he was attracted by Leonardo’s fascination to nature and the exemplified understanding of human nature and personality in his art. In his plunging to nature he was not fascinated by the external or material aspects of nature, but rather by “*the stars as they moved in the sky, over the correspondences which exist between the different orders of living things, through which, to eyes opened, they interpret each other; and for years he seemed to those about him as one listening to a voice silent for other men*” (ibid: 96). The conflict of curiosity with beauty, which in turn creates a type of subtle and curious grace, is the most striking feature that Pater finds in Leonardo. Besides being a landscape painter Leonardo was a great portrait painter. But his portrait was characterized by the presence of “*faces of a modeling more skillful than has been seen before or since embodied with a reality which almost amounts to illusion on dark air.*” (ibid: 104) Leonardo’s understanding of human personality enabled him to depict the personality with deep and unseen traits.

Pater had talked of two parallel spirits seen in fifteenth century Renaissance: antiquarianism and modern spirit (ibid: 101). Pater’s position as we have already put it above was anti- antiquarianism. So he tried to associate Leonardo with the modernist spirit of the Renaissance

in terms of realism, “*the art of going deep*” and appeal to experiences exemplified in the works of Leonardo. Hence the purpose behind Pater’s discovery of unique features in Leonardo’s landscape and portrait painting standing in stern contrast with his predecessors and contemporaries can easily be understood.

2.5.4 Religious Aspect of Leonardo

In the discussion of the context of Walter Pater we have already discussed the religious stand points of Pater, which was greatly influenced by the Victorian skepticism. Pater’s religious skepticism was also found expression while he made commentary on the religious aspects of Leonardo. Indeed, Leonardo’s religious unorthodoxy was one of the important matters that fascinated Pater the most. The essay, in fact, started with Pater’s mixed reaction to Vasari’s views on the religious aspects of Leonardo in the first edition of the monograph. It gave Leonardo an impression of a “*bold*” speculator who hailed “*philosophy above Christianity.*” But Pater regretted that such images of boldness were omitted in the second edition making Leonardo “*fainter*” and “*more conventional.*” Pater’s use of the words *fainter* and *more conventional* with utmost dissatisfaction indicates that Pater, beyond doubt, condemned the omission of the Leonardo being represented as a liberal. This indicates that Pater didn’t have any doubt in his mind about the religious unorthodoxy of Leonardo. Here also we can observe the late-Victorian skepticism and emerging modernist sensibility during the time of Pater playing role in his understanding of Leonardo.

2.5.5 Anti- antiquarianism in Pater’s essay

In the very first essay of the anthology, Pater has clearly stated his view points on Renaissance in general. His understanding of the great movement as a complex and many sided phenomenon has led him to exclude many of the essentially associated characteristics of the same. His anti-antiquarianism is well revealed in the essay on *Aucassin and Nicolette*, where he has clearly rejected the revival of antiquity as the one and only marked feature of Renaissance: “*classical antiquity was but one element or symptom*”(ibid:2). Pater’s anti-antiquarianism has also been observed in his understanding of Leonardo, where Pater has emphasized how Leonardo has deviated himself from his contemporaries and how Leonardo had often been associated with anticipation of modern ideas: “*he seemed to his contemporaries to be*

the possessor of some unsanctified and secret wisdom; as to Michelet and others to have anticipated modern ideas.” (ibid: 91).

2.5.6 Legions of Grotesque: Pater on Mona Lisa

Pater’s view on Leonardo’s Mona Lisa has been one of the best known critiques of this great work of Leonardo. The poetic style and artistic sensibility expressed in his interpretation of Mona Lisa made it one of the representative prose pieces of the Victorian age. Pater has debunked all the then ongoing interpretations of this great work of art and tried to have a microscopic perspective of the drawing; he found in the portrait “*a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions*” (ibid:118). It made it clear that Pater was concerned with exploring Leonardo’s attempt to depict inner world of Mona Lisa. It is also known that Freud himself was influenced by Pater’s interpretation of Mona Lisa. The beauty of Mona Lisa has also been mystified by Pater by associating beauty with death and darkness. His comparison of Mona Lisa to a vampire by observing in her the “*animalism of Greece*” and the “*lust of Rome*” is stunning instance of the merger of grotesque with beauty. This diabolic approach of Pater has often been anticipated as the outbreak of the modernist sensibility..

2.5.7 Pater’s Prose Style

The poetic prose style of Pater can be extracted from the various instances in the present essay; the Mona Lisa passage is one of the stunning examples of his poetic style, which had even been converted into verse by the poet W.B. Yeats. Poetic techniques and figures were often used to draw the readers to his words; alliteration, metaphor and rhythm had been used all through the essay to draw his readers to the mystical beauty laying behind the paintings of Leonardo the great. Often diabolical and antithetical oppositions had often been created through description in order to create a sense of ambiguity. Medusa of the Uffizi is hence described as *corrupt yet exquisite*; the conflict between Leonardo’s curiosity and his desire for beauty is emphasized only to exemplify the bizarre elements in Leonardo and in his art. Sentences are often loosely arranged and grammatical and punctual deviations can often be observed. These altogether contributed to the configuration of the unique poetic style of Pater.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss how did Pater contrast the conventional ways of interpreting Leonardo and his works in the prescribed essay?
2. Do you think that Pater's understanding of Leonardo was greatly influenced by the sensibility of his time? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Can we anticipate Pater as precursors of modernist sensibility in terms of the ideas exemplified in the prescribed text? Give reasons.
4. Write a note on the prose style of Pater with reference to the prescribed text.

2.6 Summing up :

This chapter has acquainted you with the works of Walter Pater in general and the prescribed essay in particular. The textual analysis of the prescribed essay is accompanied with a critical introduction of the major prose works by Pater with special reference to the *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. This has enabled you to get familiar with the major preoccupations of the author and the age from where they emanate. The critical stand of Pater is also well exemplified in the essays included in the *Renaissance* and this chapter has discussed in details Pater's ideas about art and literature in reference to the essay being prescribed. For more on Walter Pater, you may now consult the supplementary unit.

2.7 Glossary:

Bildungsroman: A novel depicting the moral and spiritual development of its protagonist

Victorian Conflict: The conflict observed in the Victorian period between the emerging scientific sensibility and the traditional religious practices.

Condition of England Novel: A set of Victorian novels solely depicting the socio-cultural and economic conditions of the period especially the degrading condition of the working class, class-inequality, status of woman and so on and so forth.

Newgate Novel: A set of narratives published between 1820 to 1840 glamorizing the life and crimes of the protagonists who generally used to be criminals. These narratives were greatly fascinated and inspired by *Newgate Calendar*, a biography of famous criminals published during the late Eighteenth Century.

Pre-Raphaelites: A group of young British painters and poets emerged in the mid of Nineteenth century in reaction to the overwhelming emphasis on the artificial and unimaginative historical paintings of realistic school of painting. They rather pleaded for a uncomplicated and uninterrupted depiction of nature with a sense of moral seriousness and sincerity.

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UNIT 3

Walter Pater

Unit Structure :

3.1 Objectives

3.2 Approaching Walter Pater

3.3 Other Essays by Pater that you should read

3.4 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

3.5 Summing Up

3.6 References and Suggested Reading

3.1 Objectives:

In the preceding unit we have discussed the life and works of Walter Pater in general and the prescribed essay on *Leonardo da Vinci* in particular taking view on the major preoccupations in his writings. In the present unit some more critical approaches will be discussed that will enhance your understanding of Pater and his work. Some other important essays by Pater will also be discussed that in turn enables you to develop a cohesive and inclusive view regarding the critical preoccupations inherent in the works of Pater. Some probable questions on the discussed area will be discussed keeping in view of examination purpose.

3.2 Approaching Walter Pater

In the previous unit a good number of possibilities of approaching Pater and his works have been mentioned; in the present unit we will try to apprehend those approaches in an extended manner.

3.2.1 Walter Pater, the Aesthetic Critic

Victorian period in itself was a time of great transition-the sensibility of the age got well expressed in the writings of the writers belonging to the period. Especially inconsistencies in the ideas were strikingly observed characteristics of the period-the prevailing conflict between tradition and change, religion and reason and so on and so forth can be seen as the reason paving the way for such inconsistencies and contradictions. Pater's engagement with the sensibilities of his age and simultaneous reaction to many of them aptly reflect the contradictions of world views inherent to the time from where he emanate. It is observed that Pater was trying to plead a new critical standpoint rejecting the Arnoldian classicism, which is clear enough from his remark in the Preface, where Arnold's advocacy for classical objectivity has been reviewed back:

'To see the object as in itself it really is' has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly."(Studies in the History of Renaissance: viii).

The Victorian medievalism as exemplified by Carlyle and Ruskin was also severely contrasted by Pater taking the aim of developing the Aesthetic approach of criticism. The critical stand taken in the discussion of the life and work of the Renaissance aptly exemplifies the aesthetic critical approach. Pater's subjectivity, emphasis on the individuality of the artist and poets, rejection of religious orthodoxy, fascination for beauty and so on and so forth are characteristic of aesthetic criticism, of which he was the most prominent exponents.

While Arnold, the Oxford Professor, pleads for an objective view putting aside all the personal prejudices by the critics, Pater talks of the subjective view and for him the personal impression of the spectator is

of much more importance. Arnold believes that a single objective truth can be ascertained through a integrated positivist view, whereas Pater's approach opens up the possibilities of multiple, innumerable versions of truth as perception of truth of a matter is done in terms of the experiences and taste of each and every lone observer. In the prescribed essay also we observe that Pater rehearses the customary Victorian notion of Leonardo da Vinci as a great artist, who created masterpieces with unique style and so on and so forth. But at the same time his personal perception, as an independent spectator, has been given priority above all, which leads to some bizarre and strikingly radical views about the life and works of Leonardo. For example he has summarized the genius of Leonardo within two elementary forces, which can be read and related to Pater's general understanding of nature of art; he has not mentioned about the love for antiquity as the driving forces in the works of Leonardo. Instead he observes "*Curiosity and the desire of beauty — these are the two elementary forces in Leonardo's genius; curiosity often in conflict with the desire of beauty, but generating, in union with it, a type of subtle and curious grace*" (p. 102). The personal experiences and mental faculties of the artist is thus more important than any external phenomenon in configuring the genius in an artist in Pater's view. Again such kind of conclusive statement can be useful in understanding Pater's perception of Renaissance in general. The overwhelming importance generally given on the love of antiquity for defining and understanding Renaissance by Pater's contemporaries has been harshly debunked by him in order to develop a subjective point of view. In *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, Pater sets an endeavor to define or rather redefine Renaissance as a human tendency characterized by "*desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life*" rather than realizing it as a mere historical moment. Hence, Leonardo's genius is the product of his own desire of beauty and curiosity, where external forces have little to do. Association of the personal traits of the artist with his craftsmanship is characteristic feature of the Aesthetic Criticism, of which Pater himself was one of the most eminent precursors.

3.2.2 Impressionist Outlook of Walter Pater

It is not the personal experiences of the artist or author that has been associated with the work of art, but the personal impression and perspective of the spectators has also been thought as the key in

understanding and realizing sense of a particular work of art. The work of art is not a mere object, but it is “*one’s object*” as it is possessed by a single spectator in terms of a idiosyncratic associations based on his own background and thus in turn leads to innumerable versions of truth we have talked above. The present essay on Leonardo captures Pater’s personal perception of the life and works of the famous Renaissance artist and Pater in many a time overlooks the customary Victorian perception of Leonardo in particular and Renaissance in general. Pater is a lone spectator developing his understanding of Leonardo based on his own experiences and impressions. The famous comparison of Mona Lisa to Vampire, for example, is the best of these; in the portrait of Mona Lisa he observes “*the animalism of Greece and the lust of Rome*” (ibid: 70). Such kind of interpretation of Mona Lisa is obviously not in concessions with Victorian views of works of art, where beauty has been mixed up with darkness and death, but these are truth to Pater’s version of Aesthetic impression. Jeffrey Wallen observes that these recurring figure of vampires, clairvoyant, the god in exile “*all radically confuse the boundaries between historical eras and between what is living and what has passed on*” (Wallen, Jeffrey. “Alive in the Grave: Walter Pater’s *Renaissance*.” ELH 66.4(Winter 1999): 1033-51. JSTOR. Web. 12 May 2012). These all together reflects the author’s deliberate and obstinate desire to priorities his personal experiences and impressions to the taken for granted views of the matter of object under observation.

3.2.3 Art for Arts’ Sake

Pater’s stand point in terms of purpose of work of art is also in stern contrast to the contemporary Victorian moralism, which very often realized any work of art and literature with its didactic significance. Pater, on the other hand, was a stern advocate of the idea of art for arts’ sake, which always prefers to read a work of art in terms of its intrinsic values devoid of any didactic, moral, political, historical or utilitarian purpose. His essay on the poetry of William Morris entitle *Poems by William Morris* published in **Westminster Review** in the month of October, 1868 was one of the first essays in English advocating the doctrine of art for arts’ sake. Instead of reading Morris’ poetry in terms of its didactic and historical significance, Pater was much more anxious of exploring the poetic pursuits inherent in the poems that, in turn, justify their own entity. Thus Pater concludes:

“Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for arts’ sake, has most; for art comes to you

professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and for those moments' sake”

3.2.4 Pater on the Function of Criticism

The Preface to the *Studies in the History of Renaissance* is significant as it is loaded with some important critical views and observation by Walter Pater. We have already mentioned that Pater had been pleading for Aesthetic school of criticism and hence his views on the significance and functions of criticism have also been influenced by aesthetic point of view. The didactic and “*abstract morality*” has thus been replaced by personal impression of the critic in order to explore the inherent beauty underlying any work of art. The following paragraph in the Preface significantly sums up Pater’s view on the function of critic:

“....the function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and 5 noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others (XX-XXI)”

Pater was a great admirer of Charles Lamb as the critic; Lamb, in Pater’s view, tried to feel the charm in a work of art and literature and then interpret the same in order to convey it to others. Thus a good critic must interpret a work in terms of his personal impression without being influenced by any moral or utilitarian. His function must be to feel the virtue in the poets or painter then interpret and disengage the virtue and beauty in order to convey to other readers and spectators.

3.2.5 Pater’s Prose Style

Scholarly introspection and impressionist perspective are two of the most striking features of Pater’s prose. Sentences are, thus, often longish by nature. For example look at the following paragraph of the essay **Wordsworth** that is comprised of one sentence:

“Such is the figure of the more powerful and original poet, hidden away, in part, under those weaker elements in Wordsworth’s poetry, which for some minds determine their entire character; a poet somewhat bolder and more passionate poetical taste; an unimpassioned writer, you might sometimes fancy, yet thinking the chief aim, in life and art alike, to be a certain deep emotion; seeking most often the great elementary passions in lowly places; having at least this condition of all impassioned work, that he aims always at an absolute sincerity of feeling and diction, so that he is the true forerunner of the deepest and most passionate poetry of our own day; yet going back also, with something of a protest against the conventional fervor of much of the poetry popular in his own time to those older English poets, whose unconscious likeness comes out in him.”

He most of the time stays focused on the subject of discussion, but his wider range of references sometimes creates a bit obstacle. On the whole his prose style is communicative and economical to a great extent.

STOP TO CONSIDER

The above discussed critical approaches to Walter Pater apparently show Pater’s association with critical schools that are not customary during his time and among his contemporaries. The aesthetic, impressionistic school of criticism were in stern contrast with the customary Victorian approach to art and life. What was the endeavour that led Pater to deal and associate with such critical thoughts? Give some thoughts in this regard and go through the life and context of Pater in detail to find out the clues of answering out this query.

3.3 Other Essays by Pater that you should read

One of the most important essays you should go through is **Luca della Robbia**, which has also been anthologized in the *Studies in the History of Renaissance*. This is the sole essay on sculpture in this anthology. According to Pater the limitation of sculpture is that it tends towards a “*hard realism, a one sided presentment of mere form.*” The Greece sculptors were also suffered from this limitation by emphasizing

and depicting the types rather than the individual and hence all the possibilities of exemplifying the artist's own mood and individuality were minimized. In search of the resolution he drew attention to the fifteenth century Italian sculptures especially those of Tuscany represented by Luca and others, who in his opinion, achieved "a profound expressiveness" by working in low relief earth wave, the subtle dimension of the line serving as the means of overcoming the special limitation of sculpture. Such methodology allowed them to convey the artists' peculiar and inner mood rather than losing to the types:

They (the works of Luca) bear the impress of a personal quality, a profound expressiveness, what the French call intimite, by which is meant some subtler sense of originality—the seal on a man's work of 5 what is most inward and peculiar in his moods, and manner of apprehension: it is what we call expression, carried to its highest intensity of degree. (Studies: 56)

Hence Pater prioritised the individuality over the type, which is one of the characteristic features of the Impressionist school of criticism of which Pater was one of the eminent forerunners.

We have already referred to the essay *Poems by William Morris* by Walter Pater, which was actually a review of three of the major works of poetry of William Morris: *The Defence of Guenevere: and Other Poems* (1858), *The Life and Death of Jason: a Poem* (1867) and *The Earthly Paradise: a Poem* (1868). The essay was published in the October issue of Westminster Review, 1968. The essay along with Algernon Charles Swinburne's essay William Blake: A Critical Essay published in the same year i.e. 1968 was the one of the first essays in English literature advocating the doctrine of art for arts' sake. We have already talked about the tenets of the doctrine above and references have also given to understand how Pater has observed Morris' poetry in terms of its intrinsic beauty and justification overlooking all the didactic and utilitarian significance. This particular essay is also one of the important essays you can take up for reading as it will enable you to adequately understand the doctrine of art for arts' sake in close association Pater's critical approaches.

Critical appraisal of literary texts by Walter Pater was anthologized in *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style* published in the year 1889. Along with an essay on style, a good number of essays on some prominent English and French poets and writers and their works

have been collected together ranging from Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Coleridge, D.G.Rossetti to Feuillet. Pater's view on style, its significance and qualities of good styles have been expressed in the first essay of this collection namely **Style**. The essay can be realised in two constituent parts; the first part is the advocacy of the imaginative prose as "*the special art of the modern world*" and the second part comprises of the discussion of Gustave Flaubert's views on style. Pater regards imaginative prose high as it exerts all the varied charms of poetry in a much more convenient and justified way. Such kind of literature enables the author to express his own temperament and personality to the utmost extent. It is noteworthy that Pater's aesthetic critical stand has also been reflected in his views on style; he talks about three major requirements of good style-diction, design and personality. The writer must select and choose words that enable him to convey his sense of fact in an adequate manner as it occurs to him: "*he begets a vocabulary faithful to the colouring of his own spirit.*" It is because the function of style is to express the author's sense of 'fact' or his own temperament. The next required element of good style is the combination of words into an integrated and comprehensive whole, which calls for an architectural design that "*foresees the end in the beginning and never loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest, till the last sentence does but, with undiminished vigour, unfold and justify the first.*" Then comes the most important requirement of style, in Pater's words "*soul in style* that is the reflection of the personality of the author. Literary art represents *fact* associated with the soul of a specific personality, the author; personality of the author adds to the beauty and warmth in the works and therefore Pater concludes Style in fact "*is the man.*"

Pater's anti-moralist point of view has well been exemplified in his essay on **Wordsworth**, which was published initially in Fortnightly Review (April 1874) and later it as anthologized in **Appreciations**. It is noted that Pater tells us that Wordsworth's poetry doesn't belong to the office of the moralist; instead his poems give the reader a unique kind of pleasure which in turn convey an extraordinary wisdom in the matters of practice. He thus conveys the supreme significance of contemplation in the conduct of life in general. Wordsworth's turn to nature, his skill in representing sound and object of nature in a lively manners are some of the virtues that strikes Pater most.

- Now try to particularly concentrate on the works of art by Leonardo. The above mentioned modern spirit has well been observed by Pater in works of Leonardo. So he tried to associate Leonardo with the modernist spirit of the Renaissance in terms of realism, “*the art of going deep*” and appeal to experiences exemplified in the works of Leonardo. Try to explain this point with reference to Pater’s view found in the prescribed essay.

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- Let’s discuss about the strange, fascinating and mysterious elements in the art of Leonardo. Remember Pater’s famous observation on Mona Lisa for example, where beauty has been associated with death, darkness and grotesque elements. All such kind of juxtapositions make Leonardo’s work of art strange but fascinating.

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- Remember to discuss the individualistic and subjective nature of the works of Leonardo as observed by Pater in the said essay. His portraits are indicative of his fascination for beauty and his great understanding of human nature. He portraits man and matter as they appear to his personal lens.

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- The Anti- antiquarianism stand point of Leonardo has been observed by Pater. Try to discuss how Leonardo had moved from the customary norms of his time for which *“he seemed to his contemporaries to be the possessor of some unsanctified and secret wisdom; as to Michelet and others to have anticipated modern ideas.”*

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- Sum up the discussion with your personal logical observation in terms of the aspects discussed above.

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Question No 2: Discuss Pater’s observations on the religious views of Leonardo.

- Try to give a general views on the religious views of Walter Pater with reference to his life and works. It is to be remembered that Pater was criticized by many of his conservative contemporaries for the former’s advocacy for Hedonism and pagan sensibility in lieu of Christian sensibility.

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example, which was observed by Pater as merely “one taking leave of his friends” instead of Christ’s last blessings to his disciples.

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- Conclude with his final remarks and observations

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Question No 3: Discuss Walter Pater’s views on Renaissance and Renaissance art in terms of the prescribed essay.

- Highlights the Victorian customary perspective of Renaissance and to what extent Pater supports and subverts the same. Though medievalism and antiquarianism of the Victorian critics have severely been debunked by Pater. In his view antiquarianism is

only one aspect of Renaissance as Renaissance is a many sided and complex phenomenon.

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➤ Discuss Pater’s observation of Renaissances of different geographical regions. Instead of concentrating on Italy, he expanded his view to France and other region. The selection of the artists for discussion in the *Study in the History of the Renaissance* in itself is indicative of his inclusive perception of Renaissance.

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➤ Renaissance is not all about antiquarianism in Pater’s view. Love for antiquity is also associated with the modern spirit in Renaissance art. The above mentioned modern spirit has well been observed by Pater in works of Leonardo. So he tried to associate Leonardo with the modernist spirit of the Renaissance in terms of realism, “*the art of going deep*” and appeal to

experiences exemplified in the works of Leonardo. Try to explain this point with reference to Pater's view found in the prescribed essay.

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- Conclude with your personal observations

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3.5 Summing Up

Both in the present and preceding units the works and ideas of Walter Pater as a critic and man of letter have been discussed. Though the focus in kept particularly on the prescribed essay, yet a good number of other works has also been drawn with the aim of exploring the wider ranges of critical orientation of Pater. The aestheticism, impressionism and modernist spirit in Pater put him ahead of the Augustans, romantic and his Victorian contemporaries especially in terms of his critical stand. He, thus, can well be realized a great anticipator in the field of literary and

art criticism. We can't extract out a well structured critical theory from his works, but his scholarly introspections, brilliant insights and his effort to evolve critical touchstones make him a tall figure in the history of criticism.

3.6 References and Suggested Reading :

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