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ROMANTIC LITERATURE

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Romantic Literature

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INTRODUCTION

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This book will give students insight into the unique worldview of the Romantics and the Romantic era. The term *Romanticism* was coined as a retrospective analysis for the particular style in which a few poets in mid/late eighteenth-century expressed their thoughts and emotions. By and large, there are six major Romantic poets, divided into two generations. The first generation comprised Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge and the second generation comprised Keats, Shelley and Byron. Popular and revered, the Romantics wrote in a style which laid emphasis on the power of the imagination. For them reason was a constricting factor and the weariness of everyday life could be overcome by escaping into the larger forces of nature. Rebelling against the strict dictums of the preceding Age of Reason, mid/late eighteenth century saw many changes in thought, writing and style.

This book, *Romantic Literature* has been divided into fourteen units. The book has been written in keeping with the self-instructional mode or the SIM format wherein each Unit begins with an Introduction to the topic, followed by an outline of the Unit Objectives. The detailed content is then presented in a simple and organized manner, interspersed with Check Your Progress questions to test the student's understanding of the topics covered. A Summary along with a list of Key Words, set of Self-Assessment Questions and Exercises and Further Readings is provided at the end of each Unit for effective recapitulation.

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BLOCK - I
HISTORY OF ROMANTIC LITERATURE

UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO ROMANTICISM

Structure

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The 18th century had seen a bloodless revolution in England. The invention of the spinning jenny, the 'mule,' the power loom, the steam engine, the smelting of iron ore by pit coal—all hastened the growth of industrial towns and of a powerful banking system. New centres of population arose. The industrial England, aided materially by the system of laissez faire, grew wealthy. The factory system was established. Against the unspeakable misery and degradation that developed was raised a potent cry for better conditions in factory, poorhouse and prison, for more humane treatment of children, and for improved educational facilities.

While the industrial England presented its problems, agricultural England had its own. Large farms took the place of small holdings; wages were inadequate; housing conditions were bad; pauperism increased; particularly in the period following 1845, there was great distress because of unemployment, bad harvests, heavy war debt and disregard of the rights of labour. From 1784 to 1830, the Tory party was supreme. The middle classes were not enfranchised until 1832, when the Reform Bill was passed. Finally, the transition from an agricultural and commercial society to a modern, industrial one brought in its wake the evil of slums, the exploitation of the masses, and the economic fluctuations between boom and depression.

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By the beginning of the 19th century, a marked change had taken place in the intellectual life. It influenced not only literature, but also art, music and philosophy. It manifested itself not only in England but also in Germany and France. The simplicity, harmony and purity of the Augustan Age substituted the mystic and passionate, the free-spirited and capricious standards of the Middle Ages. The leading advocates of the spirit of idealism as opposed to realism were Rousseau in France, and Schelling, Schlegel and Lessing in Germany. In England, the rise of Methodism, from the teaching of John Weslely, made religion a vital personal experience, revealed its social responsibilities and became a recognized social and political factor. The literary aims and ideals of the 18th century were swept aside.

The development in all fields of literature was great–in the fields of poetry, fiction, essay and literary criticism. The English letters were characterized by an emotional and imaginative quality and by individuality in style. The pendulum swung from idealism to disillusionment; and from revolt to reaction. Influenced by the ideals of the French Revolution, a new literary movement began. This was the movement of Romanticism.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Assess the impact of the French Revolution on the Romantics
- Discuss the characteristics of the Romantic writers and poets
- Examine the social and economic background of the Romantic Period
- Analyse the general view of romantic literature

1.2 THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

The Romantic Movement is said to have begun from the date of publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). It had on it the impact of the French Revolution which took place in 1789. The Romantic Movement in literature was preceded and accompanied by the change from monarchy to democracy in politics, from materialism to idealism in philosophy, from conservatism to radicalism in culture and from orthodoxy to emancipation in religion.

Great was the development in all fields of literature, especially in poetry, fiction, essay and literary criticism. English letters were characterized by an emotional and imaginative quality as well as by individuality in style. The pendulum swung from idealism to disillusionment and from revolt to reaction. The so-called Lake School of poets expressed new theories as to the subject-matter and language of poetry, the novelists succeeded in making their works rival the popularity of poetry, the romantic essayists developed a new prose type, and the later romanticists

were poets of revolt who, unlike the Lake School, never recanted their revolutionary principles. It was an era of individualism. It was an age in which not only the watchwords of the French Revolution, namely Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, but also Democracy and Humanitarianism became the cry of the major English romanticists.

1.2.1 The Triumph of Romanticism

The Romantic era or the period of Romanticism was a literary, artistic and intellectual period that originated in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century, and was at its peak in most places from 1800 to 1850.

Social and Economic Conditions

The eighteenth century had seen a bloodless revolution in England. The invention of the spinning jenny, the 'mule', the power loom, the steam engine and the smelting of the iron ore by pit coal hastened the growth of industrial towns and a powerful banking system. New centres of population arose. Industrial England, aided materially by the system of laissez-faire, grew wealthy. The factory system was established. Against the unspeakable misery and degradation that developed was raised a potent cry for better conditions in factories, poorhouses and prisons for more humane treatment of children and improved educational facilities.

While industrial England presented its problems, agricultural England had its own. Large farms took the place of small holdings, wages were inadequate, housing conditions were bad and pauperism increased. There was great distress, particularly in the period following 1845, when there was an increase in unemployment, bad harvests, heavy war debts and disregard of the rights of labour. The Tory party was supreme from 1784 to 1830. Not until 1832, when the Reform Bill was passed, were the middle classes enfranchised. Finally, the transition from an agricultural and commercial society to modern industrialism brought in its wake the evil of slums, exploitation of the masses, and the economic fluctuations between boom and depression. These vast economic problems have not yet been decisively settled.

Perhaps the most influential interpretation of this condition can be observed in Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867-1894). It influenced not only literature but also art, music and philosophy. It manifested itself not only in England but also in Germany and France. For the simplicity, harmony and purity of the Augustan age were substituted the mystic and passionate as well as the free-spirited and capricious standards of the Middle Ages. The leading advocates of the spirit of idealism, as opposed to realism, were Rousseau in France, and Schelling, Schlegel and Lessing in Germany. In England, the rise of Methodism from the teaching of John Wesley made religion a vital personal experience, revealing its social responsibilities and becoming a recognized and political factor. The literary aims and ideals of the eighteenth century were swept aside.

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1.2.2 General View of Literature during the Romantic Period

During the latter eighteenth century, many poets, revolting against the set and formal rules of the classical tradition, turned to nature and the simple life (a movement encouraged by the doctrines of J.J. Rousseau) and to the past, particularly medieval tales and ballads. Instead of confining themselves to the Town, the anti-Popeans turned away from the metropolitan outlook and spirit towards nature and rural life. Their subject-matter became the remote and unfamiliar out-of -door aspects of the world, or human nature in terms of the brotherhood of man. They renewed the sensuous elements of love and adventure characteristic of the old Romans. English romanticism, for example, was foreshadowed in the horror tales of Mrs. Radcliffe.

In place of the precision symmetry and regularity of the Augustan school, the poets of the new school substituted a deepening sense of wonder and mystery of life. In place of the poetry of intellect, they emphasized passion and imagination. In place of the conventional diction and the classic couplet, they revived earlier verse forms, such as the Spenserian stanza and the ode, and endeavored to attain a simplification of diction. While it is true that the prevailing standards of neo-classical forms often cropped up in one way or another in the work of these poets of revolt, the subject-matter manifested a more direct break with rigid traditions. The essential ideas were a belief in the intuitive powers of imagination, in the value of the individual as opposed to group conformity and external authority, in the exaltation of rural life and external nature over urban life, of content over form, of the subjective over the objective and of the emotion and imagination over the intellect and judgment. Briefly, it was the victory of mysticism over clarity, colour over symmetry, sympathy over law, feeling over intellect and the romantic atmosphere of matter over classical precision of form.

Check Your Progress

1. When was the period of Romanticism at its peak in most places?
2. Who were the leading advocates of the spirit of idealism?

1.3 THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL: THE WRITING OF *LYRICAL BALLAD*

Lyrical Ballads was planned with Coleridge in 1797, when Wordsworth was living at Racedown with his sister. The volume appeared the following year, with four poems by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (including *The Ancient Mariner*) and nineteen by William Wordsworth. The materials of poetry can be found 'in every subject which can interest the human mind' and explained that these poems were experiments written chiefly 'to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic

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pleasure.' Thus, Wordsworth, instead of following the tradition of the conventional poetic style of using diction, thought of creating poetry out of his personal experiences and emotions. It is not that *Lyrical Ballads* was Wordsworth's first publication; he has started publishing poetry from 1793 onwards. In the year 1793, Wordsworth's first published poetry with the collections *An Evening Walk and Descriptive Sketches*. Wordsworth's *The Prelude* is usually thought to be his magnum opus which is a semiautobiographical poem of his early years. He revised and expanded The Prelude a number of times. Wordsworth was Britain's Poet Laureate from 1843 until his death in 1850.

Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*

Lyrical Ballads, published in 1798, heralded a new era in the history of English literature and with the publication of this volume of poems by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the Romantic Era begins. These two poets met in 1795 and immediately recognized each other's caliber and joined hands to create something new in the field of literature. Their wishes came true with the publication of this volume of poetry *Lyrical Ballads*, which also had a short Foreword by William Wordsworth. The Second edition of the volume came out in 1800 with a Preface by Wordsworth. In 1802, another revised edition was published which had more significant additions.

Issues

William Wordsworth in the very beginning of the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* points out four essential principles of poetry that are included in *Lyrical Ballads* and also propagates the reason for such poems:

- Themes from ordinary life;
- Expressed in the day to day language of ordinary men;
- Coloured by Imagination;
- Through and in them the universal and primary laws of human nature be brought out

In Wordsworth's language, the principal object of the poems in the *Lyrical ballads* is:

> to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature …

Thus, the Preface is an epoch-making critical writing as it marks a definite break from the earlier poetry of the eighteenth century. In the Preface, the poet-critic Wordsworth discusses several issues related to poetry, which can be categorized under the following heads:

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- Definition of Poetry
- Defining Poet
- Value of Poetry
- The nature of Poetic Diction

Wordsworth's Definition of Poetry

One of the key issues William Wordsworth deals with in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* is the notion of poetry. For Wordsworth:

> … 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. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced, that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified.

As the above quotation from the Preface suggests that emphasis of Wordsworth in composing good poetry is 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'; but at the same time the expression of the feelings is not as spontaneous as Wordsworth suggests that the poet had to think 'long and deeply' before he gives expression to his feelings.

Later in the Preface Wordsworth adds –

> I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquility 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 …

Thus, for Wordsworth, unlike the eighteenth-century poets whose emphasis is on the imitative rationalist aesthetic, poetry finds its origin from the emotions of the poet though it should have universal appeal, as that is the only way the poet can ensure that his creation is understood by his readers. Therefore, Wordsworth refers to Aristotle and says that:

> Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature.

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Thus, going along with the beliefs of the romantics, Wordsworth emphasized that the tendency of art or aesthetic object should be from the individual to the universal. 'Poetry being the image of man and nature' makes Wordsworth transcend the personal feelings in the process of creative expression to make it have an universal appeal.

Defining Poet

Identifying the key issues of good poetry, Wordsworth shifts to what the poet should be and here he identifies three key features of a poet:

1. The poet should be exceptionally sensitive 'endued with more than lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness … a more comprehensive soul than are supposed to be common among mankind.' This exceptional sensitivity of the poet makes him a perceiver who not only does feel his emotions strongly but feels for everything around him – man and nature. Thus, for Wordsworth, the poet is an extraordinary creature having the power of feeling more comprehensively than any other common human being.
2. The poet is 'a man speaking to men.' The poet's role does not stop at the power to feel enthusiastically and sensitively, but the other greater role is to express those strongly felt emotions to his readers. In other words, the poet is not merely a self-indulgent creature seeking pleasure in deep feelings but has a social responsibility. A great poet is a man of integrity who gives his readers the chance to rectify their feelings by his poetry. Therefore, Wordsworth adds, 'every great poet is a teacher. I wish either to be considered a teacher or as nothing.'
3. Wordsworth also endows the poet with a strong imaginative power – that is he has the power to perceive 'absent things as if they are present.' Romantics believe that it is through imagination that they can transcend the pains of this world and aspire for the ideal. Wordsworth, thinking along the similar line, asks the poets to be imaginative as it is this quality that distinguishes them from the commoners and makes them a poet. Percy B. Shelley significantly said 'the Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.' They are legislators as they provide the world with better or the idealistic version through their imagination; even though they live in the same world of flux, fever and fret.

The Value of Poetry

Wordsworth attaches much importance to the language of poetry as it is the medium though which the poet communicates with his readers – '… the medium through which, in poetry, the heart is to be affected, is language; a thing subject to endless fluctuations and arbitrary associations. The genius of the poet melts down to these to his purpose.' Wordsworth thought, similar to others, that language is the most significant aspect of poetry as 'language and the human mind acts and react on

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each other.' Moreover, he thinks that with the growth of science, poetry has become more crucial as 'If the labours of the man of science should ever create a material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the poet will sleep than no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of objects of science itself.' Comparing science with poetry, Wordsworth says –

> The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of Science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow- beings. The Man of Science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after." He is the rock of defence of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying every where with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time.

Check Your Progress

3. When was the *Lyrical Ballad* published?
4. What were the four essential principles of poetry pointed out by Wordsworth in *the Lyrical Ballad*?

1.4 THE CONCEPT OF NATURE, REASON AND IMAGINATION

The ideas behind the French Revolution – liberty, equality, fraternity, rights, democracy, etc. influenced the writers of the Romantic Age. The common man was the concern of the Revolution and the common man also became the concern and subject matter of poetry of the Romantic poets. The Romantic Age began with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the year 1798.

Lyrical Ballads, heralded a new era in the history of English literature. William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge met in 1795 and immediately recognized each other's calibre and joined hands to create something new in the field of literature. Their efforts were realized with the publication of the volume of poetry known as *Lyrical Ballads*, which also had a short foreword by William

Wordsworth. The second edition of the volume was published in 1800 with a preface by Wordsworth. In 1802, another revised edition was published which had more significant additions.

The literary historians are of the view that the publication of this collection of poems along with its preface heralded a new era in the history of English literature. Every age is either a reaction to the immediately earlier age or a continuation of the earlier age with subtle changes. In the case of the Romantic Age, we see, that the age was a complete reversal of the Age of Reason. The term 'romantic' does not only mean a poetic creed in English literature, it connects a highly complicated set of attitudes and beliefs as well. Romanticism was largely a reaction against the prevailing neo-classical school of writing which laid great stress on form, structure and conventions of poetic diction. Thus, opposed to classicism and its sophisticated culture; the Romantics brought with them the 'renaissance of wonder' where the natural world is revealed and vividly portrayed for the first time. This led to the idea of nature as an inspiring force, as felt by William Wordsworth and Shelley.

Wordsworth's Definition of Poetry

One of the key issues that William Wordsworth dealt with in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* is the notion of poetry. For Wordsworth, '… 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. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced, that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified'.

As the above quotation from the Preface suggests, according to Wordsworth good poetry is a 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'; but at the same time the expression of the feelings is not as spontaneous as Wordsworth suggests as the poet had to think 'long and deeply' before he gives expression to his feelings. Later in the Preface Wordsworth adds – 'I have said 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

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is carried on …'. Thus, for Wordsworth, unlike the eighteenth century poets whose emphasis was on the imitative rationalist aesthetic, although poetry is a creation of the emotions of the poet it should have universal appeal, as that is the only way the poet can ensure that his creation is understood by his readers. Wordsworth refers to Aristotle and says that, 'Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature'.

Thus, going along with the beliefs of the Romantics, Wordsworth emphasized that the tendency of art or aesthetic object should be from the individual to the universal. 'Poetry being the image of man and nature' makes Wordsworth's work transcend personal feelings in the process of creating universal appeal.

The governing thought of the Age of Reason is reason and that of eighteenth century (also termed Neo-Classical Age) literature is diction. The Romantics tried to oppose both these ideas and thus, Reason was replaced by imagination/ emotion; and diction by the language of the common man. Thus, we see a stark contrast between the eighteenth century poetry and the poems of the Romantics. The satiric tones of the poems of Pope, Dryden, Johnson, Gray can no longer be seen in the poems of the Romantics.

This change did not happen suddenly, it was a gradual process. The Pre-Romantics (Thomson, Gray and others; some literary scholars even include William Blake in the list of the Pre-Romantics) contributed towards achieving this change in English literature. Coleridge and Wordsworth, in the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads,* emphasized the aims and objectives of this new style of poetry. According to Wordsworth, 'the subject of the new poetry should be taken from the ordinary and commonplace life and coloured with imagination to make it poetic' and he stressed that poetry should be written in the language of the common man.

Characteristics of the Romantic Period

Given below is a brief description of the different characteristics of Romantic poetry. This will help make it clear how the different poets of this age tried to work with different concepts that dominated the age. Here, attention is focused more on various aspects of the romantic poetry than the lives and works of the individual poets. By discussing the different works of the period, we will get an idea as to the scope of styles covered by the Romantic poets.

(i) Imagination and Coleridge

Wordsworth in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* has talked about how imagination should be the means through which one has to colour the commonplace incidents of one's life. He spoke of poetry as a 'work of imagination and sentiment'. Keats wrote in a letter in 1819, 'I describe what I imagine'. Thus, all the Romantics were

preoccupied with imagination though it was Samuel Taylor Coleridge who tried to theoretically and critically talk about imagination in his book of criticism named *Biographia Literaria*, published in 1817. Coleridge made a distinction between fancy and imagination. He wrote:

> 'The imagination, then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I 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. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet as identical with the primary in its kind of agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; 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.
>
> Fancy, on the contrary has no other counters to play with, but with fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space …'

The primary imagination, according to Coleridge, is the only means through which the poet can transcend the worries, tensions and pains of everyday life so as to communicate with the 'infinite' or the 'divine' and get access to the ideal world of God. According to him, the only poetic means through which a poet can surpass the 'fixities and definites' of the world of fancy is primary imagination. He makes a distinction between the fanciful and the imaginative poet when he compares John Milton and Abraham Cowley, and says – 'Milton is an imaginative poet, whereas Cowley, a fanciful one'.

The poet's work however is not only that of a seer, as he gets into the mode of perceiving the supreme reality through primary imagination. His other role is that of a prophet, where his duty is to talk about the things that he has perceived in his primary imagination. So the poet now tries to concretize the perception of primary imagination through his secondary one. But as Coleridge says, it is not altogether possible to recreate the things from the primary imagination, as the secondary imagination 'dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create.' Therefore, it's never possible for any imaginative poet to be very content with the works that creates as the essence of what he had perceived through his primary imagination is gone if not fully, at least partially when he puts pen on paper.

(ii) Supernaturalism and Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), collaborated with Wordsworth in *Lyrical Ballads* and this association was immensely profitable to both. It is not easy to determine exactly how much each contributed to the *Lyrical Ballads*, but this work is without doubt a literary form whose immense significance cannot be denied. Coleridge was both a poet and a critic, but even more than these, he was a seminal literary mind, whose speculations on the nature of the imagination and its capacity for reconciling opposites in art led to fruitful new ideas about the nature of art and of artistic form. His *Biographia Literaria* (1817) does go part of the way toward the fulfilment of this task and owes its exasperating structure to Coleridge's continual

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urge to dash back to first principles before pursuing a particular argument any further. As a poet, he ranged from eighteenth century meditative verse in the Cowper tradition and odes in the manner of Gray and of Gray's disciple William Mason to the brilliant magical symbolic poetry of 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Kubla Khan,' which are 'romantic' in a sense but quite different from the romanticism of Wordsworth. Intermediate between the meditative and the magical, are poems which, though in some ways still reminiscent of Cowper, sometimes exhibit a profound kind of reflection and a more exciting linking of the movement of thought to the almost startlingly precise visual image than the eighteenth century meditative verse.

Like Wordsworth, Coleridge began as a sentimental radical, influenced both by William Godwin and by the 'associationist' psychologist David Hartley, enthusiastic about the French Revolution and disgusted by the oppressive policies of his own government. Utopian in his politics, he and Robert Southey were dejected at the prospects for good society in England and planned a Utopian settlement in America. They resolved to try 'the experiment of perfectibility on the banks of the Susquehanna.' Pantisocracy, as the plan was called, petered out, and the emigration never took place. Disillusionment with the course of the French Revolution was reflected in his poem *France: An Ode* (originally entitled 'Recantation'). Coleridge's finest poetry is either political or religious. *The Ancient Mariner*, which he contributed to *Lyrical Ballads* and which he later revised to eliminate the cruelty antique spellings as well as to improve it in other ways, such as by the addition of the fascinating prose 'argument,' does not deal directly with any of his major interests at the time of composition. Drawing (as Livingstone Lowes' classic work has shown) on a great variety of reading, not of course always consciously, and stimulated by the revived interest in the ballads, he produced a haunting narrative poem of symbolic adventure.

The Ancient Mariner opens with a ballad-like directness to introduce the Mariner himself – a figure who combines suggestions of Cain and of the Wandering Jew - buttonholing a wedding guest and keeping him from joining the wedding feast by the strange and gripping tale he tells. The Mariner's narrative begins with cheerfulness, sociability and normality:

> The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
> Merrily did we drop
> Below the kirk, below the hill,
> Below the lighthouse top.

But as the narrative proceeds the events become stranger and the tone becomes both ominous and exciting. Like the frozen world of art itself, the 'cold pastoral' of Keats' *Byzantium* – the albatross appears and follows the ship, a bird of good omen. But the Mariner shoots and bird and from that point on his ship is cursed. His sailors start dying as they do not have a drop of water to drink and the Mariner repents his cruel deed. The Mariner recognizes the oneness of creation and makes amends for his wanton destruction of the albatross. The Mariner is able to sleep

again; he dreams of rain 'And when I awoke, it rained.' The ship's crew, whose bodies are now filled with angelic spirits, rise and man the ship. It is an eerie and wholly unnatural situation, with dead men working with the living Mariner, and the unnaturalness of it is emphasized thus:

> The body of my brother's son
> Stood by me, knee to knee
> The body and I pulled at one rope,
> But he said bought to me.

It is clear that the Mariner's killing of the albatross violated a fundamental principle in nature, and he had to pay for it.

(iii) Search for Utopia and John Keats and P. B. Shelley

Utopia is considered the ideal – whether it is Ideal Beauty or the Absolute Truth. Throughout the Romantic Age, most of the Romantic poets were in search of the ideal world. P. B. Shelley wrote that 'the poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.' They are legislators because they are always unhappy with the present state of affairs and try to convey a better version of the world to the readers. But the problem is that, at no point of time are they accepted as the people who can make rational choices and decisions. From the classical Greek times of Plato, it has always been maintained that poetry waters the emotional self of a human being. The rational faculty or Reason is not used at all in the creating or the reading of poems. Reason is always given preference in different ages according to the dominant theme of the day. We have already seen that eighteenth century thought very little about emotional or imaginative writing and was mainly concerned with Reason. Romanticism is a revolt against this notion of the world which proclaims that the world should be governed by Reason. Marilyn Butler writes:

> 'Romantic artist's conception of Himself as a certain kind of Producer. Romanticism inflates the role of the artist, for it is expressive where neoclassicism is mimetic; it is hostile to external authority, and acknowledges no imperatives other than truth to the artist's experience.'

Or as Rene Wellek says:

> 'They all (the Romantic poets) see the implication of imagination, symbol, myth and organic nature, and see it as part of the great endeavor to overcome the split between the subject and object, the self and the world, the conscious and the unconscious. That is the central creed of the great Romantic poets in England, Germany and France. It is a closely coherent body of thought and feeling.'

The Romantic poets are all rebels as Marilyn butler's book *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* portrays. We see Satan becoming the hero of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Blake writes – 'Milton is with devil's party without knowing it.' Satan, Prometheus – all the rebellious characters of western mythology became heroes of the age which revolted against God. We see P. B. Shelley championing the spirit of Prometheus in *Prometheus Unbound*. Thus, the celebration of the individual is one of the dominant themes of the age. But more important than that

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is the rebellious temperament of theirs. We have already talked about how Wordsworth and Coleridge revolted against the rational spirit, classicism, and diction of eighteenth century writing. The French Revolution (1789) has much to do in building up the Romantic poet's revolutionary fervour. We see William Blake talking about the high expectations from the French Revolution in his 'Songs of Experience', and then dealing with the feelings of disappointment in the 'Songs of Innocence'.

The main tenets of the French Revolution (as mentioned earlier) were that of liberty, equality and fraternity. Rousseau, Voltaire and other writers from the Pre French Revolution period sowed the ideas of the rights of the common man, and made the French aware of their need to overthrow the monarchical form of government, to fight against the oppressive and suppressive authorities. The Romantic poets were influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution and their revolutionary spirit was depicted in their writing. This was the reason the mythical rebellious figures of the European civilization were championed by the Romantic poets. Promethean spirit is celebrated in P. B. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* has as its subtitle, 'The Modern Prometheus'. We also see Milton's Satan becoming a hero of *Paradise Lost* in the Romantic age. These anti-heroes are definitely the product of the French Revolution.

Referring to the French Revolution, William Wordsworth wrote:

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive
>
> But to be young was very heaven.

Thus, the French Revolution was for the Romantics, one of the most inspiring events to shape their worlds. P. B. Shelley in '*Ode to the West Wind*' tries to celebrate the rebellious spirit of the poet when he personifies that spirit in the nature of the West Wind. Donald H. Reiman says, 'the ode embodies the conflicting themes of the poet's personal despair and his hopes for social renewal in the images drawn from the seasonal cycle.' The West Wind is the wind of the spring, as well as the autumn. In the autumn, the West Wind is a destroyer, and in the spring it's a preserver. According to Shelley,

> Wild spirit, which art moving everywhere;
>
> Destroyer and Preserver;

West Wind is the 'breath of autumn's being' which leaves its unseen presence in dead leaves and 'pestilence stricken multitudes' and becomes the 'living hues' of the 'dreaming earth' in the spring. The West Wind is portrayed as the spirit of revolution which destroys the old order and invites the new order to settle itself in a new form to make Society worth living. According to Pirie, 'it is a political poem in the sense that all Shelley's poems are seeking a better world, a new life to replace the old systems and old corruptions. The wind of autumn is a perfect symbol of a moving and cleansing power, evident in natural world of what was so poignantly missing in the human'.

Some critics also see the West Wind as the poetic inspiration that makes the poet create new poetry. According to Scrivener, '… in the ode, Shelley offers himself as a fiery inspiration … inspiration entails destruction of the poet's merely human self so that in "Ode to the West Wind" he becomes a fine apocalypse and in "To a Skylark" he achieves Madness'. Therefore at the end of the poem the poet does not want to be like the West Wind, instead he asks the West Wind to be a part of him,

Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

Be through my lips to unawakened earth.

Thus the West Wind is nothing but the metaphor for poetic inspiration that can change the poet's view of the world. 'If winter comes, can spring be far behind?' the optimistic note advises not to be sad about the destruction and consequent chaos as from within the chaos a new order will arrive. The message that the poet wants to provide his readers is that the destruction of the present disorder is necessary to bring about the birth of a new ideal order. In this process the West Wind is nothing but an instrument of change which makes it possible to relocate the 'winged seeds' in the spring to give birth to new plants which will make the greenery comes back again. Thus for Shelley, the West Wind represents that rebellious power which can bring about a change to end the suffering of the human race, and which can help in the destruction of the obsolete, unwanted, dead institutions and beliefs in order to regenerate the world.

Similarly in *Ode to Liberty*, P. B. Shelley makes a scathing attack on the despotic rulers and also on the priests,

Like one fierce could over the waste of waves

Hung tyranny; beneath, sate deified

The sister – pest, congregation of slaves.

Shelley refers to the tyrannical ruler as 'one fierce could' that has overshadowed the human element; and also refers to the priests as 'the sister pest' who helped the rulers in carrying out the oppression of the common man. The institution of the king as the divine ruler and the priest as the divine son is being attacked here so as to make the readers realize the falsity of the whole argument of the divine rights of kings and priests.

In the next part of the poem Shelley goes on to praise the Classical Age in Athens and Rome, by praising their love for freedom, as he writes:

One sun illuminates heaven; one spirit vast

With life and love makes chaos ever new.

As Athens doth, the world with thy delight renew.

The poet goes on to praise Saxons Alfred and Luther for their liberating spirit which helped humanity renew their hope in the concept of liberty which meant a desolation for the destroyer and a renewed hope for men.

Men started, staggering with glad surprise,

Under lightings of thine unfamiliar eyes.

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Thus the poet throughout the poem tries to suggest that only with the end of the monarchy will the ideal be reached, where everyone would be happy forever. The search for the ideal, as mentioned earlier, is one of the key characteristics of the Romantic Age. Keats and Coleridge also tried to search for the utopian state through their poetry. In *Ode to Liberty*, Shelley talks about an ideal world which can only be achieved in the post – Monarchical era.

Poet then turns to England and says:

England yet sleeps: Was she not called of old?

Spain calls her now, as with its thrilling thunder …

To the eternal years enthroned before us

In the dim West; impress us from a seal

All ye have thought and done! Time cannot dare conceal.

This refers to the Spanish revolution which evokes in the poet the love for the Spanish ideal of achieving liberty. The poem *Ode to Liberty* starts with the celebration of the Spanish revolution. In the thirteenth stanza Shelley makes an appeal to England and its inhabitants to come up to the ideals of Spain and fight the system of Monarchy that exists in Britain.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth stanzas, Shelley again launches a vehement attack against the king and the priest respectively and in the seventeenth stanza goes on to describe the role of man in such a state.

Checks the great Mother stooping to caress her,

And cries: Give me, thy child, dominion

Over all height and depth?

Shelley is of the opinion that the concept of Liberty should emerge from man's mind and heart:

Come thou, but lead out of the inmost cave

Of man's deep spirit, as the morning star

Beckons the sun from the Eoan wave,

Wisdom.

The day people will get wise, they will break all barriers to remove monarchy and oppression from this world and harmony will be achieved,

By blood or tears, have not the wise and free

Wept tears, and blood like tears? – The solemn harmony.

The poet, thus through *Ode to Liberty* tries to evoke the feeling of harmony that can be achieved if the oppressing rulers and priests are overthrown from their thrones. The harmony is the ideal that the poet wants to achieve in this world. But he cannot do this alone, so he appeals to his readers to also strive for harmony so that the world becomes a nicer place to live in.

This search for the ideal/Utopia is also the main theme of Keats' odes. In one of his letters to his brother, George, Keats wrote – 'I am straining at the particles of light in the midst of darkness …'. This line from his letters aptly serves to describe the theme of Keats' poetry. Where Wordsworth and Shelley saw nature as an Inspiring force, the Keatsian concept was that 'scenery is fine, but human nature is finer.' Keats' work showed a little romantic taste which showed in his awe-inspiring manifestations of nature. The distinct quality of individualism of the solitary artist at odds with society, was however very much a part of Keats' sensibility. From this isolation Keats won a vision of life which embodied a negative capability:

Where a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.

Unlike the impassioned self-projection and self-dramatization of Byron and Shelley, Keats strove to objectify his emotions and feelings into a universal form. He believed that man possesses an inherent power by which he can conquer his self-regarding instincts and attain the heights of selflessness. Keats' poetic world not only comprised the 'imagined' but also the far off, remote world of myth and legend, feelings and intuitions, which are the pure activities of the imagination. For Keats, Greek paganism held strange and necessary elements of experience, as he said in a letter to B. Barton – 'What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth'. Keats' early works exhibit a progressive adaptation of myth topped with humanitarian symbolism and while Keats initially found in classical mythology a satisfying system of values, he soon came to realize its insufficiency. The realization, which probably is marked in the third book of *Endymion*, was no doubt painful, but it also led him to search for new systems of thought. And it is this sense of urgency that makes Keats' poems and letters so moving a record.

In the great Odes, Keats realizes his visions of beauty and truth are transitory moments which he must strive to experience to the fullest. Most of his odes have a close connection of thought and sequence of mood. E de Selincourt finds the odes bound together only by a similar chain of thought and a unity of feeling. They not only sum up Keatsian attitude to life, but are the expressions, in varying keys of emotions, of a mind which had loved the principle of beauty in all things. Wilson Knight too, suggests that Keats achieved a kind of resolution in the odes.

The *Ode on Indolence* portrays a mood which is the embryo of 'melancholy'; *Ode To Psyche* personifies the deity – 'the winged psyche' – with beauty, which is one of the forms which dwells with melancholy. *Ode on Melancholy* displays the growth; intensity and climax of the mood revealed in the earlier two odes. *Ode to a Nightingale* and *Ode on a Grecian Urn* centre on natural objects of unusual beauty and significance and the poet in their presence becomes oblivious of the outside world and loses himself in contemplation. He tries to search within himself in order to lift himself above the world of flux, but in the end realizes that these moments in which one enters 'onto a sort of oneness' and becomes a 'floating

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spirit' are brief. Thus, emerges the painful contrast of flux and stability as the poet is compelled to return to this world of pain and sorrow. On the other hand, Keats believed that maturity comes with the acceptance of pain and suffering as he continually grappled with various approaches to meet the challenge of human suffering. But, if pain is inescapable in human destiny, this pain must be meaningful and absolute joy cannot be experienced without intense agony. While searching for a positive aspect to pain, Keats affirmed in a beautifully written letter that pain heightens consciousness and in the process liberates the mind from the bondage of experience.

The characteristic use of 'rich' in the phrase 'seems it rich to die' meaning pleasant or precious, is used in *Ode To Melancholy* – 'if thy mistress some rich anger shows.' We can take the poem as an imaginative piece of complexity and intensity of human experience, as it is evident from the last stanza of *Ode to Melancholy*:

She dwells with Beauty – Beauty that must die;
And joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veiled Melancholy has her Sovran shrine
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

The finiteness, mortality and flux are what pains the poet's self throughout his poetic journey in the odes. *Ode To A Nightingale* therefore begins on a similar note where we see a sad poet trying to make use of 'hemlock' and 'blushful Hippocrene' to forget the pains and sufferings of this world:

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains

Keats goes on to enumerate the things that we want to get away from and he lists the causes of woe:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;

Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,

Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Thus the poet in *Ode to a Nightingale* tries to fade far away from the world of woes to the word of the 'immortal Bird', the nightingale with the help of the 'view less wings of Poesy'. But we find that the poetic journey of Keats ends in a failure as he finds faults even with the world of the nightingale which he had earlier thought to be the perfect world, as his sense of sight was lost as soon as he reached the nightingale's world:

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I cannot see what flowers are at my feet.

Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,

But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet

Wherewith the seasonable month endows.

In this seemingly perfect world of the nightingale, the poet is still 'half in love with the easeful death' though when he thinks of death as the balm to the poet's sad self he realizes that this song of the nightingale will then turn into a 'requiem'. He understands that though he, the poet, may die but this bird will carry on singing to 'hungry generations' and would carry on charming 'magic casements'. So the song which till now was the song of the infinite suddenly becomes a 'plaintive anthem' for the poet and he writes:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music: do I wake or sleep?

Keats also tried to encapsulate the ideal world in *Ode to a Grecian Urn* where he talks about the 'unravished bride of quietness' who is also the 'foster child of silence and slow time.' But while the poet is trying to locate the ideal world in the Grecian urn, he also finds some fault there as it's a 'cold pastoral':

Fair youth, beneath the tress, thou canst not leave

Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;

Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,

Though winning near the goal, yet, do not grieve:

She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,

For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair.

The lover and his beloved are immortal creatures, their love and beauty cannot be changed by the tyrannical touch of time as they are the 'foster child of silence and slow time.' But still they lack the warmth and the bliss of their first kiss. The lover will forever be running after his beloved but never be able to get near her. Therefore, we see that though the poet in the beginning of the poem praises the Grecian urn, as he approaches the end he gets dissatisfied with the whole atmosphere and setting of the urn and comes up with a philosophical statement:

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all

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

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It's not clear in the poem who is making this statement and for whom. It can be the poet saying it to his readers, it can be poet saying it to the urn, or it can also be that the urn is saying this to the poet. Whatever it is, this statement cannot be for the readers, as they need to worry about many a thing as the poetic truth is not the only truth for the readers. Therefore Keats goes into another poetic journey in *Ode to Autumn*, the final one in his series of odes, where he tries to locate the ideal world in the seasonal circle.

In *Ode to Autumn* Keats attempts to celebrate the maturity of life, as in this maturity he tries to find the ideal. As one continues in the process of life one reaches a state of ripeness where we understand the essence of life. Keats therefore celebrates autumn whereas other poets before Keats have always seen autumn to be a season of death and desolation as it is followed by winter. We have already seen Shelley trying to focus his poetic sensibility towards spring as he writes in the *Ode to the West Wind*:

> If winter comes, can Spring be far behind

Keats lacks the youthful vigour that we see in Shelley, as for Keats maturity is everything. In *Ode to Autumn*, he tries to celebrate what Shakespeare does in King Lear – 'ripeness.' In the first stanza of the poem, Keats celebrates the maturity and ripeness of autumn:

> Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
> Close bosom-friend off the maturing sun,
> Conspiring with him how to load and bless
> With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
> To bend with apples the mossed cottage-tress,
> And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
> To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
> With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
> And still more, later flowers for the bees,
> Until they think warm days will never cease,
> For summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

In the second stanza the poet goes on to talk about the human activities that take place in autumn – reaping, gleaning, winnowing and making cider. In all the four cases there is a sense of satisfaction. This sense of accomplishment becomes more pronounced when the 'fume of poppies' makes the people drowsy. In the third stanza, Keats tries to talk about the song of autumn and enumerates the sounds of nature::

> In a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
> Among the river swallows, borne aloft
> Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
> And full-grown lambs bleat from the hilly bourn;

Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

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Thus, Keats celebrates the ideal in the seasonal circle and looks for the ideal in the life of human beings. In that sense Keats is one of the most successful poet of the Romantic Age who is able to concretize the notion of the ideal for his readers. Where the other poets suffered from romantic agony, as Keats suffered in the earlier odes, but in the end Keats achieved the concretization of the ideal through negative capability.

Keats is also famous for his long poems. Keats' first long poem, *Endymion* (written in 1817 and published the following year), is full of undisciplined luxuriance, of sensation introduced for its own sake, so that the story – the Greek myth of the shepherd of Mount Latmos who was loved by the Moon – is lost in the abundance of contrived settings through which he takes his hero. Each setting is an excuse for Keats to exercise his rich descriptive power rather than playing a part to add to the development of the story or the enrichment of its meaning.

Hyperion, which followed, shows the influence of Milton in its relatively weighty and sonorous blank verse, a new style for Keats. As in *Endymion*, the theme was taken from Greek mythology, and again Keats endeavoured to put profound allegorical meaning into the story. Keats left it unfinished, and later produced a revised version, 'The Fall of Hyperion'. Here, the style is less obviously Miltonic and a deliberately discursive and philosophic note is introduced; but this, too, he left unfinished, being unsatisfied with the results of Milton's influence on him.

Both are remarkable poems, in which the story of the overthrow of the Titans by the new order of gods is treated both with imaginative particularization of setting and incident and with symbolic implications of the nature of poetry and the development of the poetic character.

The Eve of St. Agnes, written early in 1819, Keats' *annus mirabilis*, is not only Keats' greatest narrative poem, but one in which those aspects of his art which are conventionally called 'romantic' are most perfectly illustrated. Written in Spenserian stanzas, it is not Spenserian in movement, though it has something of Spenser's use of colour and imagery. Keats in his '*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*' develops the folk theme of the beautiful but evil lady into an uncannily powerful expression of a sense of loss, mystery, and terror. Art and death are both escapes from time and change, and the relation between art, death and life is the true theme of the poem, as it is of the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' which considers the arresting of life by art as both profit and loss – it represents the escape from change and decay into eternity, but at the expense of eternal unfulfilment: the 'unravished bride' remains forever between the wedding ceremony and the bridal bed, as it were.

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(iv) The Concern with Nature and Wordsworth

William Wordsworth (1770 –1850) brought a completely new approach to the writing of English poetry. His objections to an over-stylized poetic diction, his attitude to nature, his choice of simple incidents and humble people as subjects for his poetry – were not only well-known characteristics of his art but minor aspects of his revolutionary achievement. Poetry for him was primarily the record of a certain kind of state of mind, and the value of poetry for him lay in the value of the state of mind in which the poem was recorded. In his famous Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) Wordsworth proceeded to define poetry by first addressing 'What is a Poet?' A poet for Wordsworth was a man of unusual emotional vitality whose perceptions of his fellow men and of the world of external nature yielded intuitions of the relation of one to the other and of the psychological and moral truths underlying all existence. The process was not instantaneous; the high moments of perception yielded an emotion, which on later recollection produced an awareness of its human and universal significance. The starting point was the poet's special kind of perception, which differed in degree rather than in kind from that of ordinary men, but of course this difference of degree was of prime importance; the end product was a record of the implications of this perception.

This is not to say that Wordsworth was uninfluenced by the philosophical, social and political forces of his time. His views were in fact very influenced by the contemporary situation. The French Revolution and the social and political thought which proceeded and followed it; the eighteenth century development of the psychological views implicit in Locke's view of perception and knowledge, the rational and humanitarian principles of the Enlightenment, his own simple and democratic upbringing in the elemental countryside of the Lake District – these were all important factors in the development of Wordworth's view of poetry. His walking tour of France and Switzerland in 1790 and his extended visit to France in 1792 had brought him into personal contact with the French Revolution and he welcomed the idea of overthrowing of corrupt and tyrannical monarchy. His first poem of any length, *An Evening Walk* (1793), shows the influence of the French poets Rosset, Roucher, and Delille, who described the agricultural scene with anti-aristocratic feeling, and of Saint Lambert, whose poem on the seasons (1769) emphasized the place of agriculture in the life of the nation. *An Evening Walk* also shows the influence of the eighteenth century English topographical poem, with its meditative mood and moralizing digressions, and of eighteenth century views of the picturesque. The verse form is the heroic couplet for the most part; the vocabulary is indistinguishable from that of any late eighteenth century minor poet. The scene is composite and idealized, though it is based on his native Lakes. 'Descriptive Sketches', also published in 1793, is another work written in the conventional style of the time, though it shows a more direct influence of his French experience. It is a travel poem, dealing with his alpine tour of 1790, but its main purpose is to show the free, simple, and happy life of the Swiss peasantry, who

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lived uncorrupted and independent in their mountain home. Wordsworth drew heavily on a translation and amplification of William Coxe's *Sketches of the Natural, Civil, and Political State of Switzerland* (1779). As a result, *Descriptive Sketches*, written in heroic couplets, shows no real originality of conception or treatment. William Godwin's rational scorn for fundamental human relationships was also a major influence and was the cause of Wordsworth entering a period of despair and confusion from which he was rescued by his sister Dorothy and his friend Coleridge.

Lyrical Ballads were thought of with Coleridge in 1797, when Wordsworth was living at Racedown with his sister. The volume appeared the following year, with four poems by Coleridge (including 'The Ancient Mariner') and nineteen by Wordsworth. The themes of these poems were taken from 'every subject which could be of interest to the human mind and it was explained that these poems were experiments written chiefly 'to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure'. The real purpose behind these poems is that Wordsworth wanted a minimum of stylization because he was not working in any poetic tradition but kindling poetry from naked experience, as it were. This is always a dangerous thing to do, for there is no conventional poetic effect to fall back on if the inspiration falls flat. Wordsworth's task was not simply to describe the thing seen or the incident encountered or heard of, still less to render these things in a conventional poetic medium. He had to put it across with such naked force that the poet's feeling about the incident or object and his sense of its importance, was immediately clear to the reader. Wordsworth was not a dramatic poet; his vein was what Keats called the 'egotistical sublime'. His greatest poems are those where autobiography, perception and narrative are woven seamlessly into one texture.

Lyrical Ballads has been considered to mark the true beginning of the Romantic Movement, and in so far as it contained Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* it is indeed important in marking a significant development of the use of the supernatural in poetry. While his interest in the ballads, generally taken as a Romantic characteristic, was quite different from the kind of interest shown by, say, Walter Scott, he rarely did well in the ballad form. The true ballad is above all things dramatic; it tells its story without any suggestion of the poet's sense of its significance. Wordsworth, was really more at home with a more highly charged kind of verse. In *The Thorn* he spoke through the retired captain of a small trading vessel. But we cannot take this very seriously, and in so far as the poem does seem to be spoken by such a character there is an unsatisfactory casualness in the narrative. *Simon Lee*, again, is unsuccessful partly because the poet plays the part of the observer and narrator and these two roles should be kept separate. Also, Wordsworth's ear never seemed to have told him that certain double rhymes in English are, as W.S. Gilbert was to realize, irrepressibly comic. *The Idiot Boy* is a poem of strange power deriving from Wordsworth's ability to show the fascinating aspects of commonplace incidents. The poet's humane curiosity shines through in

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the careful precision with which the actions are handled, in the clearly etched imagery and carefully chosen details.

Tintern Abbey is, of course, the star of the 1798 volume, and it shows how Wordsworth developed out of eighteenth century meditative verse a richer and more personal idiom, appropriate to a poetry which linked reflection to sensation in a new, organic way. The poem is important as it is one of the most succinct accounts of the development of Wordsworth's attitude to nature - moving from the animal pleasure of childhood through adolescent passion for the wild and gloomy to adult awareness of the relation of our perception of the natural world to our sense of the human and moral world. The poetic interest of this work however, lies in its brilliant combination of the lyric and the meditative, the exaltation of reminiscence into poetry through the proper handling of 'relationship and love'. The visual scene, and emotion, the memories, the moral ideas, the benedictory attitude towards his sister, are all bound together with that special kind of Wordsworthian relevance that enabled him, in *The Prelude*, to write the only successful long autobiographical poem in the English language.

In 1800, Wordsworth wrote the famous Preface in which he expressed his view of the nature of the poetic process, the origin and purpose of poetry, and the language most suitable for it. The poet's record of his moments of perception and emotion should give pleasure to the reader, a point on which Wordsworth insists. Joy for him was the central principle of the universe and the appreciation of nature was bound to be a pleasurable experience. The poet is 'the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love'. 'Relationship and Love,' like 'joy,' are key words and key concepts for Wordsworth.

In the best poetry of his prime e.g. *Michael*, *Resolution and Independence*, the Lucy poems, *The Old Cumberland Beggar* amongst others – he gives a clear account of his experiences in an idiom of extraordinary freshness that combines quiet precision with poetic suggestiveness. Purity and power are the qualities of Wordsworth's most individual poem, and the power can be either of the massive, elemental kind that we find in *Michael* or something less obvious and made up of many instances of uncannily precise recording, where the clarity of perception of imagination gives the poem an atmosphere of almost trance-like lucidity. This clarity of vision can be found, in different ways, in the Lucy poems and in *The Idiot Boy* and *Peter Bell*. In sonnets such as '*Upon Westminster Bridge*', '*Daffodils*' and '*The Solitary Reaper'*, he mentions poetry as being 'emotion recollected in tranquility,' and he shows to perfection his gift for giving poetic effect to the emotionally charged recall of luminous perception.

In the '*Immortality Ode*' Wordsworth gave his most complete account of the balance sheet of maturity as he saw it. In this poem, whose very fabric is remembered perception giving way to reflection, he charts the course of the developing sensibility, much as he did in '*Tintern Abbey*' though in much greater detail. The naïve freshness of the child's awareness gives way to the more sober

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vision of the man; mediated by love, the child's perceptions in a strange world take on a meaning which, as he grows up, finally emerges as the recognition of profound human significance in nature. The poet is only born when the child's bliss gives way to the man's more sober but more profound sensibility, which works through 'relationship and love' rather than through mere animal sensation.

The poem in which Wordsworth could most fully and adequately exploit his gift for the 'egotistical sublime' was *The Prelude*, a long autobiographical account of his own development. The first version – a truer and fresher though often more unequal account of the poet's development up to this time - was completed in 1805, but Wordsworth kept tinkering with it throughout his life, not only to improve crudities of expression but also to remove some of the more startling unorthodoxy of his earlier position. It was first published, in its final form, posthumously in 1850, having been originally intended as an early part of or a preliminary poem to '*The Recluse*', 'a philosophical poem containing views of Man, Nature, and Society … having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement'. '*The Recluse*' remained an unfulfilled ambition. Only '*The Excursion*', representing a small part of the total scheme, was written. But what '*The Recluse*' lost, 'The Prelude' gained. This kind of retrospective narrative poetry was particularly suited to Wordsworth's genius; when he tried narrative of any length without the personal element, the result, though interesting and sometimes impressive in its own way, was of a lower order of poetic achievement. '*The White Doe of Rylstone*,' a narrative poem in seven parts, written in 1807, possesses imaginative vigour and shows there is need of a moral imagination; but there are some lapses of style, and there is a sentimental rhetorical strain running through the poem, the moral meaning being achieved more through this style than in Wordsworth's characteristic and greatest efforts. The poem is by no means a failure, and some critics have even considered it to be one of Wordsworth's greatest; but, while Wordsworthian in feeling, it is not truly Wordsworthian in treatment. One sees the transition, perhaps, in the 'Ode to Duty', written in 1805 and first published in 1807, which both in theme and treatment shows Wordsworth moving away from his characteristic dependence on perception and its poetic consequences. In later works such as the '*Ecclesiastical Sonnets'*, written in 1821, we see the moral-rhetorical Wordsworth at his best; in '*Mutability'* and the sonnets on King's College Chapel, he achieves a noble eloquence.

No English poet depended more on inspiration than Wordsworth; he had no apparatus for writing his special kind of poetry when the grand primary inspiration failed. The opening of 'The Idiot Boy,' with its extraordinary clarity and immediacy, illustrates one kind of Wordsworthian effectiveness. Wordsworth's most sustained effort in this style is 'Peter Bell,' the story of how an odd adventure with a faithful donkey and its drowned master awoke in the heart of a coarse and insensitive hawker feelings for the sacredness of human emotions. The humorous introduction is hardly successful, but the tale itself is told with a stark particularization which achieves an almost trance-like clarity and compels the reader into paying attention

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to the precise nature and meaning of the strange things that befall Peter. The poem is both ordinary and strange; both commonplace and fantastic. The combination can be regarded as ludicrous, and is – the quiet intentness with which the whole action is realized redeems the poem and gives it its uncanny fascination.

The style of '*Michael'* is very different, and its simplicity is of a different kind. A somewhat similar effect is achieved in '*The Old Cumberland Beggar*,' though here the moral is expressed more obviously. In '*Resolution and Independence*' there is again a combination, often an alternating between moral generalizations about life and a narrative of the particular incident which prompted and illustrates the generalization. But here the use of the rhyme royal stanza enables Wordsworth to make each significant moment in the development of the moral situation special.

'*Tintern Abbey*' is really a different sort of poem from any of those just discussed. There is a confessional element here, with the threads of the author's autobiography converging through his contemplation of a particular scene in the company of his sister. This gives a pulse that throbs through the verse suggesting control of an emotion, which is only just under control, only just mastered and understood. 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' has a restrained eloquence. 'The Solitary Reaper' does something similar in a more subdued and melodious manner. There is yet another kind of Wordsworthian simplicity, related to some of those just discussed yet distinctive. It represents something he was often moving toward but rarely attained absolutely.

(v) The Concern with Innocence and William Blake

William Blake (1757-1827) broke away deliberately and violently from the cultural pattern of his age and turned to the occult tradition (or traditions) in European thought. Blake himself was a visionary whose ideas often came to him in the form of clearly visualized encounters with angels, prophets, or other symbolic characters. Except for this first volume of poems, *Poetical Sketches*, Blake's poems and prophetic books were etched by himself on copper plates, with decorative designs. He was an engraver by profession, and his work as a poet and prophet was little known in his lifetime.

Blake's earliest poetry shows the influence of his reading of the lyrics of Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton and other eighteenth century imitators of older styles. The Bible, *Ossian*, as well as works by other mystical writers of the times, also contributed to his style. *Poetical Sketches* (1783) has an Elizabethan freshness as well as some obvious signs of imitativeness. It is the lyric touch that is most impressive in this volume. The influence of specific Shakespearean lyrics is almost too obvious – 'Memory, hither come, / And tune your merry notes,' or 'When silver snow decks Susan's clothes, /And jewel hangs at th' shepherd's nose' – and there are ballad imitations, Elizabethan dramatic fragments, an imitation of Spenser, meditations in a rhetorical prose which shows Ossianic influence, and invocations to each of the four seasons which show a rich pictorial sense like Keats'.

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'Songs of Innocence' and 'Songs of Experience', etched between 1789 and 1794, 'showing the two contrary states of the human soul,' are more characteristic of his style and more original. The freshness and purity of the lyrics of the former group, which deal with childhood as the symbol of an untarnished innocence which ought to be, but which in modern civilization cannot be part of the adult response to the world, show a poetic imagination at once more direct and more visionary than that of the Elizabethan lyrists who influenced his earliest poetry. The introductory poems such as, '*Piping down the valleys wild*', '*Nurse's Song*,' '*Holy Thursday*,' the well-known '*Little Lamb*, *who made thee*?' have a childlike directness and a sense of controlled joy. There are none of the signs of poetry being written for children or the poet playing at being a child that so much deliberately simple poetry shows. There is an intensity, a distilled quality about them which derives from the prophetic and visionary Blake. The touch of moral primness in such lines as:

> Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm,
>
> So if all do their duty they need not fear harm

represents neither facile optimism nor smugness, but a half-ironic, half-yearning vision of a world where, unlike this one, all men behave, as Blake would have them behave. There is a biblical vision, too, of the whole creation at peace.

'Without contraries is no progression,' wrote Blake in 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell', and his 'Songs of Experience' does not simply represent the corruption of innocence by the immoral forces of society, but shows the inevitable distortion and sadness which systematized empirical philosophy imposes on life. Everyone must travel on this road and suffer the hardships along the way as at the end of it is where ultimate wisdom lies. The true vision cannot come to the innocent, for innocence by its very nature is easily led astray, nor can it come to those who simply accept the distortions of experience; those distortions must be known and transcended. There is, that is today, no road block to innocence, only a road forward through experience to a comprehensive vision. Nevertheless, '*Songs of Experience*' are clearly the product of disillusion, however temporary, and present an overwhelmingly sad picture of what man has become as a result of the action of other men. '*The Clod and the Pebble*' sums up much of the collection. The '*Nurse's Song*' in '*Songs of Experience*' is an even more direct counterpart to the poem of the same title in '*Songs of Innocence*'. Blake's own ideas appear more strikingly in '*Songs of Experience*' than in the earlier poems; symbolic and visionary elements are more frequent, though the form is till simple and the images often still simple and familiar as in '*The Little Vagabon*d' and '*The Chimney Sweeper*.' In '*the Human Abstract*' Blake writes of Mercy and Pity in tones that savagely parody the kind of defence of things as they are which was so common in the eighteenth century and which Dr. Johnson in a very different way also fiercely attacked.

The most impressive – and by far the most well-known – of these poems is '*The Tyger*' (Blake's spelling is worth retaining, for it seems to emphasize the

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symbolic quality of the animal). The power and intensity of this short poem, achieved both by the imagery and by the way the beat of the line is handled at each point, are overwhelming, and again there is an immediate poetic meaning communicated even to those who cannot refer each image to its symbolic context. There is both beauty and terror in the elemental forces of nature. In the section of '*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*' entitled 'Proverbs of Hell' (and Hell for Blake was a deliberately perverse symbol of liberty and the spontaneous activity of genius). Blake's tiger is akin to the 'rough beast' of Yeats' 'The Second Coming' in its combined suggestion of terror and wonder. The ultimate vision of the universe is neither simple nor easy; and 'the tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction'.

With '*Tiriel'* (written about 1789: it is impossible to give a date of publication for these works of Blake for they were not published in the regular way, and 'Tiriel' was left in manuscript), Blake began a series of works written in rhetorical free verse and using myths and symbols of his own creation to embody his vision of the universe and his doctrine of man. The same movement can be seen in '*The Book of Thel*' (etched in 1789):

> The eternal gates' terrific porter lifted the northern bar:
> Thee enter'd in and saw the secrets of the land unknown.
> She saw the couches of the dead, and where the fibrous roots
> Of every heart on earth infixes deep its restless twists:
> A land of sorrows and of tears where never smile was seen.

The French Revolution (1791) shows Blake's peculiar imaginative response to the events of his time, and the swinging rhetorical line is sometimes used here with great power:

> Troubled, leaning of Necker, descends the King to his
> chamber of council; shady mountains
> In fear utter voices of thunder; the woods of France
> embossom the sounds;
> Clouds of wisdom prophetic reply, and roll over the
> palace roof heavy.
> Forty men, each conversing with woes in the infinite
> shadows of his soul,
> Like our ancient fathers in regions of twilight, walk,
> gathering round the King;
> Again the loud voice of France cries to the morning; the
> morning prophecies to its clouds.

In '*Visions of the Daughters of Albion*' (etched 1793), '*America'* (etched 1793), '*Europe'* (etched 1794), '*Urizen'* (etched 1794), '*The Book of Ahania*' and '*The Song*' and '*Book of Los*' (1795), '*The Four Zoas*' (first written 1795-97 and revised 1797-1804), '*Milton*' (1804-1808) and '*Jerusalem'* (1804-20),

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Blake presented a fully developed knowledge of mythology in order to give his view of man and his destiny. Though the mythology is Blake's own and can be bewildering to the casual reader, it represents a clearly formulated system based on elements in long established mystical and symbolic tradition.

Though an understanding of the Prophetic Books depends on a knowledge of Blake's complicated mythological system, we can find in his prose aphorisms (a form of which he was a master), in various occasional writings, and in 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell', sudden flashes that take us directly to the heart of his doctrine.

> 'He who sees the Infinite in all things, sees God.
>
> He who sees the Ratio only, sees himself only.
>
> Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is.'

'The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and God, and at liberty of Devils and Hell, because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it.'

Blake's annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses* show how bitterly opposed he was to the view that the function of the artist was to represent a generalized ideal based on selection, combination and idealization of particulars. When Reynolds writes that it would be absurd to understand poetic metaphors literally, or 'to conclude that because painters sometimes represent poets writing from the dictates of a little winged boy or genius, that this same genius did really inform him what he was to write,' Blake notes: 'The ancients did not mean to impose when they affirmed their belief in vision and revelation. Plato was in earnest. Milton was in earnest. They believed that God did visit man really and truly, and not as Reynolds pretends. How very anxious Reynolds is to disprove and contemn spiritual perceptions.'

The message of Blake's Prophetic Books is not, however, simply that empirical reason and empirical science are enemies of the visionary understanding. Blake was no simpleton, and his fully developed system does not ignore the complexities and paradoxes of existence. In his myth, reason is represented by Urizen, who created man, but in creating a necessarily limited creature out of the perfection and infinitude of God (who before the creation comprehended all) there must be a withdrawal or retraction of himself by God, and this can only be achieved by the limiting power of reason. Urizen, who is associated with reason, law, the moral order and all the restricting forces of society, is necessary for the creation, but nevertheless must be fought against. At the other extreme are Los (imagination) and Luvah (passion). The Fall, which Urizen's act of creation made inevitable, can be undone by the reconciliation of Urizen with Los and Luvah, so that the complete and undivided man (Albion), who was divided into many at the Fall, may arise again. This resurrected and regenerated whole man is sometimes identified by Blake with Jesus Christ. Blake's use of Christian and Jewish imagery is not to be taken as a sign of his fundamental agreement with the orthodoxies of either religion; his association of Los with Satan is proof of that. Blake follows through

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his myths with massive particularization; he is not content with simple opposition of pairs of contraries, but complicates his story in order to follow the complexities of experience. Even though he was a rebel in so many ways, constantly opposing so much that was the official thinking of his age, Blake also spoke for his age, rendering with his eccentric brilliance both its currents of political and social rebellion and the underground tradition of mystical and visionary ideas which had had a long history in European thought. His rhetorical utterance is sometimes wearisome and sometimes too dependent on a private mythopoeia to be readily intelligible, but his imaginative energy and his clear poetic eye are truly remarkable qualities, not easily paralleled in English poetry.

Though Blake was a visionary, he was also a man of his time who responded characteristically and sometimes violently to the main political and social events of his age like the French Revolution and the repressive policy which the British Government adopted in its fear of revolutionary activity at home, and the far-reaching changes in British social life which were the result of the Industrialization Revolution. There runs through his work a strain of protest against tyranny and repression of all kinds and of plea for freedom – social, political, ecclesiastical, and intellectual. This strain is to be found, though in differing forms, in all the first generation Romantic poets, at least in their youth. The French Revolution – or at least the idea of the French Revolution, and the mystique associated with it – was for a brief period one of the great stimulating forces for the English literary imagination. Without its impact neither Blake nor Wordsworth would have been the poets they were.

(vi) The Gothic Novelist of the Age - Mary Shelley

In the introduction to her only novel *Frankenstein* (1831), Mary Shelley declares her desire to 'curdle bloods and quicken the beatings of the heart'. This can be taken as the first of many signals to the reader that the novel should be placed in the genre of the Gothic. On a particular rainy day of 1816, many eminent intellectuals gathered at Lord Byron's house and decided that they would compete in writing ghost stories. Mary Shelley was one of the intellectuals present there and it is only she who took up the challenge seriously and worked towards winning this competition. *Frankenstein* is the product of her serious attempt.

The subtitle of *Frankenstein*, the Modern Prometheus, is indicative of Victor Frankenstein's rebellious attitude against the injustice of God. But Mary Shelley very cleverly infused within that a critique of the 'human' and also emphasized on the dark side of the human psyche, with its gothic essence. Gothic writers are interested in the breakdown of boundaries, in the exploration of what is forbidden in desire that should neither be spoken off nor acted upon. They are concerned above all with excess and transgression. By treating *Frankenstein* as a gothic novel, we see that Victor's breaking of the laws of nature and crossing forbidden boundaries unleashes disruptions and distractions in society which points out the dark recesses of mankind.

There are no decaying monasteries, no decadent monks, no terrifying castles, and no supernatural ghostly events in *Frankenstein*. None of the conventional Gothic trappings and yet Mary Shelley managed to instil horror in the reader's mind; because the horror is within the psyche, not outside. Thus, *Frankenstein* emerges as the precursor of the modern Gothic that insists on the forbidden desires and familiar yet untold aspects of the darker side of the human mind.

Check Your Progress

5. What were the ideas behind the French Revolution?
6. What is the role of primary imagination according to Coleridge?
7. What was Coleridge and Robert Southey's plan to immigrate to the USA known as?
8. What were three things that influenced Wordsworth's poetry?
9. What genre influenced Blake to turn away from the cultural pattern of his age?

1.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The period of Romanticism was at its peak in most places from 1800 to 1850.
2. The leading advocates of the spirit of idealism were Rousseau in France, and Schelling, Schlegel and Lessing in Germany.
3. *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1798, heralded a new era in the history of English literature and with the publication of this volume of poems by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the Romantic Era begins.
4. William Wordsworth in the very beginning of the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* points out four essential principles of poetry that are included in *Lyrical Ballads* and also propagates the reason for such poems:
   - Themes from ordinary life;
   - Expressed in the day to day language of ordinary men;
   - Coloured by Imagination;
   - Through and in them the universal and primary laws of human nature be brought out
5. The ideas behind the French Revolution were, liberty, equality, fraternity, rights and democracy.
6. The primary imagination, according to Coleridge, is the only means through which the poet can transcend the worries, tensions and pains of everyday

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life so as to communicate with the 'infinite' or the 'divine' and get access to the ideal world of God.

7. Coleridge and Robert Southey's plan to immigrate to the USA was known as Pantisocracy.
8. Three things that influenced Wordsworth's poetry were, the French Revolution, nature and society of the time.
9. Blake broke away deliberately and violently from the cultural pattern of his age and turned to the occult tradition in European thought.

1.6 SUMMARY

- The Romantic Movement is said to have begun from the date of publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). It had on it the impact of the French Revolution which took place in 1789.
- The period of Romanticism was a literary, artistic and intellectual period that originated in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century, and was at its peak in most places from 1800 to 1850.
- During the latter eighteenth century, many poets, revolting against the set and formal rules of the classical tradition, turned to nature and the simple life (a movement encouraged by the doctrines of J.J. Rousseau) and to the past, particularly medieval tales and ballads.
- *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1798, heralded a new era in the history of English literature and with the publication of this volume of poems by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the Romantic Era begins.
- The Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* is an epoch-making critical writing as it marks a definite break from the earlier poetry of the eighteenth century. In the Preface, the poet-critic Wordsworth discusses several issues related to poetry.
- The ideas behind the French Revolution – liberty, equality, fraternity, rights, democracy, etc. influenced the writers of the Romantic Age.
- One of the key issues that William Wordsworth dealt with in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads is the notion of poetry.
- Going along with the beliefs of the Romantics, Wordsworth emphasized that the tendency of art or aesthetic object should be from the individual to the universal.
- The governing thought of the Age of Reason is reason and that of eighteenth century (also termed Neo-Classical Age) literature is diction.
- According to Wordsworth, 'the subject of the new poetry should be taken from the ordinary and commonplace life and coloured with imagination to

make it poetic' and he stressed that poetry should be written in the language of the common man.

- Other Romantic poets were also influenced by Wordsworth's thoughts. The primary main characteristics of the Romantic age were: its imaginative quality, search for Utopia, love for Nature and Innocence.

1.7 KEY WORDS

- **Pantisocracy:** It refers to an ideal world where everyone is equal. This word is of Greek origin.
- **Annus Mirablis:** This term is of Latin origin. It literally means wonderful year or the year of miracles. It became famous after Dryden wrote a poem of this name which commemorated 1666 as the year of miracles in London.
- **Aphorisms:** It means a succinct way of telling the truth or reporting an observation.
- **Romanticism:** Romanticism is a literary, artistic, and philosophical movement originating in the 18th century, characterized chiefly by a reaction against neoclassicism and an emphasis on the imagination and emotions.
- **Imagery:** Imagery is the image used by a writer of poetry or prose in the form of figurative language suggesting mental or visual pictures.

1.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What was Wordsworth definition of poetry in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*?
2. What are the chief characteristics of the Romantic period?
3. When does the Romantic Age begin? What are the significant influences that impacted this age?

Long-Answer Questions

1. How is the French Revolution significant to the Romantic Age?
2. Discuss any two characteristics of the Romantic poets in detail. Give examples to support your answer.
3. Examine the social and economic conditions of the Romantic era.

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1.9 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 REALISM AND DRAMA

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Structure

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you were introduced to the Romantic Movement in English literature. Here, we will discuss realism and drama in the 19th century.

In literature, realism is an artistic movement that began in France and Russia in the 19th century. The movement attempts to represent familiar things as they are. Realist authors chose to depict everyday and banal activities and experiences, instead of using a romanticized or similarly stylized presentation. The drama of the Romantic period appealed to the masses of the time as entertainment, and not art, and many of the plays were melodrama. The spirit of the Romantic period lent itself more to the 'one narrator' form of verse, rather than the 'no narrator' dramatic form, since it dealt with a personal response to natural events. This led to the decline of drama in the early half of the 18th century. These aspects are discussed in the unit.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Examine the opinion of Romantic poets on nature
- Explain the reasons for the rise of realism
- Discuss lyric and odes
- Describe drama in the Romantic period

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2.2 THE RETURN TO NATURE

The Romantic period (1798-1837) is considered to be an influential phase in the history of England. The word 'Romantic' is defined in various ways. The word was first brought into usage in 17th century England. At that time it meant something which was fictitious and unreal. But by the next century it had earned a distinct meaning for itself that was associated with imagination as well as emotional pleasures. In literature, the term was used to identify a movement. The Romantic period was not just restricted to England. Romanticism could be experienced in most of the western countries between the late 18th century and the early part of the 19th century. The timeline is obviously tentative; but we take into account certain historical events to identify the time. As you have learnt, the Romantic age in English literature was initiated as a deliberate movement with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in the year 1798. It is fairly accepted that the Romantic Movement came to an end with the demise of Sir Walter Scott (1832). Needless to say the movement did not come into existence unexpectedly in 1798. It emerged slowly and gradually and dwindled eventually after a few years. Some major authors of the Romantic School are Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge, Keats et al. But many critics believe that they are not the initiators of romanticism because even the Elizabethan literature reflected a 'romantic' spirit. The poets Oliver Goldsmith, William Cowper, Thomas Gray, William Blake et al, the pre-Romantics of the late 18th century helped pave the way for this movement by helping people move away from the classicism of the neoclassical era.

The primary characteristics of Romanticism can be identified as:

i) The desire to return to nature and instill faith in human goodness.
ii) Rediscovering the unexpected potential of artists
iii) Shaping a nationalistic pride
iv) Giving preference to emotions over reason
v) A philosophical revolt that did not accept reason.

All the above mentioned characteristics can be identified especially in English Romantic poetry. There is an obvious affinity towards nature and dislike for urban life. The writings spoke about fondness for and worshiping of nature. The poems and prose highlighted an inclination towards the medieval age. Along with medieval ideas, the writings reflected a strong sense of the supernaturalism and mysticism. Poetry was no longer considered to be meant for elite people. It was identified as spontaneous expression of the poet's own feelings; mostly subjective. These poems did not follow the classical rules of poetry composition. The poems of this period did not confirm itself to composing 'heroic couplets'. In fact they started focusing on simpler verse forms. They took inspiration from ballads which was enjoyed by the rural folk of the English countryside. As was the norm in the previous neoclassical age, the 'poetic diction', was no longer appreciated. The language of the common men instead became the language of Romantic poetry. In fact the subjects of the

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romantic poetry, almost always revolved around the everyday life: 'the Idiot Boy', 'the daffodils', etc.

The Romantic period of English literature mainly witnessed growth in poetry. A vast majority of the composition can be credited to William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, P. B. Shelley, Lord Byron and John Keats. For Wordsworth, love for nature was one of the most repeated themes. Each of the Romantic poets analysed nature from a different perspective .but they all wrote about the significance of nature in the lives of common men. For them, nature was a great force, which almost felt divine.

The English Romantic writers kept themselves busy in exploring connection between man and the supernatural. They expressed a strong sense of beauty that reflected around them. They appreciated nature a lot. Poets like Shelley and Keats worshiped nature just like god. The poets of Romantic age relied on their imagination and their ability to expresses themselves not only through a colourful vision but also through a mystic communion that was carried with the outside world. As we all know, mysticism is an integral aspect of romantic imagination and this is also the foundation and spirit of Wordsworth's concept of pantheism. Imagination leads the way for Coleridge's metaphysical speculation while guides the myth-making power of Shelly.

William Wordsworth is usually considered to be the 'high priest of nature'. For Wordsworth, nature was the epicentre of everything. Wordsworth after being disillusioned with the French Revolution, sought refuge in the 'healing power' of nature. During each phase of his life Wordsworth kept changing his attitude towards nature. Wordsworth's poetic journey started with animal and sensuous pleasures and finally came to an end on a mystic note. Both God and Nature got intertwined within each other. Nature for him turned into a Universal Spirit which was ready to guide anyone who would show even the slightest of the inclination to be guided by her. The number of rural characters he portrays in his poetry are almost always simple and remain uncorrupted primarily because of their close association with nature.

There is no denying that even for Coleridge the approach to nature was in a lot of way similar to Wordsworth especially in the initial phase of his poetic career. Just like Wordsworth, Coleridge was disillusioned at the consequences that the French Revolution offered. He too found solace in Nature. And during this phase Coleridge felt that Nature was his guiding spirit as well as his teacher. In the poem *Frost at Midnight*, Coleridge longs to entrust the instruction of his infant son to none other than Nature. Yet at a later date, during his more mature phase Coleridge turned his focus into intensely concerned about the mystical as well as exotic dimensions of nature. Coleridge in his poems *Kubla Khan* and *The Rime of Ancient Mariner* highlight his intense association with supernaturalism.

When it comes to Shelley's poetry nature too plays a significant role. Yet as a nature poet, he is a great on his own. Shelley like his precursor Wordsworth was of the opinion that nature was a living being. But unlike Wordsworth, he did not

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consider nature as the ultimate spirit which is meant to delight as well as teach human beings. Being someone who was filled with the spirit associated with the principle of love, he did not assign any particular function to nature. But like Wordsworth many a times, Shelley highlighted the presence of a bond between nature and man though a mystical perspective. One significance of nature poetry by Shelley is the continuous presence of the mythopoeic element. More often than not, Shelly points out that various elements of nature are not just different segments of the One Being[1] but are actually separate entities where each one is independent of the rest of the elements. The West Wind as it perceived by Shelley is a mighty destroyer as well as preserver. We realize that the cloud turns into the daughter of earth and water. We identify the Mediterranean as a king while Night is considered to be the sister of Death. She is also the mother of the Sleep. Examples abound, but what is important is that Shelley's myth-making power finds its best expression in Hyperion.

Just like his Romantic contemporaries, Keats was also a great lover of nature. But Keats did not love nature not for her spiritual significance or due to deep messages that was conveyed by her, but also for the sensuous pleasures that was offered by her. 'Whereas Wordsworth spiritualises and Shelley intellectualises Nature, Keats is content to express her through the senses: the colour, the scent, the touch, the pulsating music; these are the things that stir him to his depths; there is not a mood of Earth he does not love, not a season that will not cheer and inspire him.'[2] The Odes composed by Keats on Autumn and the Nightingale are extremely powerful and boost of sensuous appeal. The poems reflect how Keats is a poet who is minute and thorough observer of Nature. Just like Wordsworth, Keats protested against the involvement of scientific pursuits which interfered with the sensuous wealth that nature seemed to provide.

In comparison to other Romantic poets, Byron was distinctly different. He had a distinct way of falling for nature. According to Byron, mature was devoid of meditative musing and did not boast of mystery. Yet, at the same time, there is a definite sense of wonder and delight in nature. It has been argued that Byron's love of nature was partly a result of his intense contempt for human kind. Byron took a particular delight in envisioning as well as narrating the wild and terrifying objects and aspects of nature that appear to be mocking, at the insignificance of man. But just like his other contemporaries he believed in the healing power of nature.

All romantic poetries are identified through their association with everything beautiful. Romantic poetry highlights about the sensuous beauty of nature. It also gets to see into the 'heart of things' and exposes the soul that is hidden behind the appearance. Words of sympathy and appreciation flow for the poor and the down trodden. Romantic poetry glorifies the innocence and simplicity that is inherent in the common man. The Romantics made an effort to understand human nature. The romantics identified the divine in each human. English Romanticism is simultaneously both a revolt as well as a revival. It is a revolt against those traditions

and conventions which was the hallmark of 18th century. It off sets the revival of old English meters as well as old English poetry that belonged to the common mass.

2.2.1 Concept of Introversion

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Introversion can be defined as the tendency of being predominantly interested in one's own mental life. The poets of the romantic period such as Shelley were sometimes brooding, inward looking individuals suffering from society's injustices and restraints. This inward-looking nature was reflected in their poetry.

Check Your Progress

1. Who is considered the high priest of nature?
2. What qualities made Keats love nature?

2.3 REALISM

The movement called realism began in the late 19th century. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, numerous factors led to changes in social structure and this brought in change in aesthetic appeal and one can witness a shift in understanding from romantic idealism to realism. In fact the rise of realism is actually considered to be a reaction against Romanticism. Romanticism as we all know is a literary, and intellectual movement that came into existence in Europe during the late 1700s. Romanticism relied on an idealized notion of reality. Romanticism was more directed towards individualism. It worked towards appreciating and loving the natural world. It revolved around idealism, emotion, supernatural and passion. Generally speaking, romantic literature was plot-driven. It was imaginative as well as emotionally intense. It was positive but not very realistic.

But with the arrival of the 19th century, industrialisation and urbanization brought some significant changes in social and economic aspect of life. One could see a distinct divide between the rich and poor. The need for a new literature was obvious. And this literature was expected to reflect the lives of the people. The actual lives of the actual people. The idea was to focus on reality. In realistic writings, characters became more important than any action or plot. In realistic writings we encountered characters displayed actual human troubles like anger, selfishness or even insecurities. The writings now started focusing on social class. The literary works revolved around people belonging to lower class, middle class as well as upper class. Writers composed events those were believable. The realistic novels do not pave way for dramatic stories or romances. We come across a language which is very natural and everyday like. Even the tone adopted by the authors are devoid of any poetic passion. Rather they display a manner which is similar to being comic or satiric or even matter-of-fact.

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There were a good number of writers who believed that the Romantics by focusing only on the spiritual, the abstract, or the ideal were removing themselves away from reality and were being dishonest about reflecting life as it really is. The realistic writers felt that they owed a responsibility to the society of being honest. According to the followers of realism, the Romantic impulse had paved way for escapism and produced literature that presented life as we wish them to be and not as it really was. The writers of realism insisted that life must be depicted as honestly as possible in the hope that seeing social conditions accurately would lead to improving those conditions. Many realistic writers felt that the Romantics did not act responsibly and they only idealized the world around them. Many scholars from the school of realism insisted that must pay attention to their human limitation and not just believe that an ideal should always be projected. Realistic writers decided to remain objective. They wanted to depict life as it was without making any comments the good or better aspect of it.

One of the major characteristics of realism was to focus on the common life of average, ordinary men. As one encountered them here and now. They were no stories just about extraordinary individuals. These were narratives of everyday folks. The authors of realistic fiction identified themselves as scientists who belonged to the society. They made efforts to write 'scientifically' by inventing characters who were realistic and helped situating these characters in situations which are realistic in nature. They then used their power of imagination to figure out how those characters who respond realistically. Majority of the realistic writers attempted to provide an objective perception of life. These writers focused on using descriptive language which was meant to trigger the senses - sights and sounds. They created an ambience that suggested meaning. Yet, at the same time, they avoided explaining the meaning of a scene or interpreting the significance of a situation. The authors took immense pain to reflect the way in which a certain character from a certain region would speak in his real life. It has been commented that realist writers were often impelled by the urge for social reform. They decided to expose situations so that they can change them. They highlight how people in certain social situations are often the best way that can bring compromise. These authors rely on characters who are unheroic and flawed. At times, these characters are not even true to themselves. As we see realists emphasizing on the external and the material reality, we get to know that they are also recognizing the reality as well as the complexity of human psychology. The characters they are portraying are complicated personalities and their individual responses to situations are influenced by not just external factors but also to internal factors.

Check Your Progress

3. When did the movement called realism begin?
4. What did the majority of realistic writers attempt to portray in their works?

2.4 ENGLISH DRAMA DURING THE ROMANTIC AGE

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Romantic drama came into surface during a period of revolutionary thought as well as action. That is why the plays written during this period are based on the historical as well as social milieu that was present at that point of time. 1776 witnessed the War of Independence in America and the year 1789 experienced the Revolution in France. Between the two, it was the French Revolution that influenced the Romantic poets to a great extent. The great romantic poets like William Blake, P.B. Shelley, William Wordsworth, John Keats , Samuel Taylor Coleridge and George Gordon Byron wrote plays and used dramatic form to express themselves along with the medium they were good at.

In 'The Prelude to the Lyrical Ballad', Wordsworth mentions:

> … Share with me, Friend! the wish
> That some dramatic tale, endued with shapes
> Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words
> Than suit the work we fashion, might set forth
> What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth,
> And the errors into which I fell …
>
> (xi, 282-7)

Wordsworth's desire to compose a play where he could share his first-hand observation that he experienced during the French Revolution resulted in him writing his first and last play *The Borderers*. This was published in the year 1796-97. Later on, he went on to admit that he had not originally intended this play for the stage. But for Coleridge the circumstances were different. Coleridge along with Southey composed *The Fall of Robespierre*. This was published in the year 1794. This play was also inspired by the French Revolution. This was a historical drama which focused on the horrors that the war has brought in. Even though initially he was happy with the collaborated work, Coleridge's enthusiasm fizzled when his solo play *Osorio* published in 1797 was rejected by number of people including Sheridan. However, his interest in plays never diminished. And he continued to either translate plays or to revise his own plays that he kept publishing at regular intervals.

Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1819) and *The Cenci* (1819) were highly inspired by the French Revolution. Shelley in his own way discussed about politics, liberty, tyranny as well as crime. These were the topics which were debated during those days. Shelly, at a later date, admitted that he never wanted *Prometheus Unbound* to be staged. But as far as *The Cenci* was concerned, he wanted to see whether it was successful because it was meant for stage. Irrespective of its reception, just like Coleridge.

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It is believed that Byron's unpleasant experience with plays made him disillusioned in the field of theatre and made him compose two powerful plays under the boundary of ' mental theatre' The two plays were *Manfred* (published in 1817) and *Cain* (published in 1821). On the other hand, we have Blake whose interest in drama and theatre was comparatively lesser than the other Romantic poets. Blake's *King Edward the Third* (1783) even though incomplete was a historical drama which gave a deep insight into Blake's understanding of liberty an idea that was very prominent during the Romantic age:

When confusion rages, when the field is in a flame,
When the cries of blood tear horror from heav'n,
And yelling death runs up and down the ranks,
Let Liberty, the charter'd right of Englishmen,
won by our fathers in many a glorious field,
Enerve my soldiers; let Liberty
Blaze in each countenance, and fire the battle.
The enemy fight in chains, invisible chains but heavy;
Their minds are fetter'd; then how can they be free?

(i, 6-14)

These lines takes place when King Edward addresses his nobles as well as soldiers while he was in the coast of France. He uttered these words right before the ordered the army to attack the enemy. In the beginning of the play itself the playwright (Blake) intends to discuss the popular concerns of his time. But soon after he lost his interest and was not in a position to finish the play. But we do not have any evidence suggesting whether he intended his play to be performed or not.

It must be mentioned here that even though the poets of this age who composed the plays were not dramatist in real sense, there works are surprisingly great. Again, most of these plays were not intended for performance though theatre was wildly popular during the Romantic age. Even more interesting is that though the poets were disillusioned or rejected, they never actually gave up writing plays.

The Romantic perspective to drama was that theatre was the platform which symbolized national unity. They did so by instilling patriotism or morality or sympathetic identification. If we consider the content of the play they easily served the purpose because each served the same purpose. Between the period 1737-1843 we know that a Licensing Act was implemented. As part of this, England's two prestigious theatres - Drury Lane and Covent Garden- were allowed to showcase drama from September till June. As far as we know, these theatres were not just politically controlled but they were also censored as per the political situation. Even though Romantics shared their plays to these two theatres, they were well aware that chances of having their plays performed was hardly possible because of the strong political and social message it carried. Due to this, they thought it must be sensible to adopt a closet drama as mode of expression. This

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will help them retain artistic frame work while allowing them to express themselves. The authors believed that the mind was the theatre where their plays could be staged. According to them, the act of reading was a creative process and the processing of it in the mind makes it a stage. That is why romantics relied on the senses of reading and relating it to the stage of performance.

2.4.1 The Decline of Drama

Some scholars believe that the main reason for the decline of drama is that it was a neglected form. It was neglected because during the Romantic age there was the popular belief among the masses the Romantic dramatists were not skilled in their efforts. Instead, they were attracted towards operas and Gothic performances. Critics of the Romantic drama insist that these plays dramas lacked the dramatic quality that was the hallmark of Elizabethan drama. Others believe that Romantic drama was too idealistic. Again, another school of thought believed that the emergence of melodrama led to the decline of Romantic drama. Bust most agree that the Licensing Act created a major blow to the Romantic drama because, as we already know, only Covent Garden and Drury Lane, were allowed to hold 'legitimate' plays.

But we must realize that this was an age which deified any form of raison d'etre. That is why it must have been difficult for any kind of objective art to grow. It cannot be denied that the Romantics lacked the objectivity that was required and the spirit of the Elizabethan drama which meant hollow poignancy as well as lack of ability to keep the audience charmed. This was after all, the most prominent characteristics of the Elizabethan drama.

Of course we cannot deny that the Romantic drama as an element of literature cannot be ignored as insignificant aspect. It is important in the history of English literature. We can safely say, that the detractors of Romantic theatre were too harsh in criticizing it. In fact some of them did not shy away from denigrating them. After all some of the plays that were created by the Romantics are definitely powerful as dramatic options. It must be mentioned that majority of the plays composed by the Romantics were in the form of tragedies.

Despite the popularity of melodrama, the Romantic authors continued composing dramas. We know Wordsworth produced *The Borderers*. And Coleridge had crafted *Remorse* and *Zapolya*. Again, Byron expressed his dramatic skills through plays like *Manfred* and *Cain* while Keats authored *Otho the Great*. And most famously, Shelley composed *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Cenci* and *Hellas*.

Interestingly, almost all the Romantic dramas were composed in blank verse. Though it might be difficult to identify the earliest example of Romantic drama. After all, Wordsworth started composing his play[3], in the year 1796. So ideally, he should be the pioneer of Romantic drama. Yet, at the same time, this play was finally published in the year 1842. 1842 was not just the fag end of Wordsworth's writing career, but even the Romantic period was witnessing change. Even though

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Wordsworth probably came up with the idea of writing a drama first, but with the performance of Coleridge's *Remorse* at Drury Lane in 1813, that the idea finally saw the light of the day.

Thus, we can say that it was Wordsworth who first came up with the idea of writing a drama in the Romantic age but it was only with the enactment of Coleridge's *Remorse* at Drury Lane in 1813 that the idea got crystallized. Of course, as we know, *The Borderer*s is a record of the problem of evil. Even though there were some shortcomings in terms of its theatrical appeal, without a doubt one can say that in terms of its exposition, it is one of the best. Wordsworth's Oswald probably might not be as vibrant as Iago but we can identify a parallel between the two. Both *Remorse* and *Zapolya* show that Coleridge reflected similar drawbacks as dramatists. But some of Coleridge's characters are extremely brilliant. As far as Byron's *Manfred* and *Cain* are concerned, they represent the spirit and essence of the Romantic Movement. But the poor characterization in *Otho the Great* only adds to the dramatic drawbacks of the Romantics. Yet, at the same time, the play is a good example of the dramatic capability they had built.

The Cenci was composed by Shelley in the year 1819. It was supposedly inspired by the life of an actual Italian family by the name of the Cencis. Though the play was not staged until 1922. One major reason for this was that the play dealt with the theme of incest. Ironically, the play is now identified as one of the most significant work that belonged to the Western canon. Needleless to say, the critics of Romantic drama had more than enough reason to question the dramatic talent possessed by the Romantics. Though they did not impress people in terms of plot and characterization but they had the power to deal with powerful themes in interesting manner. Despite its drawbacks it is because of romantic playwrights that 19th century dramatists like Shaw and Brecht managed to create some intriguing work.

Check Your Progress

5. Name two plays by Shelley that were inspired by the French Revolution.
6. What was the form generaly used for the composition of Romantic dramas?

2.5 THE LYRIC

Generally, lyric speakers are symbolized as poets who see themselves in a world of loneliness. However, in dramatic lyrics, nevertheless, the speaker of a lyric poem is denoted as speaking to another person in a particular condition or circumstance. John Donne's *Canonization* and William Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* are examples of such dramatic lyric poetry.

Although the lyric is spoken in first person, the 'I' in the poem does not necessarily denote the poet of the poem. In some lyric poems, for example *When*

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*I consider how my light is spen*t a sonnet written by John Milton and *Frost at Midnight* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the mention of the known circumstances of the poet's life clarifies that the reader must give due attention to the personal expression.

Even in personal lyrics such as these, however, both the character and expression of the speaker may be solemnized and formed by the author in a way that is favorable to the preferred creative influence. In many lyrics, the speaker is a conventional period-figure, for example, the long-suffering suitor in the Petrarchan sonnet or the courtly, witty lover of the Cavalier poems. Whereas in other kinds of lyrics, the speaker might be an invented figure not much like the poet's character and circumstance.

The genre of lyric poetry understands a large variety of expressions. Some, like Ben Jonson's *To the Memory of... William Shakespeare* and Walt Whitman's ode on the death of Abraham Lincoln, *O Captain, My Captain* are ceremonial poems emphasizes on a communal expression. There are certain poems which express personal feelings such as Shelley's *To Night*, or Emily Dickinson's *Wild Nights, Wild Nights*.

Famous lyrical poets

Some of the renowned lyrical poets are as follows:

- Sappho: 630 BC – 580 BC
- Percy Bysshe Shelley: 1792 – 1822
- William Wordsworth: 1770 – 1850
- Pindar: 517 BC – 438 BC
- Emily Dickinson: 1830 – 1886
- Robert Frost:1874 – 1963
- Langston Hughes: 1901 – 1967
- Charles Baudelaire: 1821 – 1867
- Robert Burns: 1759 – 1796
- Rabindranath Tagore: 1861 – 1941
- Christina Rossetti: 1830 – 1894
- Sergei Yesenin: 1895 – 1925
- Ivor Gurney: 1890 – 1937

Development of lyric poetry

Lyric poetry developed throughout various centuries and we will in this section trace its development as an important part of literature.

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16th Century

During this period in Britain, an English composer, Thomas Campion composed lute songs and the sonnet gained popularity due to ardent efforts of poets like Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser and William Shakespeare. French poets like La Pléiade, Pierre de Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay, and Jean-Antoine de Baïf worked with the aim of breaking free from age old traditional French poetry, predominantly Marot and the grands rhétoriqueurs, so they started to imitate classical Greek and Roman poetry forms like the odes. Pindar, Anacreon, Alcaeus, Horace, and Ovid are some well acclaimed names of this school of thought. They also produced Petrarchan sonnet cycles.

In Spain, devotional form of poetry took to the lyric form in order to fulfill religious purposes. Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Garcilaso de la Vega, and Lope de Vega are some noteworthy poets of this era in Spain. Though Luís de Camões is known across the world for his epic *Os Lusíadas*, yet his contribution as the greatest Portuguese lyric poet of this period cannot be denied.

In Japan, lyric poetry was known by the name 'naga-uta' ('long song') during this era. Japanese lyric poetry of this time alternated five and seven-syllable lines and concluded with an extra seven-syllable line.

17th Century

During the 17th century, lyrical poetry dominated as a major form of poetry in literature. Works of poets such as John Donne, Andrew Marvell Thomas Carew Ben, Aphra Behn, Jonson, Richard Crashaw, Robert Herrick, George Herbert, Richard Lovelace, John Suckling, John Milton, and Henry Vaughan, helped this form to gain an important place in literature. Readers appreciated such form of poetry as it was short, full of emotions which one could easily connect with.

18th Century

During the period of 18th century, countries such as England and France saw a decline in the lyrical form of poetry. Places of congregation such as the English coffeehouses and French salons, which were frequented by poets, authors and other literary intellectuals witnessed atmosphere of literary conversation which was not amiable to lyric poetry. Poets like Robert Burns, William Cowper, Oliver Goldsmith and Thomas Gray however, were exceptions to this newly formed opinion and their lyrics were not much affected by the general opinion floating around. Some popular 18th century German lyric poets are Novalis, Johann Wolfgang, Friedrich Schiller, von Goethe, and Johann Heinrich Voß. Kobayashi Issa, a poet of Japanese origin gained popularity in lyric poetry during this era. In Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, Louis chevalier de Jaucourt described lyric poetry of that time as 'a type of poetry totally devoted to sentiment; that's its substance, it's essential object'.

19th Century

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In Europe, the lyric, 1842 portrait of William Wordsworth written by Benjamin Haydon appeared as the primary form poetry of the 19th century. It gained so much prominence that it came to be considered as synonymous with poetry. The romantic lyric poetry written during this time comprised first-person explanations of the feelings and emotions of a particular time; however the emotions were extreme but personal.

William Wordsworth is known for his contribution in the field of writing sonnets. Other renowned poets such as John Keats, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley are other proclaimed names in the field of Romantic lyric poetry. Towards the end of the century, the Victorian lyric became more linguistically self-conscious and defensive in comparison to the Romantic Lyric form of poetry. Alfred Lord Tennyson and Christina Rossetti are some well-known Victorian lyric poets of this era.

This era saw popularity for lyrical poetry. Numerous poetry compilations published in this era are a testimony to this fact. The poetry written by Joseph von Eichendorff is an example of the German Romantic restoration of the folk-song custom introduced by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johann Gottfried von *Herder*, and Carl Joachim Friedrich Ludwig von Arnim and Bretano's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. During the same time, revival of lyric poetry could be witnessed in France also. It was recognized as the leading genre of French poetry.

The rise of lyric poetry in Russia during the early 19th century can be largely attributed to Aleksandr Pushkin. The Swedish poetry was also influenced by the lyric poetry and Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom, a famous Swedish poet of his time wrote many lyric poems. In Italy poets Giovanni Pascoli, Ugo Foscolo, Giacomo Leopardi and Gabriele D'Annunzio gave a new dimension to lyric poetry.

2.6 THE ODE

An ode is a form of lyric poetry which is based on a grave theme and follows a definite structure. The style of ode is elevated and is structurally intricate. In the words of an American author, Norman Maclean, 'the term now calls to mind a lyric which is massive, public in its proclamations, and Pindaric in its classical prototype'. Pindar's intricate verses were written in sets of three: moving in a dance tempo to the left, the chorus recited the strophe; moving to the right, the antistrophe; then, standing still, the epode. The Pindaric ode which is also referred to as 'regular ode' and have almost similar form, with the strophes and antistrophes included in the ode, written in a pattern of one stanza, and all the epodes written in another verse.

An ode is a verse written in lyrical form in admiration of an individual, a particular happening or a thing. This form of poetry found its roots in Ancient Greece. Initially, all Greek odes were set to music. This form was later on

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popularized and adjusted in Renaissance England and led to a new set of conventions. The definition and explanation of ode has however evidently transformed with passing time, as now it is often used usually used to denote a commendation or adoration.

A typical ode has three main parts in its structure:

1. Strophe
2. Antistrophe
3. Epode

Types of Odes

The Ancient Greek poetry talks of three different types of odes which are discussed as follows:

1. **Pindaric ode:** Pindaric ode is named after the famous Greek poet Pindar, who is often accredited for creation of this form of ode poetry. Ode poetry comprises the formal opening of the 'strophe', followed by the imaging verse known as the 'antistrophe'. The meter and length of this is same as that of the strophe. The last and the concluding verse is called the 'epode'. The meter and length of the epode is different in comparison to the previous two sections of the poem. These examples of ode were formerly performed by a chorus and complemented by performers and instruments like the aulos and lyre.

   These odes were written to admire and praise someone or to commend an event. The earlier English odes and the many to follow were even written to laud various arts like music, poetry or intellectual concepts. Romantic poets were accomplished in writing the personal ode of portrayal and obsessive musing, which is inspired by a characteristic of the outer scene and tries to resolve either a personal emotional problem or one pertaining to humanity in general. Some of the examples are Allen Tate's *Ode to the Confederate Dead* and Wallace Stevens' *The Idea of Order at Key West.*

2. **Horatian ode:** The Horatian ode has found its name from the Roman poet Horace. This ode is a homostrophic ode, which means that each stanza of such an ode form consists of the same meter, rhyme scheme, and length. In addition to this, another feature that differentiates a Horatian ode from a Pindaric ode is that, Horatian odes are also not as formal as the Pindaric odes. Rather, in comparison to Pindaric odes they are more warm and contemplative.

   Horatian odes usually are made of two or four line long verses. In divergence to the desire, far-sighted confidence, and formal language used in Pindar's odes, usually Horatian odes are composed, contemplative, and informal. Horatian odes are even usually homostrophic which means that they are written in a single repeated stanza form. In comparison to Pindaric odes these odes are much shorter. Andrew Marvell's *An Horatian Ode upon*

Cromwell's Return from Ireland (1650) and Keats' *Ode to Autumn* (1820) are some good examples of Horatian odes.

3. **Irregular Odes:** Irregular ode is form of lyric poetry which uses rhyme scheme and meter, but the difference between this and the other odes is that it does not have the same verse construction as the Pindaric or Horatian odes. Different parts of this ode do not correspond with each other. Whereas in the other two forms of odes, significant correspondence can be seen. The rhyme scheme of an irregular ode requires just the lines to rhyme anywhere, and not in a specific place.

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Irregular ode came into existence in 1656 and it was introduced by an English poet, Abraham Cowley, who copied Pindar's style and matter but did not pay much heed to the repeated pattern of stanzas in each strophic triplet. Rather, he allowed each stanza to form a pattern of its own with flexible line lengths, number of lines, and rhyme scheme. Since that time English ode has been following this structure of irregular stanzas which change freely, according to the subject and mood. William Wordsworth's *Ode: Intimations of Immortality* written in 1807 was the first of this kind.

Importance in Literature

The ode form of lyric poetry has been at an exalted position in the history of English literature. Since a long time in history, Pindaric odes have often been written and performed in order to commemorate victories in the athletic field. Later in time, romantic poets started to write English odes to rejoice their powerful emotions and profound adulations. The ode proved to be suitable for both the 18th century as well as the 19th century as these eras were resonate with their love of drama in Ancient Greece and in the Romantic period. Edmund Spenser is known to have written the first identified odes in English which were the *Epithalamium* and *Prothalamium*. In reality, the ode form of lyric poetry actually gained popularity with the arrival of irregular odes written by Abraham Cowley. Romantic poets such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats are well known for their famous examples of odes in the English language.

Famous Ode Poets

The following are some of the famous poets who wrote odes:

- Thomas Gray
- John Keats
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- William Wordsworth
- Percy Bysshe Shelley
- Pablo Neruda

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- Álvaro de Campos
- Dorothy Regan Drake
- William Shakespeare
- Thomas Nashe
- John Donne
- Allen Tate
- Gary Soto
- Ronsard
- Federico García Lorca

Examples of Ode in Literature

Some of the prominent examples of ode in literature are discussed in the following section.

Example 1: *Victory Ode*

– by Pindar

Creatures for a day! What is a man?
What is he not? A dream of a shadow
Is our mortal being. But when there comes to men
A gleam of splendour given of heaven,
Then rests on them a light of glory
And blessed are their days.

Explanation: The above stated example of ode is a translation of the work of a poet who fashioned the whole form, Pindar. It depicts the magnificent theme of triumph and the glory of man.

Example 2: *Epithalamion*

– by Edmund Spenser

Ye learned sisters which have oftentimes
Beene to me ayding, others to adorne:
Whom ye thought worthy of your gracefull rymes,
That even the greatest did not greatly scorne
To heare theyr names sung in your simple layes,
But joyed in theyr prayse.
And when ye list your owne mishaps to mourne,
Which death, or love, or fortunes wreck did rayse,
Your string could soone to sadder tenor turne,
And teach the woods and waters to lament
Your dolefull dreriment.

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Now lay those sorrowfull complaints aside,
And having all your heads with girland crownd,
Helpe me mine owne loves prayses to resound,
Ne let the same of any be envide:
So Orpheus did for his owne bride,
So I unto my selfe alone will sing,
The woods shall to me answer and my Eccho ring.

Explanation: *Epithalamion* written by Edmund Spenser is one of the original odes which formed a part of the English language. Originating from Elizabethan England, the very first verse of Spenser's ode shows the enormous themes that he deals with in his poem. The ode also consists of the reference to the renowned Greek musician and poet, Orpheus, which only reaffirms the ties of Spenser's poetic form to its origins in Ancient Greece.

Example 3: ***The Progress of Poesy***

– by Thomas Gray

Wake up, you little sleep head, awake
And give great joy to life that's found in dreams
From Nature's most sweet sounding streams A thousand turns their twisty journeys take
The dancing flowers, that above them blow
Breathe life and music as they flow Now the vast waves of sound drift along
Deep, beautiful, vast and strong
Through the fields and vales and valleys they glide
And rolling down the mountain side
Daring and carefree the water pours
From the highest edge they jump and falling, they roar.

Explanation: *The Progress of Poesy* written by Thomas Gray is an outstanding example of a traditional Pindaric ode. The strophe and mirroring antistrophe in the poem are strikingly evident. The poet has chosen three line verses each having a rhyme between the first lines which strengthens their connection. The concluding stanza is twice the length of the first ones and includes a somewhat diverse rhyme scheme. This can be called the concluding epode of the poem. Imagery has also been used by the poet. In addition to that, the language used by him glorifies nature and art, which is characteristic of the Pindaric ode.

Example 4: ***Ode on Solitude***

– by Alexander Pope

Sound sleep by night; study and ease,
Together mixed; sweet recreation;
And innocence, which most does please,

With meditation. Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me die;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie.

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Explanation: *Ode on Solitude* by Alexander Pope is a lovely specimen of a Horatian ode which lives up to the tradition in real spirit. In this ode, four-line stanzas have been used by Pope, which is characteristic of all Horatian odes. In addition to this, his verses are even homostrophic, which means all stanzas of the poem have identical meter, rhyme scheme, and length. This ode rests on a more reflective and private theme, just as the case is with a typical Horatian ode. Rather than articulating the grandness of the beauty of nature, Pope reflects on the superiority of seclusion and brings about how, owing to that, the speaker gets more time to meditate.

Example 5: *Ode on a Grecian Urn*

– by John Keats

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Explanation: *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is undoubtedly the most renowned ode in the history of English literature. This is a perfectly written, an irregular ode so though the rhyme been has used throughout, but not in a strict way as in other is done in other forms of ode. John Keats has tried to praise the features of classical Greek art through his ode. Consequently, there cannot be another poetic form is as appropriate as this ode which is a true illustration of classical Greek art itself.

Check Your Progress

7. Name two of the renowned lyrical poets.
8. What is an ode?

2.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

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1. William Wordsworth is usually considered to be the 'high priest of nature'.
2. Keats was also a great lover of nature. But his love nature not for her spiritual significance or due to deep messages that was conveyed by her, but also for the sensuous pleasures that was offered by her.
3. The movement called realism began in the late 19th century.
4. Majority of the realistic writers attempted to provide an objective perception of life. These writers focused on using descriptive language which was meant to trigger the senses - sights and sounds. They created an ambience that suggested meaning. Yet, at the same time, they avoided explaining the meaning of a scene or interpreting the significance of a situation.
5. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1819) and *The Cenci* (1819) were highly inspired by the French Revolution.
6. Almost all the Romantic dramas were composed in blank verse.
7. Some of the renowned lyrical poets are as follows:
   - Sappho: 630 BC – 580 BC
   - Percy Bysshe Shelley: 1792 – 1822
8. An ode is a form of lyric poetry which is based on a grave theme and follows a definite structure.

2.8 SUMMARY

- The Romantic period was not just restricted to England. Romanticism could be experienced in most of the western countries between the late 18th century and the early part of the 19th century.
- The Romantic period of English literature mainly witnessed growth in poetry. A vast majority of the composition can be credited to William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, P. B. Shelley, Lord Byron and John Keats.
- William Wordsworth is usually considered to be the 'high priest of nature'. For Wordsworth, nature was the epicentre of everything.
- There is no denying that even for Coleridge the approach to nature was in a lot of way similar to Wordsworth especially in the initial phase of his poetic career.
- Just like his Romantic contemporaries, Keats was also a great lover of nature. But Keats did not love nature not for her spiritual significance or due to deep messages that was conveyed by her, but also for the sensuous pleasures that was offered by her.

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- The movement called realism began in the late 19th century.
- With the arrival of the 19th century, industrialisation and urbanization brought some significant changes in social and economic aspect of life. One could see a distinct divide between the rich and poor.
- The need for a new literature was obvious. And this literature was expected to reflect the lives of the people.
- One of the major characteristics of realism was to focus on the common life of average, ordinary men.
- Romantic drama came into surface during a period of revolutionary thought as well as action. That is why the plays written during this period are based on the historical as well as social milieu that was present at that point of time.
- The Romantic perspective to drama was that theatre was the platform which symbolized national unity. They did so by instilling patriotism or morality or sympathetic identification.
- Lyric speakers are symbolized as poets who see themselves in a world of loneliness. However, in dramatic lyrics, nevertheless, the speaker of a lyric poem is denoted as speaking to another person in a particular condition or circumstance.
- The rise of lyric poetry in Russia during the early 19th century can be largely attributed to Aleksandr Pushkin.
- An ode is a verse written in lyrical form in admiration of an individual, a particular happening or a thing.
- The ode form of lyric poetry has been at an exalted position in the history of English literature.

2.9 KEY WORDS

- **Realism:** It is a style of writing, art, or film that shows things as they are in life.
- **Ode:** It is a lyric poem, typically one in the form of an address to a particular subject, written in varied or irregular metre.
- **Lyric:** It means a poem expressing the writer's emotions, usually briefly and in stanzas or recognized forms.
- **Poetic Diction:** It is the term used to refer to the linguistic style, the vocabulary, and the metaphors used in the writing of poetry.
- **Neoclassical Age:** It refers to the 18 century literary period where writers tried to imitate the style of the Romans and Greeks.

2.10 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on introversion.
2. Briefly discuss the reasons for the decline of drama during the Romantic period.
3. Mention the development of lyric poetry in the 16th century.
4. What is a Horatian ode?
5. What is the importance of odes in English literature?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe Wordsworth's opinion on nature.
2. Differentiate between Shelley's and Keat's opinion on nature.
3. Explain the reasons for the rise of realism.
4. What are the various types of odes? Discuss.

2.11 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 WOMEN'S WRITING AND THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

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Structure

3.0 INTRODUCTION

As you have learnt, the 18th century saw the rise of a new literature in England. This was called the 'Romantic Literature' or Romanticism. In so many ways, this movement was completely opposite to many existing ideas held in the previous ages. The Romantics wanted to change the social world as this would in their opinion make people happier. This movement resulted in proposing many types of reforms which included, among others, reforms in the criminal system with better and safer jails, reduction in the severity of sentencing, lesser capital punishment, and the like. It was also suggested that there should be more charity to decrease the hardships of the poor. The period also saw the emergence of women's writing in a big way as well as the emergence of the historical novel. We will discuss these issues in the unit. However, we will begin with an examination of the Romantic period's theory of poetic diction.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction
- Describe women's writing and the spread of education
- Explain the evolution of the historical novel

3.2 THEORY OF POETIC DICTION

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Poetic diction means style of writing which is used by poet in poetry like the communication style, frame of reference, and use of tropical language-normally metaphors. In the 'Preface' to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth explores his theory of poetic diction and provides his readers with the essential principles of poetry.

Poetic Diction

Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction, as put forward in the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, invited a lot of controversy in the Romantic Age and afterwards. It is true that his views of poetic diction were not so much criticized as his practical application of the theory in his own poems. Wordsworth was against his predecessors—the eighteenth century poets—for their use of stylistic devices and, in particular, figures of speech and poetic diction in general. He thought it neither suited their creative output nor the period in which they were writing.

Wordsworth was of the view that there can be no general poetic style which all poets could follow, as each poet possess a mode of experience peculiar to him. That experience should find expression in the language, which is best suited to put forward that experience to the readers. The classical poets naturally wrote in a figurative language for it suited their themes and the age in which they were writing.

The eighteenth century poets, according to Wordsworth, consciously imitated the classical model of writing and consequently, invited artificiality into their diction. He thus rejected the stereotypical, artificial and stagnant poetic diction of his predecessors. Moreover, he asserted that his poetry will be in the language of men, the language of the rustic, as their language, which is similar to their way of living, is not artificial and most natural. Wordsworth writes:

> Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, 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 condition of life our elementary feelings co-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 condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.
>
> The language, too, of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions.

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> Accordingly, such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for by the 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.

Moreover, Wordsworth felt that the language of poetry does not differ much from good prose. He mentions:

> The language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the meter, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose, when prose is well written ... the language of prose may yet be well adapted to poetry; and I have previously asserted that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good prose. I will go further, I do not doubt that it may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.

As the aim of poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with pleasure, the regularity provided by a particular rhythm functions to temper the feelings generated. Similarly, meter can also function to mitigate the more pathetic situations and sentiments. Thus, Wordsworth expresses his reservations about the artificiality of meter and, particularly, of rhyme. They, however, temper and restrain 'the passions' and contribute to regularity of effect.

Review of the Preface

The years between 1650 to 1770 were of neo-classical dominance in English literature. The change began in 1770 and, in 1798, with the publication of Wordsworth's 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, the form and content of poetry changed altogether. 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* marked the beginning of Romantic criticism. It was an end of the creed of authority as the canonical treatise on poetry dealt with the questions like, 'what is poetry', 'nature of poetry', and 'creative process' in a newer way—a way that marked a definite break from the neoclassical thought process.

Romantic theory of poetry, and primarily that of Wordsworth, attaches value to subjective experiences and to personal feelings, emotions and passions. Reacting against the artificiality of the poetry of the eighteenth century, Wordsworth promotes simplicity, both in the theme and form of poetry. As mentioned previously, Wordsworth is of the opinion that the subject of poetry should be taken from the humble and rustic life and presented to the readers in the language of common men. Thus, the common man of humble and rustic origin is the chief concern of Wordsworth in his poems. 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* is not merely a statement of the theme and nature of poetry, but shows Wordsworth making a declaration of the Romantic creed, where 'spontaneity' is the key word. When Wordsworth defines poetry as 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in

tranquility', he is saying that poetry should not be pre-meditated, and in poetry, emotion should be privileged over rationality.

For Wordsworth, poetry is 'the most philosophic of writing' for in it the general truth and essential laws of the universe and human existence find their expression. Juxtaposing poetry against science, Wordsworth says that, as against the practicality of science, poetry is an instrument of truth that does not need external validity—it is its 'own testimony'. Wordsworth says:

> Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing. It is so: Its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony … Poetry is the image of man and nature. The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information, which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things; between this, and the biographer and historian, there are a thousand.

Thus, a poet, for Wordsworth, is a specially gifted individual, out of the ordinary in his perception. His ability to feel ' … affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present … and a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels …'. Thus, for Wordsworth, the poet is a genius, an extraordinary individual who has the capability in him to perceive the ideal, which the common people do not have. It is this characteristic of the poet that makes him see extraordinary things and present it to the readers for their pleasure. T. S. Eliot vehemently criticizes this Wordsworthian theory of the poet and his poetry in his critical essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'.

3.3 WOMEN'S WRITING AND THE SPREAD OF EDUCATION

In the late 19th century, women received education in an extremely limited form. During the Romantic period, as witnessed by the British literature of the time, one can say that society was beginning to debate over the exact role of women. We had male poets and writers who were discussing about the change of role that women had been experiencing. The Romantic period was not just about men discussing about women, the age also saw the rise in number of female writers who were discussing about their thoughts and experiences as women in society. They used language which was easy to understand and was more aligned to their experiences. They insisted on an egalitarian treatment that must be extended to them by individuals as well as by society. This discourse was possible because many women during this period got an opportunity to have an access to those branches of knowledge which were considered to be extremely masculine. Women writers of the period insisted that women should be given more autonomy and rights. But there were other female advocates who insisted that the existing social

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norms were appropriate and women should not think of breaking the social norms. Women were informally taught how to take care of domestic manuals and pay attention to the sentimental novel. At times they were also taught in schools which were exclusively for a female specific education. Irrespective of whether a lady undertook formal or informal education, the core idea of imparting education to women was to teach them to behave within the restricted code of conduct as identified by society. Genderization was so intense that subjects like classical studies, economics or politics or history was supposed to be undertaken only by men as they were considered to be of superior intellect. Women belonging to the upper class as well as to the middle class were expected to be polished and sophisticated enough to attract a prospective husband from their class. In addition to conduct manuals, women were also given lessons in music, sewing and arts. Women were given additional training in how to be a proper wife and mother. And they were specifically trained in discharging domestic responsibilities to perfection. Many women did not approve of this domesticated education that was provided to them. They insisted that women must be taught because without knowledge it was impossible for anyone to judge rationally or uphold the standards of morality that was set by the society.

During the Romantic age, one comes across a number of women who belonged to both the conservative as well as to the radical position. But each of them insisted on the need of education for women. Women writers of the age promoted the idea that education for women are important as it helped them grow as an individual and explore their full potential. There were other female voices who were not open for such a radical change in the lives of women, but they still promoted the idea of betterment of the women. Their argument was that if one is considering a change in the pattern of education, than women should be trained more practically then what they were at that point of time. The conservative line of thinkers who championed for reform insisted that education provided to women should be aimed at teaching than how to fulfil their domestic as well as moral and religious duties; and it should not be confined only to attracting a good husband. Maria Edgeworth in her seminal work *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1790), argued that setting social limitations while imparting education only interrupts the development of intellectual faculties and insisted that women should avoid taking education only with the aim of having a good future with a prospective husband.

The Romantic Age is also known for the emergence of many radical female voices who insisted on sharing education on the basis of intellect and knowledge. These radical female vices did not demand for an education which was equal to that of men, but they insisted that the curriculum should be revised and e improved to make women better equipped to handle the world around them. Catharine Macaulay in her *Letters on Education* (1790) promoted the idea that education should be gender neutral. She argued that education should not be provided on the basis of gender, rather it should be on the basis of reason. Others argued that denying education to women was as good as keeping them as slaves or as

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domesticated creature. In this context we must remember two names who were extremely vocal about providing education to women: Mary Darby Robinson and Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary Darby Robinson in her *A Letter to the Women of England, on the Injustice of Mental Subordination* (1799) insisted on providing education to women in a similar league as men because otherwise women were as good as being enslaved. On the other hand, Mary Wollstonecraft insisted that the current system of education was such that women would never be able to grow into mature individuals and remain in a perpetual state of childhood. While trying to fight for better rights, people argued that the idea of feminine equality follows from the rational perspective that the age was speaking about individual liberties.

Mary Wollstonecraft in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* asks if it is 'not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner best calculated to promote their happiness? Who made man the exclusive judge, if women partake with him the gift of reason?' Wollstonecraft insisted that society was being intentionally unjust to the women around. After all, a woman 'had no political rights, were limited to a few lowly vocations… and were legally nonpersons who lost their property to their husbands at marriage and were incapable of instituting an action in the courts of law'. This was a legal procedure and it was identified as coverture. She went on to argue that such social constraint has negative impact both on men and women. Since women were expected to be accomplished only in a personal and limited space, men would invariably go around looking for pleasure elsewhere. Thus, having a faithless husband would become an excuse for the wife to become faithless as well. This in turn will lead to a society which is struggling with moral and ethical order and would make one question about individual freedom and universal happiness. Mary Wollstonecraft insisted that a woman should be rationally explained why she is expected to behave in a certain way otherwise the whole purpose of education would be considered futile. Wollstonecraft strongly advocated that one of the major reasons for social dysfunction was the fact that a large segment of the population (women) was not educated properly.

Due to their limited understanding of the world around them women were not in a position to understand their partner or be at par with their husband's intellectual ability. Wollstonecraft goes on to argue that she had undertaken a major research on the subject of education and has understood from her engagement with parents as well in schools that 'neglecting the education of women' has its own negative consequences on the society and leads to misery of women. Wollstonecraft argued that woman spent the initial years of their life trying to get accomplished in things which would bring them a good husband. As a result women do not think of establishing themselves and go on to behave as children do by dressing properly acting properly and remembering god as and when required. Wollstonecraft was severely criticized by her male peers. Horace Walpole remarked that Wollstonecraft 'was a hyena in petticoats'. Her intentions were further put on scanner after her unexpected death. After Wollstonecraft's death, her husband

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William Godwin released a book which contained information about her various love affairs, an illegitimate child, as well as her attempts to commit suicide. This led the people to believe that her unorthodox way of life was definitely not supporting the idea that education and knowledge can make a woman morally binding. But without doubt it is through Wollstonecraft's influential body of work that the idea of providing systematic education to women was popularized.

Some women from the Romantic age who were in support of providing better education to women actually addressed their opinion to their male counterparts instead of raising it as a generic concern. They did this under the impression that a learned man would find some sense into what they are trying to convey. For example, Mary Hays in her work *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain* (1798) opines that only a mother who has been educated properly will be in a position to impart proper education to the next generation, helping the nation towards the path of prosperity. Irrespective of their point of view -conservative or radical- there is no denying that women of the Romantic age contributed a lot towards strengthening the education of women and argued for improving the system of female education. Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth, and Mary Darcy Robinson were vocal about providing women with more autonomy, while people like Anna Letitia Barbauld were in favour of the restricting social pattern.

Mary Wollstonecraft's influence went on long after she died. In her *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795) Maria Edgeworth reiterated this idea through her essays which was written in the format of letter that was exchanged between her contemporaries. The 'Letter from a Gentleman' talks about a gentleman and his friend arguing about the merits of educating daughters. Edgeworth was one of the many voices that spoke about the need of having educated women in the society. At the same time, there were prominent writers like Anna Letitia Barbauld who insisted that this point of view is not healthy for the society. In her poem *The Rights of Women* Barbauld opposes the ideas proposed in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Barbauld writes:

> Yes, injured Woman! Rise, assert thy right!
>
> Woman! Too long degraded, scorned, opprest;
>
> O born to rule in partial Law's despite
>
> Resume the native empire o'er the breast! (1-4)
>
> By the time we reach the middle of the poem we can see a change of tone:
>
> all that wit and art suggest to bend
>
> Of thy imperial foe the stubborn knee;
>
> Make treacherous Man thy subject, not thy friend;
>
> Thou mayest command, but never canst be free. (17-20)

Mary Robinson spoke about the ways in which society treated men and women differently. In fact, she went on to speak how if a women's reputation is tarnished she has no way of redeeming it. On the other hand, a man is not judged in such harsh manner by the society. In her work, Robinson mentions that 'what in

man is laudable; in woman is deemed reprehensible, if not preposterous. What in man is noble daring, in woman is considered as the most vindictive persecution… The dastardly offender triumphs with impunity, because he is the noble creature man, and she a defenceless, persecuted woman'.

Thus, in the Romantic era, discussions ranging from women's rights to individual autonomy to democracy were discussed to bring a balance in the existing social norms. Women indeed felt it was important to express themselves to identify and highlight the social evils. On the other hand, these discussions paved way for the efforts to bring change that one would witness in the Victorian era and even hundreds of years after that.

Check Your Progress

1. What is poetic diction?
2. What does Maria Edgeworth in her seminal work *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1790), argue?

3.4 THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

The historical novel is that which uses setting or background from the true history of a period and attempts to convey the spirit, manners, social, economic and political conditions of that age aiming to give realistic and lively descriptions with truthful approach. The historical fact should be true to its existence and the past is made live to the doorstep of the readers. It informs the readers about the period in which it is written. *The Wolf Hall* by Hilary Mantel deals with the period of Cromwell and King Henry VIII. Thus, the tradition of the historical novel has not died.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) was also an attempt in the picaresquian and historical representation of the hero. The German author Benedikte Naubert (1756–1819) wrote around fifty historical novels. In technique, he focused his attention on the person of minor historical significance and explained the incidents and events which they experienced. The same trend was followed by Sir Walter Scott, the greatest of all English novelists of this genre. The historical novels began as a literary form of art in the nineteenth century England by Sir Walter Scott. Though Horace Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe tried to base their Gothic historically, but their knowledge of history failed to give a true historical charm to their stories. For historical representation of an event or person should be based on true facts.

Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) was a notable Scottish writer of historical novel. He had explored the works of Shakespeare, the Bible, Spenser, Dryden, Swift, and historical stories greatly. He was the first English writer who had an international career and had his followers in Europe, Australia, North America, etc. He was also a poet and playwright at the same time. Scott had worked throughout his life to revive the history of Scotland. Not only did he revive his

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country's historical past, but also made it live and presentable to the readers. He had studied his culture deeply and had lively imagination to support the true facts. In other words, he made history live and walk in his times: he took rather real men from history and the dates and transformed them into an imaginary literature. The stories which were dry and uninteresting as merely had happened once, he made them live and colourful. But he did not transcend his time like Walpole but remained there making the ghosts live in his days. As Prospero controlled spirits, Walter Scott called the dead historical figures to live and breathe. He had explored a lot in history. He was a voracious reader. Since he picked up history as his setting and filled in his ideas to live those men and women, his fictions are called historical romance.

He began by translating works from German and first published his three–volume set of collected ballads, 'The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border'. This at once made him popular. Since then he delved deep into the historical past of Scotland to revive it in the memory of his generation. His historical figures of Scotland were men and women who were not famous. They were minor historical figures. This might be the influence of his age as the entire age of romanticism sought its refuge in humanism and uplift of the society.

As a novelist he had a wide range and his novels are popularly termed as 'Waverley Novel'. They are a long series of publications. He did not write his name on his first venture as a novelist called *Waverley* (1814). Later too, he used this phrase to denote his identification, 'by the author of Waverley', instead of his name. *Waverley* (1814) is a tale of the Jacobite rising of 1745 in the Kingdom of Great Britain. The hero is Edward Waverley who had been bought up in the Tory family and so, he was sympathetic to Jacobite's cause. His novels became very popular. The time when he began writing, he became a popular subject of conversation in England and was a famous name at the Royal family because George, Prince Regent invited and dined with him. He was anxious to see the author of Waverley. Scott's central interest was a subject related to chronicle. He did not centralise the novel on a certain character but on a historical period or event. As a novelist, his range is surprising for he wrote incessantly.

In 1819, he chose a subject that related to England and not specifically Scotland in his *Ivanhoe*. This novel is about a Jew called Rebecca who is a sympathetic character. The novel came at the time of struggle for the Emancipation of the Jews in England. His *The Bride of the Lammermoor* is based on a real story of two lovers in the backdrop of Lammermuir Hills. In this novel, Lucie Ashton and Edgar Ravenswood promise each other in love but it is later discovered by Lucie's mother that the man is the enemy of their family. She forces her daughter to marry Sir Arthur Bucklaw, a rich inheritor. But Lucie, on her wedding ceremony stabs her groom, becomes mad and dies. Scott was a very famous author throughout his life and career as a novelist. He was popularly read and liked throughout the world. He was granted the title of Baronet for his excessive popularity and was regarded very much everywhere. He became Sir Walter Scott in 1820. In service

to his country, he organised the visit of King George IV to Scotland. He was a man on whom the glory of the importance of Scottish literature rests.

It was in 1827 that he announced himself as a writer of *Waverley*. The following may be considered among his famous novels: *Waverley* (1814), *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816), *Tales of My Landlord* (1816–1818), *Rob Roy* (1818), *Ivanhoe* (1819), *The Abbot* (1820), *Kenilworth* (1821), *The Talisman* (1825), *Scottish Borders*, *The Fair Maid of Perth* (1828), *Anne of Geierstein* (1829), *Count Robert of Paris* (1831), *Castle Dangerous* (1831), etc. The name Waverley which Scott chose for his title for the long series of publications is a local government district in the status of borough in Surrey, England. Through his novels Scott aimed at exploring history of the middle ages. Scott had also established a printing press. He was equally famous in the US in his times. Mark Twain, a popular American novelist, ridiculed Scott in his *Huckleberry Finn* by calling a sinking boat as Walter Scott.

There have been critics who have praised and regarded his works optimistically but there were those who wrote against his popularity. In his lifetime, Scott was one of the most famous novelists of the world. He always served his country and men. He often fought for public causes. He never bores the readers by repetition. He did not describe his characters psychologically. He did not portray the troubles inherent in our life. His characters are often accused of being important only in the context of history but he himself condemns them by calling Waverley a 'sneaking piece of imbecility'. He did not care much for plot. But in the words of Leslie Stephen, he 'is the most perfectly delightful story-teller natural by fire-side'.

The period after Scott: Scott laid down the foundation of historical fictions in England but it spread its luminous wings towards countries such as France and Germany influenced by him. In England, Mrs. Anna Eliza Bray came to be known as Scott's successor whose novel, *The Protestant* (1828) picturizes the persecution of the Protestants in the reign of Queen Mary Tudor. G R P James was also a famous minor writer who wrote almost hundred historical novels in the period of 1825 to 1850. William Harrison Ainsworth (1805-1882) was also a popular novelist for two decades who first work was *Rockwood* (1834). Bulwar Lytton (1803-1873) wrote five historical novels among which *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) was the most popular. He stuck to moral instruction and historical truth in all his works. His historical novels therefore, are mere representation of facts and they are not as lively as Scott's. His novels are full of historical accuracy and details.

Some Victorian history novel writers used the theme of history for the sake of sectarian bias. Charles Kingsley's (1819-1875) *Hypatia* (1853) attacked the Roman Catholics. Newman's fiction called *Callista: A Sketch of the Third Century* represented the same kind. Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* (1852) is also a chronicle novel about the life of the eighteenth century England. Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Barnaby Rudge* are also the novels of this genre. George Eliot's *Romola* describes the life of Italy in the period of Renaissance. In the

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twentieth century, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (1863-1944) wrote *Hetty Wesley* (1903) and *The Splendid Spur* (1889); Jacob Wassermann (1873-1934) wrote *The Triumph of Youth*; Ford Madox Hueffer (1873-1939) wrote *The Fifth Queen* (1908); Ms Phoebe Gay wrote *Vivandiere* (1929), etc.

3.5 MAJOR NOVELISTS IN THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

Although not as lofty and transcendental as its poetry, the novels of the Romantic Movement certainly made a departure from the novels of the Neo-classical era. The Romantic novel was preceded by the semi-romantic Gothic novel during the last quarter of the 18th century. Walter Scott is considered to be the first Romantic novelist who is known for his novels *Waverley, The Bride of Lammermoor, Old Mortality, The Talisman,* etc. He can be credited for creating the historical novel, since all historical novelists are considered to be the followers of Scott. The following is a brief profile of the important novelists of this era.

Jane Austen

Jane Austen (1775–1817) did for the English novel precisely what the Lake Poets did for English poetry. One of the ways in which Jane Austen is different from other 18th century novelists is that she does not share their standard picaresque form and comic epic in prose. On the contrary, she does not employ the elements of mock-heroic and picaresque, which are the hallmarks of the 18th century novel. The primacies of emotion, preference for the marriage of love, urge for adventure, attraction for the uncommon and above all the superiority of sensibility in the novels of Jane Austen are definitely romantic traits. Austen's major novels include *Sense and Sensibility* (1797–98), published in 1811; *Pride and Prejudice* (1796–97), published in 1813; *Northanger Abbey* (1798), published in 1818; *Persuasion* (1815–16), published in 1818; *Mansfield Park* (1811–13), published in 1814 and *Emma* (1815), published in 1816, all of which are dominated by female protagonists, and are primarily concerned with the twin themes of love and marriage.

What stands out conspicuously in Austen's novels is her central concern with the inner life of her characters, rather than their external interests. Beneath the outward pursuit of marriage, security and status, the driving force in her female protagonists is always the inner human urges for a delicate life of sense and emotion, peace and harmony.

Maria Edgeworth

Another notable woman novelist of the Romantic Movement was Maria Edgeworth whose *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and *Belinda* (1801) are famous. Like Jane Austen, she limited her focus to the landed gentry and gave birth to the 'provincial novel' or the 'local colour novel'. However, unlike Jane Austen, her male characters are

generally dissolute, destroying themselves through drink addiction or rash and impulsive behaviour. While the landed gentry in her novels betray decay and degeneration, the servants and peasants reveal the virtues of honesty, fortitude and hard work. And quite appropriately, while the gentry falls, the peasantry rises.

Jane Porter and Mary Shelley

A minor historical romancer or novelist of the Romantic Movement was Jane Porter whose *The Scottish Chief* (1810) remained one of the most popular novels of the century. Loaded in the medieval past, the novel portrays the life of a historical personality, whose politics involves the kingdoms of various continental countries, including England and France. Following in the footsteps of Scott, Porter focuses on high adventures and colourful descriptions, and lends the novel an appeal through its emotional fervour and picturesque scenes.

Another woman novelist of the Romantic Movement was Mary Shelley whose *Frankenstein* (1818) and *The Last Man* (1826) became famous as horror novels, but can now be viewed as the prototypes respectively of 'science fiction' and the 'dystopian novel'. While *Frankenstein* depicts the horrifying events of the man-like creations of the scientist Frankenstein, marked by treachery and self-destruction, *The Last Man* portrays total extermination of mankind by plague in the year 2973 with the singular exception of the last man, who suffers in loneliness and imagination.

William Godwin

William Godwin (3 March 1756–7 April 1836) was an English journalist, political philosopher and novelist. He endorsed utilitarianism, and can be rightly considered as the first modern proponent of anarchism. Godwin's (Refer to Figure 1.37) known for works such as *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice,* a work that attacks political institutions, and *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, which attacks aristocratic privilege, but also is the first mystery novel. Godwin wrote quite a lot in the genres of novels, history and demography throughout his lifetime. With his second wife, Mary Jane Clairmont, he wrote children's primers on biblical and classical history, which he published along with such works as Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. He used the pseudonym *Edward Baldwin* and wrote several books for children, including a version of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. He also has had considerable influence on British literature and literary culture.

Check Your Progress

3. What is a historical novel?
4. What was the name of Jane Porter's most famous work?

3.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

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1. Poetic diction means style of writing which is used by poet in poetry like the communication style, frame of reference, and use of tropical language-normally metaphors.
2. Maria Edgeworth in her seminal work *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1790), argued that setting social limitations while imparting education only interrupts the development of intellectual faculties and insisted that women should avoid taking education only with the aim of having a good future with a prospective husband
3. The historical novel is that which uses setting or background from the true history of a period and attempts to convey the spirit, manners, social, economic and political conditions of that age aiming to give realistic and lively descriptions with truthful approach.
4. A minor historical romancer or novelist of the Romantic Movement was Jane Porter whose *The Scottish Chief* (1810) remained one of the most popular novels of the century.

3.7 SUMMARY

- Poetic diction means style of writing which is used by poet in poetry like the communication style, frame of reference, and use of tropical language-normally metaphors.
- In the 'Preface' to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth explores his theory of poetic diction and provides his readers with the essential principles of poetry.
- Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction, as put forward in the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, invited a lot of controversy in the Romantic Age and afterwards.
- The eighteenth century poets, according to Wordsworth, consciously imitated the classical model of writing and consequently, invited artificiality into their diction.
- Romantic theory of poetry, and primarily that of Wordsworth, attaches value to subjective experiences and to personal feelings, emotions and passions.
- In the late 19th century, women received education in an extremely limited form.
- During the Romantic period, as witnessed by the British literature of the time, one can say that society was beginning to debate over the exact role of women.

- During the Romantic age, one comes across a number of women who belonged to both the conservative as well as to the radical position. But each of them insisted on the need of education for women.
- According to Wollstonecraft, due to their limited understanding of the world around them women were not in a position to understand their partner or be at par with their husband's intellectual ability.
- Mary Robinson spoke about the ways in which society treated men and women differently. In fact, she went on to speak how if a women's reputation is tarnished she has no way of redeeming it.
- The historical novel is that which uses setting or background from the true history of a period and attempts to convey the spirit, manners, social, economic and political conditions of that age aiming to give realistic and lively descriptions with truthful approach.
- The historical fact should be true to its existence and the past is made live to the doorstep of the readers. It informs the readers about the period in which it is written.
- Walter Scott is considered to be the first Romantic novelist who is known for his novels *Waverley, The Bride of Lammermoor, Old Mortality, The Talisman*, etc.

3.8 KEY WORDS

- **Gothic Novel:** It refers to an English genre of fiction popular in the 18th to early 19th centuries, characterized by an atmosphere of mystery and horror and having a pseudo-medieval setting.
- **Historical Novel:** It refers to a novel that has as its setting a period of history and that attempts to convey the spirit, manners, and social conditions of a past age with realistic detail and fidelity to historical fact.
- **Rustic:** It means something relating to the countryside; rural.
- **Protagonists:** It refers to the leading character or one of the major characters in a play, film, novel, etc.

3.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the 'Preface' of the *Lyrical Ballads*.
2. What was Wollstonecraft's argument in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*?
3. Name the famous works of three novelists of the Romantic period.

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Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction.
2. Examine women's writing in the beginning of the 19th century.
3. Describe the development of the historical novel.

3.10 FURTHER READINGS

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BLOCK – II
POETRY-I

UNIT 4 THOMAS GREY'S *ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD*

Structure

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you were introduced to Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction, as well as the emergence of the historical novel. This unit will discuss Thomas Grey's *Elegy Written in A Country Churchyard*.

Thomas Gray is generally considered the second most important poet of the eighteenth century (following the dominant figure of Alexander Pope). His poems deal with themes such as death, afterlife, hopelessness and vanity of life. Gray's prominent poems include *The Progress of Poesy*, *On a Favourite Cat*, *Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes* and *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Summarise Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*
- Critically analyse Gray's poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

4.2 *ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD*

Thomas Gray was born in Cornhill, London, on 26 December 1716. He went to Eton College where his uncle was a teacher. Reminiscing his wonderful days at

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Eton College, he later wrote *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.* Gray was a delicate and intelligent child who loved reading literature. During this time, he made three close friends—Horace Walpole, Thomas Ashton, and Richard West.

Gray moved to Peterhouse, Cambridge, in 1734. He did not like the curriculum, teachers and his classmates at Peterhouse. He found the curriculum boring, teachers 'mad with Pride' and his classmates 'sleepy, drunken, dull, illiterate Things'. Though he took admission as a law student, yet he spent most of his time reading classical and contemporary literature.

It was in 1742 that he took poetry writing seriously after losing his close friend Stacy James Ruffer. He went to Cambridge and began a self-imposed programme of literary study. He turned out to be one of the most learned men of this period, though he called himself lazy. He became a Fellow of Peterhouse and later of Pembroke College, Cambridge. He spent most of his life as a scholar in Cambridge. Interestingly, he is considered a leading poet of the mid eighteenth century even though his published work during his lifetime amounts to less than 1,000 lines. He was offered the post of Poet Laureate in 1757, which he declined.

He was also known to be extremely self-critical and afraid of failures so much so that he published only thirteen poems throughout his lifetime. It is believed that the poet started writing his most popular poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* in 1742 soon after the death of his close friend. However, he completed the poem in 1751 and it was soon published. The poem immediately turned out to be a literary sensation and is still considered as one of the most popular poems of English language. Some of the popular phrases used in this poem are 'the paths of glory', 'celestial fire', 'kindred spirit', 'the unlettered muse', 'far from the madding crowd' and 'some mute inglorious Milton'. His poems exhibit his sharp observation and mischievous sense of humour. He died on 30 July 1771 in Cambridge.

Some of his popular poems are:

- *The Progress of Poesy (1754)*
- *The Bard: A Pindaric Ode*
- *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat*
- *On a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes (1748)*
- *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College (1742)*
- *Sonnet on the Death of Richard West (1742)*
- *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (1751)*

Elegy Written in the Country Churchyard—The Poem

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:
Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.
Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.
The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.
For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share,
Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!
Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the Poor.
The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:-
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.
Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.
Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,

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Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?
Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre:
But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Analysis

An elegy is a form of a poem which is usually written to mourn the dead or renowned people. It does not tell a story but expresses feelings of sorrow. It admires the deceased person and describes the implications of his death on his loved ones. However, in *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, Gray mourns the death of common people. It puts common people on the pedestal and applauds them. The poet believes that death does not differentiate between renowned and common people. He wonders if there are any ordinary people buried in the churchyard whose talents could not be discovered by anyone. This thought encourages the poet to appreciate common people who have lived simple and honest lives.

The poem has the characteristics of Augustan as well as Romantic poetry since it was written towards the end of Augustan age, a period which marked the beginning of Romantic period. The poem exhibits balanced phrasing of Augustan age and emotionalism of Romantic era.

It is believed that Gray began writing this elegy in 1742 in the graveyard of a church in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, and completed it in 1751. The poem was first published in 1751 and its improved versions were published in 1753, 1758 and 1768. The poem is written in iambic pentameter and heroic quatrains. It is considered to be one of the masterpieces by Thomas Gray.

In the opening lines of the poem, the poet observes signs which depict that a country day is coming to a close. Some of these signs are a curfew bell knelling, cattle across the field and a farmer going back home. After sometime, the poet feels lonely and thinks about the isolated rural landscape. 'Knell' is a sound of a bell, especially, when it is rung solemnly to announce a death or funeral. Thus, the poet uses this word in the first line of the poem deliberately to remind the readers about the mortality of human life.

The sober tone is maintained by the poet even in the second stanza. However, it is important to note that the poet seems to be meditative and not sad at this point. He describes the quiet atmosphere around him after the day has come to a close by using phrases like 'fades the glimmering landscape', 'air a solemn stillness' and 'drowsy tinklings'. Then, an owl's sound breaks the silence of the atmosphere. The owl is sad and complains to the moon. In the first three stanzas, the poet does

not make any direct reference to funeral and death but indirectly prepares the atmosphere for funeral by describing some doleful sounds.

In the fourth stanza, the poet draws our attention to the graves in the country churchyard. The poet describes the load of earth and brings out the fact that even the earth has to be disrupted for digging a grave. The poet inverts the sentence from 'Where heaves the turf' to 'Where the turf heaves' in order to depict that the earth has already been disrupted. However, this disruption does not affect 'rude Forefathers' buried beneath the earth. They seem to be unmoved and at peace. The poet tells us that they are in 'cells'. Here the word 'cells' connotes quietness of the graveyard and that they are in deep 'sleep'.

Here the poet reminds us that the forefathers would not rise from their 'lowly beds' even after hearing 'cock's shrill clarion'. The phrase 'lowly beds' connotes humble graves and humble lives that they have lived. The poet also reminds us that they would not be able to hear the satisfying sounds of country life and would not be able to enjoy the joy that family life brings, such as the joy which a father feels when his children 'climb his knees'.

In addition, the poet also states that forefathers lying in the graves would not be able to enjoy the pleasures of working in the fields. A poem that deals with practical aspects of agriculture and rural affairs is called georgic verse. This stanza brings out the element of georgic verse in the poem, a verse that was quite popular in the eighteenth century. This relation of a farmer with soil also brings out the link of a man with nature. The element of nature was one of the major characteristics of Romantic poetry.

Further, the poet warns the rich and powerful people not to scorn the ordinary people just because they are not popular and do not have annals written on their graves. Here he reminds the rich people that they would also die one day irrespective of the fact that they are wealthy and have a respectable position in the society.

He also tells the rich that they should not look down upon the modest graves of the ordinary people. He also implies that even though the powerful people have elaborate graves with profuse memorials and inspiring honours but these do not help in bringing them back to life. Their merits in life would not save them from death. He uses the phrase 'Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust, Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?'. In these lines, Gray personifies flattery and death as if death has a will which cannot be changed even with the help of flattery.

Gray then wonders about the hidden talents and intellectual abilities of the common people. He states that they might have become powerful people or great poets but there was no one to patronize them. Their lack of resources forced them to resort to rustic life and forget all their ambitions.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,

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And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.
Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,
Their lot forbad: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,
The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.
Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenour of their way.
Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.
Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.
For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?
On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.
For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,

Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate, —
Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upl
'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high.
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.
'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.
'One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath, and near his favourite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;
'The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne,-
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'
The Epitaph
Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melacholy marked him for her own.
Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.
No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dreaabode
(There they alike in trembling hope repose),
The bosom of his Father and his God.

The poet compares common people to pearls and gems that lay deep down in the oceans and are unseen. He also compares them to flowers in jungles which fade away unnoticed.

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In the past, these graveyards gave shelter to Hampden when he faced Charles I. Thus, these graveyards may help such heroes even in the future. He again reminds us of the talents of these common people. He believes that among these graves lay people whose talents might be equivalent to those of Milton and Cromwell. Some of them perhaps deserved to be great legislators and were capable of bringing prosperity to their country. But he is also of the opinion that though their poverty stopped them from prospering, it also helped them by stopping them from committing crimes like killing their own brothers for the throne.

Some ambitious people tried to gain patronage by flattering their patrons. People who did not do such things and died unknown were at least saved from 'killing their conscience' to get patronage. The poet is happy about the fact that villagers are away from the hustle and bustle of city life where people cherish high ambitions and spend their lives hankering for prosperity, power and fame. He is happy that villagers are able to spend a peaceful life.

Though the graves of these people are not elaborately ornamented and are not full of rhymes of praise like the graves of the rich people yet some records of their lives and few sayings from the Bible are written on their graves. These sayings might have been written by some educated people of the village so that other people can praise these deceased people. The Bible inscriptions perhaps help these people embrace death cheerfully.

After this, Gray explains the reasons for raising memorials. He tells us that memorials are raised because people spend their lives struggling therefore, they wish to be remembered after death. According to the poet, even parting souls wish their loved ones to cry for them and want praises to be written on their tombs.

Now, the poet wonders about his own death. He wonders what would happen if his loved ones inquire about him from the villagers after he dies. The poet imagines that if this happens then some peasant might tell them that he was usually found walking around this area. He also visualizes that some peasant might tell them that he could not be seen around the hills, trees and lawn, where he was usually found, for two consecutive days and the next day his corpse with lamentation was carried to the church.

Then the peasant might say that he is now in the lap of the earth. He might praise the poet that he was not fortunate enough to get fame and wealth during his lifetime but he was a knowledgeable person in spite of the fact that he was born in a modest family. The peasant might feel sad about the fact that the poet was devoid of happiness during his lifetime. But he might praise him as a sincere soul who was charitable and liberal in approach and helped poor people with his limited resources.

He then says that no one might then even ask about his merits and faults because God is the one who would reward him for his good deeds and punish him for his bad deeds on the Judgment Day. Thus, the elegy ends on a note of contentment.

Check Your Progress

1. What is an elegy?
2. State the signs which depict that a country day is coming to a close in the opening lines of the poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.
3. Why is it necessary to raise memorials?

4.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. An elegy is a form of a poem which is usually written to mourn the dead or renowned people.
2. The signs which depict that a country day is coming to a close in the opening lines of the poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* are a curfew bell knelling, cattle across the field and a farmer going back home.
3. According to Gray, memorials are raised because people spend their lives struggling and they wish to be remembered after death.

4.4 SUMMARY

- Thomas Gray was born in Cornhill, London. He was the only son of Philip and Dorothy to survive infancy.
- It was in 1742 that Thomas Gray took poetry writing seriously after losing his close friend Stacy James Ruffer. He went to Cambridge and began a self-imposed programme of literary study.
- It is believed that the poet started writing his most popular poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* in 1742 soon after the death of his close friend.
- An elegy is a form of a poem which is usually written to mourn the dead or renowned people. It does not tell a story but expresses feelings of sorrow.
- The poem *Elegy written in the Country Churchyard* has the characteristics of Augustan as well as Romantic poetry since it was written towards the end of Augustan age, a period which marked the beginning of Romantic period.
- The poet compares common people to pearls and gems that lay deep down in the oceans and are unseen. He also compares them to flowers in jungles which fade away unnoticed.

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4.5 KEY TERMS

- **Poet Laureate:** It refers to an eminent poet appointed as a member of the British royal household.
- **Augustan Age:** It refers to the period of English literature in the early 18th century, when writers such as Swift and Pope were active. The name comes from that of the Roman emperor Augustus, who ruled when Virgil, Horace and Ovid were writing, and suggests a classical period of elegant literature.
- **Elegy:** It is a poem of serious reflection, typically a lament for the dead.

4.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Whom does Gray mourn in *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*?
2. Write a short note on the life of Thomas Gray.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyse the poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.
2. Gray's poetry has the characteristics of Augustan as well as Romantic poetry. Discuss.

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UNIT 5 WILLIAM BLAKE: *THE TYGER*

NOTES

Structure

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The Tyger written by William Blake was published in a collection of poems called *Songs of Experience* in 1794, and the poem was composed during his radical period. The poems in *Songs of Experience*, on the other hand, deal with poignant issues of what happens when that innocence is lost. *The Tyger* is often read in comparison with the poem *The Lamb* from *Songs of Innocence*. *The Tyger* questions that it is the same creator (God) who created the tiger and the lamb as well. *The Lamb* is one of the sublime poems which asks the Lamb who made 'thee' (just like *The Tyger*), admires how soft and cute the lamb is and then tells it about the creator God. In this unit, you will study about William Blake's revolutionary ideas and a critical appreciation of the poem, *The Tyger*.

5.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain Blake's revolutionary ideas
- Interpret the poem, *The Tyger* in comparison with *The Lamb*

5.2 BLAKE'S REVOLUTIONARY VIEWS

William Blake was a revolutionary in every sense. His views on politics, religion, literature and science were all revolutionary as he could not accept the prevailing ideas and culture of the eighteenth century. He was opposed to the eighteenth century mechanistic view of the universe. Therefore, he despised the tendency to

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analyse rather than synthesize which made him critical of philosophers such as Voltaire and Rousseau:

Mock on, Mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau:
Mock on, Mock on, 'tis all in vain!
You throw the sand against the wind,
And the wind blows it back again.

Again, in *Reason and Imagination,* Blake says:

I come in self-annihilation and the grandeur of Inspiration
To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour,
To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration
To cast off Bacon, Locke and Newton from Albion's covering,
To take off his filthy garments and clothe him with Imagination.

He held reason in contempt because he thought it imprisons the mind. For him, imagination (like other Romantic poets) plays an important role not only in poetic creation, but also in the development of human mind. Being a person born during the age of Revolution, he was attracted to the ideas of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' of the French Revolution.

Blake was eighteen when the Declaration of Independence by the American Colonies inspired idealists all over Europe. Blake in his lifetime was witness to the burning of Newgate Prison (1780) which was a violent expression of the hatred of authority. Like many others of his generation, Blake was sympathetic to the causes of the French Revolution. He was incensed when Tom Paine was attacked in 1798. With such a political background, Blake became an anarchist of sorts as he hated all political systems (as he thought them to be oppressive) and favoured complete personal freedom. He admired radicals such as William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. Several other radicals were his friends such as, Dr. Price (who was the first Englishman to support the French Revolution) and Thomas Paine. Blake was against any kind of tyranny and despised it to the heart's core. Although he did not develop (in the sense of writing) a coherent political theory, but he wanted freedom and love for all. Blake was opposed to private property, any established church, formal government, the prevailing laws, and machinery.

William Blake also hated traditional Christianity which he thought cramped the soul rather than setting it free. Like all the Romantics who attempted a re-evaluation of Christian values after the French Revolution, William Blake also had his own interpretation of Christian religion and its use for the benefit of mankind. He was against the authoritarian God who is revengeful. Therefore, he thought of churches as a kind of prison as there is no individual freedom under the purview of the church. Therefore, in *The Garden of Love,* Blake writes –

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I have never seen;
A Chapel was built in the midst,

Where I used to play on the green.
And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys & desires.

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For Blake, love is the supreme religion and it cannot be found in the bricks and mortar of churches, but in love for humanity. It is not that he did not have faith in the merciful and benevolent Christ, but he is against God the Father who, according to him, is authoritative and tyrannical. If we look at the poems '*The Lamb*' and '*The Tyger*' from *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* respectively then we will figure out that Jesus is the lamb, merciful, innocent and tender, whereas God, the Father, as represented in '*The Tyger*' has a 'fearful symmetry.'

William Blake's hostile attitude towards traditional Christianity also influenced his interpretation of history. He identified three stages in history which corresponded to three stages in the life of an individual. The first stage corresponds to that of the Garden of Eden, or of primal innocence. The second stage was the eating of the forbidden tree or the Fall (that is, the phase of Experience). The third stage was that of achieving a higher state of innocence or redemption (when one is as clever as a serpent and as innocent as a dove). In the third stage, innocence cannot be corrupted anymore as one has the necessary cleverness of the serpent will not allow the corruptions to affect innocence. So from that point of view, the two contrary states – innocence and experience are absolutely essential as 'without contraries, there is no progression.' One can never be in the first stage of innocence forever; one will get into the phase of experience with aging and with the pressures of culture; but when one surpasses that to achieve supreme innocence, one is in an ideal. Blake through his two series of poems – *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* is trying to concretize the notion of Supreme Innocence for the readers.

French Revolution

The **French Revolution** (1789–1799), was a period of radical social and political upheaval in France which laid the foundation of modern democracy as the ideas germinated by the scholars found a place in the hearts of the people of France and they revolted against the oppressive monarchy and religious system. The absolute monarchy of France collapsed within three years and feudal, aristocratic and religious privileges evaporated under the pressure of Enlightenment principles of equality, citizenship and inalienable rights. The people of France got increasingly agitated against the incompetence of King Louis XVI and the decadence of the aristocracy; leading to a Revolution in 1789 with the convocation of the Estates-General in May. In the first year of the Revolution, members of the Third Estate proclaimed the Tennis Court Oath in June, the assault on the Bastille in July, the passage of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in August, and an epic march on Versailles that forced the royal court back to Paris in October. The next few years were dominated by struggles between various liberal assemblies. A republic was proclaimed in September 1792 and King Louis XVI was executed the next year. External threats shaped the course of the Revolution. Internally, popular sentiments radicalized

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the Revolution significantly, culminating in the rise of Maximilien Robespierre and the Jacobins and virtual dictatorship by the Committee of Public Safety during the Reign of Terror from 1793 until 1794 during which between 16,000 and 40,000 people were killed. After the fall of the Jacobins and the execution of Robespierre, the Directory assumed control of the French state in 1795 and held power until 1799, when it was replaced by the Consulate under Napoleon Bonaparte. The growth of republics and liberal democracies, the spread of secularism, the development of modern ideologies, and the invention of total war all mark their birth during the Revolution. Subsequent events that can be traced to the Revolution include the Napoleonic Wars, two separate restorations of monarchy (Bourbon Restoration and July Monarchy), and two additional revolutions (1830 and 1848) as modern France took shape. The revolution was not only significant for France as the ideas germinated before and during the revolution led to its spread across other countries of Europe, also in England, and then to the rest of the world, leading to modernization.

Check Your Progress

1. Why did Blake favour imagination over reason?
2. What opinion did Blake hold regarding Churches?

5.3 *THE TYGER*: CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?
And what shoulder, & what art.
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?
What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?
When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

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Critical Appreciation of *The Tyger*

The Tiger, originally called *The Tyger*, is a lyric poem focusing on the nature of God and His creations. It was published in 1794 in a collection entitled *Songs of Experience* by William Blake. It is one of Blake's best- known and most analysed poems. *The Tyger* is a highly symbolic poem based on Blake's personal philosophy of spiritual and intellectual revolution by individuals. The speaker in the poem is mystified at the sight of a tiger in the night, and asks a series of questions about its fierce appearance and the creator responsible for its creation. The first impression that William Blake gives is of seeing a tiger in the night, and, as a result of his state of panic, exaggerating the description of the animal when he writes:

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,

Immediately upon seeing the 'Tyger' in the forest, the poet makes inquiries about the deity that could have created it:

What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

The word 'immortal' gives the reader a clue that the poet refers to God. In the second stanza, the author wonders in what faraway places the tiger was created, inferring that these places could not be reached by any mortal. In the third stanza, once the tiger's heart began to beat, the poet again inquires about the creator of such a frightening and evil animal. However, the context must be interpreted according to Blake's philosophy of symbolic myths about human life, society and spiritual revolution.

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

The tiger itself is a symbol of the fierce forces in the soul and a divine spirit that will not be subdued by restrictions, but will arise against established rules and conventions. In the forth stanza, William Blake inquires about the tools used by God for creating the fearsome and deadly creature, namely, the hammer, the chain, the furnace and the anvil.

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

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All these tools are used by an ironsmith. Thus, according to the poet, God is a kind of craftsman. In the fifth stanza, the poet asks two scientific questions. These questions refer to God's feelings:

Did he smile his work to see?

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Here, the poet wonders whether God was happy with his creation of the fearsome tiger. He does not understand why or how the deity, who is responsible for good and innocence, can introduce violence and evil in this world. However, the poet does not make any statements throughout the poem. The poem's last stanza is the same as the first one, which may indicate that the author is still not able to understand the world in which we live.

The Tyger presents a question that embodies the central theme– Who created the tiger? Was it the kind and loving God who made the lamb or Satan? Blake realizes, of course, that God made all the creatures on earth. However, to express his bewilderment that God, who created the gentle lamb, also created the terrifying Tiger, he includes Satan as a possible creator while raising his rhetorical questions.

In what distant deeps or skies

Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

In these lines, 'fire' refers to hell and 'skies' to heaven. In either case, there would be fire, the fire of hell or the fire of the stars. The tiger symbolizes evil or the incarnation of evil, and the lamb represents goodness. Blake's inquiry is a variation on an old philosophical and theological question: Why does evil exist in a universe created and ruled by a benevolent God? Blake provides no answer for this question, as his mission is to present reality in arresting images. A poet's first purpose, after all, is to present the world and its denizens in a language that stimulates the aesthetic sense. Nevertheless, the poem does propel the reader to deep thought. Here, the tiger symbolizes the quest for sustenance, and the lamb, meek and gentle, symbolizes the quest for survival. The poet wonders if it is possible that the same God who made the lamb also created the tiger, or was it the devil's work.

The poem is more about the creator of the tiger than about the tiger itself. In contemplating the terrible ferocity and remarkable symmetry of the tiger, the speaker is at a loss to explain how the same God, who created the lamb, could also create the tiger. Therefore, this poem subtly reminds that humans are incapable of completely understanding the mind of God and the mystery of his handiwork. The poem consists of six quatrains and each quatrain contains two couplets.

Therefore, we have a twenty-four line poem with twelve couplets and six stanzas. A neat and balanced package, Blake's choice of 'tiger' has usually been interpreted as rendering an exotic or alien quality of the beast. In the first stanza, we can observe that the word 'tiger' is written with a 'y' instead of an 'I'. Here,

the purpose of the poet is to give the word an inclination towards Ancient Greece. This is closely followed by the alliteration '(.,.) burning bright (.,.)'.

This alliteration is used by the author to emphasize the strong, bright, shiny colours of the 'tyger'. The symmetry 'y' is highlighted in this stanza, which is closely related to the spelling of the word, because in Ancient Greece, symmetry is seen as 'beauty'. It also speaks about an 'immortal hand or eye', which is an allusion of the tiger's creator, God. The pattern of the poem is also symmetrical.

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'*Distant deeps',* in the second stanza is an alliteration used to remark on the distant depths. Subsequently, the poet writes '*On what wings dare he aspire?',* the meaning of which is directly connected to God who created the tiger. In the third stanza, the creator of the tiger is seen as an artist, and the appreciation he has for the creator's work is quite apparent. This is followed by the line '*and when thy heart began to beat'*, which highlights God's power to create life. In the fourth stanza, God is portrayed as a 'Hammersmith', which can be gauged by the use of the words 'hammer', 'furnace' and 'anvil'. Through his meter and techniques, Blake manages quite efficiently to enforce a chanting rhythm and powerful voice. Demanding questions and vivid images disprove the simple nature of his end rhyme, rather exploring a deep, driving question.

Check Your Progress

3. What does the tiger symbolize in the poem?
4. When was the poem, *The Tyger* published?

5.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Blake favoured imagination over reason because Blake held the view that imagination plays an important role not only in poetic creation but also in the development of human mind. He held reason in contempt because he thought it imprisons the mind.
2. Blake thought of churches a a kind of prison as there is no individual freedom under the purview of the church. He believed that love could not be found in the bricks and mortar of churches.
3. The tiger symbolizes evil or the incarnation of evil. The tiger is a symbol of the fierce forces in the soul and a divine spirit that will not be subdued by restrictions but will arise against established rules and conventions.
4. *The Tyger* was published in 1794 in a collection entitled *Songs of Experience* by William Blake.

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5.5 SUMMARY

- William Blake was a revolutionary in every sense. His views on politics, religion, literature and science were all revolutionary as he could not accept the prevailing ideas and culture of the eighteenth century.
- He held reason in contempt because he thought it imprisons the mind. For him, imagination (like other Romantic poets) plays an important role not only in poetic creation, but also in the development of human mind.
- William Blake also hated traditional Christianity which he thought cramped the soul rather than setting it free.
- For Blake, love is the supreme religion and it cannot be found in the bricks and mortar of churches, but in love for humanity. It is not that he did not have faith in the merciful and benevolent Christ, but he is against God the Father who, according to him, is authoritative and tyrannical.
- Blake through his two series of poems – *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* is trying to concretize the notion of Supreme Innocence for the readers.
- The French Revolution (1789–1799), was a period of radical social and political upheaval in France which laid the foundation of modern democracy as the ideas germinated by the scholars found a place in the hearts of the people of France and they revolted against the oppressive monarchy and religious system.
- *The Tiger*, originally called *The Tyger*, is a lyric poem focusing on the nature of God and His creations. It was published in 1794 in a collection entitled *Songs of Experience* by William Blake.
- The tiger itself is a symbol of the fierce forces in the soul and a divine spirit that will not be subdued by restrictions, but will arise against established rules and conventions.
- The poem is more about the creator of the tiger than about the tiger itself. In contemplating the terrible ferocity and remarkable symmetry of the tiger, the speaker is at a loss to explain how the same God, who created the lamb, could also create the tiger.
- Through his meter and techniques, Blake manages quite efficiently to enforce a chanting rhythm and powerful voice. Demanding questions and vivid images disprove the simple nature of his end rhyme, rather exploring a deep, driving question.

5.6 KEY WORDS

- **Redemption:** It is an act of redeeming or atoning for a fault or mistake**.**
- **Incarnation:** It literally means embodied in flesh or taking on flesh.
- **Anarchist:** It refers to a person who rebels against any authority, established order, or ruling power.

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5.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on Blake's interpretation of history.
2. Briefly mention Blake's revolutionary ideas.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyze the poem, *The Tyger*.
2. 'The poem is more about the creator of the tiger than about the tiger itself.' Explain the statement with reference to *The Tyger*.

5.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 6 ROBERT BURNS' *HIGHLAND MARY*

NOTES

Structure

6.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you Studied about William Blake's *The Tyger*. In this unit, the discussion will turn towards Robert Burns' poem *Highland Mary*.

The poet Robert Burns is considered to be the national poet of Scotland. He is regarded as a pioneer of the Romantic Movement, and after his death, he became a great source of inspiration to the founders of both liberalism and socialism, and a cultural icon in Scotland and among the Scottish diaspora around the world. Burns composed *Highland Mary* in 1792. It is one of three works dedicated to Mary Campbell, with whom Burns was in love in the 1780s.

6.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the life and works of Robert Burns
- Examine the poem *Highland Mary*
- Discuss ballad as a poetic form

6.2 ROBERT BURNS: LIFE AND WORKS

One of the most celebrated poets of the world, the national poet of Scotland and still an esteemed hero around the world, Robert Burns was born in Alloway [Ayrshire, Scotland] in 1759. His birthplace was a beautiful picturesque village. He is that flamboyant, candid, sprightly, musical bard and nationalist from Scotland

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who lived to inspire not only his age but even the twenty-first century generation of today. Burns' Scotland was undergoing nationalistic changes to establish her identity after the founding of the Union in 1707. There were two nationalistic fervours or traits trying to dominate the era in Scotland. Both exhibited stark differences such as Highland-Lowland, Catholic-Protestant, Scots-Gaelic, etc. His verse unified all hues that could accomplish and contribute for his nation with a peculiar identity in contrast to England. In his radical short-lived existence, Burns' not only surged to immense popularity due to the Scottish ancient songs that harbingered a charmingly unique Scotland, but also because he ironically mocked the state of things around him earning the ire of many.

Robert Burns' rebellion towards the existing social order could be partly linked to his childhood days when he witnessed his father's struggle in Ayrshire to obtain fortune by working tirelessly on Mount Oliphant [1766] and Lochlea [or Lochlie, 1777] farms yet meeting his bankruptcy and subsequent demise in 1784: 'It was watching his father being thus beaten down that helped to make Robert both a rebel against the social order of his day and a bitter satirist of all forms of religious and political thought that condoned or perpetuated inhumanity.' As a child, Burns laid his hands on eighteenth-century texts, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden; and also gained knowledge of French and Latin. He was aware of his traditional Scottish native folklores and songs during his tender years with little formal education. He assisted his father at his farms where he had to partake in hard manual labour which eventually affected his health.

Burns opposed the orthodoxy of religion and norms. He began to produce verses as early as when he was fifteenth when he became strongly infatuated by a girl Nelly Kilpatrick [1759-1820], a fellow farm labourer at Mount Oliphant [harvest season 1774] to whom he devoted his O*, Once I Lov'd A Bonny Lass* [1775]. Another lady to whom he addressed further two poems was Margaret-Peggy Thompson [1762-], a housekeeper at Coilsfield House [Montgomery Castle] in Ayrshire. She was called 'charming Fillette' by Burns. From Alloway his family shuffled to settle in Tarbolton in 1777. It was here Robert founded *Tarbolton Bachelor's Club* post his and his brother Gilbert's becoming a pupil of the country dancing school in 1779. His friendship with Captain Richard Brown in Irvine, the place he joined to become a flax-dresser when twenty-two, served as a deep impetus for his becoming poet: 'encouraged me to endeavour at the character of a poet.'

A witness to his father's perennial struggle with difficult life, taking rented farms on lease, Burns being the eldest had to see his family suffer from poverty. Although he was a helping farmer to his father's property like Gilbert, he pursued his passion for verse composition. He commenced a 'Commonplace Book' to note down his songs and poems. Having failed to maintain the Lochlie farm after their father's legal battle, imprisonment and unfortunate death, both brothers took Mossgiel farms in Mauchline on a lease from Gavin Hamilton [March 1784]. During their four years of farming at Mossgiel, they had perpetual strife and discontentment

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with the Highlanders. Here he got introduced with Belles of Mauchline, a group of young girls amongst them Jean Armour, a stonemason's daughter, was one he formed his relationship with. Most of the women in Burns' life belonged to the weaker class of society.

Burns himself belonged to struggling social order from where he raised his status on behalf of his extraordinary literary and musical gifts: he was born in a house that was constructed by his own father which exemplifies their condition of hard labour. His father progressed to Oliphant farms having sold that house. As Robert Burns shared his father's labour on his farms ever since he was three or four, relentless hardships affected his constitution permanently, giving him a stoop to his gait.

Outstandingly recognised as the originator of famous Romantic Movement, Burns was also one of the foremost forces reckoned behind socialist and liberalist movements worldwide. If he remains famous for his poetic muses that emphasized women personalities in a mysterious way in his poetry, he also stood as a distinctly harmonious, integrated cultural idol for Scotland and a sympathiser for the suffering class. Burns' ceaseless toil with unquestionable devotion to collect, preserve and develop ancient traditional Scottish literature in their every existing form including folklores, ballads, songs, lyrics, etc., enlivening them by adding his own works into the volumes both in Scots dialect and English, left such an undiluted imprint on his countrymen, that they spread his renown worldwide. Burns remains the most appreciated, admired and enlightening Scot till date as researches and surveys establish.

In Ayrshire, he had illustrated strong, unflinching support to social activism, *Calvinism* to the extent that he was deemed as someone who offended religion. He also had an affair with Elizabeth Paton named commonly as Betsy [1760-1785], a maid at his father's farm and the mother of his first-born in 1785. Burns hailed her entrance into this world as "Dear-bought Bess" and the poem *My Girl She's Airy* was dedicated to Betsy. He also described the affair in the poem *The Fornicator*. To have a child by a servant without marriage was none other than a daring act and social stigma but Burns spoke frankly about his life in *A Poet's Welcome to His Love-Begotten Daughter*. Elizabeth-Bess Burns was though illegitimate but his first born and known to the world as his daughter. Next to Elizabeth, he impregnated Jean with a twin, a wedding to which her parents acquiesced after some time in 1788. Jean Armour and Burns became parents of nine children, yet, of them only three children were graced with life beyond infancy. It was his continuous economic instability which led him to think of migration to Jamaica as a worker.

The job offered to him was that of a 'Book Keeper' who maintained record of slaves overseas under Charles, brother of Dr. Patrick Douglas. On the meagre wages of £30 a year, he was supposed to survive in a very poor condition witnessed in his writing *The Slave's Lament*. It was during this period that Burns

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came into contact with Mary [Margaret] Campbell [1763-1786]. There has been immense speculation and research on his poetic muse Mary. Whether she had been fictitious or a fact, there are many scholarly debates, arguments about it but the story goes that Burns met her several times and they exchanged a Bible as a seal of their true love before parting as she was travelling for a job. In 1786, Mary became infected with typhus while serving her brother suffering from same disease.

She was already dead when Burns came to know and pined over his loss. He immortalised his love for Mary in some of his lyrical journeys: *The Highland Lassie O* [1786], *Highland Mary* [1792], *To Mary in Heaven* [1795] and *Will ye go the Indies, my Mary, and leave auld Scotia's shore?* [1792]. He was also having an intimate relationship with Jean Armour at this time in which he had promised to marry her.

Undergoing financial crunch Burns decided to publish influenced by Gavin Hamilton to have sufficient money for his trip to Jamaica. His *Scotch Poems* appeared on April the 14th 1786 under Kilmarnock, the date when his wedding affidavit was destroyed by Jean Armour's angry father.

Prepared to leave, he transferred his part of Mossgiel farm to his brother Gilbert. Being involved into many love affairs impregnating women without marriage, Robert had to confront its religious and legal repercussions because it was mandatory for him to prove he was a bachelor for his passage abroad: 'Armour has got a warrant to throw me in jail until I can find a warrant for an enormous sum….I am wandering from friend's house to another.' This piece of communication he exchanged with his friend John Richmond following which his book *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* [1786] was published including *The Twa Dogs*, *Halloween*, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, *To A Mouse*, *Epitaph for James Smith*, *To a Mountain Daisy*, and others. They were written during his work on the farms mostly. They attained instant fame due to their deep thought, popular appeal and simple diction.

It was Dr. Thomas Blacklock's launching a larger edition [published 1787] of his already published work, which made Burns pause his journey for Jamaica, and concentrate on his poetic passage. His letter of encouragement to Burns led him to Edinburgh next. Burns was an immediate success after the publication of his second edition.

In Edinburgh literary circles, his poems were commemorated and Burns was given respect equal to the already established, famed writers. In Edinburgh literary circles, Burns formed his impression as a genius of robust, plain and unaffected disposition because he was extraordinarily gifted. By this time, Armour had given birth to his twins. Burns became a prominent name in the literary circle after publication of his Edinburgh edition of the poem which allowed him a comfortable living. He fell into many relationships in one of which his illegitimate son Robert Burns Clow was born in 1788 by Jenny Clow [1766-1792], a servant woman. His pursuit to possess Agnes Nancy McLehose [1758-1841], separated

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from her husband to whom she repaired later, failed, yet they had intimate passion for each other. Burns's letters with a pseudonym 'Sylvander' are addressed to 'Clarinda' [Nancy] and his poem *Ae Fond Kiss*, too. He also had an affair with Margaret May Cameron, a servant woman.

Together with James Johnson [1753-1811], a passionate musician who collected and engraved Scottish songs, Burns contributed to 'The Scots Musical Museum' [since 1787] around two hundred of a total six hundred songs which got published in 1803 collectively. When he returned from Edinburgh, he repaired his relationship with Jean Armour and took the Ellisland farm in Dumfriesshire on rent by shifting there in mid-1788. Burns composed *Tam O'Shanter* [1790] next and he gradually shifted his vocation from farming by 1791. He learnt skills in excise and customs. He worked in a government department from 1789 onwards as an alternate source of income because neither of the brothers excelled in agriculture. He was also proffered *Chair of Agriculture* at the University of Edinburgh along with some other positions which he refused to undertake. He became a member of *Royal Company of Archers* in 1792. This genius Scot lyricist enriched 'The Melodies of Scotland' with over a hundred contributions. He always employed his skills to improve upon his cultural treasure like George Thomson's *A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice*" and James Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*. Efforts to revive his culture and embellish it by his own works established Burns' glory as an extraordinarily consummated artist as well as lyric poet in the world.

What he added to those collections were some lyrics of his own, some traditional folk tunes were set with his lyrics, and some old songs or lyrics were edited, revised, resung by him. Some tunes were merely short, incomplete existence which he transformed filling in words, tunes with musical entirety. Burns liked to use ordinary style of language for songs with traditional [tunes] way of singing. The musical accompaniments were usually guitar and fiddle belonging to the native Scottish tradition. His songs were played by grand musicians of the day such as Ludwig Van Beethoven, Franz Haydn, etc. As a publisher, Thomson was in charge of commissioning arrangements for Scottish, Welsh and Irish Airs. For the composers like Beethoven whose musical appeal was for the whole world, Burns had to learn tunes perfectly prior to attiring them by his lyrics.

> "My way is: I consider the poetic sentiment, correspondent to my idea of the musical expression, then chuse my theme, begin one stanza, when that is composed which is generally the most difficult part of the business:. I walk out, sit down now and then look out for objects in nature around me that are in unison or harmony with the cogitations of my fancy and workings of my bosom, humming every now and then the air with the verses I have framed. when I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fireside of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper, swinging, at intervals, on the hind-legs of my elbow chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures, as my, pen goes." [Robert Burns]

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Burns was pioneer poet in conserving his culture by redefining, revising or simply elasticising a folk song, accumulating them in many collections, the most notable among which is *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*. His *Auld Lang Syne*, *A Red Red Rose*, *The Battle of Sherramuir* are encased in their famous traditional tunes like *Can Ye Labour Lea*, *Major Graham*, *Cameronian Rant*, and the like. In this way, Burns not only lived his traditional songs by giving them new words, lustrous beauty, but also immortalised them.

His chief poetic works include *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* [1786], *Tam O'Shanter* [1795], *The Cotters Saturday Night* [1795], *The Jolly Beggars* [1799], *Burns' Poetical Works* [1824], *Holy Willie's Prayer* [1789], *To a Mouse, On Turning Her Up In Her Nest With The Plough* [1785], *Address to a Haggis* [1786], *Auld Lang Syne* [1788], *A Red, Red Rose* [1794], *Is There for Honest Poverty,* etc. Some of his biographers are Franklyn Bliss Snyder ['*The Life of Robert Burns*,' 1932], Hilton Brown ['*There Was a Lad*,' 1949], Maurice Lindsay ['*Robert Burns: The man, his work, the legend,*' 1954], Robert Crawford ['*The Bard: Robert Burns, a Biography;*' 2009], Napier Niven and Khull ['*Letters addressed to Clarinda, &C.,*' 1802], J M'Creery ['*Reliques of Robert Burns*,' 1808], etc.

Just like Shakespeare and Dickens, Robert Burns is loved the world over. Burns' fame and respectability rose even outside his own nation, becoming internationally acclaimed. In the course of time, Burns drifted apart from many social contacts and friends; his candid expressions in favour of the French and American Revolutions affected his employers; his humanitarian views were public; and he became part of Royal Dumfries Volunteers [1795] to manifest his faithfulness to the existing monarchy. Consumption of alcohol and excessiveness in lifestyle brought about early aging, irritation, waning health and provoked his already existing rheumatic heart problems, eventually causing his demise in July 1796. The Bard of Scotland silenced the literary world by his premature exit. After his death, his widow Jean Armour claimed to secure his property in order to look after his children. Burns, as a devoted nationalist, had been bestowed many awards for his poetic contributions. He left twelve children behind, among whom some were his illegitimate ones.

Burns' poetic texture is construed to combine soft and satiric, as well as sprightly and despondent themes. The National Poet of Scotland had in him greater qualities than the mediocre litterateur of his time and he expended his intellectual strength to preserve culture, tradition and the essence of his nation. There is inherent romantic hue in all that he depicts with human sympathy; on the other hand, he also laughs at human follies, taking side of the poor and downtrodden. He had mastery of formal, colloquial, dialect and informal language.

Although some of the writers of his age slighted him by labelling him a 'heaven-taught ploughman', Burns inspired most of the renowned authors of his and of the upcoming generations from different countries of the world. The writers he inspired

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include Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Shelley, John Keats, Huge MacDiarmid, Alexander McLachlan, Robert William Service, and so on. Apart from having digested Shakespeare and Milton as a child, he combined traits of his forerunner Scottish poets Allan Ramsay [1713-1784] and Robert Fergusson [1750-1774] following whom he was proclaimed to be a part of the famous 'Vernacular Revival.' His popularity has no boundaries as he spread the anthem of love and harmony towards all mankind, whether it is Japan, Maldives or the United States. In Canada, Burns is held in close admiration as a 'patron poet' by Scottish Canadians and his birthday is celebrated as 'Robbie Burns Day' nationwide by denizens and academic institutions.

Burns' own valiant national idols included Robert the Bruce [1274-1329], William Wallace [1270-1305], Bonnie Prince Charlie [1720-1788], all of whom left everlasting impressions. He admired Joseph Addison [1672-1719], William Shenstone [1714-1763], James Thomson [1700-1748] and James Beattie [1735-1803]. Burns prevails as a steady influence on the American literary writers or citizens and its example can be seen in John Steinbeck's [1902-1968] fiction *Of Mice and Men* [1937], the title of which is extracted from his poem *To a Mouse*. The vernacular genii James Whitcomb Riley [1849-1960] and Frank Lebby Stanton [1857-1927] acknowledged and accepted his influence on them. The Nobel Laureate singer, song-writer Bob Dylan [Born 1941] regards Burns as the most potent impetus behind his creative genius and Burns' song 'A Red Red Rose' plays a vital role in shaping Dylan's talents. J. D. Salinger [1919-2010] based his fiction *The Catcher in the Rye*'s [1951] title and theme on Burns' *Comin' Thro' the Rye* [1782].

In Russia, Burns has been held in popular esteem as a great poet who regarded the common man as his subject of poetry. He is widely translated in Russia. Burns' support to the French and American Revolutions along with his deep sympathy for the poor, holds him up as a people's thinker in Russia. For his poem *A Man's A Man For A' That* [1795] *and Birthday Ode for George Washington* [1794], Burns was regarded greatly by the Soviet Union. He is massively read by Russians and regarded as a revolutionary poet. There are number of clubs on his name in many countries across the globe. He remains a famous literary genius loved across the world: Robert Burns is remembered as a great thinker, poet and song writer of the world. His nation holds him as their greatest poetic genius and a contributor to the cultural, traditional values of Scottish language, 'To cherish name of Robert Burns; to foster a love of his writings, and generally to encourage an interest in the Scottish language and literature.' Most of the properties belonging to him have been turned into museums and heritage sites.

Many roads and streets in different countries owe their names to him, as do university scholarships, a crater on Mercury, monuments, statues, a stamp by USSR, and so on. This is because the poet and thinker Robert Burns lived not only to protect his national sentiments, interests and tradition alive, intact, and

develop them, but also breathed for humanity and served it profusely by producing a large number of effusions which attach to him an identity which centuries beyond endear him to the public.

O my Luve's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June;
O my Luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

['*A Red, Red Rose*' by Robert Burns, L.1-4, 1794]

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6.2.1 Mary (Margaret)] Campbell

Nae gentle dames, tho' e'er sae fair,
Shall ever be my muse's care:
Their titles a' arc empty show;
Gie me my Highland lassie, O.

['*My Highland Lassie, O*;' Robert Burns, L.1-4, 1786]

The songwriter, poet and great humanitarian Robert Burns' poetic muse Mary Campbell, that is, *Highland Mary*, was born to Archibald and Agnes Campbell of Dunoon in 1762. She was the eldest daughter among her four siblings. They first lived in Dunoon, later shifted to Campbel town and finally to Greenock. Mary served as a governess in Gavin Hamilton's [1751-1805] house in Ayrshire who was a close friend of Robert Burns. According to Mrs. Todd's account, who was daughter of Hamilton, Mary Campbell was a pleasant-looking captivating girl. During 1785, she was a governess of Mrs. Todd's brother Alexander. Her next occupation was that of a dairy maid in Coilsfield, described as 'Castle o' Montgomery' by Robert Burns. Her beauty is of marked consequence, mentioned repeatedly by the poet in many of his poems. Her sister Mrs. Anderson describes Mary as 'tall, fair haired with blue eyes.'

With the poet Robert Burns, she definitely would have shared a relationship of lover-beloved. Burns' praises her in many of his lyrics which name her and describe their intimate relationship with commitment for each other quite candidly. While introducing his song, *The Highland Lassie, O*' [1786] Burns stated, 'This was a composition of mine in very early life, before I was known at all in the world. My Highland lassie was a warm-hearted charming young creature as ever blessed a man with generous love. After a pretty long tract of the most ardent reciprocal attachment, we met by appointment, on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot by the Banks of Ayr, where we spent the day in taking a fare el, before she should embark for the West-Highlands, to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life. At the close of Autumn following she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock, where she had scarce landed when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to the grave in a few days, before I could even hear of her illness.'

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Records say that they had exchanged Bibles which meant their loyalty towards each other for future union, but she died ahead of its fulfilment. However, she continued to have a special place in the life of the poet.

"She has my heart, she had my hand,
By secret troth and honour's band!
Till the mortal stroke shall lay me low,
I'm thine, my Highland Lassie, O."

['*My Highland Lassie, O;*' Robert Burns, L.25-28, 1786]

There seemed to have, as his poems convey, been a sort of agreement between them to cross the ocean for reaching the other side of the globe and Burns is asking for her company as a mate to travel abroad in the following lines

"Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary
Across the Atlantic's roar?"

['*Will ye go the Indies,*' Robert Burns, L.1-4,1786]

Mary's died taking care of her ill brother Robert, after contracting the same infection. Other researches reveal that Mary was pregnant and died because of that complication. One story goes that in 1920 when her grave in the West Churchyard was opened as that place was required for expansion due to industrialisation, remnants of a child's coffin were witnessed to have been buried inside along with her body. Apart from this, in his 'dissipation and riot….and other mischief' [his letter to Brice dated 12th June 1786] Burns admits that there was something beyond the charming picture of love between him and Mary Campbell which his friends well knew. Probably Mary Campbell lacked integrity, fidelity and modesty that a pious woman ought to possess, and this is most likely to belong to her character. His other letter to Aiken dated October 1786 when she had already passed away reveals:

> 'I have been for some time pining under secret wretchedness, from causes which you pretty well know the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society or the vagaries of the Muse. Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner.'

His dejection, whether caused by Mary's betrayal somewhere or by his hearing the sad news of her death, cannot to be ascertained. It is difficult to predict what Mary meant to Burns but her memories haunted him. Even though he was wedded to Jean Armour Burns' continued to write poems in praise of Mary Campbell:

'My Mary! Dear departed shade!
Where is thy blissful place of rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?'

['*To Mary In Heaven*,' Robert Burns, L.29-32,1789]

Biographers agree that Burns was not held in kind esteem in Mary Campbell's family after her death; rather they hated her. John Richmond is of view that, 'Her character was loose in the extreme. She was *kept* for some time by a brother of Lord Eglinton's, and even while a servant with Gavin Hamilton, and during the period of Burns' attachment it was well known that her meetings with Montgomery were open and frequent. The friends of Burns represented to him the impropriety of his devotedness to her, but without producing any change in his sentiments.' It is acknowledged by the available proofs that, 'Montgomery and Highland Mary frequently met in a small ale house called the Elbow and having often in vain tried to convince Robert of her infidelity upon this occasion they promised to give ocular proof of their assertions. The party retired to the Elbow. Richmond (Mr. Grierson's informant) was one and they took their seats in the kitchen [sic] from which two rooms branched off to the right and left being all the accommodation the house contained.... After waiting long, and when Burns was beginning to ridicule their suspicions Mary Campbell appeared from one of the rooms was jeered by the party, in a general way blushed and retired. Another long interval elapses and Burns began to rally his spirits, which were very much sunk. Montgomery walked out of the same room. Burns coloured deeply compressed his lip and muttered '*damn* it'. After enduring considerable bantering from his friend, he soon gave way to the general hilarity of the evening, and his friends thought he had seen enough of Highland Mary, but in a few days after he returned "like the dog to its vomit."

Whether this description is true or not, there is some evidence to suggest that the Mary Campbell-Robert Burns-relationship was not pure on either side as Burns was also linked with Jean Armour and other women during his lifetime. But in his lyrics and songs dedicated to her, Robert Burns immortalised her so much so that it seems her character was flawless, pious and beautiful, and she was the one with whom he wished to spend his life had she survived.

Check Your Progress

1. List some of Burns' chief poetic works.
2. When was Mary Campbell born?

6.3 SUMMARY AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *HIGHLAND MARY*

The song *Highland Mary* [1792] was composed for George Thomson's [1757-1851] collection and it is based on 'Katherine Ogie' tune, a traditional Scottish song. The poem consists of thirty-two lines having four octaves. Each octave has the first and third lines in unrhymed Iambic tetra metre; and the second and fourth lines rhyming Iambic tri metre.

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"How sweetly bloomed the gay green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasp'd her to my bosom!"

[*Highland Mary*, Robert Burns, L.9-12,1792]

The modulation of the emotions in the song flows with simple lustrous diction containing the English and Scottish dialect. In the song, Burns states the full story of his tender moments with Highland Mary, probably the most meaningful day he spent with her. He has depicted his entire sequence of her love-life and her unfortunate premature demise before their life could culminate into glorious union of matrimony. The poem *Highland Mary* is a gay and melodious song imbued with love and agony of a lover having not achieved the fullness of love. The poet begins his song describing the picturesque Castle of Montgomery which was also called Coilsfield House. Coilsfield is located in the South of Ayrshire in Scotland. Coilsfield House was the ancestral dwelling for the famous Montgomeries, the distinguished landlords of that region.

Highland Mary and Robert Burns' love tale begins with their tender affection and dedication towards each other as told by the narrator of this ballad. The poet addresses the beautiful natural panorama that was witness to the presence of Highland Mary and his emotional meetings which brought him close and be enamoured by her. He augurs the banks, downward hilly slopes, and brooks in that familiar vicinity of Castle of Montgomery surrounded by lush green trees and beautiful flowers where water is always clean, transparent, pure. The poet addresses the Castle of Montgomery, the seat of the Montgomery family, which he says is so delightfully covered with natural beauty, beauties which he desires greatly because what happened there between the lovers. The place where their love occurred became eternal for Burns, something which will never lose its essence, chastity, comeliness, favour, affection and much more; on that very spot two lovers breathed their eternal love, unconditional affection and deep feelings for each other which immortalised their tale at that place for ever.

Burns sent *Highland Mary's* draft to George Thomson dedicating it to Mary Morison, recalling it as 'one of' his 'juvenile works.' In fact, the freshness of youth stem from the four lyrics or songs dedicated to Mary Campbell. In his letter to Thomson, to whom Burns sent probably three of his Mary poems, Burns wrote that the girl was named Mary Morison, 'How blythely wad I bide the stoure, Aweart slave frae sun to sun, Could I the rich reward secure The lovely Mary Morison.' In the poem he describes how the land of that place had the privilege to have his sweetheart Mary walk over it first for so long in the company of her lover. Not only did they spent the most passionately memorable days of their lives on that land, but also this milieu would ever remain marked for the fact that he bid her farewell there which also became his final adieu, for she was not allowed by fate to meet him again in her mortal life.

The poet describes how in this vast beautiful panorama of nature he has his last meeting with his sweet Highland Mary. The poet describes the natural phenomena surrounding that place which bore the impact of the warmth of their love and envisaged, experienced, enjoyed it through its birches, hawthorns, groves where they sat together and nurtured their emotional bond. The beauty of faith and passionate devotion of the poet Robert Burns and his Highland Mary transcended into lovely green birches, hawthorn blossoms, for it was under those trees that he sat caressing his beloved in peace, dreaming his future with her. Time swiftly passed for it was a sweet memorable time. He calls them 'golden hours' which gave him immeasurable pleasure which only his 'light and life' Mary could bestow in her fondness like an angel.

The physical nearness is explicitly quoted in 'mony a vow, and lock'd embrace.' This line also shows the depth of their commitment towards each other indicating future union to which they mutually agreed happily. They exchanged Bibles in faith of their love and future oneness. It might be one long meeting that Burns is describing here in this ballad, or it might be summarising all of his meetings or togetherness with Highland Mary for whatever period of time they were one. All the same, beaming in love and tenderness towards each other they exchanged a promise that they would be one through matrimony. It was their parting with each other, a very uncomfortable phase for both of them since they were so closely bonded as one, that caused them emotional stress, at the end of which they vowed to become one again without delay. Only the consolation of another union could render them the strength to bid farewell to each other.

'Death' by its cold, severe hand smothered his Highland Mary ruthlessly prior to their marriage. His soft charming girl was plucked prematurely before she could see pleasures of life. Burns next speaks about her grave which was mossy, grown green with grass. The clay which laired her dead body inside grave had also become quite cold. The metaphors used here to describe her death show that she was dead for some time. The monetary nature of time is conveyed through images 'green's the sod,' 'cauld's the clay,' etc. She was dead long before this visit of Burns to her grave. The growth of natural vegetation and coldness of soil are derivatives which endow pathos and agony to a lover's plight of losing his beloved, especially the one who was his very source to life.

The first part of this song depicts his love, its nature, her importance in his life and their aspired future union; in the second phase, it exposes utmost naked reality of life, 'Death:' an uncontrollable, infinite action which separates human existence from this corporal world. Love, death, brutal realities of life, role of destiny, expectations, their cease, and the likes are themes which are crowded within this short ballad. In the closing octave, the poet describes her physical transformation from youthful, beautiful, and captivating into a bloodless spectre. Her red lips fresh as rose have become pale. He could no more exhibit his fondness for her because she was dead. He once kissed those lips with love which were clad in paleness buried under the soil now. He closed those bright love-showering

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eyes many times which glittered in affirmation to anything he asked for. The heart which throbbed on his love once upon a time was decaying under the weight of clay and dust spread on it.

The five elements of Nature were assimilating her beautiful body fast and finishing her mortal remains under coffin. He mentions that her yearnings in life were to love Burns and be with him forever. Even though fate sundered them apart and dragged her away from his heart physically, Highland Mary would stay in his heart as the most passionate pursuit of whole his life. He would not separate her from himself for any worldly treasure, and she would continue to inspire, instil and nestle love in his bosom for good. On this solemn note, Burns concludes his song. The eternal yet mourning journey of their unfulfilled love would never end as he would not let her part from his heart as long as he would survive.

The 'Highland Mary' Mar Campbell was employed in Coilsfield [Castle of Montgomery] as dairymaid when Burns met her. It is said of her that she was not very beautiful but charming having sprightliness and greater mental abilities. The couple frequently met in this atmosphere which sealed their affection and fondness. As the poet acknowledges in this song, they were bound to be each-others until the fangs of death separated them. 'Death' is personified in 'Highland Mary.' There are some beautiful images and metaphors like 'waters never drumlie,' 'There simmer first unfolds her robes,' 'gay green birk,' 'fragrant shade,' 'angel wings,' 'Death's untimely frost,' 'nipt my flower,' 'cauld's the clay,' 'mouldering now in silent dust' and 'bosom's core.' The poem contains two extremes of life's reality: love and death where with love's softness, passion, yearning, union flourish; and with death, coldness, frost, paleness, ambiguity of existence, separation, memories, transcending from physical presence retiring into misty vagueness with void which death enables one with continue:

"O, pale, pale now, those rosy lips,
I aft haekissed sae fondly!
And closed for aye the sparkling glance
That dwelt on me sae kindly;
And mouldering now in silent dust
That heart that lov'd me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary."

['*Highland Mary*,' Robert Burns, L.25-32, 1792]

6.3.1 Ballad as a Form of Poetic Art

A ballad as a form of poetic art belongs to ancient France where it was used for performing traditional dances. It was essentially poetry in structure such as verse composition with a story having some sort of theme. During the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries, it became known to other parts of Europe, popularised by different writers because of its musicality and feelings conveyed through it.

It also gave them opportunity to earn money, for ballads came to be liked by large audiences and readers who considered it as a pleasant and interesting literary art. This literary form of lyrical poetry remained in popular cult until the close of the nineteenth-century, yet ballads are composed by many literary writers even in the modern age. There are two schools of thoughts regarding the evolution of ballad poetry or lyrical ballads as an art form. The first school of thought is called 'communalists' who hold the view that ballads grew or flourished in the hands of many writers and it is their collective labour, endeavour, effort which developed and pruned this art; the second school of thought belongs to the 'individualists' who think that a ballad as an ancient art form which is only practised by various poets, but these writers have been using those guidelines or principles that were laid as an archetype.

The ancient ballads were stories sung orally and were handed on to the posterity in the oral form. The reason behind this could be as it was difficult to preserve folk ballads when the dialects or languages were not actually developed in a script form or a lack of literacy in remote regional cultures meant that such traditional activity could only be transmitted as a ballad in a spoken form only. The evolution of technology and science helped this oral tradition to be documented, preserved, and many additions were done to its original form by poets across the world. A standard ballad should contain the original source of dialect or very lucid language; usually in the third person narration founded on love, romance, tragic events, difficulties of life, personal experiences, folklores related to some characters, and so on; and the essence of a song where few lines or verses ought to be repeated at intervals as styled by poet, or as designed traditionally. Sometimes, a ballad is structured as question-answer dialogue. Normally, a ballad would never explicitly convey a moral message or lesson on its superficial reading unless the reader is familiar with the whole plot. Often a ballad contains allegory or allegorical references. Ballads traditionally have a metrical formation as alternate rhymes having Iambic tetra metre and Iambic tri metre.

These are the common precepts of a standard ballad. It flourished into many types in course of time. Traditionally, in any culture of the world, a ballad is held as a public performance. Its practice has been diverse in the hands of different poets in various cultures or geographical regions. The following have been popular forms of ballad: traditional ballad, broadside or musical ballad, and literary ballad. Examples of traditional ballad are 'Robin Hood' [1495], 'The Ballad of Chevy Chase,' etc. Traditional ballads are also documented as collection, revised or reframed by writers like Samuel Pepys [1633-1703], Robert Hartley [1661-1724], Robert Burns [1759-1796], Walter Scott [1771-1832], Thomas Percy [1729-1811], etc. Broadside or musical ballads originated as cheap printed readings during the sixteenth-century employing enticing illustrations and poetry set on famous tunes with a catchy title. They remained very popular during the Restoration period. Literary genii like Robert Burns [1759-1796], Sir Walter Scott [1771-1832] in Scotland, William Wordsworth [1770-1850] and Samuel Taylor Coleridge [1772-1834], Goethe [1749-1832] and Schiller [1759-1805] in Germany are held in

high esteem as great ballad writers. They not only resourced but also accomplished this literary art form. Other poets and writers in England who experimented with the literary ballad were Rudyard Kipling [1865-1936], Oscar Wilde [1854-1900], C.G. Rossetti [1830-1894], and so on.

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Check Your Progress

3. For whose collection was *Highland Mary* composed?
4. What were ancient ballads?

6.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Robert Burns' chief poetic works include *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* [1786], *Tam O' Shanter* [1795], *The Cotters Saturday Night* [1795], *The Jolly Beggars* [1799], *Burns' Poetical Works* [1824], *Holy Willie's Prayer* [1789], and so on.
2. Mary Campbell was born to Archibald and Agnes Campbell of Dunoon in 1762.
3. The song *Highland Mary* [1792] was composed for George Thomson's [1757-1851] collection and it is based on 'Katherine Ogie' tune, a traditional Scottish song.
4. The ancient ballads were stories sung orally and were handed on to the posterity in the oral form.

6.5 SUMMARY

- One of the most celebrated poets of the world, the national poet of Scotland and still an esteemed hero around the world, Robert Burns was born in Alloway [Ayrshire, Scotland] in 1759.
- Robert Burns' rebellion towards the existing social order could be partly linked to his childhood days when he witnessed his father's struggle in Ayrshire to obtain fortune.
- Outstandingly recognised as the originator of famous Romantic Movement, Burns was also one of the foremost forces reckoned behind socialist and liberalist movements worldwide.
- In Edinburgh literary circles, his poems were commemorated and Burns was given respect equal to the already established, famed writers.
- In Edinburgh literary circles, Burns formed his impression as a genius of robust, plain and unaffected disposition because he was extraordinarily gifted.

- Burns was pioneer poet in conserving his culture by redefining, revising or simply elasticising a folk song, accumulating them in many collections, the most notable among which is *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*.
- His chief poetic works include *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* [1786], *Tam O' Shanter* [1795], *The Cotters Saturday Night* [1795], *The Jolly Beggars* [1799], *Burns' Poetical Works* [1824], *Holy Willie's Prayer* [1789], *To a Mouse, On Turning Her Up In Her Nest With The Plough* [1785], *Address to a Haggis* [1786], *Auld Lang Syne* [1788], *A Red, Red Rose* [1794], *Is There for Honest Poverty,* etc.
- Burns' poetic texture is construed to combine soft and satiric, as well as sprightly and despondent themes.
- The National Poet of Scotland had in him greater qualities than the mediocre litterateur of his time and he expended his intellectual strength to preserve culture, tradition and the essence of his nation.
- The songwriter, poet and great humanitarian Robert Burns' poetic muse Mary Campbell, that is, *Highland Mary*, was born to Archibald and Agnes Campbell of Dunoon in 1762.
- With the poet Robert Burns, she definitely would have shared a relationship of lover-beloved. Burns' praises her in many of his lyrics which name her and describe their intimate relationship with commitment for each other quite candidly.
- Mary's died taking care of her ill brother Robert, after contracting the same infection.
- The song Highland Mary [1792] was composed for George Thomson's [1757-1851] collection and it is based on 'Katherine Ogie' tune, a traditional Scottish song.
- The poem consists of thirty-two lines having four octaves.
- The modulation of the emotions in the song flows with simple lustrous diction containing the English and Scottish dialect.
- In the song, Burns states the full story of his tender moments with Highland Mary, probably the most meaningful day he spent with her.
- A ballad as a form of poetic art belongs to ancient France where it was used for performing traditional dances.

6.6 KEY WORDS

- **Coilsfield:** It is a region and a previous estate in the Kyle district of South Ayrshire, situated on the right bank of the Water of Fail almost a kilometre West of Failford and two kilometres Southeast of Tarbolton.

NOTES

- **Coilsfield House:** It was the abode of the Montgomery family of Coilsfield who became the Earls of Eglinton; only Coilsfield Mains farm remains even today as relic.
- **Ballad:** It is a poem or song narrating a story in short stanzas. Traditional ballads are typically of unknown authorship, having been passed on orally from one generation to the next.
- **Panorama:** It is an unbroken view of the whole region surrounding an observer.

6.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Where did Robert Burns plan to move abroad?
2. Name the first book published by Burns.
3. Which famous Scottish literary writer held Robert Burns in Edinburgh in awe and admiration?
4. What literary form does 'Highland Mary' belong to?
5. Write a short note on the life of Robert Burns.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss *Highland Mary* as a mixture of Burns' 'mirth-melancholia' mood.
2. Examine Robert Burns' poem *Highland Mary* as a ballad.
3. Discuss Robert Burns as a master craftsman of poetic art with reference to his poem *Highland Mary*.
4. Discuss ballads as a poetic form.

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UNIT 7 WORDSWORTH'S ODE: *INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY*

Structure

7.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit discusses William Wordsworth's poem *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*. William Wordsworth, like his Romantic peers, was a great lover of nature. He believed that nature could bestow peace, sympathy, love, joy and other virtues on man. He did not like to depict nature 'red in tooth and claw'. He believed that nature gave purity to man and ennobled his heart. He was a great lover of the common man and the rustic and rural life. He loved childhood stage of human life and thought that because of its innocence, purity of thought and nearness to God, childhood was the golden period of human life. He loved all creation and all kinds of creatures, including the smallest and most insignificant animals and insects. He believed that 'nature never did betray the heart that loved her.' He himself practiced what he preached and spent most of his time in the company of nature. The poem *Ode: Intimations of Immortality* was written in 1804.

7.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of William Wordsworth
- Critically analyse the poem *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*
- Examine Wordsworth as a poet of nature

7.2 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH: LIFE AND WORKS

NOTES

William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1770 in Cockermouth, Cumberland. His father was a law agent and collected rent. He was financially secure and Wordsworth enjoyed a comfortable childhood. He was admitted to Hawkshead Grammar school near Windermere in 1778. In 1787, he went to Saint John's College, Cambridge. He loved trekking in Cumberland, France, Switzerland, Germany, and Wales. He visited France in 1791 during the time of the French Revolution. It was during this time that he met Annette Vallon, a French woman and had a brief affair with her. He returned to England due to the Anglo-French war. In 1794, Dorothy, his sister, became his close companion, friend and housekeeper. In 1795, he met Coleridge. He planned lyrical ballads in 1798. Then he travelled to Germany after which both William and Dorothy settled in their beloved lake district near Grassmere. In 1783, he married Mary Hutchinson. He faced a series of tragedies; death of his brother, death of his two children and alienation from Coleridge. His financial condition was also not stable. In 1830, he was appointed as distributor of stamps for West Mooreland. Gradually he became financially secure. His literary career started with descriptive sketches in 1793. At the peak of his poetic career, he wrote *Poems in Two Volumes* which was published in 1807. In 1828, he reconciled with Coleridge and both toured the Rhineland together. Wordsworth received an honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree in 1838 from Durham University, and the same honour from Oxford University the next year. He became a poet laureate in 1843 and died in 1850.

He bought a completely new approach to the writing of English poetry. His objections to highly stylized poetic diction, his attitude to nature, his choice of simple incidents and humble people as subjects of his poetry are some his achievements. Poetry for him was primarily the record of a certain kind of state of mind and the value of poetry for him lay in the value of that state of mind that the poet recorded. As a poet, Wordsworth was a man of unusual emotional vitality. The initiation point is the poet's special kind of perception which differed in degree rather than in kind from that of ordinary men. The French Revolution, eighteenth century development of psychological views implicit in Locke's view of perception and knowledge, rational and humanitarian principles of enlightenment, his own simple and democratic upbringing, and the countryside of the Lake District were important factors in the development of his poetry. His first poem, *An Evening Walk* (1793), shows the influence of the French poets. Wordsworth was not a dramatic poet. He displayed what Keats called egotistical sublime. He himself had to be implicated in everything he wrote however apparently objective the narrative might be. His greatest poems are those where autobiography, perception and narrative are woven into one texture. *Tintern Abbey*, 1798, shows idiom of poetry where reflection is linked to sensation in new and organic fashion. It shows the development of his attitude towards nature- moving from the animal pleasure of childhood through adolescent passion for wild and gloomy to adult awareness

of the relation of one's perception of the natural world to a sense of the human and moral world. In immortality ode, Wordsworth gives us the complete balance of maturity as he saw it. '*The Prelude*' gives a long autobiographical account of his own development as a poet. '*The Recluse'* is a 'philosophical poem containing the view of man, nature and society having for its principal subject the sensations and the opinions of a poet living in retirement'. Relationship, love, joy are the key words of Wordsworth. Poems like *Resolution, Independence, The Solitary Reaper and Michael* are some of his most famous poems.

Check Your Progress

1. When was William Wordsworth born?
2. When did Wordsworth visit France and why was he forced to return?

7.3 ODE: INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY: *TEXT AND CRITICAL INTEGRETATION*

Text

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.
'The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.'

I
There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.

NOTES

It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II

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

Interpretation

In the above stanzas, the speaker is in a pensive mood. He says that at one time everything around him seemed surreal. There was an otherworldly effect as everything was bathed in celestial light. But things are not as they were before even though the rose is as lovely as ever, the rainbow makes its appearance regularly and on a cloudless night we can see the moon and soak in the beauty of the stars. The water shimmers on a starry night and the sun spreads its glorious brightness around the world. In spite of this, the speaker feels that the magnificence of the earth has lessened in some way.

Text

III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,

The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday;—
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy!

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

NOTES

Interpretation

The speaker was immersed in the joyous song of the birds in the springtime and the playful leaping of the lambs in the meadows when a sad thought crossed his mind. However, that thought did not last for long as he found solace in the sound of the waterfalls, the echoes in the mountains and winds blowing across the fields. All this gave him strength and he decided he would not let his unhappiness mar the enjoyment of spring, the season when everybody around him was happy. He tells a shepherd boy to revel in the joy of the month of May and to shout and play with abandon. Further, addressing the creatures of nature, the speaker says that he is with them in their enjoyment of the season and participates in the gaiety wholly as if in a festival. He says that it is sacrilegious to feel sad on a beautiful May morning when children around him play and laugh. However, the feeling that something is amiss persists as he looks upon a tree and a field. The pansy that grows on the ground also brings forth a similar sentiment. The speaker wonders where the visionary dream has vanished.

Text

V

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

VI

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

Interpretation

In the fifth stanza, the speaker declares human life as merely 'a sleep and a forgetting'. He says that before entering the earth, humans live in a purer and more majestic kingdom. That kingdom is heaven. Infants have heaven around them and when we look back on childhood memories, we realize that for us everything on earth was suffused with magic. On growing up and moving from babyhood and young adulthood into manhood, our perception of life changes and the magic wears off gradually. The earth is so unique and its pleasures so different from what man has visualized that he now gradually forgets the glories of the place he had originally come from.

Text

VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;

NOTES

But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little Actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his 'humorous stage'
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation

Interpretation

In the seventh stanza, the speaker observes a six-year-old boy and imagines his life, and the love his parents bestow upon him. He sees the boy playing with some imitated fragment of adult life, 'some little plan or chart,' imitating 'a wedding or a festival' or 'a mourning or a funeral.' The speaker imagines that all human life is a similar replication of this childhood observation.

Text

VIII
Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy Soul's immensity;
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind, —
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by;
To whom the grave
Is but a lonely bed without the sense or sight
Of day or the warm light,
A place of thought where we in waiting lie;

Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX
O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast: —
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;

NOTES

NOTES

Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts today
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;

In the faith that looks through death,

In years that bring the philosophic mind.

Interpretation

NOTES

In the eighth stanza, the speaker addresses the child as though he were a powerful prophet of a lost truth, and asks him when he has all the splendour of his origins and the pure experience of nature why does he still rush toward an adult life of convention and material pleasures.

In the ninth stanza, the speaker is happy that his childhood memories are a link to the world of innocence. In the tenth stanza, reinforced by this pleasure, he implores the birds to sing and he encourages all earthly creatures to join in the happiness of the month of May. Though the speaker says he has lost some part of the glory of nature and experience, he will take comfort in the knowledge that as one grows older, a maturity sets in and a person acquires a philosophical bent of mind. In the last stanza, the speaker says that an adult is aware of the mortality of life as compared to a child for whom life will simply go on hence an adult can well appreciate the beauty of nature, as he knows he has a short life in which to enjoy it. Each object of nature stirs in him a thought process. Even the simplest flower blowing in the wind sets him in a thinking mode and raises in him thoughts that are hidden deep in the crevice of one's mind.

Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*, as it is often called, is written in eleven variable ode stanzas with variable rhyme schemes, in iambic lines with anything from two to five stressed syllables. The rhymes occasionally alternate lines, occasionally fall in couplets, and occasionally occur within a single line (as in 'But yet I know, where'er I go' in the second stanza).

In *Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth discussed how childhood memories of nature influenced the adult mind. The *Imitations of Immortality* ode is his mature masterpiece on the subject. The poem, whose full title is '*Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood,'* makes explicit Wordsworth's belief that life on earth is a dim shadow of an earlier, purer existence, dimly recalled in childhood and then forgotten in the process of growing up.

Though the poem's metaphysical theory can be disagreed upon, one cannot doubt the brilliance of language in this ode. Wordsworth's speaker is consciously at odds with the festive mood of nature all around him. For Wordsworth, this was an unusual occurrence considering the fact that he is habitually in unity with nature. The speaker is unhappy because he cannot enjoy and experience the beauty of the May morning as he did in his childhood. He is forcing himself to enjoy the morning but real happiness comes to him when he realizes that 'the philosophic mind' has given him the ability to understand nature in deeper, more human terms—as a source of metaphor and guidance for human life. This is very much the same pattern as *Tintern Abbey*, but whereas in the earlier poem Wordsworth made himself joyful, and referred to the 'music of humanity' only briefly, in the later poem he explicitly proposes that this music is the remedy for his mature grief.

NOTES

The style of the ode is distinctive from Wordsworth's other works. While most of his works are characteristically fluid, naturally spoken monologues, the Ode is written in a lilting, songlike cadence with frequent shifts in rhyme scheme and rhythm. Also, the Ode does not follow one single idea throughout but shifts from one idea to the next, reverting repeatedly to the central theme along the way. At times the speaker takes us by surprise. He addresses the Mighty Prophet in the eighth stanza and it is only revealed later that the mighty prophet is a six-year-old boy.

Wordsworth's linguistic approach in this Ode is sophisticated and complex. The use of metaphor and image shifts from lost childhood to a philosophic mind. The main ploy used here is that when the speaker is melancholy, to offer happy pastoral images which are more than often personified, e.g., the lambs dancing as to the tabor, the moon looking about her in the sky. When the poet achieves the philosophic mind and his fullest realization about memory and imagination, he begins to employ far more subtle descriptions of nature that, rather than jauntily imposing humanity upon natural objects, simply draw human characteristics out of their natural presences, referring back to human qualities from earlier in the poem.

Text

XI

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

Interpretation

In the final stanza, the brooks 'fret' down their channels, just as the child's mother 'fretted' him with kisses earlier in the poem; they trip lightly just as the speaker 'tripped lightly' as a child; the Day is new-born, innocent, and bright, just as a child would be; the clouds 'gather round the setting sun' and 'take a sober coloring,' just as mourners at a funeral might gather soberly around a grave. The effect is to illustrate how, in the process of imaginative creativity possible to the mature mind, the shapes of humanity can be found in nature and vice-versa. A flower can summon thoughts too deep for tears because a flower can embody the shape of human life, and it is the mind of maturity combined with the memory of childhood that enables the poet to make that vital and moving connection. '

7.4 WORDSWORTH AS A POET OF NATURE

Wordsworth is a worshipper of nature, a Nature's devotee, a high-priest. Nature is an integral part of his poems. He presents nature in a positive manner. With Wordsworth, the poetry of nature takes a new range, passing beyond the sensuous presentation and description. Under the influence of nature, he expresses a mystical mood, a transcendental feeling. He finds joy in the presence of her calm and spiritual beauty. For him, nature possesses a soul, a conscious existence, an ability to make us feel joy and love. Nature is a divine presence, a sublime experience. Wordsworth conceives that nature is alive and it has a living soul. Between this spirit in Nature and Man, there is a pre-arranged harmony which makes man feel every time a divine glory.

Wordsworth has a complete philosophy of nature. He conceives nature as a living personality. He tells us that he has felt the presence of a 'celestial light' in the setting sun, the round ocean, the blue sky etc. Wordsworth believes that nature is a benevolent force which fills human heart with joy. He feels a great ecstasy in the world of nature and realizes the sweet sensation in the hours of weariness.

Wordsworth emphasizes the moral influence of nature on man. He regards nature as a great teacher. He expresses his views about nature that it is the only power which has educated him in real manner. In the lap of nature, he has completed his education. In his poetry, nature is not a passive inert phenomenon. It is rather a dynamic force which activates, energizes and shapes the creative impulse of the poet. It is a guiding force.

For him, nature is a beacon light whose wisdom we can learn if we will. And without which any human life is vain and incomplete. This inter -relation between man and nature is very important in considering Wordsworth's views of both.

Wordsworth describes his love of nature as a boy, as a young man and as a mature man. As a boy, his love for nature is merely a fascination. There is nothing peculiar and distinct in nature at this time. As a young man, his love for nature is

physical passion, an appetite. As a grown-up man, his love is intellectual and spiritual towards nature. His love is now reflexive as he is now so matured that even the ordinary objects of nature seem to be significant to him. In *Ode on Intimation of Immortality*, he says:

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Check Your Progress

3. What was the subject matter of *Tintern Abbey*?
4. How does Wordsworth conceives nature?

7.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1770 in Cockermouth, Cumberland.
2. Wordsworth visited France in 1791 during the time of the French Revolution. It was during this time that he met Annette Vallon, a French woman and had a brief affair with her. He returned to England due to the Anglo-French war.
3. In *Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth discussed how childhood memories of nature influenced the adult mind.
4. Wordsworth conceives nature as a living personality. He tells us that he has felt the presence of a 'celestial light' in the setting sun, the round ocean, the blue sky etc. Wordsworth believes that nature is a benevolent force which fills human heart with joy.

7.6 SUMMARY

- William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1770 in Cockermouth, Cumberland.
- Wordsworth's literary career started with descriptive sketches in 1793. At the peak of his poetic career, he wrote Poems in Two Volumes which was published in 1807.
- Wordsworth bought a completely new approach to the writing of English poetry. His objections to highly stylized poetic diction, his attitude to nature, his choice of simple incidents and humble people as subjects of his poetry are some his achievements.
- Poetry for him was primarily the record of a certain kind of state of mind and the value of poetry for him lay in the value of that state of mind that the poet recorded.

- Poems like *Resolution, Independence, The Solitary Reaper* and *Michael* are some of his most famous poems.
- Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*, as it is often called, is written in eleven variable ode stanzas with variable rhyme schemes, in iambic lines with anything from two to five stressed syllables.
- The style of the ode is distinctive from Wordsworth's other works. While most of his works are characteristically fluid, naturally spoken monologues, the Ode is written in a lilting, songlike cadence with frequent shifts in rhyme scheme and rhythm.
- Though the poem's metaphysical theory can be disagreed upon, one cannot doubt the brilliance of language in this ode.
- Wordsworth's speaker is consciously at odds with the festive mood of nature all around him.
- Wordsworth is a worshipper of nature, a Nature's devotee, a high-priest. Nature is an integral part of his poems.
- Wordsworth has a complete philosophy of nature. He conceives nature as a living personality.
- For him, nature is a beacon light whose wisdom we can learn if we will. And without which any human life is vain and incomplete.

7.7 KEY WORDS

- **Ode:** It is a lyric poem, typically one in the form of an address to a particular subject, written in varied or irregular metre.
- **Imagination:** It is the faculty or action of forming new ideas, or images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses.
- **Metaphysical:** It means transcending physical matter or the laws of nature.
- **Pensive:** It means to be engaged in, involved in, or reflecting deep or serious thought.

7.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the life of William Wordsworth.
2. What is Wordsworth's linguistic approach in the poem *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*

NOTES

Long-Answer Questions

1. Examine the poem *Ode: Intimations of Immortality.*
2. Discuss Wordsworth as a poet of nature.

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BLOCK - III

POETRY - II

NOTES

UNIT 8 S. T. COLERIDGE: *THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER*

Structure

8.0 INTRODUCTION

Samuel Taylor Coleridge published *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* for the first time in *Lyrical Ballads* (in 1798, a joint effort of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge which started the Romantic Movement in English Literature) nineteen years later, in 1817; he published an edited version of the poem in his collection entitled *Sibylline Leaves*. In the 1817 version of the poem, Coleridge added another layer to the poem in the form of marginal glosses. These explanations not only amplify the allegorical feel of the poem, but also state directly that spirits, and not just nature, are responsible for punishing the Ancient Mariner and his shipmates.

The subjectivity of experience and the importance of the individual are two significant characteristics of the Romantic Movement that *The Rime of Ancient Mariner* celebrates though other features of Romanticism in the poem, such as the use of the supernatural etc. The poem is told largely from the Ancient Mariner's perspective, despite the minor involvement of a separate narrator, who describes the Ancient Mariner and the actions of the wedding guests. The Ancient Mariner tells his tale not because he wants his tale to be known to the world, but because he is forced to tell the tale to allay his agonizing storytelling compulsion. The Romantics were some of the first poets to place a literary work's focus on the

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protagonist's empirical experience of the world, rather than on a didactic message. Moreover, the Romantics also went against the earlier trend of championing religious institution and instead locating the spiritual and the sublime in nature. Despite the Ancient Mariner's expression of love for communal prayer, his message reveals his belief that the true path to God is through communing with and respecting nature. The poem is said to have been inspired by many historical sources — Captain James Cook's voyages, the legend of the Wandering Jew, and especially Captain George Shelvocke's 1726 *A Voyage 'Round the World*, in which he describes how one of his shipmates shot an albatross that he believed had made the wind disappear.

8.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Recall key aspects of Coleridge's biography
- Discuss Coleridge's cultural and literary background
- Discuss Coleridge's notion of the imagination
- Summarize *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

8.2 SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE: LIFE AND WORKS

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (21 October 1772 – 25 July 1834) is considered to be one of the founders of the Romantic Movement in England and a member of the Lake Poets. He is famous for his poems: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, as well as his critical work: *Biographia Literaria*. His critical work, especially on Shakespeare, was highly influential, and he helped introduce German idealist philosophy to an English-speaking culture. Coleridge's early intellectual debts, besides German idealists like Kant and critics like Lessing, were first to William Godwin's *Political Justice*. But throughout his adult life, Coleridge suffered from crippling bouts of anxiety and depression.

At the university, he was introduced to political and theological ideas then considered radical, including those of the poet Robert Southey. Coleridge joined Southey in a plan, soon abandoned, to establish a utopian society, called Pantisocracy, in the wilderness of Pennsylvania. In 1795, the two friends married sisters Sara and Edith Fricker, in St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, but Coleridge's marriage with Sarah proved unhappy. The years 1797 and 1798, during which he lived in what is now known as Coleridge Cottage, in Nether Stowey, Somerset, were among the most fruitful of Coleridge's life. In 1795, Coleridge met poet William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. Besides *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, he composed the symbolic poem *Kubla Khan*, written—Coleridge

himself claimed—as a result of an opium dream, in 'a kind of a reverie'; and the first part of the narrative poem *Christabel*. During this period, he also produced his much-praised 'conversation' poems *This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison*, *Frost at Midnight*, and *The Nightingale*. In 1798, Coleridge and Wordsworth published a joint volume of poetry, *Lyrical Ballads*, which heralded the romantic age. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was published in *Lyrical Ballads*.

In 1800, he returned to England and shortly thereafter settled with his family and friends in the Lake District of Cumberland where Wordsworth had moved. Soon, however, he was beset by marital problems, nightmares, illnesses, increased opium dependency, tensions with Wordsworth, and a lack of confidence in his poetic powers, all of which fuelled the composition of *Dejection: An Ode*. In 1804, he travelled to Sicily and Malta and it was at that time that he became thoroughly addicted to opium. His opium addiction began to take over his life: he separated from his wife Sarah in 1808, quarreled with Wordsworth in 1810. In 1817, Coleridge, with his addiction worsening, took residence with the physician James Gillman. Gillman was partially successful in controlling the poet's addiction. In Gillman's home, he finished his major prose work, the *Biographia Literaria* (1817).

Samuel Taylor Coleridge died on 25 July 1834 at the age of 61. Upon his death, his good friend Charles Lamb claimed he could not grieve for Coleridge, saying: 'It seemed to me that he long had been on the confines of the next world - that he had a hunger for eternity.' According to Lamb, Coleridge spent his life striving for the eternal and sublime, so that death was for him the fulfilment of his deepest desire, rather than a dreaded end.

8.3 CULTURAL AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

The Romantic Age began with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the year 1798. Literary historians are of the view that the publication of this collection of poems along with its Preface heralded a new era in the history of English literature. The governing word of the eighteenth-century was reason and the dominating word of the literature was diction. The romantics tried to oppose both these notions and these words were replaced by imagination or emotion; and by the language of the common man as opposed to limited practitioners of diction. Thus a stark contrast can be perceived between the eighteenth-century poetry and the poems of the Romantics.

But it is not that this change that happened suddenly. This change in outlook about writing poetry was a gradual one. The Pre-romantics (Thomson, Gray and others) had their contribution in achieving this change in the history of the English literature. But Wordsworth in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* emphasized the aims and objectives of new poetry. According to Wordsworth, the subject of new poetry should be taken from ordinary and commonplace life and colored with imagination

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to make it poetic. Along with this, it should be written in the language of the common man. Even though Coleridge collaborated with Wordsworth in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), they had different notions of Romanticism. Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* not only professes his ideas about poetry and the creative process, but also ponders on his intellectual difference from Wordsworth, while maintaining his deep veneration for him. In Chapter Fourteen and Chapter Seventeen of *Biographia Literaria* we can witness the admiration Coleridge had for Wordsworth but that does not deter him from pointing out the lapses in Wordsworth's notion of poetry as propounded in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.

Let us now concentrate for a while on Coleridge's notion of Imagination and its role in poetry so as to understand Coleridge's critical thoughts in a better way.

8.4 COLERIDGE'S NOTION OF THE IMAGINATION

Wordsworth in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* has talked about how imagination should be the means through which one has to colour the commonplace incidents of one's life. He spoke of poetry as a 'work of imagination and sentiment.' Keats wrote in a letter in 1819 – 'I describe what I imagine.' In no ambiguous terms, all the Romantics were preoccupied with imagination though it was Samuel Taylor Coleridge who tried to theoretically and critically talk about it in his book of criticism named *Biographia Literaria*, published in 1817. Coleridge made a distinction between 'Fancy' and 'Imagination'. Coleridge in Chapter Thirteen of *Biographia Literaria* writes:

'The imagination, then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The Primary Imagination I 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'. The Secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet as identical with the primary in its kind of agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; 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.'

'Fancy', on the contrary has no other counters to play with, but with fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space …'

The Primary Imagination, according to Coleridge, is the only means through which the poet can transcend the worries, tensions and pains of this reality so as to communicate with the 'infinite' or the 'divine' and get some access to the ideal world of His. According to him, the only poetic means through which a poet can surpass the 'fixities and definites' of the world of Fancy is Primary Imagination.

He makes a distinction between the fanciful and the imaginative poet when he compares John Milton and Abraham Cowley, and says – 'Milton is an imaginative poet, whereas Cowley, a fanciful one.'

But the poet's work is not only that of a seer, as he does it while getting into the mode of perceiving the supreme reality with the Primary Imagination. His next role is that of a prophet, where his duty is to talk about the things that he has perceived in his primary imagination. So the poet now tries to concretize the perception of the Primary Imagination through the Secondary one. But as Coleridge says it is not altogether possible to recreate the things of the primary imagination, as the secondary imagination 'dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create.' Therefore, it is never possible for any imaginative poet to be entirely content with his creative output as the essence of what he had perceived through his Primary Imagination is gone if not fully, but partially. T. S. Eliot later in one in a different context altogether in the poem 'The Hollow Men' writes:

'Between the conception and the creation

Falls the shadow'

This shadow pained the Romantic poets. And it is termed by literary canonizers and scholars as Romantic Agony.

Wiling suspension of disbelief

'Wiling suspension of disbelief' is a phrase coined by Samuel Taylor Coleridge to understand the way the poetic world is different from the world in which we live in. If one compares our world with the poetic world and tries to judge the poetic world according to the standards of this world then one would necessarily be hopeless as the realm that the poets' create in their fictive world is different, and the moment we enter that world of poetry one needs to willingly suspend his or her sense of disbelief for that world so that he or she can enjoy the piece of literature. Strange, supernatural things happen in *The Rime of Ancient Mariner* but those things cannot be questioned, but the supernatural things are used merely as a device to ascertain a moral, a truth.

Check Your Progress

1. In Coleridge's philosophic contribution to Romanticism, does he consider fancy and imagination to be at par? Give reasons for your answer.
2. What is Coleridge's perception of primary and secondary imagination?

8.5 *THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER:* TEXT AND CRITICAL INTERPRETATION

Text

Part the First

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.

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"By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?
"The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din."
He holds him with his skinny hand,
"There was a ship," quoth he.
"Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!"
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.
He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years child:
The Mariner hath his will.
The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot chuse but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.
The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the light-house top.
The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.
Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.
The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.
The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot chuse but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased south along.
With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.
And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.
And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.
The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!
At length did cross an Albatross:
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.
It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!
And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!
In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.

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"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?"—With my cross-bow
I shot the ALBATROSS.

Part the Second

The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.
And the good south wind still blew behind
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!
And I had done an hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay
That made the breeze to blow!
Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.
The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free:
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.
Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!
All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.
Day after day, day after day,

We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.
Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.
The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.
About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.
And some in dreams assured were
Of the spirit that plagued us so:
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.
And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.
Ah! well a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

Part the Third

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
ow glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.
At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist:
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

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A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.
With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could not laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!
With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.
See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!
The western wave was all a-flame
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.
And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered,
With broad and burning face.
Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres!
Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a DEATH? and are there two?
Is DEATH that woman's mate?
Her lips were red, her looks were free,

Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-Mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.
The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
"The game is done! I've won! I've won!"
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.
The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea.
Off shot the spectre-bark.
We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clombe above the eastern bar
The horned Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.
One after one, by the star-dogged Moon
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.
Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.
The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my CROSS-BOW!

Part the Fourth

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,

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As is the ribbed sea-sand.
"I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown."—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.
Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.
The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.
I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.
I looked to Heaven, and tried to pray:
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
my heart as dry as dust.
I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.
The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.
An orphan's curse would drag to Hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is a curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.
The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:

Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside.
Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red.
Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.
Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.
O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.
The self same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

Part the Fifth

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.
The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

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My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.
I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.
And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.
The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.
And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.
The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.
The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.
They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.
The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do:

They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.
The body of my brother's son,
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.
"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!"
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:
For when it dawned—they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.
Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.
Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!
And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the Heavens be mute.
It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.
Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

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Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.
The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.
Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.
How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two VOICES in the air.
"Is it he?" quoth one, "Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low,
The harmless Albatross.
"The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow."
The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, "The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do."

Part the Sixth

FIRST VOICE.
But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—

What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the OCEAN doing?
SECOND VOICE.
Still as a slave before his lord,
The OCEAN hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—
If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.
FIRST VOICE.
But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?
SECOND VOICE.
The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.
Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.
I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high;
The dead men stood together.
All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.
The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.
And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green.
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—
Like one that on a lonesome road

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Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.
But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.
It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.
Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.
Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree!
We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.
The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the moon.
The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.
And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.
A little distance from the prow

Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!
Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.
This seraph band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light:
This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.
But soon I heard the dash of oars;
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.
The Pilot, and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.
I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

Part the Seventh

This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.
He kneels at morn and noon and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:

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It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.
The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
"Why this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?"
"Strange, by my faith!" the Hermit said—
"And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were
"Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young."
"Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared"—"Push on, push on!"
Said the Hermit cheerily.
The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.
Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.
Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.
Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill

Was telling of the sound.
I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.
I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
"Ha! ha!" quoth he, "full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row."
And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.
"O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!"
The Hermit crossed his brow.
"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?"
Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.
Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns;
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.
I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.
What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

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O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be.
O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—
To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!
Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.
He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all.
The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.
He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

Summary with Brief Critical Comments

Part 1

The Ancient Mariner, a strange old man with a 'long grey beard and glittering eye,' stops one of three people on their way to a wedding celebration. The Wedding Guest tries to resist being stopped as he is on his way to a marriage ceremony where he is the closest living relative to the groom, and the festivities have already begun. But the Ancient Mariner pays no heed to what the wedding guest says and begins to tell his story. The Wedding Guest starts listening to his story enamoured and engrossed.

The Ancient Mariner narrates how on one clear and bright day, he set out sail on a ship full of happy seamen and they sailed along smoothly until they reached the equator. The sounds of the marriage festivities make the wedding guest impatient, but he carries on listening to the story with rapt attention. As the ship reached the equator, a dreadful storm enforced the ship to go southwards. The wind blew with such vigour that the ship pitched down in the waves. Then the sailors reached a calm patch of sea that was 'wondrous cold', full of snow and glistening green icebergs as tall as the ship's mast. The sailors were the only living things in this fearsome, enclosed world where the ice made terrible groaning sounds that echoed all around. Finally, an Albatross came out amidst the mist. The sailors valued it as a sign of good luck, as though it were a 'Christian soul' sent by God to save them. As soon as the sailors fed the Albatross the ice broke apart, allowing the captain to steer out of the freezing world. The wind picked up again, and continued for nine days. All the while, the Albatross followed the ship, ate the food the sailors gave it, and played with them. At this point, the Wedding Guest notices that the Ancient Mariner looks at once grave and crazed. He exclaims:

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!

From the fiends that plague thee thus!-

Why lookst thou so?'

The Ancient Mariner responds that he shot the Albatross with his crossbow.

Brief critical analysis

From the beginning of the poem, the poet is able to create a supernatural atmosphere where the Ancient Mariner's glittering eyes not only compels the Wedding Guest to forget the festivities; but at the same time be enamoured to listen to the strange story of the old man. The other-worldly features of the mariner makes the reader curious to listen to his tale as there is already a premonition that a strange tale is about to unfold. Moreover the poet through the two characters is able to make a clear distinction between the two worlds: the physical and the supernatural. The sounds of the festivities invite the wedding guest to the physical temporal world, but he is unable to leave the spiritual and supernatural world of the tale and of the mariner.

Even in the tale of the Ancient Mariner, the physical and the supernatural worlds are confounded the moment the sailors cross the equator. As the sailors reach the equator, they lose control of their course of their journey, as the storm drives the ship into an icy world – 'the land of mist and snow'. The word 'rime' of the title of the poem is significant here as it can mean 'ice' referring to the icy supernatural world where the poem is set, and can also signify 'rhyme' in the sense of the poem being a rhymed story of the Ancient Mariner.

Part 2

The ship sailed to the Pacific Ocean. Though the sun was shining during the day the wind remained strong and the mist held fast. The sailors were upset with the

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Ancient Mariner for killing the Albatross, which they thought had saved them from the icy world by summoning the wind:

'Ah wretch! Said they, the bird to slay
That made the breeze to blow!'

Then the mist disappeared and the sun shone particularly brightly. The sailors changed their opinion about the killing of Albatross — they now thought that the Albatross must have brought the mist. So they started praising the Ancient Mariner for having killed it to get rid of the mist:

'T'was right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.'

The ship sailed along until it entered an uncharted part of the ocean where the wind disappeared. Consequently the ship could not move; it was 'As idle as a painted ship / upon a painted ocean.' The sun became unbearably hot just as the sailors ran out of water:

'Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.'

The ocean became a horrifying place; the water churned with 'slimy' creatures, and at night, eerie fires seemed to burn on the ocean's surface. Some of the sailors dreamed that an evil spirit had followed them from the icy world, and they all suffered from a thirst so appalling that they could not speak. To trademark the Ancient Mariner for his misdeed and place the guilt on him and him alone, the sailors hung the Albatross's dead corpse around his neck.

Brief critical analysis

Part II of the poem is significant in the sense that Coleridge introduces the idea of responsibility where the sailors accuse the Ancient Mariner for the misfortune that has fallen upon them as he killed the Albatross for no rhyme or reason, in a moment of impulse. The interesting fact is that the sailors make him claim responsibility for their fate than what their fate actually is. First, they curse the Ancient Mariner for making the wind disappear, and then they praise him for making the mist disappear. The sailors in their praise and accusations subject their own reason to scrutiny as they cannot assess a situation as it truly is. The mistake that the mariner commits by killing the albatross needs to be paid for and the co-sailors does so as they suffer. Their suffering reaches its epitome when we figure out that they have water all around them, but they do not have any water to quench their thirst:

'Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.'

As we have already discussed, the Albatross is a bird, but in the poem it becomes akin to a spirit, and its murder by the Ancient Mariner wreaks spiritual

havoc on the sailors. We cannot arrive at any reason why the Ancient Mariner shoots the Albatross, and moreover we come to know that he does so without premeditation, without thinking about the pros and cons of it. The sailors add to the Ancient Mariner's physical punishment when they hang the Albatross around his neck, giving him a physical burden to remind him of the spiritual burden of sin of murder he carries. In this way the sailors punish him physically for his spiritual depravity.

Part 3

In Part III, the sailors were trapped in their ship on the windless ocean for some time, and finally became delirious with thirst for water. One fine day, the Ancient Mariner noticed something approaching from the West. As it moved closer, the sailors realized that it was a ship, but no one could cry out to call the ship as their throats were dry and their lips badly sunburned. The Ancient Mariner bit his own arm and sipped the blood so that he could wet his mouth enough to cry out: 'A sail! A sail!' Mysteriously, the approaching ship managed to turn its course to them, even though there was still no wind. It crossed the path of the setting sun, and its masts made the sun look as though it was imprisoned. The Ancient Mariner's initial joy turned to dread as he figured out that the ship was approaching in a sinister way and very quickly, and its sails looked like cobwebs. The ship came near enough for the Ancient Mariner to notice that it was manned by Death, embodied in a naked man, and nightmare Life-in-Death, embodied by a naked woman. The latter was eerily beautiful, with red lips, golden hair, and skin 'as white as leprosy.' Death and Life-in-Death were gambling with the dice for the Ancient Mariner's soul, and Life-in-Death won. She whistled three times just as the last of the sun sank into the ocean; night fell in an instant, and the ghost ship turned away and fled. The sailors turned towards the Ancient Mariner and cursed him with their eyes and then all two hundred of them dropped dead without a sound. The Ancient Mariner watched each sailor's soul zoom out of his body like the arrow he shot at the Albatross:

> 'And every soul, it passed me by,
>
> Like the whiz of my cross-bow!'

Brief critical analysis

In Part III, Coleridge presents the spiritual world's retribution in a fantastical, supernatural way where the spiritual world continues to punish the Ancient Mariner and his fellow sailors. Later in the poem, we come to know that a specific spirit is responsible for their ill fate: as the wind refuses to blow, the ocean churns with dreadful creatures, and the sun's relentless heat chars the men. The ghost ship, in this context, is different from the natural world as we see that it sails without wind, and its inhabitants are spirits. Death and Life-in-Death are allegorical figures who are introduced by Coleridge to create the supernatural atmosphere of the poem. As Life-in-Death wins in the game of dice, we understand that the life of Ancient

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Mariner would be much worse than death itself. Death would have been a respite to the mariner for the sin he has committed, but his living with the burden of the sin is a suffering which is more grave and difficult than death. Even those sailors whose souls go to hell seem freer than the Ancient Mariner; while their souls fly unencumbered out of their bodies, he is destined to be trapped in his indefinitely - a living hell. His present story-telling to the Wedding Guest is a part of his suffering as he feels uneasy and suffers a bout of agony if he does not tell the tale to someone. It serves two purposes – (a) people who listen to the tale get aware of the fact how one should not meddle with the natural – metaphysical world; (b) the suffering of the Ancient Mariner continues. The Ancient Mariner's spirit is trapped in his own body, in an excruciating state of limbo - the realm of Life-in-Death. Death would have been a balm to his ailing self, but he is even denied that and made to suffer the agonizing compulsion to carry on narrating his tale of woe and experience the whole thing again and again as he narrates it. The Ancient Mariner's 'glittering eye' suggests more than madness; it represents the state of his soul, which longs to be released from living death. It should be remembered here that when the sailors' souls are released, they fly past the Ancient Mariner with the same intensity and the sound of the arrow he shot at the Albatross. But the Ancient Mariner will probably never experience the sweet release of death.

Many scholars are provoked to interpret the Albatross as Christ, and the Ancient Mariner as the archetypal sinner. The Albatross has the potential to guide the sailors just as Christ has the capability to guide men's souls to heaven. By sinning on impulse, the Ancient Mariner ruins his chances at salvation, and is condemned to the eternal limbo of Life-in-Death. This interpretation implies that every time a person sins, he destroys his relationship with Christ and his chances of reaching heaven, and redemption must be sought through acts of atonement. Just as people wear crucifixes around their necks to remind them of Christ's sacrifice and their responsibility to him, the sailors hang the Albatross around the Ancient Mariner's neck to remind him of his sin.

Part 4

In the beginning of Part IV, the Wedding Guest proclaims that he fears the Ancient Mariner as he is unnaturally skinny, tanned and wrinkled that he resembles the sand, and possesses a 'glittering eye.' The Ancient Mariner tries to assure him that he has not returned from the dead (that is, not a ghost); he is the only sailor who did not die on his ship, but rather drifted in lonely, scorching agony. His only living company in the ocean was 'slimy' creatures of the ocean. As he realized his sin and tried to pray, he could produce only a muffled curse. For seven days and nights the Ancient Mariner remained in suffering alone on the ship amidst the dead sailors, whose dead bodies miraculously did not rot and continued to curse him with their open eyes. Water snakes frolicking beside the ship were the only living creatures around and unconsciously he blessed them. Finally, he was able to pray, and as soon as he could pray, the Albatross fell off his neck and sank heavily into the ocean.

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Brief critical analysis

As the Ancient Mariner floats on his ship on the ocean, nature around him becomes more threatening. Everything around him - the ship, the ocean, and the creatures within it - are 'rotting' in the heat and sun. The rottenness outside is symbolic of the rottenness within. The rottenness is metaphorical as the sailors' corpses lying all around the ship refuse to rot, and their open eyes curse the Ancient Mariner continuously, giving him a vision of the living death that awaits him. It is living death for him as he will age with time, but will not die (even though death will be an end to his suffering). His soul will never be released from his body to escape the horror of damnation. His eyes will carry on glittering mysteriously and he will be feeling the urge to narrate his tale of horror to someone so that he goes through the experience again and again. As the Ancient Mariner floats around, he becomes delirious, unable to escape his overwhelming loneliness even by sleeping:

'I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye...'

The Ancient Mariner's moral depravity has even denied him the comfort of prayer so as to escape the damnation that he has thrust upon himself by committing the crime of killing the albatross.

Ironically, it is the 'slimy', 'rotten' creatures that comfort the Ancient Mariner and allow him to pray. Aglow in the moonlight, the slimy creatures of the sea begin frolicking, rather than churning nastily; creatures of a beautiful, supernatural world, they

'moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes...
I watched their rich attire;
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.'

When the Ancient Mariner is able to realize and appreciate the beauty of the natural world around him, he is granted the ability to pray. It is the player which will eventually redeem himself.

Part 5

In Part V, Coleridge shows how after praying, the Ancient Mariner thanked the Virgin Mary for finally allowing him to sleep. In his sleep, the Ancient Mariner dreamt that the buckets in the ship are getting filled with dew. The sound of rain made him wake up and after many a days he was able to quench his thirst. Suddenly the mariner heard a loud wind far off, and the sky lit up with darting 'fire-flags' that

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could be interpreted as lightning, aurora borealis, or 'St. Elmo's Fire'. The rain poured from a single cloud, as did an unbroken stream of lightning. The ship began to sail, although there was still no wind. All the dead mariners around him also stood up and went about doing their jobs as a mute, ghostly crew. Hearing the tale, the Wedding Guest got alarmed and proclaims: 'I fear thee, Ancient Mariner!' It is a supernatural tale that the Mariner is narrating which is replete with supernatural, fearful incidents and ideas will make every listener shudder in fear. The Mariner assures the wedding guest that the sailors were not evil and how they gathered together around the mast and sang beautifully. Then the ship sailed on miraculously in the absence of wind, moved instead by the spirit that had followed it from the icy world. Once the ship reached the equator and the sun was directly overhead, it stopped moving and the sails stopped singing. The Ancient Mariner fainted and remained lay on the ship's deck, during which he heard two voices. The first voice swore on Christ that he was the man who betrayed the Albatross that loved him, and that the spirit from the icy world also loved the Albatross:

'The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

The second voice, softer than the first, declared that the Ancient Mariner would continue to pay for his crime:

'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

Brief Critical Analysis

It seems that at the end of this part of the poem the Ancient Mariner is redeemed, as not only is he allowed to sleep, but it finally rains, and his thirst is quenched. As we have seen earlier, the physical drought and thirst is the punishment that is perpetrated on the Ancient Mariner because of his moral depravity. It is the rain that symbolizes his redemption. We see that even though many terrifying things continue to happen all around him - storm, lightning, thunder - the Ancient Mariner is in awe instead of being fearful of it. Part V also ends the Ancient Mariner's loneliness, as the sailors 'awaken' to sail the ship. They not only sing melodious song but the ship sings along with them. And we see that some mysterious force moves the ship even though the air is still. Again, only when the ship crosses a boundary - the equator - confusion returns as the Ancient Mariner is knocked unconscious. The readers are again made doubtful whether the Ancient Mariner is actually redeemed or not. The voices confirm that it is indeed a specific spirit punishing the Ancient Mariner. A spirit that inhabits the icy world of the 'rime' loved the Albatross and the Ancient Mariner's suffering can be seen as a consequence of its vengeance. In the 1817 version of the poem, the readers are specifically informed that the two voices that the Ancient Mariner hears are spirits.

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Part 6

Part VI of *The Rime of Ancient Mariner* opens with a dialogue between the two voices. The first voice asks the second voice to remind as to what moved the Ancient Mariner's ship along so fast, and the second voice proposed that the moon must be controlling the ocean. The first voice asked again what could be driving the ship, and the second voice replied that the air was pushing the ship from behind instead of the wind. The voices disappear after narrating this. The Ancient Mariner wakes up at night to find the dead sailors again together on the deck, cursing him with their eyes. Suddenly they too disappeared. The Ancient Mariner was not relieved as he knew that these dead men would come back again to haunt him. Then, a wind began to blow and the ship sailed quickly and smoothly until the Ancient Mariner could see the shore of his native place. Moonlight illuminated the glassy harbor, lighthouse, and church. The Ancient Mariner sobbed and prayed. Suddenly, crimson shapes began to appear from the water in front of the ship. When the Ancient Mariner looked down at the deck, he saw an angel standing over each dead man's corpse. The angels waved their hands silently, to guide the ship into port. The Ancient Mariner again heard voices. A pilot, the pilot's boy, and a hermit were approaching the ship in a boat. The Ancient Mariner was overjoyed to see other living beings and wished the hermit would cleanse his sins, to 'wash away the Albatross's blood.'

Brief critical analysis

In Part VI, of the poem is unusual as suddenly the two voices appear and break the narrative of the Ancient Mariner and provide the ancient mariner with a perspective of what has happened. It is a break for the readers too as the readers get a perspective from the dialogues between the spirits. As the Ancient Mariner says that we cannot visualize the two spirits, but can only hear them. They are discernable to human beings only by the sounds that they make.

As the ship enters the harbour, we believe that the Ancient Mariner will be redeemed now, but at the same time, we know that he is doomed to be haunted by the dead men indefinitely. Suddenly, angels appear, one for each dead man, and silently guide the ship into shore. Then not only the pilot and pilot's boy come to rescue the Ancient Mariner, but a hermit also comes out of the woods to redeem the mariner of his sins. The Hermit meets the Ancient Mariner and urges the pilot and pilot's boy to steer the tattered ship to the harbour even though they are afraid. Although at the end of Part VI the Ancient Mariner knows that the Hermit can absolve him of his sin, yet the readers cannot help but suspect that more horror is in store.

Part 7

After suffering long in the course of his journey in the ocean, the Ancient Mariner was cheered by the hermit's singing. As the hermit, the pilot and pilot's boy neared

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the ship, the pilot and the hermit wondered where the angels - which they had thought were merely beacon lights - had gone. The hermit talked about how strange the ship looked with its misshapen boards and flimsy sails. The pilot was afraid of going near the ship, but the hermit encouraged him to steer the boat closer to the ship. Just as the boat reached near the ship, the ship sank straightaway. They saved the Ancient Mariner even though they thought he was dead; after all, he looked as if 'one that hath been seven days drowned.' The boat spun in the whirlpool created by the ship's sinking. Suddenly the Ancient Mariner moved his lips and began to row the boat which terrified the other men; the hermit began to pray, and the pilot's boy laughed crazily thinking the Ancient Mariner was the devil. When they reached the shore, the Ancient Mariner begged the hermit to absolve him of his sins. The hermit crossed himself and asked the Ancient Mariner what sort of man he was. The Ancient Mariner was instantly compelled to narrate his story to the hermit. His need to tell the tale was so strong that it agonized his whole body and once he told the story, he felt relieved.

The Ancient Mariner then tells the Wedding Guest that since then, the urge to narrate his tale has returned at unpredictable times, and he is in agony until he tells it to someone. He says that he wanders from place to place, and has the strange power to single out the person in each location who must listen to his tale. As he says:

'I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.'

The Ancient Mariner tells that even though the wedding celebration sounds entertaining, he prefers to spend his time with others in prayer. He bids the Wedding Guest farewell with one final advice:

'He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.'

What he means is that when one loves all creations of God 'both great and small,' one comes closer to god. Saying this, the Ancient Mariner goes away suddenly. The Wedding Guest too walks away mesmerized by the experience of the tale of the Ancient Mariner. Readers are told that:

'A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.'

Brief critical analysis

The ship reached the very near the harbour, but mysteriously drowns, but we know for sure that the hermit, along with the pilot and his boy would be able to save the Ancient Mariner as he would not get an easy death. The hermit may try to absolve his sins, but he will be perpetually damned for the sin he has committed.

We find out that as soon as he reaches the coast, he is agonized to tell about his adventure in the ocean to the hermit and since then and every now and then a peculiar agony haunts him and he has to narrate the tale to someone or the other all over again. He has the strange power to single out the person to whom he would narrate the tale. And the person who listens to the tale becomes very sad hearing it even though it makes him a wiser human being. In this way the poem ends with a moral:

'He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

Coleridge's use of the supernatural

A question probably has cropped up in our minds – what is the purpose of Coleridge in designing and writing a poem like this where the readers are jolted every moment with supernatural incidents. Is it merely that Coleridge wants his readers to enjoy something supernatural or is it that there are other motifs in the poem? Is supernatural a device of some kind which the poet is using for some other purpose. Probably this is the truth as Coleridge through the supernatural device is trying to tell his readers a lesson on the mindless sins that we perform and consequently are being trapped in our own moral depravity. Furthermore, it is only through prayer and suffering we can try to salvage our damned state. This theme can be also be read as carrying strong pagan overtones; if we try to understand the poem from the point of view of the spirits that are added in the 1817 edition of the poem. It can also be seen as a Christian poem where the same theme of sin, damnation, suffering and salvation are portrayed. Whether we see the poem as having a pagan theme or a Christian theme, it is a religious poem – a poem where the supernatural is used by Coleridge for a specific purpose. In all Coleridge's poems, the supernatural is a device that is used to discuss greater truths and not just for the sake of it.

The Rime of Ancient Mariner is usually interpreted as an allegory of man's connection with the spiritual world (sometimes seen as a Christian Allegory). As we read the poem we understand that the Albatross is intimately tied to the spiritual world, and as the Ancient Mariner shoots the albatross, there begins a narrative by the spiritual world. This world manifests itself in the poem through Nature as it seeks retribution — the ocean, sun, and lack of wind and rain punish the Ancient Mariner and his shipmates. Coleridge locates the spiritual and/or holy in the natural world in order to emphasize man's connection to it. Thus, nature – supernatural elements in nature – is deliberately and consciously used by Coleridge to ascertain a moral –

'He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

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Check Your Progress

3. What is the significance of part II of the poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*?
4. What is the moral to be learnt from the poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner?*

8.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. As per Coleridge's understanding of Romanticism, fancy is a less potent faculty of the mind as compared to imagination. Declaring a clear disdain for 'fixities and definites', fancy is little less than memory 'emancipated from the order of time and space'.
2. Primary imagination is the living power and prime agent of all human perception. It is a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite.

   Secondary imagination is considered to an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet as identical with the primary in its kind of agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses and dissipates in order to re-create.
3. Part II of the poem is significant in the sense that Coleridge introduces the idea of responsibility where the sailors accuse the Ancient Mariner for the misfortune that has fallen upon them as he killed the Albatross for no rhyme or reason, in a moment of impulse. The interesting fact is that the sailors make him claim responsibility for their fate than what their fate actually is. First, they curse the Ancient Mariner for making the wind disappear, and then they praise him for making the mist disappear. The sailors in their praise and accusations subject their own reason to scrutiny as they cannot assess a situation as it truly is.
4. There is a moral that can be learnt at the end of the poem. As we learn that the Ancient Mariner is doomed to narrate his tale in revived waves of anguish, we are told, with the help of pagan and supernatural elements how one should strive to come closer to God not by prayer alone but by deeds; deeds that show love for man and beast.

8.7 SUMMARY

- Coleridge is a Romantic poet whose poem *The Rime of Ancient Mariner* was published in *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, which heralded the Romantic Movement.

- *The Rime of Ancient Mariner* is supernatural poem where the Ancient Mariner narrates his strange tale in the ocean to a Wedding Guest.
- The tale is so gripping and interesting that the Wedding Guest is not able to leave the tale and join the wedding celebration.
- The tale is about killing of an albatross and the consequent suffering that the Ancient Mariner went through in the ocean.
- Through this tale Samuel Taylor Coleridge arrives at the moral that one who loves things of nature whether big or small, is truly praying to God.

8.8 KEY WORDS

- **Albatross:** It is a type of great, white sea bird native to the oceans of the Southern Hemisphere.
- **Allegory:** It means the depiction of abstract ideas through the use of characters and events. Allegory can be verbal, written, pictoral, or theatrical.
- **Hermit:** A person who has chosen to live in seclusion from society, often in a forest, is known as a hermit.

8.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on Coleridge's cultural and literary background.
2. Briefly mention Coleridge's notion of the imagination.
3. What is the Ancient Mariner's appearance? Contrast it with the wedding festivities that are unfolding in the backdrop of the Poem.
4. Identify all the supernatural figures in the poem and comment on how they affect the Ancient Mariner.

Long-Answer Questions

1. What is 'willing suspension of disbelief'? What is its importance in studying *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*?
2. Discuss Coleridge's use of the supernatural in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.
3. Do you agree that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is a Christian allegory? Give a reasoned answer.
4. Write short notes on:
   (a) Albatross
   (b) Supernaturalism in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

(c) The Hermit

(d) Wedding Guest

5. What is it that makes the Ancient Mariner tell the tale? What is the significance of the tale?

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8.10 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 9 SHELLEY

NOTES

Structure

9.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt about Wordsworth's poem *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*. This unit will discuss the poetry of P.B. Shelley.

Shelley is considered to be the finest lyric and philosophical poet in the English language. He was not famous during his lifetime, but gained recognition for his poetry following his death at a young age.

For Shelley, the Romantic Movement became an exploration of the poet's desire to achieve immortality through their work. It also became a movement where a philosophical analysis of what people know and how they will be perceived as time passes became critical points of discussion. The unit will discuss Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* and *Ode to a Skylark*.

9.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss Shelley as a revolutionary poet
- Explain Shelley's nature poetry
- Critically examine the poems *Ode to the West Wind* and *Ode to a Skylark*

9.2 *PERCY SHELLEY:* LIFE AND WORKS

Like Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was a great revolutionary, who championed the cause of liberty. He revolted against tyranny of the State, against corruption in morals and manners. His *Queen Mab* was an angry protest of an

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idealistic youth against a corrupt and coarse society. His *The Spirit of Solitude, The Revolt of Islam, Prometheus Unbound, Ode to Liberty, Mont Blank* were poems of revolutionary ideals which made passionate plea for the total freedom of human will and ideal social order. Romantic poetry is predominantly known for nature, beauty, love, imagination, etc. Poets have hardly spoken about death and desperation. In such themes, Shelley stands out as a romantic poet. His strong disapproving voice, radicalism, revolting temperament made him one of the leading poets of his age. His close friends were John Keats and Lord Byron. It is also said that when he died, a pocket book of Keats's poetry was found in his pocket.

Introduction to Shelley's Poetry

P.B. Shelley was born in Sussex in 1792. His parents belonged to the class of nobility. As a child he was highly fanciful like William Blake. He was a sensitive boy who held self-respect above anything else. Shelley joined Eton College in 1804, where he was ridiculed and called 'Mad Shelley' by other boys. He was ill-treated as he revolted against the tyrannical system prevalent in the school. While at Oxford, he published his pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism* because of which he was expelled from the university. First Shelley married Harriet, a school girl whose parents never agreed to this marriage. Even Shelley's own parents disinherited him for this. Later he eloped with Mary, who later wrote *Frankenstein*. Sadly, this elopement led to Harriet's well-known suicide.

Nature was obviously a primary source of inspiration for Shelley's poetry. In 1818, he left for Italy and never returned. The picturesque scenery of Rome and Pisa influenced *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Witch of Atlas*. His most famous short poems, *Ode to the West Wind* and *To a Skylark*, are based on actual experiences in Italy. Shelley's nature poetry is concerned with the more immediate descriptions and feelings produced by the poet's experiences with nature. Of major importance in this connection are *Alastor, Mont Blanc, The Sensitive Plant, Ode to the West Wind, To a Skylark* and several short poems. The concept of ideal beauty not only strongly influenced the form of Shelley's poetry, but also helped to constitute the theme of his work. The treatment may be narrative or reflective, but it always relies heavily on description.

Shelley's view of the landscape finds its two extremes in the ideals of the cave and the isle. The Platonic concept of the cave as the abode of thought and dream was one of Shelley's favourites. Thus, the mountain scenery is closely connected with his philosophic ideas. Descriptions like the following occur repeatedly in various poems, but with similar expressions:

'. . . wintry mountains, inaccessibly
Hemmed in with rifts and precipices gray.
And hanging crags, many a cove and bay,'

(*The Witch of Atlas*)

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Apart from the description of a stationary scene, the wild, mountainous landscape may engage in dramatic effects. The poems *Alastor* and the *Spirit of Solitude* are an allegorical voyage of the mind. The varying description of the scenery is symbolic of the tragic changes wrought in the poet's soul. The poet is a master in the rendition of sound impressions. He contrasts the roar of the waterfall with the harmonious sound of the wind in the trees. He describes a small brook in three different aspects, two of which involve sound effects: '…..the rivulet

Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed- Sometimes it fell
Among the moss with hollow harmony
Dark and profound Now on the polished stones*
It danced; like childhood laughing as it went:
Then through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness…'

(*Alastor*)

Shelley's love for the sea is connected with his love for waterfalls and brooks. He usually prefers to see it stormy, powerful and majestic. Shelley's dream maidens are garmented in light. His fondness for water, which combines the effects of sound, motion and light, may also be the result of his view of a unified nature. In the poem *To a Skylark*, the water imagery is the underlying effect:

'From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody,'

(*To a Skylark*)

Shelley compares the mind of the poet to a mighty river, which has its origin in the pure and spiritual heights of an eternal power. Mont Blanc expresses this idea symbolically in the river Arve, which originates in the remote and serene mountains of Mont Blanc. The introduction of the poem hints at its symbolical meaning:

'The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves.
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters,….'

(Mont Blanc)

In the purest form of spiritual mysticism, the poet identifies himself with the spiritual powers of nature and loses himself in them. Shelley is probably the greatest lyricist.

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Comparing Shelley with Wordsworth, critics say, 'Wordsworth found and Shelley lost himself in nature.' E. Blunden says of Shelley, 'Shelley did not take up every subject for verse in the solemn, neutral way which we scholiasts are liable to ascribe to him.'

Check Your Progress

1. What is Shelley's *Queen Mab* about?
2. What is the subject matter of the poems *Alastor* and the *Spirit of Solitude*?

9.3 *ODE TO THE WEST WIND:* TEXT AND CRITICAL INTERPRETATION

Text

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,

Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge
Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystàlline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

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The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

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As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

As a poet, Shelley championed the cause of liberty for the people of England and other European nations. Shelley revolted against tyranny in state as well as in church, in life as well as in letters, against corruption in morals in all walks of life so much so that even drinking liquor and eating meat were considered a corruption of morals.

As discussed, nature was obviously a primary source for Shelley's poetry. His nature poetry is concerned with the more immediate descriptions and feelings produced by the poet's experiences in nature. The west wind is personified in this poem. The west wind is presented as a destroyer and a preserver. The poem is both a personal and political document. It is an objectification of the poet's own revolutionary zeal. He derives strength from it and hopes that his own verses will

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be as powerful as the wind is. The poet has a message of hope for all mankind. The west wind is free. It can move anywhere it likes. It is symbolic of poet's great love for freedom and revolution. The west wind is very powerful. It sweeps away everything that comes in its way. The poet prays for the same power he had while young. He wants to be tameless, proud and swift though the years are weighing on him. He had fallen on the thorny ground. He requests the west wind to lift him like a wave, a leaf or a cloud. The message of the poem is very clear. If winter comes can spring be far behind. This shows the poet's unflinching faith in human progress, perfectibility and his inevitable optimism.

In the beginning of the poem, the poet says that the west wind drives away some seeds with it and scatters them. These seeds remain under the earth like dead bodies in the grave. They lie there during the whole of winter. Then spring comes and rouses them by blowing its bugle. In other words, the seeds start sprouting in the spring season. The dreaming earth comes to life. Plants and flowers of different colours and sweet smell fill the fields and the hills.

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

The new sweet buds look like the flocks of sheep. The poet calls the wind the wild spirit. He says that it is moving here and there destroying the old vegetation in order to create the new one.

Thou dirge……..
Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,

In *Ode to the West Wind,* Shelley highlights the effect of the west wind on the sky. The west wind has scattered the clouds all over the sky. The west wind is like a dirge that is a song sung at the burial. It is a dirge of the dying year. The passing night is like a dome of the big tomb. In this dome, all the dark clouds are gathered by the west wind. These dark clouds will put forth rain, lightening and hails. In other words, rain, lightening and hails will burst from these dark clouds gathered under the dome. The poet wishes the same power for himself and requests the west wind to give him. The west wind lifts a wave, a leaf or a cloud and in the process provides energy and strength to them. He says that he has fallen on the thorns of life and is bleeding. He is passing through a very difficult time. There was a time when in his youth he was like the west wind. He was tameless and proud. But now the burden of age and time have chained him and made him humble or bow. He is helpless now. So the poet makes a fervent appeal to the west wind to give its power.

Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

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Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!

The poet invokes the west wind to give some of her power to his verses. He calls her fierce spirit and requests her to be his spirit, to blow through him in the same way the poet wants complete identification with the west wind which is violent and sudden both. He requests her to drive his dead thoughts over the universe as it does the withered leaves. These withered leaves are helpful in bringing out new life. Similarly, his dead thoughts will be helpful in the birth of new ideas. The power of west wind will quicken the birth of new revolution and new world order.

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

In the end, the poet expresses hopes for the mankind. He requests her to blow through his lips. His verses should awaken the sleeping mankind. The west wind is requested to be a trumpet of a forecast. The forecast is that if winter comes, can spring be far behind. No, it will certainly come, sorrows and sufferings will be replaced by joys and happy days. Good time is bound to come. Thus the poet is highly optimistic about spring of joys and happiness

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
O! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee—tameless, and swift, and proud.

The poet says that if he were a dead leaf (like the ones in the first stanza) or a cloud (like the ones in the second stanza) or an ocean wave that rides the power of the Atlantic but is less free than the uncontrollable west wind—or if even he were as strong and vigorous as he was when he was a boy and could accompany the wandering wind in the heavens and could only dream of traveling faster—well, then, he would never have prayed to the west wind as he is doing now in his hour of need.....Referring again to imagery in the first three stanzas, the poet asks the wind to lift him as it would a wave, a leaf, or a cloud; for here on earth he is experiencing troubles that prick him like thorns and cause him to bleed. He is now carrying a heavy burden that—though he is proud and tameless and swift like the west wind—has immobilized him in chains and bowed him down.

9.4 *ODE TO A:* TEXT AND CRITICAL INTERPRETATION

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Text

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert -
That from Heaven or near it
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.
Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest,
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.
In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run,
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.
The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight -
Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.
All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflowed.
What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see,
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody: -
Like a Poet hidden

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In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:
Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:
Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aërial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view:
Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingéd thieves:
Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers -
All that ever was
Joyous and clear and fresh - thy music doth surpass.
Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.
Chorus hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Matched with thine would be all
but an empty vaunt -
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.
What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?
With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:

Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest, but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.
Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?
We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.
Yet, if we could scorn
Hate and pride and fear,
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.
Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!
Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know;
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

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Ode to a Skylark is one of Shelley's most critically acclaimed poems. It was published in 1820 and has inspired many other writers, most notably Thomas Hardy who wrote the poem, *Shelley's Skylark*, and also provided inspiration to this publication.

Ode to a Skylark was written in 1820 when Shelley was in Italy. He compares the Skylark to various objects in order to make the readers understand the mysterious ways of this beautiful bird. This lyric is a manifesto of Shelley's spirit of balance and order. This poem also reminds us of the nightingale of Keats. The difference is that nightingale is a bird of night but skylark is a bird of daylight. Moreover, nightingale 'was not born out of death.' Shelley's expression about skylark does not make him a bird lover or bird watcher rather he is fascinated by the happiness that is present in the song of the bird. He has converted the bird or

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rather bird's song into a symbol of happiness. Thus, the poem is not so much about the bird as it is about happiness. The singing bird is personified as a 'blithe' or happy spirit in the first line of the poem. The poet extols the virtues of the skylark, a bird that soars and sings high in the air.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest,
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

The poem is a romantic lyric about nature and all its beauty. It is a tribute to the bird. Birds are free to express themselves and the poet also wants to express his happiness through the depiction of a bird, skylark. The bird is spiritual with divine powers. It is indeed mystical. Its song is better than the sound of rain and human poetry. The subject of its song is free from pain of love. Perhaps it sings because it knows that the alternative is death. It doesn't have the same desires and concerns that interfere with human happiness.

The speaker is a bit envious of the liberty with which the skylark travels where it pleases. It is always flying high above. We can feel its presence even if we do not see it or hear it.

The poet is not aware why the bird is so happy and the source from where it derives its happiness. He compare it to other living objects in nature; poets, a maiden, worms and roses, which express love, pain and sorrow. None of these objects has the expressive quality of the singing bird. The poet wants to learn a lot from this bird as how it manages to continue on with its 'rapture so divine' without ever succumbing to pain or sorrow. The song of the skylark spreads so much happiness and joy that no human song can ever hope to equal it.

The skylark is a unique entity**.** Even rainbow clouds do not rain as brightly as the shower of melody that pours from the skylark. The bird is like a poet hidden in the light of thought, able to make the world experience sympathy with hopes and fears. It is like a lonely maiden in a palace tower who uses her song to soothe her lovelorn soul. It is like a golden worm who scatters light among the flowers and grass in which it is hidden. It is like a rose whose scent is blown by the wind until the bees are faint with too much sweet.

The song of skylark is more powerful than the skylark itself. It is the song that can have the 'light of thought' of 'the poet,' the 'soothing love' of the maiden, invisible existence as the 'glow-worm golden,' and the aura of 'a rose.'

As the bird flies higher, it is lost to human sight due to the clouds in the sky but what enables the poet to follow it is its song that is so powerful as it echoes all over the sky.

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The poet says that sometimes it is better if we are not aware of things, if things are hidden from us. A bird is carefree, it has no worry as it lives for the moment and does not brood over what could have been or what can be. Humans, on the other hand, always long for what they don't possess.

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know;
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

The speaker would be happy to know only 'half its gladness', which has the ability to inspire others as the poet is inspired by the bird's happiness. It is free from all that gives pain to man. It knows what lies beyond death and has no fear. Even if man freed himself from hate, pride, and fear, man's joy would not equal the skylark's. The secret of its capacity to sing so happily would be an incomparable gift for the poet. If the skylark could communicate to Shelley half its happiness, then he would write poetry that the world would read as joyfully as he is listening to the song of the bird.

What, Shelley asks, is the secret that accounts for the skylark's happiness, manifested in its song?

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

Thus why the bird is free of pain? This question unravels human condition as man knows pain, experiences weariness, annoyance. He is also plagued by hate and pride and fear. He cannot escape from his past. He is also obsessed with his future. He longs for what he does not exist and even his laughter is mixed with sorrow. He dreads death. The skylark, on the other hand, Shelley fancies, 'of death must deem / Things more true and deep / Than we mortals dream.' Therefore the skylark has no fear of death. The skylark is happy because it knows only what makes it happy. They fear death because they are ignorant of what lies beyond death, among other reasons. The skylark knows what lies beyond death, and the nature of what it knows banishes its fear of death. It is no wonder that it is incomparably happy.

Shelley's poetry revealed two types of idealism. While in his poem '*Ode to the West Wind*' he gave vent to his revolutionary idealism, in '*To a Skylark*' he dealt with Platonic idealism. The abstract and the invisible are more real than the concrete and the visible. Shelley's bird is not a bird of flesh and blood. It is more

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a spirit. Shelley made it a scorner of the ground. While Wordsworth made its skylark 'true to the kindred points of heaven and home', Shelley made his skylark a denizen of the sky where it got lost forever. Here skylark is Shelley's free will of free thinking. The skylark is not a simple bird but an ideal one. His mind is like the skylark. He wants freedom like the bird. Though he can\'t see the bird he feels its presence in his heart.

Check Your Progress

3. What is Shelley's nature poetry concerned with?
4. When and where was *Ode to a Skylark* written?

9.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Shelley's *Queen Mab* was an angry protest of an idealistic youth against a corrupt and coarse society.
2. The poems *Alastor* and the *Spirit of Solitude* are an allegorical voyage of the mind. The varying description of the scenery is symbolic of the tragic changes wrought in the poet's soul.
3. Shelley's nature poetry is concerned with the more immediate descriptions and feelings produced by the poet's experiences in nature.
4. *Ode to a Skylark* was written in 1820 when Shelley was in Italy.

9.6 SUMMARY

- Like Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was a great revolutionary, who championed the cause of liberty.
- Shelley revolted against tyranny of the State, against corruption in morals and manners.
- Shelley stands out as a romantic poet. His strong disapproving voice, radicalism, revolting temperament made him one of the leading poets of his age.
- While at Oxford, Shelley published his pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism* because of which he was expelled from the university.
- Nature was obviously a primary source of inspiration for Shelley's poetry. In 1818, he left for Italy and never returned.
- The picturesque scenery of Rome and Pisa influenced *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Witch of Atlas*.

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- Shelley's most famous short poems, *Ode to the West Wind* and *To a Skylark*, are based on actual experiences in Italy.
- Shelley's nature poetry is concerned with the more immediate descriptions and feelings produced by the poet's experiences in nature.
- The west wind is personified in this poem. The west wind is presented as a destroyer and a preserver. The poem is both a personal and political document.
- In *Ode to the West Wind,* Shelley highlights the effect of the west wind on the sky. The west wind has scattered the clouds all over the sky.
- *Ode to a Skylark* is one of Shelley's most critically acclaimed poems. It was published in 1820 and has inspired many other writers, most notably Thomas Hardy who wrote the poem, *Shelley's Skylark*, and also provided inspiration to this publication.
- Shelley compares the Skylark to various objects in order to make the readers understand the mysterious ways of this beautiful bird.
- Shelley's poetry revealed two types of idealism. While in his poem '*Ode to the West Wind*' he gave vent to his revolutionary idealism, in '*To a Skylark*' he dealt with Platonic idealism.

9.7 KEY WORDS

- **Skylark:** It is a small brown bird that sings while flying high above the ground.
- **Liberty:** It is the state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on one's way of life, behaviour, or political views.
- **Tyranny:** It means a cruel and oppressive government or rule.
- **Mysticism:** It is a vague or ill-defined religious or spiritual belief.

9.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the two types of idealism in Shelley's poetry?
2. What are the major themes in Shelley's nature poetry?
3. How do critics compare Wordsworth and Shelley's poetry?

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Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the life and works of P.B. Shelley.
2. Shelly has been called a champion of Liberty. examine this Statement with reference to *Ode to a West Wind*.
3. Critically analyse the poem *Ode to a Skylark*.

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UNIT 10 JOHN KEATS: *ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE*

NOTES

Structure

10.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt about Shelley's poems *Ode to the West Wind* and *Ode to a Skylark*. This unit discusses the poet John Keats and his poem *Ode to a Nightingale*.

The Romantics poets, namely, John Keats and P.B. Shelley favoured more natural, emotional and personal artistic themes. Nature is one of the prominent themes of the poetry of the Romantics. While Shelley intellectualizes nature and Keats is content to observe nature through his senses. Like Shelley, Keats died at a young age. Moreover, his poems were not liked by critics during his lifetime. However, after his death, his reputation grew. By the end of the century, Keats was considered as one of the most beloved of all English poets.

10.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of John Keats
- Critically examine the poem *Ode to a Nightingale*

10.2 *JOHN KEATS:* LIFE AND WORKS

John Keats was born on 31st October 1795 in London. After his father's death, his mother had started to live with his grandmother. It was here that his love for literature developed. Soon his mother also died and his grandmother had to employ two guardians to take care of him. They pulled him out of school and instead sent him to surgeons' apprenticeship but he left that and after he was introduced to the

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works of Edmund Spenser's poem '*Faerie Queen*' with which he was inspired, he wrote his first poem *Imitations of Spenser* which was published by his friend Leigh Hunt in 1816. In 1817, he wrote his first volume of poetry entitled *Poems*, this was, however, not well received. His epic poem *Endymion* received bad reviews in *Blackwood* magazine. Keats was labelled as being a part of Leigh Hunt's Cockney School of poetry. After his brother's death Keats moved to London where he met Fenny Brawne and fell in love. They spend beautiful days together. The following spring and summer of 1890 he wrote some of finest poems- *Ode to Psyche, Grecian Urn, Nightingale*, *Autumn*. He left London for Italy. Here Keats suffered severe cold and tuberculosis. After publishing his famous poems *Isabella, Lamia* and *The Eve of Saint Agnes,* he died in Rome in 1821. The epitaph on his grave reads as 'Here lies the One whose name was writ in Water'.

He is perhaps the greatest member of that group of second generation of romantic poets who blossomed early and died young. He has worn better than Shelley because for all the indulgent luxury of his imagery, Keats developed a self-discipline in both feelings and craftsmanship which Shelley never attained. He is romantic in his relish of sensation, his feeling for the middle ages, his Hellenism, his conception of the role of the poet, but the synthesis he made of these elements was his own.

10.3 *ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE:* TEXT AND CRITICAL INTEGRETATION

Text

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

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sun-burnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,

Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

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

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

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

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Darkling I listen; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod

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

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

Interpretation

In *The Ode to Psyche* Keats was shaping the rhythm and stanza which were to carry the subsequent odes. The Ode shows him tinkering with the possibilities of the Shakespearean sonnet; stanza three reads like an incomplete sonnet, stanza five like a sonnet with a misplaced couplet and an extra four lines. But the exercise leads him to the ten-line stanza of the next three odes; for *To Autumn* he adds an

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eleventh. In all four poems, the predominant line is the traditional iambic pentameter, shaped to his own needs and in his hands still marvellously supple, rich and sweet.

The *Ode to a Nightingale* is generally taken as being the next in sequence and written in early May, 1819. It is the longest of the odes, but Charles Brown described its composition in the first draft as lasting only 'two or three hours', written in the garden behind his house in Hampstead 'on the grass-plot under the plum-tree (where) a nightingale had build her nest'. Before beginning a consideration of the poem, and as a possible corrective to treating it with too great solemnity, these entertaining and ribald comments of D.H. Lawrence seem to deserve a place.

He (the nightingale) is the noisiest, most inconsiderate, most obstreperous and jaunty bird in the whole kingdom of birds. How John Keats managed to begin his *Ode to a Nightingale* with: 'My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains my sense', is a mystery to anybody acquainted with the actual song. You hear the nightingale silverily shouting: 'What? What? What, John? Heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains? Tra-la-la! Tri-li-lilylilylilylily!'…. the nightingale never made any man in love with easeful death, except by contrast. The contrast between the bright flame of positive, pure, self-aliveness, in the bird, and the uneasy flickering of yearning selflessness, forever yearning for something outside himself which is Keats.

The exasperation has its relevance in discussion of Keats; however, just how Lawrence is unfair to Keats will emerge as we go along.

In fact, 'selflessness' is just what we think of in connection with Keats, but not 'yearning', not at least in his greatest poetry. There, selflessness becomes involuntary as he moves outward into his environment and is absorbed by it. We remember the note in a letter, '… if a sparrow comes before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel'. Yet in this poem there is a contrast. The personal pronoun is insisted upon much more than in the other odes, and it becomes clear that this time Keats longs for the irresponsible, flaming assertions of the nightingale, while he cannot disencumber himself of suffering, however much he wishes to. This is his honesty and this the moral discovery of the poem: he is tempted to escape from the busy, painful world by the ineffable 'requiem' of the nightingale, but he wryly recognizes that he has been trying to hypnotize himself, and abandons the fantasy. It is notable that the decadent poets at the end of the last century, the Swinburnes and Walter Paters, looking for poetry which exquisitely cultivated and tingled the senses, lighted enthusiastically on Keats, and misread him for their own purposes. It is important that the same misreading is not repeated.

In the first stanza the poet moves with heavy inertia towards oblivion. The vowel-sounds and blunt consonants in 'numbness', 'drunk', 'dull', 'sunk' – pull our voice and feeling down towards the black Lethe, river of forgetfulness. The poet is not envious of the bird's jauntiness, he assures us, but he is paradoxically made too happy and therefore in pain. The opposition of the first four lines against

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the last may seen too violent to some readers; certainly both conditions, that of drugged dullness and of jauntiness, are beautifully realized. 'Full-throated ease' concludes a mounting movement towards exuberance and springtime freshness. The exuberance carried him on to 'O, for a draught of vintage', though it is not fanciful to detect a pleading note there. But the rhythm of feeling carries us forward to the drink; the long slow line-cool'd a long age…' – is boldly contrasted against the colour and gaiety of:

Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth.

But the rich, thrilling taste of the cold wine curves back towards the initial awareness of suffering, and the longing to escape, to:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget.

The line has a plaintive, falling cadence which perfectly reflects its meaning; every stress is softened towards dissolution, and therefore the bluntness of the next line is profoundly startling:

What thou among the leaves hast never known…

There's a fine truculence in his voice which, after the weak fourth line, turns to a clear –sighted brave compassion. 'Spectre thin' is a terribly haunting phrase; it has a prickly, jerky and yet shadowy sound which prompts images of dreadful illness and waste. We are 'Where but to think is to be full of sorrows'. We are in this world, 'here', the adverb insists, and this is to be one with Moneta, to whom 'The miseries of the world are miseries'.

The fourth stanza serves only as a link in the argument, and lacks the solidly grasped reality and relevance of the rest. In it, however, he invokes a release from this pain which is not merely an escape – 'On the viewless wings of Poesy' where as his letter said, 'all disagreeables evaporate from their being in a close relationship with Beauty and Truth' (although it is a pity he still uses the tiresome word 'Poesy'). In the fifth stanza Keats, with his characteristic outgoing sympathy, moves towards the stuff of poetry, that which consoles by its positive beauty, not that which invites voluptuous fantasy. It is a lovely stanza. The plenty and freshness are evoked by scent and touch at first. Sometimes both senses mingle to beautiful effect, as in 'What soft incense hangs upon the boughs' and 'embalmed darkness'. As before, the mingling intensifies each sense and adds to the plenty of the 'seasonable month'. Seasonable' is a nice, delicate adjective, full of mild restraint. After all, this is mid –May', and though he looks forward to the massed, drenched, richness of late June humming faintly along the m's of the last line, 'the grass' and the 'White hawthorn' keep the air fresh.

Yet, in stanza six, the lush darkness makes the poet regress again. Although he is only 'half' in love with easeful Death, yet:

Now more than ever seems it rich to die

To cease upon the midnight with no pain….

These lines get undue attention in talking about Keats. Biographically, it is easy for us to see the justice of the remark; but that is not the point. The point, is that it seems rich to die, merely 'to cease', but the seeming is only temporary. Again, as he wrote in his letters, 'Life must be undergone'. In any case, death is a matter of becoming, unglamorously, 'a sod'. The heavy, uncompromising syllable ends four lines celebrating, as Lawrence would wish, the bird 'pouring forth' its soul 'in such an ecstasy' and 'high requiem'. In this context 'sod' is both brutal and ironic. It qualifies the whole stanza, for death is recognized as not just a matter of 'ceasing'. By contrast, the nightingale seems immortal.

Check Your Progress

1. When did Keats write his first poem?
2. What does the epitaph on Keats' grave read?
3. When was *Ode to a Nightingale* written?

10.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Keats wrote his first poem *Imitations of Spenser* which was published by his friend Leigh Hunt in 1816.
2. The epitaph on Keats' grave reads as 'Here lies the One whose name was writ in Water'.
3. The *Ode to a Nightingale* is generally taken to be written in early May, 1819.

10.5 SUMMARY

- John Keats was born on 31st October 1795 in London. After his father's death, his mother had started to live with his grandmother.
- Keats was introduced to the works of Edmund Spenser's poem '*Faerie Queen*' with which he was inspired, he wrote his first poem *Imitations of Spenser* which was published by his friend Leigh Hunt in 1816.
- Keats is perhaps the greatest member of that group of second generation of romantic poets who blossomed early and died young.
- Keats developed a self-discipline in both feelings and craftsmanship which Shelley never attained.
- The *Ode to a Nightingale* is generally taken as being the next in sequence and written in early May, 1819.

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- According to Keats, the nightingale is the noisiest, most inconsiderate, most obstreperous and jaunty bird in the whole kingdom of birds.
- The fourth stanza serves only as a link in the argument, and lacks the solidly grasped reality and relevance of the rest.

10.6 KEY WORDS

- **Epitaph:** It is a phrase or form of words written in memory of a person who has died, especially as an inscription on a tombstone.
- **Nightingale:** It is a small migratory thrush with drab brownish plumage, noted for its rich melodious song which can often be heard at night.
- **Shakespearean Sonnet:** It refers to a poem by Shakespeare using a rhyme scheme of abab cdcd efef, followed by an ending couplet of two lines with a rhyme scheme of gg.

10.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Mention the life and works of John Keats
2. Write a short note comparing Shelley's and Keats' poetry.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically examine the poem *Ode to a Nightingale*.
2. Comment on the writing style of Ode to a Nightingale in your own words.

10.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 11 JOHN KEATS: *ODE ON A GRECIAN URN*

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Structure

11.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you were introduced to the poet John Keats and his poem *Ode to a Nightingale*. In this unit, the discussion on Keats will continue. The unit will discuss Keats' poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. The poem was one of several odes written by Keats in *Great Odes of 1819*. The poem discusses a series of designs on a Grecian urn. The poem was well received by the critics. It is only later that the poem became popular. It is now considered one of the greatest odes of the English language.

11.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss Keats' notion of beauty
- Examine the poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*

11.2 INTRODUCTION TO *ODE ON A GRECIAN URN*

Ode on a Grecian Urn is a poem written by the Romantic poet John Keats in 1819. John Keats was born in London on 31 October 1795. Thomas, his father, worked in the Swan and Hoop Inn Stables owned by his father-in-law. He continued his schooling in Dame school and later on in a school in Enfield whose headmaster was John Clarke, who went on to become a major influence in Keats life. Keats father died in 1804. His mother remarried, but her second marriage turned out to be unsuccessful. She died in 1810.

Keats became an apprentice to Thomas Hammond, and after completing his apprenticeship he became an assistant to a surgeon. However, all through this

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he was in touch with Charles Clarke, a teacher by profession and son of John Clarke. Keats first poem to be published was *On Solitude* in 1816. It came out in Leigh Hunt's *Examiner.* His first book which was published was *Poems*; it was commercially unsuccessful. Next he started writing *Endymion,* an epic poem, which he finished only after the death of his brother, Tom. *Endymion* was published in 1818 and turned out to be another unsuccessful attempt. Immediately after this came his *The Eve of St. Agnes, To a Grecian Urn, La Belle Dame Sans Merci, To a Nightingale, To Psyche* and *To Melancholy*. He started composing his next epic *Hyperion.*

In 1819, he met Fanny Brawn, the love of his life. In 1820, came out his final book *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes and Other Poems*. He died in February 1821.

In his last wish, Keats had mentioned that his grave should contain, apart from his body, unread letters received from Fanny Brawn, a lock of her hair and a purse designed by Keats' sister and his headstone would have the words 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water' etched out.

Ode on a Grecian Urn is one of John Keats most famous poems. The poem has been written in five stanzas each comprising ten lines. Literary critic and historian Douglas Bush has pointed out that 'from first to the last Keats's important poems are related to, or grow directly out of. . .inner conflicts.' The poems chronicle Keats' engagement with the various dichotomies of life — like sufferings and delight, sorrow and exaltation. All these feelings are interlaced with each other and life. It is difficult to separate each from the other.

Ode on a Grecian Urn begins abruptly in an apostrophic mode. The initial lines associate the urn with permanence and immortality. The word 'still' is used to highlight the fact that the urn is beyond the temporal effects of time. The poet cannot suppress his wonder as to how could this piece of art battle the effects of time and remain as a custodian to the last few centuries to which it has been a silent spectator.

Keats juxtaposes his excitement and amazement of this sudden encounter with a 'Sylvain historian' with his imagining sense of impermanence and transient life that he is leading. He portrays the urn as a feminine symbol which is accommodating, nurturing and is part of the ancient world. He calls her 'bride' and mentions about its shape and outer lines.

The closing lines of the poem have indeed drawn a lot of speculation and critical observations. The words seem to convey a multitude of contexts which could have led to this statement. In a letter to Fanny Browne, Keats mentioned that 'I have loved the principle of beauty in all things.' All of Keats' works prominently highlights his love for beauty; Keats was an admirer of the ideal beauty, a concept which can trace its germination to the Greek Philosopher Plato. According to Plato, the mortal world that we exist in is a replica of the ideal and perfect image that exists in the ideal world.

In another letter to Bailey written on 22 November 1817, Keats asserts, 'what the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth.' It could also be that Keats had in mind P.B. Shelley's '*A Defence of Poetry*' where he advocates that 'to be

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a poet is to apprehend the truth and the beautiful.' Nevertheless, there was a difference in Keats's and Shelley's approach towards the notion of beauty. For Shelley, beauty was abstract but for Keats it was more physical, something that can be felt with senses. The link between 'truth' and 'beauty' might be because of the influence of the neoclassical artists. The urn becomes the representative where the synthesis of truth and beauty takes place.

The use of the phrase 'cold pastoral' underlines that the poet is no longer traversing in his fantastical and ecstatic journey. He is back to the reality. However, at the same time, it suggests that the beauty of the urn and its symbolic manifestations are now part of the poet's mind. The beauty of the urn is not only love but it is also perceived and internalized.

Keats, like all the Romantics, was strongly influenced by the Greeks who were lovers of beauty. Keats believed that any form of art is created to represent beauty. For him, the artistic creativity is a wholesome representation of human perfection, which is the only solace for human mind. The poem first records the beauty that has a visual appeal:

'What men or gods are these?'

What wild ecstasy?'

Keats is so amazed on seeing the human figure and other inanimate objects that are painted in the urn that he gets involved in their joy. These lines reflect Keats belief that true beauty was 'joy forever'. From physical sensations, Keats gradually moves to perceptions which are beyond physical. He writes, 'Heard melodies are sweet … of no tone'.

The melodious tune that the piper on the urn plays cannot be captured by the human auditory organs. Here, Keats affirms the significance and utility of imagination which has the ability to reconstruct the world that is beyond the grasp of the mortal senses. The word 'soft' used in these lines caters to both aesthetic as well as sensuous appeal. In the concluding lines, Keats insists that the urn holds a benevolent position in human world. By being free from the temporal world, it is able to draw human attention to one liberating aspect of human existence.

'When old age… need to know.'

11.3 *ODE ON A GRECIAN:* TEXT AND CRITICAL INTERPRETATION

Ode on a Grecian Urn is one of the most memorable of all the poems to come from the Romantic Period. The poem is distinguished for its profound meditation and credible conclusions about the nature of beauty, above all as beauty is depicted in artistic media.

Text

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,

Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,

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Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Interpretation

Keats addresses the urn as 'unravish'd bride of quietness' because it has managed to survive for centuries without undergoing any transformation in its appearance (it is 'unravished'). He goes on to identify the urn as 'foster-child of silence and time' because it has taken recourse to silence and has transcended time; thus, acquiring this calm disposition. Furthermore, Keats refers to the urn as a 'sylvan historian'. The urn is 'sylvan'— because a design of leaves circumscribes the vase and also because the scene depicted on the urn is located among the woods. It is historian because it has been a witness to human lives for centuries and also because it depicts a pastoral landscape of an unidentified period.

The pattern on the urn depicts a story ('legend'). Keats presumes that the scene depicted is set on Arcadia or Tempe. Tempe is a valley situated between Mount Olympus and Mount Ossa in Greece that was a favourite location with Apollo. Arcady refers to Arcadia, a place in Greece popular for its scenic beauty which reflects the rustic life. Keats is taken aback on seeing the picture and wonders if the people reflected in the vase are actually humans or gods. He wonders who the maidens are and what kind of action is taking place in the lives of these people.

Text

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Interpretation

Stanza two uses the figures of speech of paradox and oxymoron. Keats seems to be in awe of the silent music coming from the pipes and considers these 'unheard melodies' more appealing to the auditory organ than the real-life music one comes

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across. Keats then realizes that the characters painted on the vase have transcended time and have received an immortal status. The young man who is playing the pipe under trees will always keep his hands stretched. He, like the leaves, has defeated time. They will always remain as they are. Keats rightly observes that the young lover will never be able to embrace the girl despite sharing such close proximity. However, Keats suggests that there is no reason for the lover to be sorrowful because though the embrace can never materialize yet their love for each other will always remain intact and the beloved will remain as beautiful forever.

Text

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Interpretation

Keats shifts his focus to the tress, the 'happy, happy boughs' and wonders at the eternal spring they will enjoy as they will never shed leaves. He calls the young musician, 'happy melodist' because his song too will remain forever melodious just like the unquenched yet unchanging nature of love of the young man for this maiden — 'warm and still to be enjoy'd / Forever panting, and forever young...' In contrast to this ideal depiction, Keats points out that the lovers in real world are imperfect, causing distress and sorrow. The lovers are always faced with 'burning forehead, and a parching tongue.'

Text

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

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Interpretation

Keats wonders about the people and the nature of the occasion when he sees the approaching crowd moving towards an altar to sacrifice a 'lowing' (mooing) cow. Keats speculates about the background of these people. However, then he realizes that it does not matter whether they are from a town or village because the entire place will be vacant now as all the people are now participating in the ritual. Just like the lover and the beloved, they are also caught in the framework of time.

Text

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Interpretation

Keats calls the urn as 'attic shape' because the urn was created in Attica, a place in Greece. The urn is beautiful because of its 'brede', the decorations. Keats refers to the urn as 'cold pastoral' partly because it is made of marble, partly because it is unaffected by time or surrounding. Keats argues that even after he or his generation is dead, even then the urn will remain, reminding all that 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'.

Poetic devices

The line 'bride of quietness, / Thou foster-child of silence and slow time' is an example of assonance. Assonance is the repetition of the similar vowel sounds in quick succession 'Thou foster-child of silence and slow time, / Sylvan historian, who canst thus express' an example of alliteration. In alliteration, consonant sounds recur in quick succession. The lines

***What** men or gods are these? **What** maidens loth?*

What mad pursuit? **What** struggle to escape?

***What** pipes and timbrels? **What** wild ecstasy?*

These lines are an example of anaphora. Anaphora is the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of consecutive clauses or verses.

The line 'Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard /Are sweeter:' is an oxymoron. It implies in setting side by side two contradictory terms (here, heard-unheard). The poem is written in iambic pentameter.

Check Your Progress

1. How does the poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn begin*?
2. What did Keats believe that any form of art is represented?
3. List the figures of speech used in stanza two of the poem?

11.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. *Ode on a Grecian Urn* begins abruptly in an apostrophic mode.
2. Keats believed that any form of art is created to represent beauty.
3. Stanza two of this poem uses the figures of speech of paradox and oxymoron.

11.5 SUMMARY

- *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is a poem written by the Romantic poet John Keats in 1819.
- Keats first poem to be published was *On Solitude* in 1816. It came out in Leigh Hunt's *Examiner.*
- *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is one of John Keats most famous poems. The poem has been written in five stanzas each comprising ten lines.
- *Ode on a Grecian Urn* begins abruptly in an apostrophic mode. The initial lines associate the urn with permanence and immortality. The word 'still' is used to highlight the fact that the urn is beyond the temporal effects of time.
- Keats juxtaposes his excitement and amazement of this sudden encounter with a 'Sylvain historian' with his imagining sense of impermanence and transient life that he is leading.
- Keats portrays the urn as a feminine symbol which is accommodating, nurturing and is part of the ancient world. He calls her 'bride' and mentions about its shape and outer lines.
- The closing lines of the poem have indeed drawn a lot of speculation and critical observations.
- The use of the phrase 'cold pastoral' underlines that the poet is no longer traversing in his fantastical and ecstatic journey.
- The pattern on the urn depicts a story ('legend'). Keats presumes that the scene depicted is set on Arcadia or Tempe.
- Keats calls the urn as 'attic shape' because the urn was created in Attica, a place in Greece.
- The urn is beautiful because of its 'brede', the decorations.

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11.6 KEY WORDS

- **Apostrophic:** It is an exclamatory figure of speech. It occurs when a speaker breaks off from addressing the audience and directs speech to a 3rd party such as an opposing litigant or some other individual, sometimes absent from the scene.
- **Permanence:** It is the state or quality of lasting or remaining unchanged indefinitely.
- **Urn:** It is a tall, rounded vase with a stem and base, especially one used for storing the ashes of a cremated person.

11.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is Keats' notion of beauty?
2. Prepare a list of the major Odes written by John Keats.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Examine the poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.
2. All of Keats' works prominently highlights his love for beauty. Discuss this statement in the context of the poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.

11.8 FURTHER READINGS

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BLOCK - IV

FICTION

UNIT 12 OLIVER GOLDSMITH: *THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD*

Structure

12.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt about John Keats' poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. This unit will discuss Oliver Goldsmith's novel *The Vicar of Wakefield.*

Goldsmith was an Irish novelist, poet and playwright. His novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* was published in 1766. It was one of the most popular novels of the 18th century. The story in the novel follows the misfortunes of the Primrose family. The novel is considered an exemplary example of the sentimental novel, which was basically an 18th century genre that celebrated the emotional and intellectual concepts of sentiment, sentimentalism, and sensibility.

12.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of Oliver Goldsmith
- Describe the themes in the novel *The Vicar of Wakefield*
- Summarise and critically analyze the novel
- Examine the main characters in the novel

12.2 *OLIVER GOLDSMITH:* LIFE AND WORKS

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Aid slighted truth with thy persuasive strain,
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
Teach him, that states of native strength possest,
Tho' very poor, may still be very blest;

[The Deserted Village, Lines 423-426]

The author of utter simplicity in style, good humour and satirical observation with native and rural touch, rendering to whatever rhythm of written art form that he attempted, and in which he promptly excelled, Oliver Goldsmith [1728-1774] was miles adrift from the Augustan Age's neoclassical trend of writing and focus. He was a noted novelist, playwright, poet, essayist and prose writer of the Augustan Age of English letters, who hailed from Ireland. It cannot be affirmed if Goldsmith was born on a particular date or year, however, 1728 or 1730 is assigned as the year of his birth. Born to an Irish Anglican curate who served the parish of Forgney, with background of clergy and master grandfather, Goldsmith received his education in Dublin. He later fixed his attention to music, study of medicine at the University of Edinburgh [1752-55], and foreign tours to Italy, France, and Switzerland. He decided to settle in the English capital in 1756. Eighteenth-century London was a hub of fashion and intellectuals in which Goldsmith made a place for himself worthy of respect.

London did not prove to be a facilitating platform for Goldsmith initially. He tried his hand in various vocations, but his perpetual gambling and squandering resulted in debts that obliged Goldsmith to slog as a literary hack for Grub Street. Later on he was associated with Dr. Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke and others that helped his career. He also became a founder-member of The Club: a renowned club of contemporary academicians, scholars, intellectuals, scientists and great artists. His short life was a rare combination of talent and dissolution where at points he produced quality literature, and at others he was often a staunch wastrel. This compelled Horace Walpole to adorn Goldsmith with the epithet 'inspired idiot.' Oliver Goldsmith gave himself a pseudonym James Willington for his translation of the autobiography of *Jean Marteilhe*.

Goldsmith was short and stout, blessed with wit, very simple-natured and devoid of a single streak of cunningness. If he had gambled in his life, he also never saved a penny that caused a sufferer a pretty smile. Hence his financial stability was always in doubt. In short, his naiveté, love for children and goodness of heart were what God had gifted him. Dr. Johnson's patronage fruited Goldsmith fame as a playwright and literary artist. His contemporaries held him as easily envious, soft-natured man with a lack of personal discipline, who had plans of immigrating to America. Fate prevented his migration. It was during this time Goldsmith was engaged at Thornhill Grammar School, which overtones biographical notes in the novel *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Goldsmith had a large circle of intellectual men of

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letters, eminent scholars, elites, philosophers, painters, scientists who were fond of him like the scientist Reverend John Mitchell. Thomas De Quincey aptly portrayed him as:

All the motion of Goldsmith's nature moved in the direction of the true, the natural, the sweet, the gentle.

Oliver Goldsmith met with his demise prematurely at the age of forty-six [or forty-four] in 1774 and was buried in London. The monument at his death is inscribed by Dr. Samuel Johnson. His works include the *Universal Dictionary* which was an encyclopaedia comprising articles by Dr. Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, Adam Smith, Edward Gibbon, Thomas Percy, Sir Joshua Reynolds, David Garrick, Sir William Jones, James Boswell, Charles James Fox and Dr. Burney which remained unpublished, *The Hermit* [1765], *The Deserted Village* [1770], *An History of the Earth and Animated Nature* [1774], *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* [1765], *The Vicar of Wakefield* [1766], *She Stoops to Conquer* [1773], *An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* [1759] and *The Citizens of the World, or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher* [1762].

Leaning on autobiographical roots, his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* which was completed in 1762, presents the picture of a rural life enthralling in the dews of sentimentalism, idealistic views, moralising and melodramatic occurrences trimmed with soft humour, pathos, vivacious gaiety and subtle irony. When Laurence Sterne's *novel Life of Tristam Shandy,* [1759] attained fame, Goldsmith still struggling with his stature as a writer, authored *The Vicar of Wakefield* following Sterne as his model and achieved greater success.

He believed in heterodox religious principles, 'as I take my shoes from the shoemaker, and my coat from the taylor, so I take my religion from the priest.' His faith was dauntingly firm which made Thomas Hurst describe Goldsmith as a man who 'recognised with joy the existence and perfections of a Deity. For the Christian revelation also, he was always understood to have a profound respect knowing that it was the source of our best hopes and noblest expectations. The benevolent literary genius who spent his hard earned savings on the needy or his own excesses, through his characterisation and background presented his interest in countryside and deep study of human nature. But his works are never as deep as those of the novelist Thomas Hardy. His literary productions are unlike his age and men of letters because Goldsmith voiced human sentiments and laughed at concurrent trends of the Augustan Age, known for its neoclassical precision and inflexibility of standards.

12.3 *THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD:* SETTING AND PLOT CONSTRUCTION

The Vicar of Wakefield, published in 1766, written about 1761 or 1762, has a native English setting of two village parishes: the first one is named Wakefield, and

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the other is never mentioned, save hinting at a dominant family name: Thornhill. This reveals that the second village parish where most of the action of the novel takes place might be Thornhill. The novel is also subtitled 'A Tale, Supposed to be written by Himself.' It was published in two volumes. The novel is a first person narrative where the vicar, Dr. Charles Primrose is speaking about his family and difficult life conditions. Dr. Charles Primrose and his better-half, Mrs. Deborah Primrose, live in Wakefield with their six children- George, Olivia, Sophia, Moses, Dick and Bill. In the beginning of the novel, the hero, on the evening of his eldest son George's marriage with Miss Arabella Wilmot, the daughter of his fellow but elite and arrogant clergy Mr. Wilmot, loses his fortune and becomes bankrupt. As a result, the engagement is broken off as Mr. Wilmot does not want his daughter to marry a destitute. The vicar sends his son to find a job to London so that they can improve their life on his future success.

He gives priority to peaceful management of all troubles in life, and does not lose patience. Dr. Primrose settles on the farms of Squire Thornhill, a lewd, lusty man who is known for his promiscuity around the countryside. Dr. Primrose's family, which enjoyed wealth and space in life before their misfortune, has problems adjusting in that new atmosphere, which has no fashionable society like they enjoyed previously; however they get to know two gentlemen: the Squire who is their landlord, and Mr. Burchell who is a poor man; and they happen to provide a new, agreeable circle to them beside their neighbours.

Incidentally, Sophia's life is saved by Mr. Burchell and attraction grows between them. Her father does not agree to their secret admiration as Mr. Burchell, although agreeable, is an indigent young man. Squire Thornhill has more sway on the vicar's family because he is rich despite being socially disregarded because of his characterlessness. Thornhill's advances to Olivia are entertained by the family for he is a man of well-cultivated manners and charming personality. Dr. Primrose's family, encouraged by their landlord, mixes up with his acquaintances to dignify their reputation, but they are treated in a condescending manner only resulting in their embarrassment.

In course of time, the vicar observes how the Squire has been taking advantage of their family, and has been only fooling them; but it only happens when Olivia elopes with him, like Wickham elopes with Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice*. However, there is a difference between the two comparisons as Wickham was set right by Mr. Darcy, and here, the Squire even though he is punished by his uncle at the end of the novel, does not change himself for his wife Olivia. Dr. Primrose goes after his daughter but he becomes sick on this job. Many incidents take place which render severe blows to his family and they only receive miseries, defamation and disrepute. But like a fairy-tale denouement, Mr. Burchell unveils himself as their saviour from entire sequence of vicissitudes that they face. He is discovered to be the hidden Sir William Thornhill, the Baronet.

The English village where the majority of the action is set reiterates Goldsmith's memories of his Irish home of childhood days in Lissoy. The hero of

the novel is a virtuous man, who having left behind a lavish life and modern facilities in his previous job, appreciates his hard and close-to-nature life. But Squire Thornhill who helps him post-misfortune in the new settlement, is a man full of London's vices like excessive indulgence in pleasure, luxuries of rich life, elite society, lasciviousness, etc. The hero is punished unduly by his landlord and imprisoned; his daughters are abducted, and the eldest abused and left by him; and his son is also jailed by him in vengeance. The whole family is subjected to excessive mortification, loss of livelihood, health and fortune by his landlord. Suddenly, Mr. Burchell, their former associate who was looked down contemptuously by them and who happens to be the Baronet of the place, emerges as their protector, restoring them to happiness and prosperity.

The story is often held in esteem as Goldsmith's memoir represented in the first person but his experiences are shared by many characters here, not one. The novel encompasses multiple literary genres like fiction, poetry, prose, memoir, sermon, fable, letter, etc. The novel is remembered for its complex plot, themes and incidents being one of the prominent literary works promoting sentimental fiction.

Check Your Progress

1. Why did Horace Walpole label Goldsmith an 'inspired idiot'?
2. List some works by Oliver Goldsmith.
3. Why does Thornhill hold more sway on the vicars family?

12.4 TEXT SUMMARY AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Let us now summarise the critically analyse the novel in detail.

Advertisement

The 'Advertisement' in the beginning of *The Vicar of Wakefield* is addressed to its readers. Oliver Goldsmith commences his much acclaimed fiction, *The Vicar of Wakefield* with a clarification which is rather philosophical but true to realism: 'There are an hundred faults in this Thing, and an hundred things might be said to prove them beauties. But it is needless. A book may be amusing with numerous errors, or it may be very dull without a single absurdity.' His literary manifesto as an advertisement of his oft-quoted novel is a strong platform of voicing ironically the textures and tapestries employed in this work of art. They counsel and impart the readers, the philosophy and style of Goldsmith himself.

Upon his word, his hero exhibits and embodies three most agreeable qualities of manhood, 'of a priest, an husbandman, and the father of a family.' The behaviour that the hero of this novel exudes is that of a mild man. Goldsmith, with a soft current of humour and irony, puts this epithet 'He is drawn as ready' to explain his inner qualities. The novelist wants to present a figure to the society which is ideal

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for him. His hero is warm-hearted, genteel, pleasure-loving, investing into business and shares, allowing freedom to his daughters, gambling, drinking, truthful, pious, righteous, honest, and so on. In the first half of the novel, he adorns a careless behaviour of a family yes-man; in the second, having tragedy befallen him, he becomes a pure Christian who never deviates into any other thing but uprightness.

He is a type Goldsmith considered as virtuous enough to command life in every given challenge, circumstance and manner. After describing his hero's goodness, Goldsmith turns to focus on his audience, age and state of a literary artist: 'In this age of opulence and refinement whom can such a character please? Such as are fond of high life, will turn with disdain from the simplicity of his country fire-side.' Goldsmith's digressions during his college and university days, his own dissipating lifestyle, his vision and outlook towards life, his principles of simplicity, humanity, dissoluteness embedded in his nature, disagreement with Augustan traits, his love for rural and native life, are apparent in his literary productions which feature and invoke these qualities, or even his shortcomings. They either flourish and serve in his dramatis personae, or engage his background.

Goldsmith's work emits shades of his personal philosophy and attitude towards his age. And that verges on the lightness of life, which he seemed to admire in the countryside, and less complex characters, in contrast to the pomp and polish of his age. But some of his characters are too complex.On the other hand, when Goldsmith created such characters like his hero in the novel, he wants to show the world the small foibles and absurdities which are darker sides of our lives. However, he does it in a humorous vein and an undercurrent of subtle irony dabbles over his pages by which he satirises English society of the time: 'Such as mistake ribaldry for humour, will find no wit in his harmless conversation; and such as have been taught to deride religion, will laugh at one whose chief stores of comfort are drawn from futurity.'

Chapters 1 to 6

Sperate miseri, cavete faelices is the Latin phrase tagged on the top of the novel. It means 'Let the wretched live in hope and the happy be on their guard'. Oliver Goldsmith begins his story with the nature and description of the protagonist's family: the Vicar of Wakefield. The author presents oneness of views and similarities of characters among them. His hero is of virtuous character whose responsibility as a father sometimes overlaps his curacy and priesthood. His commentary about the Wakefield occupants has an archness giving vent to irony and sarcasm. The vicar had chosen a wife who was rather fond of housekeeping than indulging into books with whom he shared great understanding, by never objecting her wisdom or prevalence. They enjoyed an elite friend-circle with wine and visitors, but also spent time helping the needy. The hero's family condescended their poor relatives, 'my wife always insisted that as they were the same flesh and blood, they should sit with us at the same table. So that if we had not, very rich, we generally had very happy friends about us; for this remark will hold good thro' life, that the poorer the

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guest, the better pleased he ever is with being treated: and as some men gaze with admiration at the colours of a tulip, or the wing of a butterfly, so I was by nature an admirer of happy human faces.'

The last statement reveals the character of the protagonist of this novel, that is, his generosity. The vicar's initial period of marital and filial bliss is described in the exposition of the plot. His sons were hard and active, and his daughters, beautiful and blooming. In praise of his parenthood, the vicar states, 'When I stood in the midst of the little circle, which promised to be the supports of my declining age, I could not avoid repeating the famous story of Count Abensberg, who, in Henry II's progress through Germany, while other courtiers came with their treasures, brought in his thirty-two children, and presented them to his sovereign as the most valuable offering he had to bestow.' And therefore, he had six children whom he reckoned as 'very valuable present made' to his 'country, and consequently looked upon it as my debtor.'

The second chapter opens up a storm of ill fate on the Wakefield family and they suffer loss of fortune. The vicar had rendered ample services to Wakefield to have his share of humanity, 'I made over to the orphans and widows of the clergy of our diocese; for having a sufficient fortune of my own, I was careless of temporalities, and felt a secret pleasure in doing my duty without reward. I also set a resolution of keeping no curate, and of being acquainted with every man in the parish, exhorting the married men to temperance and the bachelors to matrimony; so that in a few years it was a common saying, that there were three strange wants at Wakefield, a parson wanting pride, young men wanting wives, and ale-houses wanting customers…'

The early introduction of the vicar is that of a less serious man until life became severe on him. There are certain parts in the vicar's behaviour like his light-heartedness, tolerance to everything, humaneness and politeness which remind us of the author himself. There are often some manifestations which are related to Augustan priesthood, 'it was unlawful for a priest of the church of England, after the death of his first wife, to take a second, or to express it in one word, I valued myself upon being a strict monogamist. I was early initiated into this important dispute, on which so many laborious volumes have been written. I published some tracts upon the subject myself, which, as they never sold, I have the consolation of thinking are read only by the happy Few. Some of my friends called this my weak side; but alas! they had not like me made it the subject of long contemplation…..as he had engraven upon his wife's tomb that she was the only wife of William Whishton; so I wrote a similar epitaph for my wife, though still living, in which I extolled her prudence, oeconomy, and obedience till death…'

Even with his sons and daughters, the protagonist's affection sided with the favourable no matter what. This is reflected in George's love affair with Arabella Wilmot who was inheriting a large fortune by her clergy father. Mr. Wilmot does not object to this match as he knew that George's father was a rich cleric and lot of properties would be transferred to his son-in-law in the future. Here, Goldsmith

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has subtly conveyed that clergies of the Augustan parishes were rather interested in keeping sources by which they could ensure their wealth and live a gay life, 'We were generally awakened by music in the morning by music, and on fine days rode a hunting. The hours between breakfast and dinner the ladies devoted to dress and study: they usually read a page, and then gazed at themselves in the glass, which even philosophers might own often presented the page of greatest beauty.' The lifestyle of the vicar often verges on exposing reality of the holy men of England during Goldsmith's days in a mild manner.

The vicar was fond of inviting people, enjoying music with family and guests, cards, gambling and ale, 'When we had dined, to prevent the ladies leaving us, I generally ordered the table to be removed; and sometimes, with the music master's assistance, the girls would give us a very agreeable concert. Walking out, drinking tea, country dances, and forfeits, shortened the rest of the day, without the assistance of cards, as I hated all manner of gaming, except backgammon, at which my old friend and I sometimes took a two-penny hit.' His utterance further confirms his lavish lifestyle, 'Nor can I here pass over an ominous circumstance that happened the last time we played together: I only wanted to fling a quatre, and yet I threw deuce ace five times running…' On the occasion of marriage of his son George, he composes a sermon because he thinks of matrimony as the most important concern of the parish.

Mr. Wilmot's character is contrasted to the vicar by Goldsmith. Although they were going to be relatives, the former disagreed to all that the latter said or proposed. While these two were in dispute arguing about the marriage which was scheduled the following day, the vicar got the news that his wealth which he had invested in the town through a merchant was lost. The London merchant had announced his bankruptcy. The informer requested him to 'dissemble his emotions lest he would lose the prospects of Arabella's nuptials with his son, and further fortune.' But the vicar being honest, admitted the truth of his situation to the bride's family. After the vicar's announcement, Mr. Wilmot does not show any interest in the match.

The vicar, whose name the novelist has not disclosed till now, invested money in shares which he has lost as his broker declared himself bankrupt. And his son lostthe hand of his would be bride as its consequence. By now the novelist has given a fair account of his protagonist's nature: the vicar was a man of modern likes and demeanour; he loved to be a family man; and he was social, forgiving and sentimental. This outbreak of misfortune on him did not break his confidence or his devotion to family. Committed, he rather tried to look forward.

In the next chapter, the vicar, not blaming anyone after his ill fortune, moved on to save his family from further abuse. His efforts to rescue his wealth goes in vain and he is forced to employ himself on fifteen pounds a year in a remote parish where he also had prospects of raising his income by managing farms of a certain gentleman Squire. He paid all his debts from his remaining wealth of fourteen thousand pounds after which he was left with only four hundred at the end. The

family meet Squire Thornhill, a rich and playboy kind of person: 'scarce a farmer's daughter within ten miles round but what had found him successful and faithless.' They are also introduced to Mr. Burchell, a poor but well-mannered gentleman who accompanied them to their new parish. The vicar's daughters become happy to see a future match in the Squire. Mr. Burchell was a money-borrower and the vicar seemed to dislike and scorn him.

While his family was riding together to his new home, Mr. Burchell explained to them what kind of man Sir William Thornhill is. While Burchell is narrating his story about Sir William Thornhill, Sophia falls in a stream and is about to be carried away by its gushing force. Burchell jumps in the water and saves her life. As a result, Sophia and the entire Primrose family are indebted to the young improvident man for his kindness. In this chapter, all the major characters of the novel are introduced and the author brings the family to the place through incidents where they are going to spend their life from now on. The story is navigating the principle of simplicity of life, but wealth and comforts of life are deemed greater than human qualities by the protagonist by now.

Now the narrator, the vicar himself, describes the village where fate led his family: it is a self-contained kind of parish where all comforts are available and people related to each other. Goldsmith's philosophy of life is well-reflected in his description of the village here: 'Remote from the polite, they still retained the primaeval simplicity of manners, and frugal by habit, they scarce knew that temperance was a virtue.' It was a kind of paradise where people 'wrought with cheerfulness on days of labour; but observed festivals as intervals of idleness and pleasure.' Their small abode was fixed in the midst of beautiful panorama that mother Nature graced: 'Our little habitation was situated at the foot of a sloping hill, sheltered with a beautiful underwood behind, and a pratling river before; on one side a meadow, on the other a green.' He had to look after twenty acres of 'excellent land' as his farm. The vicar bred good manners in his children and tried to remind them that family discipline was foremost of importance to him expecting them to carry his legacy of manners forward.

The fashionable daughters of Primrose family had not forgotten their former style, arrogance and indulgence to keep themselves in a beautiful way which gave their parents a strong sense of pride still. At this point of story, Mrs. Primrose opens up the name of her husband Charles, and the names of last two boys are also introduced to the readers as Dick and Bill. They all mix up well with their neighbourhood families. In short, their life begins again with a smooth flow, exceptthe realisation of their changed circumstances, and penury.

Chapter 5 introduces us to the character of Thornhill. He comes visiting the vicar's family, after which there grows a familiarity between him and Charles's family members, especially his daughters. Mrs. Primrose looks forward to gain the power of happiness from such a high association, and encourages his visits, and so does Olivia, who harbours private affection for him. The vicar is not happy with the interest that Thornhill shows his daughters, but his wife changes his mind.

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By the end of this chapter, they receive news from the Squire that he would come to dine with them in a few days. The news brings a wave of happiness to the entire household. But the closing lines of this chapter are harbinger for future which the vicar was suspicious of, 'I therefore continued silent, satisfied with just having pointed out danger, and leaving it to their own discretion to avoid it. That virtue which requires to be ever guarded, is scarce worth the centinel.' The next chapter is focussed on Mr. Burchell's visit to the household. Charles observes that Burchell seems to be interested in Sophia, however, the vicar is against any relation forming between this improvident man and his daughter. When Burchell leaves them, the family discusses his unfortunate circumstance and spendthrift nature, and laugh at his level of comfort in his wretched poverty. They are of the opinion that Burchell is a complete waste, and no fruitful gain can be achieved out of him. As the discussion upon Mr. Burchell continues, the vicar comes to acknowledge that his daughter Sophia does not wish to blame Burchell for his former gullibility and simplicity that verged on foolishness. She thought that good people should be respected no matter they had once been fools enough to squander all they had. The chapter ends with the family expecting the Squire to call on them.

Chapters 7 to 12

The chapter begins with the squire arriving with his two servants. Olivia is the centre of interest for Squire Thornhill's proposed visit and familiarity. She also admires the man and his humour. His presence in the family had ushered a kind of stir which Charles is not been able to subside or control, 'Indeed, pappa…she does not: I have read a great deal of controversy. I have read the disputes between Thwackum and Square; the controversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday the savage, and I am now employed in reading the controversy in Religious courtship…' Their discussion ended in cooling down the storm on part of the vicar because he never crossed any view in his life which created disturbance or upheaval in his happy family atmosphere. This chapter ends with a strong suggestion of the future that awaits Olivia.

The eighth chapter describes the many visitors to the Primrose family. The placid family of the vicar witnesses an emotional tumult with the presence of Thornhill; not so fast had the essence of that guest subsided than they now were waited upon by Mr. Burchell the following morning. This guest was quite a nuisance to the master of the house. Goldsmith paints this poor gentlemen as a sharp contrast to the Squire, 'It is true his labour more than requited his entertainment; for he wrought among us with vigour, and either in the meadow or at the hay-rick put himself foremost. Besides, he had always something amusing to say that lessened our toil, and was at once so out of the way, and yet so sensible, that I loved, laughed at, and pitied him. My only dislike arose from an attachment he discovered to my daughter: he would, in a jesting manner, call her his little mistress, and when he bought each of the girls a set of ribbands, hers was the finest.' The father was protective of his daughter because Burchell had squandered his belongings.

Goldsmith's characters in the vicar's family often mention the names of famous literary writers and poets such as Dryden, Gay, etc. In one such conversation, Mr. Burchell says, '…both the poets you mention have equally contributed to introduce a false taste into their respective countries, by loading all their lines with epithet. Men of little genius found them most easily imitated in their defects, and English poetry, like that in the latter empire of Rome, is nothing at present but a combination of luxuriant images, without plot or connexion; a string of epithets that improve the sound, without carrying on the sense.' He then sings a ballad composed in quatrains having thirty-nine stanzas which he claims is free of above-mentioned defects.

At the end of the ballad, which leaves a captivating impression on Sophia, to whom it was intended, they hear a gunshot. Frightened, Sophia jumps into the arms of Mr. Burchell. The gunshot was aimed at a blackbird by the Squire's chaplain who appeared on the scene apologising for shaking off their habitual peace. The chaplain also brings news that the Squire has given a moonlight ball in honour of her young daughters that night.

The chaplain asks for Sophia's hand as his dance partner but she announces Mr. Burchell to be her partner. This astonishes the vicar as he does not expect his daughter to refuse a man of wealth and position for a man in want of all. His characters here are presented close to appreciating Nature, and are people with good hearts. They themselves attain simplicity of manner, and admire simplicity in others too. Occasionally, they indulge into fashion or extravagance, especially his root characters. Goldsmith has wilfully introduced the gentlemen of the Squire group with shooting and killing. Hunting also symbolises their malevolent intention and character.

In the ninth chapter, the Squire, a lascivious man of ill manners, visits them with his men, and two ladies from London. The narrator gives his assessment of the guests and their behaviour putting parallel his family's reactions to the unspoken and unprepared visit of the gallant Squire. Goldsmith's comparisons, contrasts or commentaries remind us of Austen's world where she throws ironical light upon such city-bred ladies and gentlemen who ooze pomp, and have a polluted life full of discontentment. In front of the guests a discussion about refinement of the two young Primrose ladies flourishes when Squire Thornhill, taking their part, speaks about his actual character, and by this, Goldsmith informs his readers what the Squire actually plans to use the vicar's family, 'And what pleasures do they not deserve to possess, who have so much in their power to bestow? As for my part, my fortune is pretty large, love, liberty and pleasure, are my maxims…' The tenant Charles Primrose objects to Thornhill's flirting and audacious approach towards Olivia reminding him that they respect honour greater than anything in the world.

The onset of the next day brings a 'gypsy' fortune-teller who portends that Olivia would be married to a Squire within an year, and Sophy would be the wife of a Lord after her elder sister's wedding. Goldsmith's description of the gypsy, with omens, dreams, all act as dramatic agents to apprise the readers about the

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novel's end when the girls will have final settlement gaining riches and social position. The ladies from the Squire's side sent a note to Olivia and Sophia that they wished to be with them on the forthcoming Sunday congregation at the church. The vicar reaches the church on his usual time; finishes the clergyman's services; and takes the way home on which his family is expected to follow to church. On his return, he meets his family and comes to know what problems they have encountered on their thoroughfare because of an imprudent decision to ride horses merely to ostentate false status and fan their former pride of being rich.

The twelfth chapter opens on the vicar's house where hustle and excitement are peculiarly carrying their hearts away in a dreamland, the premise of which are founded totally on the preferment of the Squire, and his town-bred women friends. The vicar's family is always shown discussing any small incident that even by chance occurred to them. In style, Goldsmith has chosen a bit of melodramatic tinge in his sequencing of incidents which steer the main action in the plot. Against the vicar's wish, as he seldom delighted in unnatural growth of anything, his family decides to send Moses to a village fair to sell their old colt, replacing him with a new horse to gain respect in the eyes of those who were rich.

The dolled and decorated Moses goes to the fair. In between, the family received good news of commendation from the Squire through his butler. Meanwhile, Mr. Burchell visits them with gifts for their children. Deborah Primrose and he initiate a discussion meanwhile Moses returned. Since the Primrose family had a principle of keeping no relation with anyone deprived especially young men, Deborah laughs at his imprudence of spending money being so poor. The colt was sold for three pounds, five shillings and two-pence and Moses gets a bargain of a 'groce of green spectacles, with silver rims and shagreen cases' in return. His bargain was a fraud. His family informs Moses that he was fooled by someone.

Chapters 13 to 18

The vicar Mr. Charles Primrose tells a moral fable to his family which means, 'how little is to be got by attempts to impose upon the world, in coping with our betters. Such as are poor and will associate with none but the rich, are hated by those they avoid, and despised by these hey follow.' This fable is symbolic of what the vicar's family was aspiring for: rich connections with the Squire and detesting the poor but good soul Mr. Burchell. The fable was about two friends: the giant and the dwarf who sought adventures in life. The story was intended for Dick and at its completion the vicar hears a verbal dispute between his dear wife and Mr. Burchell. Mr. Burchell seemed to be against the vicar's wife's decision of sending their daughters to visit London with women friends of Thornhill. Burchell perceived that he was openly hated by the Primroses and he mentions that he would make only one more visit to them as he knew that he was unwelcome there. It was a happy proposal to the vicar's family because they also wanted to get rid of Mr. Burchell. Sophia was the only one who trusted goodness of this gentleman but the greatest disadvantage with this young man was that he was poor. The girls were

bred learning similar values because their chief pursuit was to have a husband who would give them high social rank with all the comforts of life. And Burchell did not fit in their concepts of eligibility for their suitors. Their pursuit of rich suitors such as the characterless Squire blinded them so much so that they could not allow any other young man near their daughters. Burchell did not belong to any special rank that they craved to be with in order to enhance their status, thus he was abominable, and to be kept out of their way. And their entire discourse after his departure was based on their likely future link with Thornhill giving encouragement to their daughters for a lucrative and prosperous morrow.

The fourteenth chapter opens having a flutter of excitement where the young Primrose ladies are seen preparing for their London trip on which they might be invited by those two town-bred fashionable friends of the Squire. To meet the expenses of their styling and fineries, the vicar moved to the village fair to sell his one-eyed horse that was now almost useless to them. There are a number of biblical references made by Goldsmith to connote the vicar's situations in life. In the fair, buyers do not show inclination in purchasing his poor animal and thus, the vicar walks with his clergy friend to an alehouse for refreshment. Here, the vicar becomes the victim of fraud just like Moses. He loses his for without any payment being made to him. After he reaches home, another misfortune befalls his family. He is informed that his daughters cannot go on their London trip. Having had their whole set of expectations being crashed to pieces, the family is in tears. Thornhill goes on to inform them that a suspicious person pressurised the London ladies to at once leave for London without vicar's daughters.

The fifteenth chapter opens on Charles's family who are busy searching for their enemy in the neighbourhood since they believe the neighbours are envious of Squire Thornhill paying too much attention to their daughter Livy [Olivia]. While playing outside, one of his younger sons finds a letter-case which divulges that Mr. Burchell was the man who made those ladies travel to London without the daughters of the vicar. All of them are shocked at the audacity of their friendly, amicable guest who selfishly marred their future blossoming. They not only planned to retaliate but also give Burchell a good lesson for his impudence and insincerity on his very next visit. Mr. Burchell calls upon them very soon, the moment which they anxiously wait for. Immediately the family members take turn making fun of Mr. Burchell. And then the vicar shows them the letter that they have seen. The vicar accuses him of his baseness upon which Burchell retorts that he could equally hang them for opening his pocket-book. The vicar does not expect a poor wretch like Burchell would reply to him in such discourteous, insolent manner and he proclaims, 'Ungrateful wretch, begone, and no longer pollute my dwelling with thy baseness. Begone, and never let me see thee again: go from my doors, and the only punishment I wish thee is an alarmed conscience, which will be a sufficient tormentor!' They find it astonishing that Burchell smiles as he collects his pocket-book before quitting their house for good. They are amazed to witness his pride even though he was a beggar.

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In the sixteenth chapter, the narrator says that Mr. Thornhill became a regular presence at vicar's house after Burchell's final exit and none showed any reaction upon Mr. Burchell's thorough absence. The Squire visited them only when the men were out to field and the ladies were in. He amused the ladies and taught them piquet. The vicar's wife entreated him in many ways and tried to tempt, persuade him for her eldest daughter to which he never gave clue if he would get married to her. The shrewd Squire did not leave a single way of flirting with Olivia which was all the more motivated by her family. While Squire Thornhill was their uninterrupted guest, the vicar's family was enthralled between mortification and vanity, honour and suspicion, scandal and gratification. Through the actions of the chapter, the author skilfully plaits many themes together, the chief of which is that for a woman the pursuance of rich suitors for the prospect of matrimony is the most important task in life. In fact, matrimony and happiness in marriage are the foundation of the story here.

The seventeenth chapter unfolds the main action or problem which will lead to the resolution of the novel. The vicar and his family is happy with the prospective wedding of the Squire and their daughter Olivia. When the 'intended nuptials' was only four days away, the poor vicar's family discusses around the fire place how that connection would raise their level of support to ease their lives. Bill sings an elegiac song taught to him by Mr. Williams: "An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog." After the song comes to an end, Dick came running in the midst of their joy to inform that Livy, his sister, has left them forever with two gentlemen who came in a post-chaise and one of them persuaded her to elope and kissed her. The vicar's family had been facing various blows of fate, of which this was the strongest. The villain had been calling her his 'angel' and Olivia was crying that she should not breach her father thus. The parents and family wailed in anger, suspicion and helplessness of fate being severe on them. The news would sure become a forest's fire the following day, and they were supposed to suffer this infamy's consequences in society.

The eighteenth chapter opens on similar morose, bleak and chill family atmosphere. Dr. Primrose knew very well that his young landlord Squire Thornhill had taken his daughter away. He started for Thornhill-Castle, but one of his neighbours communicated to him that his daughter was seen with Mr. Burchell in a post-chaise. He still went to the castle to ask his landlord about his daughter, but he denied connection to the matter and appeared quite ignorant of the truth. After this meeting, the vicar starts suspecting Mr. Burchell. He moves from place to place in an attempt to find his daughter. Despite being an old man, he traverses many miles after her. His health is not able to keep up with him and he falls sick. He has to linger at an ale-house for three long weeks as a result.

On his way back, he meets the strolling theatrical company where his daughter was witnessed performing. There is a digression from the theme here where the vicar evaluates the English dramatists like *Dryden, Otway, Row, Fletcher, Ben Johnson, Shakespeare, Congreve* and *Farquhar* while conversing with a player

working for that company. The novel contains many styles including the picaresque too as is seen in the flight of the vicar in search of his daughter with a pistol. Thinking his Olivia would be there in the company or he might get some news regarding her, he travels with them until in fear of being recognised when he was obliged to find shelter in an ale-house. He met a gentleman who mistakes him for the owner of that company.

Chapters 19 to 24

The gentleman who was well-educated and sober, takes the two invitees to his house nearby on foot. To their surprise, they 'arrived at one of the most magnificent mansions I had seen in that part of the country.' They are awestruck to be in such an elegant apartment where servants with liveries were attending on them. The strange gentleman introduces some ladies to them with whom he sat to discuss politics and English governance with their guests. He knew all the journals published in England and displayed a unique command with impeccable civility over whatever he touched as subject; and the ladies participated in the talk equally well. They discussed the economy, rule, their shortcomings, condition of an ordinary English citizen, state of being ruled, colonising, capitalism, monarchy, democracy, religion, etc. But upon the vicar's opinion he burst into wrath. At this moment, a knock appeared to rouse them from their actual level to an understanding that all of them were only servants, and the master and his wife were at the door.

As the door opened, the master and the lady of the house entered followed by Miss Arabella Wilmot. This pleasant surprise took her to cling in Dr. Primrose's arms at once, as though she had found her lost father back. The old gentleman and his lady requested him to grace their abode for a few days by his honourable presence. It was Mr. Arnold and his lady's property who were uncle and aunt of Arabella. The vicar was well received by them into a beautiful chamber to spend night. In the morning while Arabella chose to walk with him, she asked if he knew where George would have been. He denied having any knowledge about George after they left Wakefield. It is here, we come to know that the name of his previous village parish was Wakefield. The name of the current village is still not disclosed by the author. And he explains that for three years he had had no news from George; and being humbled by time and poverty, he could not even try to enquire his whereabouts. She cried hearing his details and her concern was deep about the vicar's family. At dinner, he meets with the manager of that company who gave them tickets of a play named 'Fair Penitent' and highlights praise of a newly joined great actor who represents Horatio. When Dr. Primrose goes to watch the play, he discovers his son George playing part of Horatio.

When George sees his father and Miss Wilmot in the audience, he cannot overcome his flood of tears which interrupts his performance and the curtains are drawn. The vicar was taken home by good Arabella and her uncle. After discovering George's fate, he gets cordially invited to the house by Mrs. Arnold. George was cordially received by her aunt and uncle. In the twentieth chapter of, Mrs. Arnold

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urges George to share his experiences as she already knew some of it from her niece Arabella before he left for London after their engagement broke. George goes on to narrate his story. The story of George's way through his poverty and struggle as a writer is somewhat the author's own tale at the Grub-street of London. The market demands from an author, the popular choice, the genius, the mediocre and die-hard efforts of an original mind in the vocation of writing: these are detailed by Goldsmith as he himself brooked all hardships before fate shined on him.

When he was at the university, he was friends with Ned Thornhill who was vicar's landlord, and Lady Arnold's family friend whose visit was expected there. Ned appointed him as helper and entertainer. But a captain, efficiently talented in flattery which best pleased Ned Thornhill and whose sister was ill used by Ned, took George's place. When Ned Thornhill was leaving London, he recommended his friend to his uncle Sir William Thornhill, who though a gentleman of high rank posted under the government and very decent, sternly queried him what reward should he receive for serving his idle and spoilt nephew. William Thornhill left his mansion seeing a card which ended their communication and George did not receive any of his replies regarding employment or help.

In the next chapter, Thornhill's visit to the Arnolds discloses that he was courting Miss Arabella. Squire Thornhill secretly conveys to the vicar to keep Olivia's elopement hidden from Arabella or his son before proceeding to dance with Arabella; she, on the other hand, had certain reservations of feelings as she still hesitated to be with anyone else; and perhaps, was secretively attentive to George. As Arabella was kind to George during his stay, so was Thornhill. He, having paid a hundred pounds to be returned by Charles Primrose later, sent his son to fight in the royal army. The vicar felt that Miss Arabella loved George more than Thornhill. When George was gone, Dr. Primrose, the Reverend, also bids adieu to his hosts commencing passage for his home.

Dr. Primrose takes shelter at night at a country inn twenty miles off his abode where he sits drinking with its landlord discussing Squire Thornhill. He is told by this inn owner, Mr. Symmonds that Squire Thornhill was hated by all unlike his uncle. It is an habitual conduct of the Squire to allure and possess daughters of people; keep them for some weeks; and return or leave them after having destroyed their modesty. Mr. Symmonds's wife interrupted their conversation and joined them in drink to inform them about a young woman who is lodging at their inn without payment. While she is shouting at her to leave their inn, her father recognises the wailings of his daughter Olivia.

Both father and daughter unite to cry together. She reveals that the villain, shameful man gave her private proposals from the first day of their meeting. The father suspected Mr. Burchell to be the culprit of this criminal activity against Livy, but she tells him that Mr. Burchell always tried to convince her that Squire Thornhill was a fallen man who was ensnaring her and nothing else. Squire Thornhill employed two abandoned women or whores of the town to trap Olivia but this artificer's plan was defeated by Mr. Burchell's letter. Olivia did not know by what power

could Burchell drive away those women and silence the Squire for a while from seducing her further. Squire Thornhill got married to her in a private way by a popish priest but his own name was kept secret. The squire welcomed his daughter as his legal wife but she disclosed that there were several like her to whom he was married and then abandoned.

She was afraid to let her secret out; but her father, the vicar insists on exposing and punishing the squire. In the morning following her nuptials, she was introduced to two more women whom he married and set into prostitution. Probably Olivia was taken into a brothel as Squire offered her to a Baron but she run away. She took a stage-coach to reach this inn. Guilt and infamy were pressing hard on her conscience which she could not unburden even though she had accepted her fault to her father. The benevolent vicar alleviated his daughter's pain by consoling her and conveying that she was always loved by her dear family who had been impatiently waiting to welcome her.

The vicar leaves Olivia behind in a secured, comfortable situation at the inn for a better reception at home to come back with Sophia the next morning. He was very happy as he reached home at midnight when all were asleep and the house was 'bursting out in a blaze of fire, and every apperture red with conflagration.' He fainted at this dreadful sight which woke up his son; all the family assembled to bring the master back to senses; his family was in distress due to the prevalent situation. The fire destroys all of their possessions save only a few tokens of wealth. The neighbours including the warm-hearted Mr. Solomon Flamborough sympathetically and caringly arranged for their night at one of their outhouses with utensils, clothes, etc. Dr. Primrose explained to his family what he had gone through during his absence from home and the discoveries of Olivia, George and Arabella. The following morning, Moses and Sophy were dispatched to bring their elder sister home. Despite losing his home in the fire, the vicar does not lose self-confidence even in adversity.

The twenty-third chapter opens on the vicar fostering courage into his loving family, who he calls his fortune and esteem of life. His neighbours take up the task of rebuilding his abode; the fellow farmers warmed up their friendship with his family; Mr. Williams also renewed his affection for his daughter, and family. However, Olivia rejected his advances with disenchantment for her miseries were greater in volume than playfulness which society demanded from her. Though the worried vicar gave her sermons about life and repentance, Livy shun the public eye and seemed to be losing her health.

Squire Thornhill's marriage was fixed with Ms. Wilmot. The vicar sent his son Moses to deliver a letter to Ms. Wilmot stating her future husband's bad conducts towards his family, and similar information was sent to Mr. Wilmot too. But Arabella could not get that letter as she was travelling. The wedding was nigh and the couple was seen celebrating with their families and surrounding. Sir William Thornhill, his uncle was the most regarded gentleman among all present there.

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Dr. Primrose reminded his son Moses that he should not be carried away by the happiness of that vile man who abused the life of his sister and acted immorally against her. He looked at his family which even though was being supplied with all necessary nourishments by their kind neighbours, was yet trudging under the 'heavy weight of hours.' Whenever the vicar's family demanded divine aid, circumspection and animation, they looked ahead to a song, a tale, a fable or a poem to vitalise and invigorate them. Squire Thornhill visits them but displays no sense of remorse, rather greets them with the same candour and frivolity. The vicar, despite being incensed, keeps his composure while receiving his landlord. Mr. Thornhill shamelessly argues with him that his acts were no impudence. The vicar scolds and shouts at the culprit in anger directing him to leave at once for the dishonour he had brought on them undeservedly. The Squire tells him that he does not bother about who they are and what poor opinion they wish to form against him. His daughter could be married to any other man keeping the squire as her lover simultaneously to which he would always agree.

Mr. Thornhill's immoral, base proposal unbolts the indignation of Dr. Primrose upon his offender who in return threatens him to destroy more, '…what may be the consequences of my resentment. My attorney, to whom your late bond has been transferred, threatens hard, nor do I know to prevent the course of justice, except by paying the money myself, which, as I have been at some expenses lately, previous to my intended marriage, is not so easy to be done.' The Squire daringly warns him to turn his daughter into his mistress, while making her someone else's wife and both father-daughter should attend his marriage with smiles lest they would be thrown out of house and face serious legal consequences. The vicar retorts that he would not allow him to marry as he already had a marriage with his daughter, and he was free to settle his resentment the way he pleased. Thornhill having given his tenant an ultimatum of severity in revenge, leaves his dwelling.

The following morning, the squire's steward demands annual rent from the vicar, failing to recive it, drives his cattle sells them for an inferior price. Additional misfortune befall the vicar as he is arrested on the squire's orders by men of justice.. By the end of the twenty-fourth chapter, the hero, a kind family man whose moral leaning was so staunch that he could not be shaken by further tempest designed by the Providence stands firm even in this hour of distress when they had to partake of all their honour, social capacity, family happiness, wealth, position and health. There was hardly a possession left to despoil.

Chapters 25 to 30

They are forced to leave the neighbourhood on foot as beggars. Almost fifty of the vicar's poor parishioners come behind their priest and start having verbal spats interceding with the judicial officers. Had the vicar not intervened, it would have been difficult for the men in charge to seize him as prisoner. But he told his parishioners that they should not take law into their hands and believe in God's

service and truth. As they reached the jail, the family is set in a comfortable place and the vicar has to shift to the cell where debtors serve. The prison is full of wailers, rioters, 'prophaneness' and disorganised robbers. The next chapter goes on to describe Dr. Primrose' time in prison. Through the trial and tribulations of the vicar and his family, Goldsmith suggests that all of their misfortune is linked with both his and his wife's aspirations to join the elite class circle and marry their daughters to ranked men irrespective of prudently judging whether they were sincere and upright or vile and pretentious.

The twenty-seventh chapter begins with the Primrose family while still in jail being intimated of plans of prison reform by its master to which they disagree unanimously. Their objection is on the foundation that the idea of prison reform would further damage his image. Dr. Primrose deemed that 'the heart that is buried ina dungeon is as precious as that seated upon a throne.' 'Human soul' is the greatest gem on Earth and he would always protect it. Like politics, governance, education, authorship, unemployment, gentility towards life, and above all humanity, Goldsmith introduces another theme of prison reform in the novel, commenting on the prison reforms that took place during his lifetime by John Howard in England. Oliver Goldsmith has been delineating many themes here in his *The Vicar of Wakefield* which he thinks would be able to govern society better. Throughout his fiction, it has been his general disposition to be carried away in discussion, discourse on topics related to his interests and through his hero, or other characters, convey his thoughts or what he thought was apt for humanity. Dr. Primrose argued on natural laws which tame a man more efficiently than the constitutional laws. England's mismanagement has been discussed in many aspects here. Dr. Primrose states, 'I cannot tell whether it is from the number of our penal laws, or the licentiousness of our people, that this country should shew more convicts in a year, than half the dominions of Europe united.' Dr. Primrose's discourse on prison and law reform concerning human nature, ends the twenty-seventh chapter.

Till now the story has developed having gust of problems one after another and no clue to the resolution has been hinted at: Dr. Charles Primrose loses his wealth, his job, and is sentenced to prison. In addition, due to his pursuit of rich life and false pomp of manners, his eldest daughter loses her virginity to a criminal Squire Thornhill who even tries to sell her into brothel; his Oxford-graduate son wandering like a destitute, is sent on debt of one hundred pounds to serve in the army; and the rest of his family is yet unsettled and deprive of their all belongings. The author till now has given no sign of an agent or character who will resolve the problems in the plot.

The vicar Dr. Primrose does not see his daughter Olivia since the time he has been in prison. Almost dead with ailment for a fortnight now, Olivia visits her father being supported by her sister. He cheers her with his usual love and care to which she replies that he should comply with Thornhill's wish rather than suffer himself to death. This consolation would allow her easy death. But the vicar stubbornly protests further offence to his family from Thornhill saying he would

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never make his daughter a whore by surrendering her to the immoral, unfair, dishonourable snares of Thornhill. This comment is heard by a fellow prisoner. The unknown prisoner suggests that the vicar send a detailed letter to Sir William Thornhill, the uncle of Squire Thornhill. He assures him that the uncle is the most respected and just man in the whole country, who would sure make a decision against him in only three days.

The man supplied him with the stationery and the vicar sent his letter. No reply appeared to diminish the vicar's troubles; instead his health begins to fail because of confinement and previous wounds. The tormented family has to silently watch their father and sister wither away but they can shed tears only. Olivia is not able to her father directly. So she communicates to him each day via Sophia. On the fifth day after his letter is dispatched to the uncle, Dr. Primrose is surprised to know that his daughter was near death. The unknown fellow prisoner who gave him her account every day informed him that ill Olivia was free from earthly bondage. The vicar cannot even see his dead daughter. The number of problems was increasing when Jenkinson advises him to forget about his self-respect or values for the sake of his family and survival as the vicar was also on way to death; he urges him to compromise with his landlord Squire Thornhill.

Mr. Jenkinson notes down the submission word by word as the vicar spoke and it meant that he had no objection to the squire's further marriage begging forgiveness for himself. Putting his signature, the letter is sent by Moses who returns in six hours informing him how Thornhill knew about Dr. Primrose sending a letter to his uncle, which was thrown away with contempt. He should stop pleading and trouble his attorney for further communication related to the Squire who was getting married in three days; and the vicar should rather depend on his daughters to plead to the Squire now. Dr. Primrose shares his emotions with at the prisoner who compels him to send another letter to his uncle conveying the schemes that his nephew was undertaking. A fresh storm wrecks the Primrose family as Deborah informs her husband that Sophia has been forcibly abducted by ruffians. Another prisoner's wife tells him that a post-chaise followed them when a handsome, rich stranger kidnapped her and drove off their sight quickly. Both parents wailed as their dignity was utterly ruined. The ray of hope peeped in as Moses delivered his brother George's letter to his father saying that he was going to be promoted to the rank of lieutenant by his colonel soon.

Deborah, in tears for Sophy, is not ready to accept if God is still kind to them and George was safe. The God fearing vicar always thanks his Creator for giving him the strength to fight his life's adversities. He is content that George could be a wise guardian to all in his absence as he was about to die. Suddenly, a frightening noise arrests their attention when the jail-keeper drags inside a heavily-fettered, badly-wounded, thrashed young man. To his family's horror, the thrashed young man was George. Yielding to fate's coldness and cruelty, the vicar implores that God should give him death as all their hopes were lost.

It was George's honesty that he went to punish Squire Thornhill after receiving his mother's letter. Thornhill protested his approach by sending four of his men to stop him. Since George wounded one of those four in a scuffle to save himself, Thornhill influenced the law to give death to his offender. This was the reason for his rigorous imprisonment. Goldsmith exposes a flaw in the English judicial system here, 'I have sent a challenge, and as I am the first transgressor upon the statute, I see no hopes of pardon.' There was hardly any plea accepted against the new law. As the vicar's death is nearing like George, he requests all the prisoners to be called and stand in front of him whom he made an effort to reform. The vicar can scarcely get up but he goes on to address them. The vicar tells the prisoners that religion is the most efficient guide to an erred human soul. The biblical philosophy is then propitiated by the author that those who brook pain as their companion more than pleasure are closest to God. If God is the caresser, what else does a human being need? Therefore, to be acting for human welfare with the passion of no return has been the reward for this humbled vicar who feels most relieved and elevated near death. He gives his final sermon to his fellow prisoners based on his own precepts. Till this part of the fiction, the author does not allow access to a happy resolution which convinces the reader that the novel is a tragic tale of an honest parson. There is no room for any ray of hope as evil has gained sufficient influence upon those deserving good.

In the thirtieth chapter, the vicar, near death is visited by a gentleman. To the vicar's surprise, the gentleman is Mr. Burchell, accompanied by Sophia. Sophia tells her parents that Burchell is her saviour and rescuer. The vicar who taught lessons loaded with morality throughout his life committed the silly mistake of loathing a poor man, Mr. Burchell who loved his daughter Sophia respectfully. The vicar apologises to the gentleman accepting Thornhill's machinations made him detest Burchill. Burchell being a benevolent soul with big heart does not raise previous issues. Rather he pities the calamities that vicar has had to endure as he was adamant to advance relations with Squire Thornhill, and he understood its aftermath.

Turning to Sophia he asks the name of the person who abducted her but Sophia denies to have known who actually they were. She was pushed in a post-chaise by a few people who threatened her to stop crying out for help as they drove fast through busy roads. She broke the window-canvas and saw Mr. Burchell on the road, who ran to her aid. He ran parallel to the chaise and controlled all by applying physical strength. Defeated, they were soon chased away. She was then driven in the same chaise to her father. Now the generous father offered his daughter's hand to Mr. Burchell if he wanted. The young man demands if her father remembers well how his status was once despised, ridiculed by them all. But the vicar Dr. Primrose insists that finding a match of similar sincerity was beyond his capacity, though it was completely the gentleman's choice to be her husband or leave her for someone else.

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The young man becomes silent at his proposal, which was another insult to the poor vicar. Mr. Burchell rather orders food from a nearby inn which seems to be some sort of celebration for all, but the merriment has to obey restrictions as they stood under a jail-roof. However, the jailor provided them the required help. George, upon entering the room, is greatly bewildered to behold the man whom his family knew as Mr. Burchell. Dr. Primrose tells his son how Sophia has been saved by Mr. Burchell. They must pay their regards to the gentleman together. His son maintains a distance in hushed reverence with the gentleman while Sophy entreats her brother again to thank her deliverer.

George was yet silent until Mr. Burchell allowed him to disclose his identity by moving forward. Burchell is in fact Sir William Thornhill in disguise. Mr. Burchell assumes a dignified and superior countenance now. The jailor's servant stepped in to pass the news that a person with distinction and wealth waited upon to see him and was asking which time would suit him. Burchill orders the jailor to wait until he was free and turned to George to state why he was in prison. After hearing George, Burchell tells him that George was no higher than a murderer who killed people for selfish ends. The vicar discloses that his wife wanted her son to take revenge upon Thornhill which pushed him go there. His father handed Burchell his wife's letter reading which he pardons George and breaks his spell of stupefaction by admitting he often visits jails for indiscriminate reasons. Mr. Burchell shakes hands with George, cordially acknowledging that his father was a very honest and kind man. He explains how his small, impoverished abode could furnish him joy that courts could not afford. He loved the 'amusing simplicity by his fire-side' and regarded their company for long. His nephew had been informed of his meeting them at that hour and was shortly to join his uncle Sir William Thornhill, 'the disguised spectator.'

Sir William Thornhill reminds George not to accuse Squire Thornhill until his blames were proved and he should believe in the justice of Sir William Thornhill who had been revered for his wisdom by all. Thorhill tells them that, 'The poor Mr. Burchell was in reality a man of large fortune and great interest, to whom senates listened with applause, and whom party heard with conviction; who was the friend of his country, but loyal to his king.' The vicar's wife stands in awe of her past familiarity and misconduct against the poor Burchell. Sophia begins to cry as the distinction and change in his circumstances had claimed all her rights over that poor friend whom she loved so dearly. Deborah Primrose apologises to him for her ill demeanour and overt, intended insults. Sir William Thornhill calmly clears those clouds by stating that he had never held any of them as offenders or anyone on the Earth except the man who trapped Sophia, 'his little girl.' He inquires if Sophia recalled his features.

She informed that he had 'a large mark over one of his eye-brows.' Jenkinson wants to know if that man had red coloured hair which she acquiesces in the affirmative. Jenkinson recognizes the man as Timothy Baxter, the greatest runner in England. He assures the Baronet of his current location also when Sir William

called the jailor decreeing that the culprit must be arrested immediately. Jenkinson is dispatched to catch the criminal. Meanwhile Bill climbed upon Mr. Burchell to kiss him. His mother tried to hush the child from trespassing but the Baronet stopped her. He showered affection on Bill and Dick in his usual manner, though the handsome children were hungry, ragged and indigent. Sir William happens to have been a doctor as well and writes a prescription for the ailing vicar as his burnt hand was in a miserable condition due to lack of medical care and confinement. Dr. Primrose witnesses' immediate relief as his wound was dressed.

Chapters 31 And 32

In the second last chapter of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, when the nephew Squire Thornhill bids his greeting and tries to embrace his uncle, his uncle repels it. He strictly conveys that Squire Thornhill should not expect his uncle to endure his vices, but rather only honesty in a person which can find a space in his heart. He opened the allegations against Ned, like seduction of Olivia, ruination with imprisonment of the vicar, his son's punishment without reason, etc. Mr. Thornhill places his arguments very shrewdly. Sir William accuses him of insincerity which was opposite his father's nature who was his honoured elder brother noted for his magnanimity, generosity and dignity. Thornhill convinces his uncle that he was innocent and that the vicar's imprisonment was a natural outcome of his queued debts. The Squire instead blames Dr. Primrose for his meanness to have abused him by throwing baseless, motivated allegations upon him which as testimony could be sealed by the witness like some of his servants. He could easily free Dr. Primrose of other accusations but his letter to his uncle, and his son's preparation to attack him determined him to pay them back legally.

It looked like Squire Thornhill, being manipulative, malicious and powerful was prevailing on his uncle's will. Mrs. Primrose angrily protests his lies against her son George and curses the pretender. Having arrived there, Jenkinson interrupts with the tall man who was fit for Tyburn, a place in London known for capital punishment. Thornhill's altered frightened look was obvious enough of his guilt as he was a regular acquaintance with Jenkinson and Baxter. Jenkinson addresses the Squire audaciously exposing his evil deeds to Sir William: the man, referred to as over-wounded was not so in truth. The Squire framed the entrapping by giving good clothes and post-chaise to Baxter who took Sophia by coercion, feigning himself as an abductor, where Thornhill would appear on the scene to rescue her to gain confidence over the young lady in order to exploit her. The Baronet recollected the coat belonging to his nephew. For the rest, the man caught accepted how Mr. Thornhill swore being in love with both the sisters at the same time with a wish to possess both, had manoeuvred this for obtaining her.

The Baronet uncle becomes aware of the wickedness and treachery of his nephew. Mr. Thornhill accuses the two criminals plotting against him, which his uncle should not believe and rather take evidences from his butler or other servants. The butler being presented admits the truth in front of his master that Squire was

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thick with Baxter who brought him new women. Then he declared he never liked young Mr. Thornhill by character or deeds. Jenkinson inquired from the butler if he knew him of which he returned that he remembered the night when Olivia was deceived being parcelled to Thornhill's house, he was one of the party who committed that crime. Jenkinson, on being reproached indignantly by Sir William, disclosed that the Squire was blameworthy. Jenkinson was, on his usual duty, ordered to bring the fake priest so that this marriage could not be validated legally. Sir William asks George to be set free and demands Olivia's presence to affix her seducer. Miss Arabella Wilmot accidentally approaches the jail. She and her father, who were going to her aunt to discuss the venue of her marriage, by chance halt to take refreshment at an inn from the window of which she could see either Dick or Bill with the children. Having met him, she becomes aware of their misfortunes. She does not know that her future husband was at the centre of all tragic events befalling her beloved old acquaintance.

Though Mr. Wilmot prevented her to visit an unsuitable place like a prison, she still comes to see them. She thought Ned Thornhill to be their rescuer, but in reality he was the criminal contriver of the entire Primrose family's doom which his uncle discloses to her shock. She, in utter distress, divulges that the Squire had told her how George was in America with his newlywed wife enjoying a holiday. Mrs. Primrose said that it was falsehood as George had vowed he would never marry anyone as he loved Miss Wilmot. Mrs. Primrose narrated the rivalries of Thornhill with her son and explained how he brought the whole family to where they were, in jail. Miss Arabella Wilmot exposed the dishonesty of Mr. Thornhill who fabricated hundred ways to achieve her acquiescence for their wedding only on the grounds that George, to whom she was betrothed and loved dearly, had no care of her and had married someone else. Since that breached their promise for each other, she could be free to be his wife. He did not leave a single effort to fan her hatred against George, a brave and honest man.

George was freed because the man who posed as nearly murdered by him was a fraud caught by the law now. He was prepared by Jenkinson to be presentable in a military uniform. Miss Wilmot begged his pardon for her betrayal in earnest tears which filled him with emotions because there was a mile's distance between their current social ranks. Moses rushed to that inn and narrated all particulars that had taken place to her father. Squire Thornhill's iniquities, sinfulness and misdemeanour were uncovered in public. He retaliated openly and warned Sir William that he did not need to obey him for 'anything' as he repulsed his wealth. His father-in-law, Mr. Willmot would pass on him his wealth which he was sure about. Arabella was already in his custody having signed bonds under his control. He pursued her as his wife only for wealth sake and the rest could not escape him any way. Sir William himself was party in that agreement, and hence knew of the legal consequences Ned Thornhill could impose.

Miss Wilmot applying a common sense seeing herself in the clutches of a rogue asked George if he would accept her hand without fortune. George

proclaimed his love to be only Ms. Wilmot. Mr. Wilmot joined them declining any nuptial promise to be fulfilled to the declared culprit but since his wealth was in his security, it was a great loss to him which he deplored in silent contemplation acknowledging what was going on. The Baronet having known his passion for wealth in disengaging his daughter from the vicar's son, reminded him of his uncompassionate past, simultaneously reminding him of his present when he could amend his former mistake by allowing his daughter to go back to that worthy man who deserved her.

Mr. Wilmot displays no objection to his daughter's wedding with George, however, Dr. Primrose is supposed to pass on six thousand pounds to Miss Wilmot whenever he would be rich again, if they wished to secure her as match. The vicar readily consents to this agreement as all depends on his acquiescence. The couple unite in happiness throwing away all prospects for love for each other. As for Squire Thornhill's possession of her wealth as her husband prior to their marriage, it would be granted only if he married Arabella Wilmot. This he could not as he was wedded to someone else as claimed by Jenkinsonby introducing dead Olivia to them as alive, displaying their marriage certificate. Jenkinson shared that he was a great loyal friend to the Squire who married women with a fake priest and fake certificate; but when he had to bring a priest for Thornhill and Olivia's wedding, he prepared an original licence and an original priest; albeit his real marriage was accomplished by Jenkinson for extracting money from him in future by blackmailing. All were happy to see that gradually justice being finally done. Jenkinson, being inquired upon how he kept the elder Miss Primrose alive secretly, replied that he could not see any other way to get the vicar off prison but to comply with what Squire Thornhill demanded: the submission of both his daughters to him by letting them married to someone else. Since the eldest daughter was still alive the younger could not be sacrificed to the Squire. In this plan of Jenkinon, the vicar's wife was a partaker too.

The Squire fell over the feet of his uncle begging forgiveness. Though his penance was abated by Dr. Primrose's interference but his uncle deprived him of his wealth; gave its third part to Olivia; and ordered that he would be given any money only at the request of his wife. The Baronet did not accept his any pleading nor did he pardon him. He was made to leave the place and for his daily services, only one servant was granted to him. After his ordered departure, Sir William congratulated Olivia for becoming a member of his family. Miss Arabella and her father also did her the same honour. And so did her mother to Olivia because now her marriage was legal and respectable. Mr. Jenkinson, Moses and Sophy also congratulated her. Sir William happily looked around to observe their faces and remarked that there were one or two faces and they were not content who seemed agitated from within. Mr. Jenkinson was next to be thanked by Sir William and Dr. Primrose as he acted very kindly in procuring evidences and exposing real villains.

Sir William suggested that Sophia would be a good match for Jenkinson and announced to give five hundred pounds to her and him wishing them a happy

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married life. He called Sophia forward to give her consent or disagreement on this proposal which she denied, '…not have Mr. Jenkinson, your benefactor, a handsome young fellow, with five hundred pounds and good expectations!' The Baronet is astonished to see Sophia's ungratefulness who prefers death to such a match. But readers come to know that it was a jest. Then he unravels himself to be the one who wants to marry Sophia ardently. A man such as Sir William Thornhill who had been with the most ranked girls and families, praised Sophia for her great beauty, innocence and pragmatism which was all he wished in his future wife in whose search he was roaming like a vagabond in disguise for so many years. He felt sorry for Jenkinson. Jenkinson was promised to have five hundred pounds by him.

They leave 'those gloomy mansions of sorrow' for the inn that was prepared for their reception with Lady Thornhill, Miss Sophia Primrose. The convicts are given forty pounds as charity by the Baronet, and twenty pounds by Mr. Wilmot. By then all his villagers assemble outside jail to welcome their honest vicar and partake in their joyous moments at the inn. But they are retuned with some gifts by their generous landlord, Sir William. The hero of this story being ill leaves the jolly crowd and comes back to retire with profound gratitude to God for both good and evil that had been his fate. At last, the resolution has taken place in which vicar's honesty, integrity and righteousness are rightly paid.

The last chapter of the fiction contains conclusion in which Dr. Primrose, the previous vicar of Wakefield, is bestowed unexpected happiness by the Almighty. George apprises his worthy father in the following morning that the merchant who dealt in the town with his wealth was taken into custody at Antwerp, Belgium and his creditors were to secure more amount of money than anticipated. George had done perfect duty of an obedient son to relieve Dr. Primrose of his settlement which he had to do for him and his wife. The vicar takes the opinion of the Baronet in this regard if he is permitted to do so without any legal offence. The Baronet confirms that there could be no legal implications as his son was already affluent by his marriage with Arabella Wilmot. He only expected his father to bless the ceremonies. The two couples were impatient to get married and all were sharing in their joy. Funnily, the serious priest wanted them all to maintain the gravity of life while getting married but they were so full of merriment and light-heartedness that they did not pay heed to his moral preaching.

Sir William Thornhill and Sophia Primrose were the first to tie the knot. George followed next with Arabella, the most charming pupil of the vicar as he called her. Dr. Primrose had invited his kind neighbour Mr. Flamborough who reached the inn by the time when they came back from church having fulfilled rituals of marriage. The eldest Ms. Flamborough was offered a proposal from Mr. Jenkinson and Moses chose the youngest. The parishioners came to congratulate him screaming in joy. They were chiefly those who had rescued the parson previously. They first received censure from the Baronet for being there, and later some money for celebration. The entire party was then invited by Mrs. Olivia

Thornhill to dine at her residence. The former Squire now dwelt with one of his relatives in a modest manner being carefully tended by them. Olivia could not but be hurt whenever she thought of him, yet she might forgive him would he rectify his mistakes. They sat eating, exchanging jokes, laughter, and jocoseness. The vicar relied on his old custom of removing table after food to have all together for a longer period of time for enjoying the fireside. Dr. Primrose happily beholds his whole family in front of him in mirth and comfort graced by God which was what he always meant life for. To say, all his ill luck was reversed with abundance of health and delight. And the fiction, full of justice of karma with the moral lesson of retaining morality in life ends in contentment with peace.

Check Your Progress

4. Who is the advertisement in the beginning of the novel addressed to?
5. What is the real identity of Mr. Burchell?

12.5 RECURRENT THEMES IN *THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD*

Oliver Goldsmith's in his masterpiece *The Vicar of Wakefield*, has carefully woven some important themes which he has tried to validate by his hero's life and those of others characters. Let us examine some of them here.

Matrimony: The overlapping wings of prospects in matrimony, harmony in matrimony and family balance cover the whole plot of Oliver Goldsmith's novel. Therefore, matrimony on the whole, remains its main theme. His hero, Dr. Charles Primrose, a priest, makes sure to publish and preach about the importance of peaceful married life to his parishioners: a doctrine practised diligently by himself. He believes that an happy marriage could keep a man contented in his family which would promote a healthy society. Both he and his wife make sure to teach their daughters and sons to think and act on choosing a proper match for their life-partners and making a comfortable life by adjusting with them. The theme of matrimony which is introduced in the very first chapter by the description of hero's family and house continues to flow in the same vein till the end of novel, as the story is principally linked with Olivia, Sophia and George's prospects in marriage. Likely so, the novel ends on the espousals and engagements of Olivia, Sophia, George, as well as both Miss Flamboroughs'.

Family-Man and Husbandship: Linked with the theme of matrimony in his *The Vicar of Wakefield*, the author introduces other significant aspects of life: family-man and husbandship. How and what a man should do to make his family and wife happy, satisfied are major purposes of life to the hero here. Dr. Charles Primrose, the parson protagonist, knew one principle of running his life peacefully: never object to his sweet but uneducated wife and restrict his children unnecessarily. From the onset of the novel, he proved himself a true family-man and greatly

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obliging husband. His family had always enthralled in comfort and gaiety of which he was the soul procurer. This aspect of the priest's demeanour has sundry effects on which the whole plot revolves: excessive liberty in application of any decision that his family members take, pursuit of following only rich people for the prospect of matrimony, maintenance of peace in every possible way to keep family members happy, commitment towards each-other in a strong bond of love, keeping the poor at bay so that nothing unranked could blemish their respectability, etc. They contain both negative and positive effects.

Having given freedom to his wife to handle family the way she thought best, the vicar loses control over the manners of his daughters who make sure to secure a rich suitor for themselves without judging his sincerity or character. It is because of this reason that tempests break on them followed by a series of misfortunes governed by men and fate both. The other side of commitment to family and husbandship pays the vicar well in the latter half of novel when Olivia returns after her undignified elopement with Squire Thornhill before her wedding with Mr. Williams. Then all of them unite and live in poverty brooking storms of destiny like the best family.

Humanity, Prison Reform and Natural Law: Dr. Charles Primrose, the vicar is shown as man of high moral character who conscientiously works on the correction of human vice by instituting morality and goodness in human hearts. When punished for not paying annual rent to his landlord Squire Thornhill, the parson Dr. Primrose is jailed where he is surprised to notice how his fellow inmates were rejoicing their state of wastage blindly being misled. Even though he was very ill, he reads to them as part of his service because he wants to bring in reform in their lives. Being godly in his efforts, the vicar receives productive outcome within six days of his readings to them. Consequently, he begins to inspire them to earn money by 'cutting pegs for tobacconists and shoemakers, the proper wood being bought by the general subscription, and when manufactured, sold' by the vicar's appointment in the market. Though it could not add a huge amount of money to turn them wealthy, but it teaches them their existence and energy's significance.

Dr. Primrose believed that human efforts in the right direction could sow the seeds of morality in society which would empower any nation. Even those who commit crime, savagery and kill others could be tamed by kindness and love. If negative energy could be turned into positive ways, those who enacted serious offence, violation, damage could be brought to a better state of life. In this way, by giving lessons of rectification by reading to such prisoners and driving their negative energy towards doing something constructive would certainly shape them as better and responsible human beings. The author strictly disagrees with the governance and constitutional laws that announce capital punishment for any sinner. The hero, a philosophical thinker, hold that a humane heart could create wonders: 'Thus in less than a fortnight I had formed them into something social and humane, and had the pleasure of regarding myself as a legislator, who had brought men from their

native ferocity into friendship and obedience.' If the law could concentrate on reform rather than severity, follow natural law instead of capital punishment, change rather than cut, better ends could be achieved by any government. Advocating natural law against harshness, inflexibility and brutality, the hero reflects, 'Natural law gives me no right to take away his life…' Often, 'the multitude of laws produce new vices, and new vices call for fresh restraints.'

Mixing Literary Genres in the Fiction Form: Oliver Goldsmith has given a complex design to his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* by amalgamating many literary genres in one form: fiction. It contains letters, a ballad, elegy, fable, story, discourse and songs. He has attempted to give a typical pastoral setting to his novel. Besides making it rich and interesting, he has also employed dramatic techniques such as use of emotionalism, sentimentalism and fine play of irony throughout the fiction.

Love for Nature and Simplicity of Life: The entire fiction dabbles into beauty of Nature as she is presented as a friendly figure here. Nature is painted uniquely in her serenity, picturesqueness, mildness in the form of a protector in Goldsmith's novel. From the commencement of the novel till its end, the author has shown Nature in her most soothing complexion. The Primrose family has a life close to Nature when it shifts to the other place of work after the vicar's loss of fortune. Away from artificiality of life, they enjoy sitting under honeysuckle: 'Our little habitation was situated at the foot of a sloping hill, sheltered with a beautiful underwood behind, and a pratling river before; on one side a meadow, on the other a green.' They reposed outside and enjoyed songs by their children with music: 'Our family dined in the field….To heighten our satisfaction two blackbirds answered each other from opposite hedges, the familiar redbreast came and pecked the crumbs from our hands, and every sound seemed but the echo of tranquillity.' Even though when their house was set on fire, which is the angriest form of Nature here, whatever they are offered next by Nature as life, they accept it.

Another principle theme that runs throughout fiction is simplicity of life to which Dr. Primrose sticks to without compromise. He always seeks ways to pacify things and forgive his family members. Even with his neighbours and parishioners, he shares exceptional rapport and camaraderie. From the commencement of fiction, he controls his family's manners and behaviour by encouraging moral strength in them. Peace and love are the messages he spread in his family and acquaintances. Even though people have been merciless for him like Squire Thornhill, he minimises his chastisement by urging Sir William Thornhill to be considerate. Except for his grave mistake of giving a little too much liberty to his family, hating impoverished people, allowing freedom to strangers to have free play in his inner family circle and restraining himself against his family members decisions till the point of calamity, there have been no foibles in the character of Vicar Dr. Primrose. Not only that, he often preaches in his long discourses how simplicity of life and morality could be two major premises of human dignity and existence.

12.6 CHARACTERISATION IN *THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD*

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Let us discuss the major characters in the novel.

Dr. Charles Primrose: The protagonist of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, Dr. Charles Primrose is a righteous and kind gentleman who lives his life on the principles of simplicity. He is a stable character by demeanour who does not lose patience and wisdom even in his misfortunes. When the novel begins we soon witness that life and incidents begin to humble his pride down in a series of tempests but he endures all his difficulties and sorrows with forbearance and fortitude. He has a loving wife and well-bred children who try to maintain their father's principles of simplicity and morality. He is usually against pomp and show except for his wife's provocation of enticing Squire Thornhill and encouraging his daughters' over expectations from their position. He is the strongest character who narrates this story as well. The readers see each and every incident described by him learning his views towards life. He gives comments and opines about many topics which are sometimes not the immediate concern to the thread of the story like English literary figures, politics, governance, economy of Europe, etc. He is seventy-two and his name is introduced in the middle of the story.

Mrs. Deborah Primrose: Mrs. Primrose, the wife of Vicar Dr. Charles Primrose, is a poorly educated woman who is though simple and sweet by nature, yet runs behind superficial charms of life. She is an active agent in the story who brings in the main action to plot: the scandalous elopement of her eldest daughter Olivia prior to her marriage. It is she who quarrels with her husband when he wants to command his daughters' disgracing pursuit of unprincipled man Squire Thornhill, unnecessary running behind two fashionable ladies from London, insults to poor Mr. Burchell, etc. She is a simple woman of obstinate mentality but a loving, kind mother and wife too. She obeys her husband most of the times and where she does not obey, her actions propel some serious flaw like her plan to fix a false marriage of Olivia with Mr. Williams.

Squire Thornhill: Squire Ned Thornhill is a young, rich and villainous appearance in the novel. Due to his licentiousness and ill-repute, his uncle Sir William Thornhill had seized his rights over the property. When the vicar joined his village parish and farm as his tenant whom he had given his fields to look after, he allures the vicar's daughter Olivia, elopes with her for a secret wedding and tries to sell her as a prostitute after having used her. He was popular for his lewdness in the villages as he had done false marriages with many girls and sold them or forsook them after using. He contrived to torture the vicar and his family in various ways. It is at the end of the story that his vileness is discovered by his uncle, the Baronet through Jenkinson and Olivia is restored as his wife with punishments. But till the end of the novel, he had not accepted her.

Sir William Thornhill: The Baronet Sir William Thornhill appears only at the end of the novel as an angel to set everyone in his or her position and pass on justice to all characters in the novel. Humorously, he is a man in disguise called Mr. Burchell: an indigent, intelligent, handsome, bachelor vagabond not yet thirty in want of food and lodging who shared gifts and happiness with people in the village where the story is located. Burchell is reprimanded and cast off the Primrose house as the master and mistress thought he was loitering around Sophia, their youngest daughter to entrap her into a love-affair, and since he had no wealth or social distinction, he did not deserve to be an acquaintance to them.

He is seen occasionally visiting them. Notwithstanding being always condescended, he warns Olivia and Mrs. Deborah Primrose against Squire Thornhill's ill-intention, lustfulness, wantonness and indulgent character. When his letter to drive away the two London-based whores comes to be highlighted, they react to him with animosity and throw him out of the door with affront, humiliation and insolence, which is not their normal demeanour. But they are repaid for this shameless act when at the end it is discovered that he is the Baronet and is to decide who would receive what to conclude the story. He loves Sophia, the impoverished vicar's daughter and marries her by protecting them from all evils of the world. He fixes Olivia and Ned Thornhill as couple and arranges Miss Arabella Wilmot-George Primrose tie up. It was only he who stands as an icon of justice and penalises Ned Thornhill and his gang of pimps. He is always held in reverence and awe by his people as a righteous benefactor.

Check Your Progress

6. What themes cover the whole plot of Goldsmith's novel?
7. Which character is the active agent in the story who brings in the main action to the plot?

12.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Goldsmith's short life was a rare combination of talent and dissolution where at points he produced quality literature, and at others he was often a staunch wastrel. This compelled Horace Walpole to adorn Goldsmith with the epithet 'inspired idiot'.
2. Some works by Goldsmith include *The Hermit* [1765], *The Deserted Village* [1770], *An History of the Earth and Animated Nature* [1774].
3. Thornhill has more sway on the vicar's family because he is rich despite being socially disregarded because of his characterlessness.

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4. The 'Advertisement' in the beginning of *The Vicar of Wakefield* is addressed to its readers.
5. Burchell is in fact Sir William Thornhill in disguise.
6. The overlapping wings of prospects in matrimony, harmony in matrimony and family balance cover the whole plot of Oliver Goldsmith's novel.
7. Mrs. Deborah Primrose is an active agent in the story who brings in the main action to plot.

12.8 SUMMARY

- Oliver Goldsmith was a noted novelist, playwright, poet, essayist and prose writer of the Augustan Age of English letters, who hailed from Ireland.
- Goldsmith was short and stout, blessed with wit, very simple-natured and devoid of a single streak of cunningness.
- Leaning on autobiographical roots, his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* which was completed in 1762, presents the picture of a rural life enthralling in the dews of sentimentalism, idealistic views, moralising and melodramatic occurrences trimmed with soft humour, pathos, vivacious gaiety and subtle irony.
- *The Vicar of Wakefield*, published in 1766, written about 1761 or 1762, has a native English setting of two village parishes: the first one is named Wakefield, and the other is never mentioned, save hinting at a dominant family name: Thornhill.
- The novel is a first person narrative where the vicar, Dr. Charles Primrose is speaking about his family and difficult life conditions.
- The English village where the majority of the action is set reiterates Goldsmith's memories of his Irish home of childhood days in Lissoy.
- The hero of the novel is a virtuous man, who having left behind a lavish life and modern facilities in his previous job, appreciates his hard and close-to-nature life.
- The story is often held in esteem as Goldsmith's memoir represented in the first person but his experiences are shared by many characters here, not one.
- Oliver Goldsmith's in his masterpiece *The Vicar of Wakefield*, has carefully woven some important themes which he has tried to validate by his hero's life and those of others characters.
- The overlapping wings of prospects in matrimony, harmony in matrimony and family balance cover the whole plot of Oliver Goldsmith's novel.

- The Baronet Sir William Thornhill appears only at the end of the novel as an angel to set everyone in his or her position and pass on justice to all characters in the novel. Humorously, he is a man in disguise called Mr. Burchell.

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12.9 KEY WORDS

- **Vicar:** It refers to a priest in the Church of England who is in charge of a church and the religious needs of people in a particular area.
- **Squire:** It refers to a man of high social standing who owns and lives on an estate in a rural area, especially the chief landowner in such an area.
- **Karma:** It refers to the sum of a person's actions in this and previous states of existence, viewed as deciding their fate in future existences.
- **Matrimony:** It is the state of being married.

12.10 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short Answer Questions

1. What chiefly does *The Vicar of Wakefield exhibit as a work of art?*
2. Apart from Charles Primrose, which character employs the characteristics of Oliver Goldsmith in the novel?
3. Are there elements of eighteenth-century polished society and style of expression in Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*?

Long-Answer Questions

1. What is the significance of the advertisement and the ballad in '*The Vicar of Wakefield*?' Explain with reference to the context.
2. Discuss major themes in Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*.
3. Examine *The Vicar of Wakefield* as a proponent of the sentimental and domestic fiction genre told in a satirical vein.

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UNIT 13 SIR WALTER SCOTT: *THE TALISMAN*

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Structure

13.0 INTRODUCTION

The Talisman is an adventure based novel written by Sir Walter Scott in 1825. Unlike his other romantic creations, *The Talisman* circulated widely within nineteenth-century English culture. The main characters on which the entire story revolves are the Scottish knight Kenneth, a fictional version of David of Scotland, Earl of Huntingdon, who returned from the third Crusade in 1190; Richard the Lionheart; Saladin; and Edith Plantagenet, a relative of Richard. Other characters are the actual historical figures of Sir Robert De Sable, as well as Conrad Aleramici da Montferrat/ Conrad Aleramici Di Montferrat. *The Talisman*'s huge popularity positions this novel as the source text for many subsequent Victorian crusades romances. The story takes place at the end of the third Crusade, mostly in the camp of the Crusaders in Palestine. Several factors are placing the Crusade in danger specifically scheming and partisan politics as well as the illness of King Richard the Lionheart.

A principal incident in the story is that from which the title is derived. Of all people who ever lived, the Persians were perhaps most remarkable for their unshaken simpleness in amulets, spells, periapts, and similar charms, framed, it was said, under the influence of particular planets, and bestowing high medical powers, as well as means of advancing men's fortunes in various manners. A story of this kind, relating to a Crusader of eminence, is often told in the west of Scotland, and the relic implied is still in existence, and even yet held in adoration. Sir Simon Lockhart of Lee and Gartland made a considerable figure in the reigns of Robert the Bruce and of his son David. He was one of the chief of that band of Scottish chivalry who accompanied

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James, the Good Lord Douglas, on his expedition to the Holy Land with the heart of King Robert Bruce. Douglas, impatient to get at the Saracens, entered in the war with those of Spain, and was killed there. Lockhart proceeded to the holy land with such Scottish knights as had escaped the fate of their leader and assisted for some time in the wars against the Saracens. The following adventure is said by tradition to have befallen him: he made prisoner in battle an Emir of considerable wealth and consequence. The aged mother of the captive came to the Christian camp, to redeem her son from his state of captivity. Lockhart is said to have fixed the price at which his prisoner should ransom himself; and the lady, pulling out a large embroidered purse, proceeded to tell down the ransom, like a mother who pays little respect to gold in comparison to her son's liberty. In this operation, a pebble inserted in a coin, some say of the Lower Empire, fell out of the purse, and the Saracen matron testified so much haste to recover it as gave the Scottish knight a high idea of its value, when compared with gold or silver. "I will not consent, he said, to grant your son's liberty, unless that amulet be added to his ransom". The lady not only consented to this, but explained to Sir Simon Lockhart the mode in which the talisman was to be used, and the uses to which it might be put. The water in which it was dipped operated as a styptic, as a medicine, and possessed other properties as a medical talisman.

13.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to.

- Discuss the life and works of Sir Walter Scott
- Describe the various themes in the novel *The Talisman*
- Examine the major characters in the novel *The Talisman*

13.2 *SIR WALTER SCOTT:* LIFE AND WORKS

Sir Walter Scott, as one of his country's earliest prominent writers, helped established Scotland's place in the literary world. Scott was a prolific poet as well as the author of numerous historical romances and adventures. Despite his early success and the influence he exerted over 19th century English literature, time had not always been kind to Scott. Later critics denounced his works on grounds of structure, tone, and content. Yet, in many ways, Scott was at the forefront of the romantic, larger-than-life style that pervaded the late 19th century. A renewed interest in Scott has overlooked his faults and helped cast his work in a more positive light. He remains a significant figure in both the Scottish canon and literature as a whole. He was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on 15 August, 1771, and attended Edinburgh Royal High School and Edinburgh College. In 1786, he signed contracts to become a Writer to the Signet and, in 1792, he became a Scottish advocate. He became Sheriff-Deputy of Selkirkshire in 1799 and Clerk to the Scottish Court of Session in 1806. From 1805 to 1810, he published best-selling poetry.

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In 1812, he bought Abbotsford, his home for life. Two years later, Scott published *Waverley,* the first in the series of remarkably successful and influential Waverley novels. He became a baronet in 1819, and later, in 1822, he arranged and managed the visit to Scotland of King George IV. In 1827, he acknowledged publicly his authorship of the Waverley novels, and, in 1829, he began publication of the "Magnum Opus", a forty-eight-volume edition of the Waverley novels.

An important factor in the vividness of the Scottish novels was the strong oral tradition to which Sir Walter Scott had access from his early childhood. In the region of Sandyknowe, from which his ancestors had sprung, he heard stories of Border raids, Jacobrite risings, and religious struggles from people for whom the past survived in a living tradition. Throughout his life he added to his fund of narration, and his notes to the novels show how very often incidents in them are founded on actual events about which he had learned from the participants themselves or from their more immediate descendants.

Learning that most medieval romances were in French, he taught himself enough French to read short tales of adventures. After reading the Italian poets Torquato Tasso and Ludovico Ariosto in translation, he mastered Italian in order to read the works of Dante. He also read Spanish and German fluently. After graduating from high school at age 12, he took classes at the local college for three years but left without a degree. He then apprenticed himself to his father for four years and began law school.

Scott read law seriously enough to pass his examination, but he also joined literary and social clubs, still spending his weekends in country rambles, searching for material. Admitted to the bar in 1792, he limited his practice, successfully soliciting appointments that left time for his recreations. In 1799, Scott became sheriff of Selkirkshire, later becoming the clerk of session. He did the prescribed work religiously, but he guarded his free time. He began writing almost accidentally, starting with a ballad collection. He next tried a prose romance, dropping it to edit new texts of major writers. Yet he continued with narrative poems, especially *Marmion; A tale of Flodden Field* (1808), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), *Rokeby* (1813), and *The Lord of the Isles* (1815). Ballantyne nearly failed at the time of *Rokeby,* threatening to draw Scott with it. The crisis was adverted, but Scott needed to open a new chapter in his literary mine. Besides, the public was neglecting Scott's poems in favour of George Gordon, Lord Byron's.

In 1825, Ballantyne finally collapsed. Scott's fortunes were inextricably entangled. To reduce the debt, he decided to lock himself to his desk for up to twelve hours daily, six days weekly, relentlessly churning out fiction, history, biography. The next novel, *Woodstock* (1826), is well up to previous standards, and *The Fair Maid of Perth* (1828) contains some of his best scenes and characters; but the other novels are less successful. In other respects, however, he did some of his best work. Somehow, he found time to compose *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* (1890), which displays some of his most natural and touching prose. *Tales of a Grandfather* (1828-1830) are beautiful, skilful retellings of episodes from Scottish history, especially for children.

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13.3 DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

During a truce between the Christian armies taking part in the third Crusade, and the infidel forces under Sultan Saladin, Sir Kenneth, on his way to Syria, encountered a Saracen Emir, whom he unhorsed, and they then rode together, discoursing on love and necromancy, towards the cave of the hermit Theodoric of Engaddi. This hermit was in correspondence with the pope, and the knight was charged to communicate secret information. Having provided the travellers with refreshment, the anchorite, as soon as the Saracen slept, conducted his companion to a chapel, where he witnessed a procession, and was recognised by the Lady Edith, to whom he had devoted his heart and sword. He was then startled by the sudden appearance of the dwarfs, and, having reached his couch again, watched the hermit scourging himself until he fell asleep.

Sir Kenneth, the Knight of the Couchant Leopard, is one of the knights who follows King Richard the Lion-Hearted to the Holy Land during the Third Crusade. At the time, Richard is ill with a fever, and the Council of Kings and Princes has sent Kenneth on a mission to Theodorick of Engaddi, a religious hermit who acts as a go-between for both Christians and Muslims. Richard is not aware of the mission, for the other leaders in the Crusade are jealous of him and his power, and they resent his high-handed methods and his conceit. In the desert, Kenneth meets and fights with a Saracen, an infidel who does not know at first that Kenneth carries a pass from Saladin, the leader of the Muslims. Neither warrior is injured in the fight, and since at the time there is a truce between the Christians and the Muslims, they continue their journey together. The Saracen promises to conduct Kenneth to Theodorick's convent retreat. Theodorick shows Kenneth a crypt containing a piece of the cross of Christ. As the knight kneels before the holy relic, a group of nuns, novices, and others living at the convent come into the holy place singing and strewing flowers. One of the robed ladies, King Richard's kinswoman Lady Edith Plantagenet, several times passes by him at his devotions, each time dropping a single rose at his side. Although she and Kenneth have never spoken, they love each other. Marriage is impossible for them, however, because Lady Edith is related to the English king and Kenneth is only a poor Scottish knight. Both his low birth and his nationality form a barrier between them, for England and Scotland are constantly at war. Edith is at the convent because she is one of the ladies attending Richard's wife, Queen Berengaria, who is on a pilgrimage to pray for the king's recovery. Forcing himself to put Lady Edith out of his mind, Kenneth delivers his message to Theodorick, who promises to carry it to Saladin. When Kenneth returns to Richard's camp, he brings with him El Hakim, a Muslim physician. Saladin has sent this learned man to cure Richard's fever, for although the two rulers are enemies, they respect each other's valour and honour. El Hakim uses a talisman to make a potion that brings down the king's fever. Still weak but restored to health, Richard is grateful to Kenneth for bringing the physician but furious with him for acting as a messenger for the Council of Kings and Princes without his knowledge. Richard feels certain that the other leaders will soon

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withdraw from the Crusade, for the Christians are greatly outnumbered by the infidels. It will be impossible for Richard to continue the war with his small band of followers.

The other leaders are growing increasingly restless and dissatisfied. Two of them in particular wish to see Richard disgraced: Conrade, the marquis of Montserrat, wants to gain a principality in Palestine for himself, and the Grand Master of the Knights Templars wants Richard killed and out of the way. The other leaders merely want to give up the Crusade and return to their homes. Conrade's sly hints and slurs against Richard move the archduke of Austria to place his flag next to Richard's standard on the highest elevation in the camp. Learning of this act, Richard rises from his bed and, though still weak, tears down the archduke's flag and stamps on it. Then he orders Kenneth to guard the English flag and see to it that no other flag is placed near it.

Queen Berengaria has grown bored with life in the camp. She sends Kenneth a false message saying that Edith wants him to come to her tent. He is bewildered by the message and torn between his love for Edith and his duty to King Richard. At last, overwhelmed by love, he leaves his trusted dog on guard and walks to Edith's tent. There he overhears the plotters giggling over their joke. When Edith learns of the trick, she disclaims any part in it and sends Kenneth at once back to his post. There he finds the royal standard of England gone and his dog apparently on the verge of death. El Hakim appears suddenly and says that he can cure the animal with his talisman. He also offers to take Kenneth to the Muslim camp to escape the king's wrath, but Kenneth refuses to run away. Instead, he confesses his desertion to Richard and is instantly condemned to death. Everyone tries to save him: The Queen even confesses to the trick she played on him, but Richard will not be moved. Kenneth refuses to plead his own cause; he believes that he deserves to die for deserting his post. In preparation for his execution, he asks for a priest and makes his confession. Then El Hakim asks the king for a boon in return for saving the royal life with his talisman. He is granted the favour he requests: the privilege of taking Kenneth with him when he leaves Richard's camp. Kenneth is thus saved from death and becomes an outcast from the Christian camp. The other leaders of the Crusade continue their scheming to rob Richard of his power. At last, the Grand Master persuades Conrade to join him in a plot to kill the king. They capture a dervish—a member of a wild tribe of desert nomads who are rabidly devout Muslims—disguise him, and send him, pretending to be drunk, to Richard's tent. The king's guards are lax, but one of the gifts that Saladin has sent the king, a mute Nubian slave, is extremely loyal to him. As the assassin raises his poniard to strike the king, the slave dashes him to the ground. In the scuffle, the Nubian receives an arm wound from the dagger. Richard knows that the knife's blade has probably been poisoned, and he sucks the slave's wound to save him from the poison's effects. The grateful slave writes a note promising that if Richard will have all the leaders pass in review, he, the slave, can identify the one who stole the royal flag. The slave is, in reality, Kenneth in disguise. After curing Kenneth's dog, El Hakim had told the knight that the animal undoubtedly could identify his assailant. Richard agrees to the plan for seeking out the culprit, and as the

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suspected plotters pass by in review, the dog attacks Conrade of Montserrat. Conrade denies his guilt, but Richard declares that his innocence can be decided only by trial of arms. The king asks Saladin to choose a neutral ground for the match and courteously invites Saladin to be present at the combat to test Conrade's innocence or guilt. At the place of combat, where Richard and Saladin meet for the first time without their battle armour, Saladin is revealed to be El Hakim. Richard confesses that he had known the slave to be Kenneth, whom he also names as the king's champion. In the fight, Conrade is seriously wounded and is hastily carried away by the Grand Master of the Knights Templars, who fears that Conrade will reveal the whole plot against the king. Richard then reveals to the Queen and Lady Edith that Kenneth is really David, the Earl of Huntingdon and prince royal of Scotland. The king has learned his true identity from one of Kenneth's retainers. The noble knight, having vowed not to reveal himself until the Crusaders have taken the Holy City, has refused to break his oath even to save his life. The king promises to give Kenneth Edith's hand in marriage, although their betrothal belies Theodorick's earlier prophecy that Edith would marry Saladin. Abashed, the old hermit confesses that he interpreted the signs incorrectly. His vision had been that a kinswoman of the king would marry Richard's enemy in a Christian marriage. Theodorick had thought his vision meant that Saladin would be converted and marry Edith. The true prophecy was that the king's kinswoman would marry Kenneth, a Scot and thus an enemy of the English king; being Christians, they would have a Christian wedding.

At a noontime repast provided by Saladin in honour of his friends, Saladin kills the Grand Master of the Knights Templars because he has learned that the Grand Master, while bending over Conrade to hear his confession, stabbed Conrade with a dagger so that he could not confess the plot against Richard. Richard and Saladin both realize that the Crusade has failed and that the Christian forces can never hope to overcome the Saracens. The two men part as friends, each honouring the other's skill and valour. A short time later, Edith and Kenneth are married, and Kenneth receives the lucky talisman as a wedding gift from Saladin. Although the magic token later effects some cures in Europe, it never again has the power it had in the hands of the famous infidel.

Check Your Progress

1. Why were Scottish novels of the time considered vivid?
2. Who is the protagonist of the novel?

13.4 EVALUATION

A perfect novel is the one which caters to almost every category of audience. *The Talisman* is one true example as it contains adventure, love, faraway lands, mystery, medieval courage, and pure daring. The author uses as these ingredients together with his skill to bring the various subplots together in the final scenes. He also uses

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history to invent characters and situations and bend them with real people and monumental events. The outcome of the collaboration of fact and fiction for readers is to ignore any discrepancies and simply enjoy the well penned novel.

The novel is a pure entertainer, but it also operates on a more important level of expression. Sir Scott was committed to moral truth throughout his life which is why he chose the historical novel as the medium for his artistic expression because the genre comprises the facts of time as well as the truths of morality that undergo the test of time. Moreover, the author was a thoroughly eighteenth century man, concerned with the victory of reason over passion and with proper conduct in an orderly society. These are the elements that define *The Talisman*.

The author uses a particular historical period or an era to demonstrate the relationship between past and present, thereby highlighting attitudes, conflicts, and behaviour common to all human beings at all levels of history. In order to present this historical setting, Sir Scott introduces a character who incorporates the period or manner of life with which novel is concerned, thus avoiding unnecessary detail. In the novel, King Richard represents the chivalric code and way of life as it was known in England during the Middle Ages. The king also represents the excess pride and brash that can infect anyone, which shows that certain attitudes, weakness, and behaviour patterns are universal to mankind. The author's approach to history relies less on facts than on general historical content. He realised that a reader required more than facts and that reality must be altered and improved to correspond with the desire for unexpected developments.

The novel has a purpose to reveal the immorality of the chivalric code and to determine if there is intrinsic value in it. King Richard symbolises chivalry, its ceremony and its power over individuals. This power has become tainted however, as evidenced by Richard's haste and prideful acts; he represents the extremism that blocks clear rational thought. The presence of certain evil force like the grand master and the marquis of Montserrat further shows the degenerate state of the chivalric order.

Saladin, one of such grey character is presented for comparison. He represents the rationality, fidelity, and compassion that are missing in the Crusaders' camp. Saladin does not symbolise a code, but rather than the honour that evolves from the organic growth of right conduct nourished by the use of reason and common sense. The character who experiences the influences of both forces and must choose between them is Sir Kenneth, who occupies the middle ground. Already schooled in the chivalric code and displaying the narrow vision that brings with it, Kenneth meets Saladin, disguised as Sheerkohf, in a duel and emerges victorious in might but not in honour. Later, Kenneth doubts the Saracen's sincerity in offering peace between them. When Saladin convinces him of the earnestness of his pledge, the 'confidence of the Muslim' makes Kenneth 'ashamed of his own doubts.' Thereafter, Saladin's wisdom, rationality, and sense of honour affect Kenneth's development.

The impact of Saladin's games on Sir Kenneth succeeds largely through the Saracen's numerous disguises. It is the author's purpose to show that reason,

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judgement and moral conduct must grow organically from within the individual rather than be imposed by external forces or rituals. Sir Scott describes this truth in disguising Saladin as El Hakim, the wise Muslim healer. In this role, Saladin appears as a more common individual, like Kenneth, and one who has objectively witnessed the course of events leading to a young Knight's conviction and impending execution. The Saracen's wise and compassionate intervention enables him to convince Kenneth later that it is more practical to stay alive and redeem himself and his reputation by revealing the real culprit to King Richard and to the entire camp.

King Richard seems to learn the lessons of wisdom and self-control, and the victorious Sir Kenneth enjoys his rewards: the announcement of his real identity and supremacy and the hand of Lady Edith Plantagenet in marriage. The positive vibe of Saladin's character becomes clear as he is identified by all concerned with his various disguises and his valuable deeds, his impact is obvious in Kenneth's potential as a great leader, for the young knight has matured largely because of Saladin's influence. This ironic turn reassures Sir Scott's belief that human beings, regardless of origin, share a common nature throughout history and that reason and order in society, by exposing the imprudence of outdated codes such as chivalry, transcend the boundaries of race, creed, nationality, and time.

13.5 MAJOR CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL

Let us now discuss some of the important characters in the novel.

Sir Kenneth

Sir Kenneth, Knight of the Couchant Leopard, who is really David, Earl of Huntingdon and the prince royal of Scotland. He has taken a vow not to reveal his true identity until the Holy City is taken in the crusade. He will not break this oath, even to save his own life. Disguised as a Nubian slave, he is severely wounded by a poisoned knife while saving Richard's life. Richard sucks the poisoned wound and saves him. He is in love with Lady Edith Plantagenet, the king's kinswoman, but they cannot marry because he is a poor Scotsman and she is of royal blood. When Kenneth's true identity becomes known, they do marry.

The Sultan Saladin, alias Sheerkohf or Ilderim (an Emir) or El Hakim**:**

El Hakim, the physician sent by Saladin to heal Richard. He makes a potion with a talisman he carries, and the potion cures Richard. El Hakim is really Saladin in disguise. He gives the talisman to Kenneth and Lady Edith as a wedding present

Richard the Lion- Heart

Richard the Lion-Heart, is the English king who leads the Third Crusade to the Holy Land. He is proud and egotistical; the other leaders in the crusade resent him and also his methods. Ill from a fever, he is healed by a Muslim physician sent to him by Saladin, the leader of the Muslims in the Holy War. An attempt is made on

Richard's life, but a slave saves him. Richard finally realises that the crusade is a failure.

Other characters featured in the story are

- Lady Edith Plantagenet, his kinswoman
- Blondel, his minstrel
- Queen Berengaria, his wife
- Lady Calista of Montgaillard, her attendant (of Montfaucon in some editions)
- Necbatanus and Guenevra, her dwarves
- Sir Thomas de Vaux of Gisland
- The Archbishop of Tyre
- Giles Amaury, Grand Master of the Templars
- Conrade, Marquis of Monserrat
- Leopold, Archduke of Austria
- Philip II, King of France
- Earl Wallenrode, a Hungarian warrior
- A marabout or dervis

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13.6 PLACES DISCUSSED IN THE NOVEL

Some of the places discussed in the novel are as follows:

Diamond of the Desert

It refers to a natural fountain amid solitary groups of palm trees and a bit of verdure, located in the region of the Dead Sea. At this oasis, Kenneth of the Couching Leopard and the Saracen Sheerkohf, the Lion of the Mountain, refresh themselves after confronting each other in an inconclusive duel in the desert that gives them a mutual respect for each other. Sir Kenneth is supposedly a poor Scottish knight, who as a mere adventurer has joined the crusaders in Palestine. Emir Sheerkohf (called Ilderim by the hermit of Engaddi) is supposedly a prince descended from the Seljook family of Kurdistan, the same family that produced the Saracen ruler Saladin. However, in this novel, several characters are not what they initially represent themselves to be. In the final two chapters, the Diamond of the Desert becomes the centre of Saladin's encampment.

Cave of Theodorick of Engaddi

It is the home of the hermit Theodorick, which is hidden among sharp eminences in a range of steep and barren hills near the Dead Sea. Theodorick (called Hamako by Sheerkohf) is a religious recluse who dresses in goatskins. In chapter 18, he reveals his true identity—Alberick Mortemar, of royal blood. He does constant

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penance for having corrupted a nun and causing her suicide. As the Scottish knight and Saracen spend a night in Theodorick's cave, Theodorick leads Sir Kenneth through a secret door and up a staircase into a magnificent chapel whileSheerkohf sleeps.

Chapel of the Convent of Engaddi

It is a church hewn from solid rock to which Theodorick takes Sir Kenneth. The structure features six columns and their groined roofs, revealing the work of the ablest architects of the day. Brilliantly lit by silver lamps hanging from silver chains, the chapel is redolent with the scent of the richest perfumes. At its upper and eastern end stands an altar before a gold curtain of Persian silk. The curtain is mysteriously drawn aside to reveal a reliquary of silver and ebony. It is opened and displays a large piece of wood emblazoned with the words "Vera Crux" (true cross). Sir Kenneth hears a choir of female voices singing "Gloria Patri" and the sound of a small silver bell, then sees four beautiful boys serving as acolytes, followed by six Carmelite nuns and six apparent novices. As the procession moves three times around the chapel, one of the novices twice drops rosebuds at the feet of the kneeling Kenneth. The nun is, in truth, Lady Edith Plantagenet, kinswoman of King Richard I of England and Sir Kenneth's courtly lover. She, along with Queen Berengaria, has come to the chapel on a pilgrimage on behalf of the king's health.

Crusader camp

It is a huge tent city in the wilderness, housing the massed armies of the Christian knights—the English, French, Austrians, and others. Due to constant dissension among the European princes, the Crusade is collapsing, and England's king, Richard coeur de lion, the effective commander in chief of the crusaders, is confined to his pavilion, ill with a potentially fatal fever "peculiar to Asia." Saladin sends a physician, Adonbec el Hakim, to minister to his noble adversary. Hakim administers an apparently magical elixir—the talisman of the title—which cures the King.

Saladin's camp

It was Saracen army encampment at the once lonely site, the Diamond of the Desert. The large pavilions are vividly coloured and bear gilded ornaments and embroidered silken flags. Here, more identities are revealed. Emir Sheerkohf and Adonbec el Hakim, it seems, were but disguises for Saladin himself, King of Egypt and Syria (the Saracens were originally nomadic tribesmen of Syria and nearby regions). Sir Kenneth, earlier disgraced and forced for a time to disguise himself as a Nubian slave, reclaims his honour by vanquishing King Richard's archenemy, Conrade, Marquis of Montserrat. King Richard then announces that Kenneth is actually David Earl of Huntingdon, Prince Royal of Scotland. Thus, he is of high birth and may marry the Lady Edith. Somehow, these twists of plot seem more plausible in twelfth century Palestine than they might in a less exotic setting.

13.7 *THE TALISMAN*: SORTING FACT FROM FICTION

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The Talisman is one of those novels which has a mixture of facts and fiction. It can be said that majority of the incidents introduced in the below tale are fictions and reality is only retained in the characters of the piece. Hence, in order to understand this factual fictional art-form, we will understand *The Talisman* chapter by chapter in chronological order.

Chapter 1-3

In the first three chapters, we meet Sir Kenneth, a Muslim warrior, and the knight who are the main characters amongst the others. All these characters are purely fictional characters. Sir Walter Scott was from Scotland and that's the reason why there is a glimpse of Scottish culture in *The Talisman*. In these chapters, culture and religion are contrasted as these characters interact. Specific historical events are not really depicted here.

Chapter 4-5

Sir Scott takes Kenneth through an elaborate ceremony, wrapped in spiritualism, guided by the Christian ascetic. Few references to controversies of the age - Christian recovery of the "True Cross" taken from western Christians at the Battle of Hattin a few years before the Third Crusade.

Chapter 6-8

The focus now shifts to the camp of Sir Richard the Lionheart where he expresses frustration with the disputable groups. This was a persistent problem from the time Richard arrived in the Middle East until he left. Abandonment and difficulties imposing discipline because allegiances were owed to different lords, also plagued Richard. So these aspects of Sir Richard's camp are also historically based. The shady character in *The Talisman*, Conrad of Monferrat is also depicted as present in this camp. Conrad was with Richard's forces only for a brief time between Richard's arrival at Acre, and the city's surrender, the same time Philip was with Richard. After Philip left, Conrad left, and at one point actually negotiated with Saladin to set an alliance against Richard. So in a different way, Conrad was a villain to the historical Richard's efforts as well.

Another fictional character is Sir Thomas of Gisland. He clashes with Kenneth over a Muslim physician that Sir Kenneth has brought to the camp. The idea of a competent Muslim physician in the Christian camp is completely possible, as eastern Mediterranean medicine was certainly more advanced than western European medicine at this time. And religion was not a bar for practicing medicine, one of Saladin's physicians was a Jew.

Chapter 9-11

This is that part of the story where Conrad schemes with Templar Knights against Richard, and seems more interested in preserving his position than in the success of

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the Christian mission. The author presents him as scheming to divide Christian forces. However, Christian forces were divided without the help from Conrad. In the novel, Conrad convinces Leopold to place his banner next to Richard's without any help from Conrad.

Chapters 12-14

Now we move in to the heart of the story, the battle over banners. The consequences of the banner incident didn't occur until a few years later in Europe, as detailed earlier. So the entire banner story like guarding it, losing it is fictional.

At this point in the story, the author introduces Berengeria, Sir Richard's wife, the Queen of England. Berengeria is a mysterious figure in history, the only Queen of England never to set foot in the country. She is from Basque royal family, married to Sir Richard to place allies at the southern area of Richard's holdings in France where rebellions seem to be chronic. King Richard marries Berengeria in Cyprus, on the way to the Middle East, but seems to grow tired of her. This bitter, unsettled Berengeria seems to be a fiction of the author, not consistent with the limited records available concerning Berengeria.

Chapters 15-19

The events in this part of the book are not based on history. In a curious twisting of history, Conrad schemes to assassinate Richard. The real Conrad is assassinated by the original "assassins", and Richard is suspected of hiring some of them. There are reports that Philip feared Richard had sent some assassins to France to kill him.

Sir Scott highly admired Saladin and was respected during his period by westerners as heroic Muslim. When fighting the armies of the Third Crusade, Saladin called for a Holy war, to defeat and expel western Christians from the area. In such a situation, no Muslim ruler can agree to a peace treaty. There can be only truces on the way to complete victory. The historical Saladin would have held that firmly in mind.

Chapters 20-23

King Richard receives a message from England describing a conflict between Richard's brothers Geoffrey and John, with the 'High Justiciary Long-camp' and 'oppressions by nobles against the peasantry'. The message is loud and clear that these problems may be exploited by France and Scotland. There is no doubt that Richard received a set of message from home, warning him of risks to his position while he was fighting for Christendom in the Middle East.

A Nubian slave foils an assassination attempt on Richard. The slave is wounded by a poison dagger; Richard is willing to suck poison from the wounds when his guards won't. The Nubian slave ends up giving a note to Richard, a note from Saladin in French. Richard figures the slave cannot speak English. Historically, neither could Richard; Richard grew up in France and in truth was more French than English.

We flash back to find out the Nubian slave is Kenneth in disguise. This moves the story forward, the fictional story about Richard the Lionheart's stolen banner.

Chapters 24-26

The story of the banner continues, involving Conrad as the culprit. The controversy evolves in to a challenge of combat, with Saladin deciding the neutral ground for the combat. In these chapters, we have Lady Edith refusing to marry Saladin, very much along the lines of Richard's sister Joan refusing to marry Al-Adil, though in a completely different tone and context.

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In one of the most famous scenes of *The Talisman*, Richard and Saladin meet and demonstrate a symbolic representation of their power. Richard slices a bar of iron with his sword; Saladin neatly slices a cushion. The problem with the scene is that Richard and Saladin never met face to face. Richard asked Saladin to meet with him for peace negotiations when he first arrived, but Saladin insisted that kings do not meet while at war. After the truce was signed, Richard would not come to Jerusalem because he had not captured the city. Also, Scott refers to the 'avarice of the Venetians.' The Italian merchant cities of Venice, Pisa, and Genoa, rivals in commerce, were known for being more committed to mercenary concerns than religious devotion. They traded with Muslims as well as Christians.

Chapters 27-28

This part of the novel shows Leopold of Austria and Philip of France leaving the camp. So the author does have them depart before the resolution of the story, as they do in history. However, in *The Talisman*, the departure happens from a place further south, and further along in the conflict.

Scott ties up the loose ends of his fictional plot line involving a combat between Sir Kenneth and Conrad. Saladin was concerned with the Muslim tradition of hospitality; once hospitality is offered to a guest, even a prisoner of battle, the guest can consider himself safe from harm. Saladin had no problem with such a guarantee for the ill-fated King Guy. But Saladin had a long list of grievances with Reynald, and wanted no limits placed on how he would deal with Reynald. He ended up beheading Reynald. In *The Talisman*, the goblet is first offered to Kenneth, who passes it to Leopold, who then passes it to the Master of the Templars, depicted as a conniving villain. Scott has Saladin make his famous disclaimer, and then behead the Master of the Templars for treachery Saladin observes earlier in the story. So Scott has borrowed some history and transplanted it into the climax of his story.

Check Your Progress

3. How is *The Talisman* an example of a perfect novel?
4. What is the diamond in the desert?
5. Who was Richard the Lionheart?

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13.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. An important factor in the vividness of the Scottish novels was the strong oral tradition to which Sir Walter Scott had access from his early childhood.
2. The protagonist of the novel is Sir Kenneth, the Knight of the Couchant Leopard, one of the knights who follows King Richard the Lion-Hearted to the Holy Land during the Third Crusade.
3. A perfect novel is the one which caters to almost every category of audience. *The Talisman* is one true example as it contains adventure, love, faraway lands, mystery, medieval courage, and pure daring.
4. 'Diamond in desert' refers to a natural fountain amid solitary groups of palm trees and a bit of verdure, located in the region of the Dead Sea.
5. Richard the Lionheart, is the English king who leads the Third Crusade to the Holy Land.

13.9 SUMMARY

- Sir Walter Scott, as one of his country's earliest prominent writers, helped established Scotland's place in the literary world.
- In many ways, Scott was at the forefront of the romantic, larger-than-life style that pervaded the late 19th century.
- An important factor in the vividness of the Scottish novels was the strong oral tradition to which Sir Walter Scott had access from his early childhood.
- Scott began writing almost accidentally, starting with a ballad collection. He next tried a prose romance, dropping it to edit new texts of major writers. Yet he continued with narrative poems, especially *Marmion; A tale of Flodden Field* (1808), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), *Rokeby* (1813), and *The Lord of the Isles* (1815).
- In the novel, during a truce between the Christian armies taking part in the third Crusade, and the infidel forces under Sultan Saladin, Sir Kenneth, on his way to Syria, encountered a Saracen Emir, whom he unhorsed, and they then rode together, discoursing on love and necromancy, towards the cave of the hermit Theodoric of Engaddi.
- Sir Kenneth, the Knight of the Couchant Leopard, is one of the knights who follows King Richard the Lion-Hearted to the Holy Land during the Third Crusade.
- Richard and Saladin both realize that the Crusade has failed and that the Christian forces can never hope to overcome the Saracens. The two men part as friends, each honouring the other's skill and valour.

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- The novel is a pure entertainer, but it also operates on a more important level of expression.
- The impact of Saladin's games on Sir Kenneth succeeds largely through the Saracen's numerous disguises.
- It is the author's purpose to show that reason, judgement and moral conduct must grow organically from within the individual rather than be imposed by external forces or rituals.
- Richard the Lion-Heart, is the English king who leads the Third Crusade to the Holy Land. He is proud and egotistical; the other leaders in the crusade resent him and also his methods.
- *The Talisman* is one of those novels which has a mixture of facts and fiction. It can be said that majority of the incidents introduced in the below tale are fictions and reality is only retained in the characters of the piece.

13.10 KEY WORDS

- **Oral Tradition:** It is a form of human communication wherein knowledge, art, ideas and cultural material is received, preserved and transmitted orally from one generation to another.
- **Crusade:** It refers to a series of medieval military expeditions made by Europeans to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries.
- **Hermit:** It refers to a person living in solitude as a religious discipline.
- **Crusaders:** It refers to a fighter in the medieval Crusades.

13.11 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the life and works of Walter Scott.
2. Discuss three major characters in the novel *The Talisman*.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Comment on the title of the novel *The Talisman.*
2. Summarize the novel *The Talisman.*

13.12 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 14 JANE AUSTEN: *EMMA*

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Structure

14.0 INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen was a 19th century novelist whose novels depicted the life of the landed gentry in England. The daughter of a clergyman, Austen was born in 1775 in a village called Stevenson. Austen wrote several novels during her lifetime including *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey*. The unit will begin with a discussion on the life of Jane Austen as a novelist, satirist and moralist. It will go on to discuss the novel *Emma*.

Emma was written by Jane Austen in 1815. This novel depicts a young 19th century girl who is completely different from the 'typical' type of women of that era. Emma belongs to the upper strata of society and this factor gives her the power to act as a God in the life of her innocent friend Harriet Smith. The unit critically analyses the various themes and characters of the novel *Emma*.

14.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Assess the life of Jane Austen
- Describe Jane Austen as a novelist
- Analyse Jane Austen as a satirist and moralist
- Analyse Emma as a character in the novel
- Discuss the themes of the novel *Emma*

14.2 JANE AUSTEN: *LIFE AND WORKS*

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Jane Austen was the greatest of all novelists of manners who raised the genre of novel to a new level of art. She produced some of the greatest novels in history with her quietly penetrating vision of man, ironic awareness of the claims of personal morality and those of social and economic propriety, her polished and controlled wit and her steady moral apprehension of the nature of human relationships.

Jane Austen was born on 16 December 1775 at the church house in Hampshire. She was the seventh child of George Austen and Cassandra. She was educated mainly at home. She was extremely close to her elder sister, Cassandra. Since her childhood, Jane was encouraged to write and pen down her ideas. She read extensively using her father's library and got material from there in order to write short satirical sketches when she was a child.

She had begun writing at an early age though only for her family circle. Her life amid English country provided her the opportunity to learn by heart the world of social pretentions and ambition, of balls and visits, and speculations about marrying. She found the raw materials for her novels in her daily routine, visits, shopping, sewing, gossip and other trivial matters. The world, which her books present to us, is essentially the 18th century world in its habits, taste and appearances.

Sometime around Jane's pre-adolescence phase, she and Cassandra were sent to boarding school so that they could gain more concrete and formal knowledge. Unfortunately, both Jane and Cassandra fell victim to typhus, and it seemed impossible for Jane to recuperate back at that time. Post recovery, the sisters spent some more time attending school, but their education was unexpectedly terminated as the family underwent severe financial crisis. Due to this, the sisters returned home and resided with their family.

She did not gain her due as a writer during her own time. But Austen's tongue-in-cheek take on the amorous lives of the landed gentry found its due popularity only after 1869. Her stature as a writer of substance evolved more prominently in the twentieth century. Her popular novels like *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, *Persuasion*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park* hold great significance as they are literary classics, bringing about a seamless blending of romance and realism of the Victorian Age. The leading characters of her novels were women of fine upbringing and contemporary views. Since her novels did not conform to the Victorian and Romantic expectations that strong emotions need to be authenticated by a superfluous display of colour and sound in the writings, nineteenth century audiences and critics usually preferred the works of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens. Although her novels were re-published in England in the 1830s and remained continual sellers, they were not able to gain the privilege of becoming bestsellers.

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Jane Austen was forever attracted towards stories. Her fascination for them initiated her to write in notebooks in the early stages of her writing career. During the 1790s, when Jane was in her adolescence, she composed her novel *Love and Freindship*. It was a collection of a parody of amorous letters which were written with the intention to sketch the genre of romantic fiction. This work set the tone for her later writing. It clearly displayed Jane Austen's dislike for an excessive romantic attitude or sensibility. The year after completion of *Love and Freindship*, Jane wrote *The History of England*. It was another parody which ridiculed the historical writing. This thirty-four page work also contained illustrations sketched by her sister Cassandra. These notebooks of Jane Austen, containing her short compositions, poems, novels and dramas are collectively called *Jane's Juvenilia*.

Jane's youth was spent trying to help maintain her family. She also played the piano and like a good Christian, was a regular at Church. She socialized with the people in her neighbourhood as well. She was an accomplished dancer and regularly read aloud to her family during the evening hours. In the meantime, she kept honing her writing skills and developing her distinctive style. In her youth, she wrote Lady Susan, a more accomplished work than her previous attempts. This was also an epistolary story which dealt with the life of a woman who knew how to manipulate situations to suit her purposes by using her charm, intelligence and sexuality. She also started composing Elinor and Marianne, another epistolary effort, which was later published as one of her famous masterpieces, *Sense and Sensibility*.

Jane Austen's first three novels fetched her both commercial as well as critical success, which she was able to experience in her lifetime. But it was only after her demise that her brother revealed to the world that his sister was an author of high repute and immense talent by publishing her later works.

Jane Austen is definitely one of the most popular authors of our times, her novels genuinely liked and widely read by all. She has been a darling of both critics and readers alike.

Jane Austen did for the English novel precisely what the Lake poets did for English poetry. One of the ways in which Jane Austen is different from other eighteenth century novelists is that she does not share their standard picaresque form and comic epic in prose. On the contrary, she isolated herself from the elements of mock-heroic and picaresque, which were the hallmarks of the eighteenth century novel. The primacy of emotion, preference for the marriage of love, urges for adventure, attraction for the uncommon, and above all, the superiority of sensibility in the novels of Jane Austen are definitely romantic traits. All of Austen's major novels are dominated by the female protagonists and are primarily concerned with the twin themes of love and marriage.

Jane Austen stays on the middle ground between the extremes of sense and sensibility, which constitutes one of the shades on the spectrum of Romanticism. Her concern with the inner life of her characters rather than their external interests

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is what stands out conspicuously in her novels. Beneath the outward pursuit of marriage, security and status, the driving force in her female protagonists is always the inner, human urge for a delicate life of sense and emotion as well as peace and harmony.

In the year 2002, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) conducted a poll where she was honoured with the seventieth position on a list of '100 most famous Britons of all time'. Scholars of the 1920s have contributed immensely towards 'rediscovering' Austen as a great literary figure and re-establishing her popularity. The fans of Jane Austen prefer to call themselves 'The Janeites'. The widespread popularity of her writing in the modern period is established from the fact that her work has been adapted into films and TV programmes. In the year 2007, author David Lassman submitted various manuscripts of Jane Austen with very few modifications under a disguised name to some publishing houses. He was shocked to discover that all the manuscripts were rejected. He wrote this experience in one of his articles called 'Rejecting Jane'. This article was a tribute to the author who was an unbeatable champion of wit and humour.

In July 1809, the women of the Austen house moved back to Hampshire countryside when their brother Edward offered them a permanent home in his Chawton Estate. The place provided a perfect setting for Jane Austen to write. She stayed in this house for seven and a half years and these years turned out to be a phase of intense literary activity for her. Between 1811 and 1813, she revised *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* and published them. *Mansfield Park* was published in 1814 and *Emma* in 1816 and she completed *Persuasion* (which was published together with *Northanger Abbey* in 1818, the year after her death). All her novels were said to be written 'By a Lady'.

Fig. 14.1 *Jane Austen*

She died on 18 July 1817 when she was 41 years old. She is buried in Winchester Cathedral.

Let us list out some of the popular novels by Jane Austen:

- *Sense and Sensibility:* Published in 1811, it was Austen's first published novel. The novel is about Elinor and Marianne, two daughters of Mr Dashwood who encounter the sense and sensibility of life and love through the course of the novel.
- *Pride and Prejudice* (1813): The novel was first published in 1813. The story follows the protagonist Elizabeth Bennet as she deals with issues of etiquettes and marriage in the society of the 19th century England.
- *Mansfield Park* (1814): *Mansfield Park* was written when Austen was at Chawton Cottage.
- *Northanger Abbey* (1818, posthumous): At first, the novel was called *Susan*. It was written in 1798–99. Austen revised it in 1803 and sold it to a London bookseller for £10. The publisher decided not to publish the novel. In 1817, the bookseller sold it back to Henry Austen, Jane Austen's brother for £10 not knowing the popularity of the author at that time. The novel was further revised and was published in 1818.
- *Persuasion* (1818, posthumous): *Persuasion* is another novel by Jane Austen that was published after her death.

Short fiction written by Jane Austen:

- *Lady Susan* (1794, 1805)

Unfinished fiction written by Jane Austen:

- *The Watsons* (1804)
- *Sanditon* (1817)

Other works by Jane Austen:

- *Sir Charles Grandison* (adapted play) (1793, 1800)
- *Plan of a Novel* (1815)
- *Poems* (1796–1817)
- *Prayers* (1796–1817)
- *Letters* (1796–1817)

Juvenilia — Volume the First (1787–1793)

- *Frederic & Elfrida*
- *Jack & Alice*
- *Edgar & Emma*

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- *Henry and Eliza*
- *The Adventures of Mr. Harley*
- *Sir William Mountague*
- *Memoirs of Mr. Clifford*
- *The Beautifull Cassandra*
- *Amelia Webster*
- *The Visit*
- *The Mystery*
- *The Three Sisters*
- *A beautiful description*
- *The generous Curate*
- *Ode to Pity*

Juvenilia — Volume the Second (1787–1793)

- *Love and Freindship*
- *Lesley Castle*
- *The History of England*
- *A Collection of Letters*
- *The Female Philosopher*
- *The First Act of a Comedy*
- *A Letter from a Young Lady*
- *A Tour through Wales*
- *A Tale*
- *Juvenilia — Volume the Third* (1787–1793)
- *Evelyn*
- *Catharine, or the Bower*

Check Your Progress

1. What events provided Austen the opportunity to learn the world of social pretentions and ambition?
2. Name one novel that was published after Austen's death.

14.3 JANE AUSTEN AS A NOVELIST

Jane Austen was one of the supreme artists in fiction. She was a highly sophisticated artist. In the opinion of the critic, W. L. Cross, 'She is one of the sincerest examples

of our literature of art for art's sake.' Her experience was meagre and insignificant, but from it sprang an art finished in every detail, filled with life, and meaning. She possessed the magic touch and a talent for miniature painting. No doubt her range was limited, but her touch was firm and true. She used a 'little bit two inches wide of ivory' and she worked on it 'with no fine a brush as produces little effect after much labour'.

Jane Austen was a very careful artist. She wrote her novels with care, constantly revising them. There was nothing in her novels that did not have a clearly defined reason, and did not contribute to the plot, the drama of feelings of the moral structure. She knew precisely what she wanted to do, and she did it in the way that suited best.

Her Limited Range

The range of Jane Austen's novels was limited. She drew all her material from her own experience. She never went outside her experience, with the result that all her scenes belonged to South England where she had spent a considerable period of her life. Austen exploited with unrivalled expertness the potentialities of a seemingly narrow mode of existence. From the outset she limited her view of the world that she knew and the influences that she saw at work.

Jane Austen defined her own boundaries and never stepped beyond them. These limitations were self-imposed and she always remained within the range of her imaginative inspiration and personal experience. The characters of her novel are neither of very high nor of very low estate, and they have no great adventures. A picnic, a dance, amateur theatricals, or at the most an elopement are some outstanding events. The stories and events are told from a woman's point of view and deals only with such persons and events that naturally come within the range of her novels. Lord David Cecil, a British biographer and historian remarks:

> Jane Austen obeys the rule of all imagination composition; that she stays within the range of her imaginative inspiration. A work of art is born of the union of the artist's experience and imagination. It is his first obligation, therefore, to choose themes within the range of this experience. Now Jane Austen's imaginative range was in some respect a very limited one. It was, in the first place, condoned to human begins in their personal relations. Man in relation to god, to politics, to abstract ideas, passed her by. It was only when she saw him with his family and his neighbours that her creative impulse began to stir to activity.

Jane Austen was finely alive to her limitations 'and out of these unpromising materials, Jane Austen composed novels that came near to artistic perfection. No other writer of fiction has ever achieved such great results by such insignificant means; none other has, upon material so severely limited, expanded such beauty, imaginity and precision of workmanship.'

Lack of Passion

Jane Austen's novels do not represent stormy passions and high tragedy of emotional life. She was primarily concerned with the comedy of domestic life. But with her

very mental makeup she was incapable of writing a tragedy or romance. Jane Austen was absolutely incapable of writing adventurous tales dealing with romantic reveries and death scenes.

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Austen chose a limited background for her novels. Her novels are recognized as 'domestic' or 'the tea-table' novels and the reader seeking anything like high romance in her works would be disappointed. There is hardly any feeling for external nature in her stories and there is little passion in her pictures of life. Whatever language of emotion used, is forced and conventional. The kind of life that she has depicted is the one which she had put in the mouth of Mr Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*: 'For what do we live but to make sport for our neighbours and to laugh at them in our turn?'

Her Realism

Jane Austen was a supreme realist. Her stories are all drawn from the life that she knew. *Emma* tells us of a delightful girl who is as she was in the years when Napoleon was the emperor. The ordinary commonplace incidents and the day-to-day experience formed the warp and woof of her novels. Sir Walter Scott wrote in his diary that the talent of Jane Austen as a realist was the 'most wonderful' he had ever met with. 'That young lady had a talent for describing involvements, feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I have ever met with.'

Jane Austen described the English country scene with skill and fidelity. She gives a vivid and glowing picture of the social manners and customs of the eighteenth century. She created numerous realistic characters. Jane Austen is nearer to life than any of the earlier novelists. Speaking of Jane Austen's age, the critic G. E. Milton wrote: 'Jane Austen was the first to draw exactly what she saw around her in a humdrum country life, and to discard all incidents, all adventures, all grotesque types, for perfect simplicity.'

Plot Construction

Austen's great skill lies in plot-construction. Her skilfully constructed plots are really the highest objects of artistic perfection. Her novels have an exactness of structure and symmetry of form. All the incidents that are introduced have their particular meanings.

Jane Austen's plots are not simple but compound. They do not compromise barely the story of the hero and the heroine. In *Pride and Prejudice,* for instance, there are several pairs of lovers and their stories form the component parts of the plot. In the novels of Jane Austen, the parts are so skilfully fused together as to form one compact whole.

In the plots of Jane Austen action is more or less eliminated. Action in her novels consists in little visits, morning calls, weddings, shopping expeditions, or the quizzing of new arrivals. These small actions and incidents go to make up the

plots of Jane Austen's novels. Her novels are not novels of action, but of conversation. The place of action is taken up by conversation and scene after scene is built up by the power of conversations. In *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance, dialogues form the bulk of the novel.

Referring to the great skill of Jane Austen's plot-construction, W. L. Cross remarks in *The Development of the English Novel*: 'No novelist since Fielding has been master of structure. Fielding constructed the novel after the analogy of the ancient drama. *Pride and Prejudice* has not only the humour of Shakespearean comedy, but also its technique.'

Characterization

Jane Austen is a great creator of characters. She has created a picture-gallery filled with so many delightful characters. Her characters are not types but individuals. She portrays human characters with great precision and exactness. Her male characters are almost perfect. She creates living characters, both male and female, and draws them in their private aspects.

Jane Austen has an unerring eye for the surface of personality and records accurately the manners, charms and tricks of speech of her characters. Nothing escapes her notice. In this respect, she can be compared with her great successor Dickens, who is unique in drawing surface peculiarities. Dickens does not go below the surface while Jane Austen does. She penetrates to the psychological organism underlying speech and manner, and presents the external relation to the internal. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the scene wherein Darcy proposes to Elizabeth at Hunsford Personage, is a fine psychological study. Darcy if outwardly composed and taciturn, is driven within by a conflict between his love for Elizabeth and hatred for her stupid relations, which prevent him from marrying her.

Sir Walter Raleigh wrote of Jane Austin, 'She has a great sympathy for all her characters and their follies and foibles do not annoy her. Jane Austen is never angry with her characters. In *Pride and Prejudice* Mr Collins and Lady de Bourgh are figures of fun, monstrous puppets of silliness and snobbery, to be elaborated and laughed at.'

Austen as a Satirist and Moralist

Jane Austen is a satirist as well as moralist. Satire is an element in which Jane Austen lives but there is no trace of the savage indignation in her writings. Her attitude as a satirist is best expressed in the words of Elizabeth when she says: 'I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can.' It is evident that her satire was sympathetic. Walter Allen, literary critic and novelist rightly points out, 'Jane Austen was a moralist—an eighteenth-century moralist. In some respects, she was the last and finest flower of that century at its quintessential.'

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Dramatic Nature of Her Art

Jane Austen developed the dramatic method both in the presentation of her plots and characters. Instead of describing and analysing the characters, she makes them reveal themselves in their action and dialogues. The plot is also carried forward through a succession of short scenes in dialogues. Though keeping the right to comment, she relies more on dialogue and that is her main forte. The plot of *Pride and Prejudice* is dramatic. Baker points out that both the theme and the plot-structure of *Pride and Prejudice* are remarkably dramatic. He divides the novel into five acts of high comedy.

Her Humour

Jane Austen's attitude towards life, presented in her novels, is that of a humourist, 'I dearly love a laugh', says Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice,* and this statement equally applies to the novelist. She laughs at follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies. Folly is the chief source of laughter in the novels of Jane Austen and she creates comic characters who provoke nothing but laughter. Her comic characters are Mrs Bennet, Sir Walter Eliot, Mrs Norris, Mr Collins and Mr Woodhouse. She laughs at each one of them because of their foolishness and foolish actions. Irony is a conspicuous aspect of Jane Austen's humour. There is enough of verbal irony in her novels.

Style

Jane Austen rendered a great service to the English novel by developing a flexible, smooth-flowing prose style. She is sometimes a shade artificial. But at her best her prose moves nimbly and easily and enables her narrative to proceed onward without any obstruction. 'It does not rise to very great heights, being almost monotonous in its pedestrian sameness except when relieved by an occasional epigram or well-turned aphorism. It achieves its greatest triumphs in dialogue. It is not a prose of enthusiasm or exaltation. But it is wonderfully suited to dry satiric unfolding of the hopes and disappointments of the human heart.'

W. L. Cross aptly remarks, 'The style of Jane Austen cannot be separated from herself or her method. It is the natural easy flowing garment of her mind, delighting inconsistencies and infinite detail. It is so peculiarly her own that one cannot trace in it with any degree of certainty of the course of her reading.'

Jane Austen is undoubtedly the greatest woman novelist as Shakespeare is the greatest dramatist. Faithful observation, personal detachment, and fine sense of ironic comedy are among Jane Austen's chief characteristics as a writer. Austen's novels mark a big step forward in the development of English novel. Her range is limited but her touch is firm and true. Her stories may not be exciting and thrilling, but the picture of life that she presents has all the charm of vivid narration. Dialogues form a prominent feature of the narrative of Jane Austen. Her stories are dramatic in nature. Her characters are taken mostly from the aristocracy and upper middle

class of the English village and its vicinity. She created numerous realistic characters. She presents remarkable psychological studies of men and women, avoiding passion and prejudice. Her novels have a distinct moral purpose. She is the greatest English novelist because of her craftsmanship, purity and simplicity of her style and themes.

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Check Your Progress

3. What kind of action is seen in Jane Austen's novels?
4. Which scene in *Pride and Prejudice* is a fine psychological study?

14.4 *EMMA*: SUMMARY AND THEMES

Emma: Summary

Emma is the story of a girl who is clever as well as rich. She genuinely desires to change the lives of her social inferiors as well as her equals. Her overconfidence and her desire to change people's life make her go through some shocks, which later help her achieve a higher degree of self-knowledge. This self-realization helps her find her true love, Mr Knightley, who is a brother of her elder sister's husband. This section gives a short summary of the novel followed by a description of its themes and important characters.

The twenty year old protagonist is a resident of the village of Highbury. Although she is convinced that she herself will never marry, she imagines herself to be naturally endowed with the ability to conjure love matches. She is thrilled with the successful matchmaking between her governess and Mr Weston, a widower.

Emma takes up the responsibility to find a suitable match for Harriet Smith. The parentage of Harriet is not known. However, Emma believes that Harriet deserves to be a gentleman's wife and asks her friend to consider Mr Elton for marriage, who is a village vicar. Harriet is inclined towards Robert Martin, a well-to-do farmer, but Emma convinces Harriet to reject his marriage proposal. Due to continuous encouragement by Emma, Harriet starts nourishing feelings for Mr Elton. The situation becomes ironical when Emma fails to realize that Elton is inclined towards her and not Harriet. Emma feels shocked when she realizes that she is losing touch with the reality of life due to her obsession of matchmaking.

Mr Knightley, Emma's brother-in-law and her good friend, critically observes Emma's matchmaking efforts. He considers Mr Martin as a worthy match for Harriet. Mr Knightley and Emma quarrel with each other over the latter's meddling role in Harriet's matchmaking. Mr Knightley proves to be wise person in this quarrel.

During a conversation with Elton, Emma's implication that Harriet is his equal offends him and he leaves for the town of Bath and immediately marries a girl there. Emma tries to comfort her friend. Emma then speculates about Mr

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Weston's son, Frank Churchill, who is expected to visit Highbury. Frank is raised by his aunt and uncle in London and they have taken him as their heir as well. He has not visited his father for a long time.

Mr Knightley is suspicious towards Frank and the incident of Frank's rushing back to London just to have his haircut makes him more suspicious towards him. On the other hand, Emma finds Frank charming and feels that he is inclined towards her. She decides to discourage these charms but ends up flirting with the young man. Emma meets Jane Fairfax, another visitor to the Highbury. Jane is beautiful but Emma does not like her.

Mr Knightley defends Jane saying that she deserves empathy because she does not have an independent fortune and might have to leave home to work as a governess. According to Mrs Weston, Mr Knightley's defence is due to his romantic feelings towards Jane but Emma opposes this opinion. Everyone feels that Frank and Emma are inclined towards each other but Emma dismisses Frank as a prospective match for her and sees him as a suitor for Harriet.

At a village ball, Knightley offers to dance with Harriet because she was humiliated by Mr Elton and his new wife. This kindheartedness of Knightley helps him earn Emma's approval. The next day, Frank saves Harriet from Gypsy beggars. When Harriet shares with Emma that she is in love with a man who is above her social class, Emma thinks that she is talking about Frank. Knightley suspects that Frank and Jane are inclined towards each other and he tries to warn Emma. Emma feels amused by Knightley's implication and laughs at him. She again flirts with Frank and insults Jane's aunt, Miss Bates who is a kindhearted spinster. Knightley reprimands Emma for this action.

Everyone comes to know that Frank has lost his aunt. This event paves the path for the unfolding of the secret that Frank and Jane have been secretly engaged and he flirted with Emma in order to conceal his engagement with Jane. With his uncle's approval, Frank later marries Jane.

Emma feels worried about Harriet but comes to know that Harriet is in love with Knightley, not Frank. Harriet believes that Knightley also loves her. Emma feels sad with this revelation and her sadness on this revelation makes her realize that she is in love with Knightley. After this, Emma expects that Knightley would tell her that he loves Harriet but to her joy, Knightley declares his love for Emma. Robert Martin proposes Harriet and she accepts his offer. The novel ends with the marriage of Emma and Mr Knightley and that of Harriet and Mr Martin.

Emma: Themes

Her self-deception and haughtiness sometimes turns her into a comic figure. It is through her that the theme of self-deception is presented in the novel. In spite of this, she does not lose the sympathy of her readers. In the opening line, Austen explains: 'Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence;

and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.'

There are a number of traps for Emma's vanity and self-importance throughout the novel and she falls in each one of them. She decides to protect Harriet Smith, 'the natural daughter of somebody', and decides to find a suitable match for her. In this attempt, she goes to the extent of breaking off Harriet's incipient love affairs with Mr Martin, a worthy and suitable match for her. Emma feels that Mr Elton is a suitable match for Harriet but Mr Elton, a young and foolish young man, misunderstands Emma's behaviour and proposes to her.

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In her second attempt to marry off Harriet, Emma gets involved in a serious trouble. She tries to get Harriet interested in Frank Churchill. Harriet, misunderstanding Emma's elegant hints, thinks she is referring to Mr Knightley and falls in love with him. It is a shock for Emma when Harriet makes clear that she would not allow anyone to marry Mr Knightley but herself. The moral pattern is carefully woven and Emma's attempt to play God involves her in a variety of situations, which contribute to her self-knowledge in the end.

Emma wants Frank Churchill to marry Harriet but she is also attracted to him. There is an interesting tension between her admiration to his vitality and wit and her half-realized love for Mr Knightley 'one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse'. Mr Knightley is a wealthy landowner, around seventeen years older to Emma. He is generous, kind to his tenants, intolerant towards deceit and cruelty and does not have superficial gaiety like Frank Churchill.

While Emma is scheming for Frank and Harriet marriage, Mr Knightley feels that she herself is falling in love with Frank. The situation is enriched with ironies with the introduction of Jane Fairfax. Jane is a foil for Emma; she has no fortune but is equally talented and at music more talented than Emma. This fact perhaps arises her unconscious jealousy.

Emma amuses herself by hinting and speculating about Jane's relation with Mr Dixon and joking about it with Frank. It appears that Frank and Emma make fun of Jane. The fun is not wholly innocent on Emma's part; there is an element of jealousy in it if not spite. Further, Jane's lack of fortune means that if she does not marry soon, she will have to take up a position as a governess and the horrors and humiliation of that kind of work are made abundantly evident through Mrs Elton's insufferably patronizing offers to help her in getting a job. Emma therefore has no moral right to laugh either at Jane or at her garrulous aunt, a character on whom Emma vents a momentary irritation and Mr Knightley castigates Emma for this.

It emerges at last that the relation between Jane and Mr Dixon, which Emma has conjured up and about which she has joked so often with Frank, has no basis and Jane and Frank are secretly engaged. Emma suddenly realizes that she is and has been a dupe. At every point, Emma's wit and knowingness involves her in humiliation but Mr Knightley stands by her. The exploration of different kinds of selfishness as well as the sharply ironic character sketches of characters like Eltons

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and Miss Bates gives the novel real depths below the surface brilliance. The character of Emma's father, whose concern for other people is a way of implementing a profound selfishness, opens and closes the book. The novel symbolizes the ambiguities of selfishness, which is one of the themes of this novel. The moral pattern is spelled out more clearly in *Emma* than in *Pride and Prejudice*, but in other respects, it is a less sharply drawn novel, standing midway, with respect to subtlety and complexity between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*.

In the early 19th century, the status of women was defined in terms of their accomplishments that would make them a suitable 'property' to get married and acceptance of marriage proposal by a person of high social status. Every mother desired to marry off their daughters in wealthy families because they saw this as the shortest and surest way to climb the social ladder. The bride's family would choose a suitable match for her on the basis of family's reputation and their inheritance. It was the only area laid open by society for women to exercise their choice and freedom and feel the sense of empowerment on getting the right groom. The entire structure of the novel *Emma* is based on the theme of marriages.

There is a significant point raised in the novel. The ritual of marriage should be consummated between families of equal social status only then these are successful otherwise these become void. Mr Weston's marriage to Miss Churchill was not successful and suffered many hardships. On the other hand, his marriage to Mrs Weston, shown in the beginning of the novel, is quite successful as both the families stand at equal footing. Mrs Weston was a governess before marriage and was more than happy to be rescued from it. Emma fruitless attempts in consummating the marriage of otherwise incompatible Harriet and Mr Elton is another case. She compels Harriet to reject her feelings for Robert Martin who would have proved a suitable match for Harriet. Martin hails from the family of tradesmen so he would have been a suitable match for Harriet. Frank Churchill's engagement to Jane Fairfax is a relationship in question. The marriage of Emma with Mr Knightly is successful because they have a similar social status, compatibility and temperament.

During this period, the privileges given to women were shockingly limited. If she had the freedom to go out, it was not for work but for social visits, charity visits or music and art. The limitation of social space for women hampered their development of personality. There was little room to display their intellectual abilities. Their entire energies and capabilities were directed towards fulfillment of marital aims. The only active work they could do was getting the right kind of marriage proposal, preparing for the marriage and working towards successful consummation of it. Quiet shockingly, there were characters like Jane Fairfax, who saw marriage as a route to be women of fortune without undergoing the drudgery of working women. For example, Jane compared the work of governess to slave trade.

Another significant feature of the novel is the way in which it brings forth the idiosyncrasies of personal prejudices of the characters. Thus, the novel also deals

with the theme of prejudices of people. Emma guides Mr Elton in pursuing his love because she thinks that he is in love with Harriet. Meanwhile, Mr Elton misunderstands her concern and proposes to her. Emma and Mr Elton's personal prejudices blind them to real situation. Both are them were oblivious to each other's feelings and desires. Emma tries to build a relationship between Harriet and Frank but it takes a turn when Harriet develops desires for Mr Knightley. Frank's desire to use Emma as a screen for his real preference makes him believe that Emma is aware of the relationship between him and Jane. A detached narrator can see that the personal prejudices of characters create a lot of misunderstanding. It creates a lot of humour and a dramatic space for the interplay of irony.

Does that mean that interactions among the characters on various platforms of social propriety like the dancing balls, music and art circles etc. should be minimized or eliminated as they give rise to a lot of misunderstanding and confusion? According to Austen, not eliminations but restrain is the word. She says that the emphasis should be on clear communication and open expression among the interacting partners. Austen says that there should be certain codes of communications and verbal decency. The bantering of Emma is misleading because it is full of gregariousness and vanity. She hurts Miss Bates and hates Jane in an indiscreet fashion. Mr Elton has a flimsy, ostentatious and insincere style of praising people. Frank also tells people they want to hear. Mr Knightley proves right in being suspicious of Frank's integrity.

Check Your Progress

5. What does Emma genuinely desire with respect to her social inferiors?
6. Why does Emma compel Harriet to reject the marriage proposal of Robert Martin?

14.5 *EMMA*: CHARACTERS

The various important characters of the novel have been discussed in this section.

Emma

In the opening lines, she is described as 'handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition,' Emma 'had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.' However, the narrator also tells us that Emma possesses 'the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself.' Emma's obstinacy produces many conflicts in the novel.

In the novel, Emma makes three major mistakes. First, she tries to help Harriet marry a gentleman, when Harriet's social position commands that the farmer, who loves her, is best suited to her. Second, she flirts with Frank Churchill even

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though she does not have any intention to marry him and makes unfair comments about Jane Fairfax. Third, she claims that is she committed to staying single and does not realize her own feelings that she is in love with Mr Knightley and wants to marry him. These mistakes threaten Harriet's happiness, make Emma embarrassed and create problems in Emma's path to find her true love.

Although the omniscient narrator speaks in the third person yet many events are observed through Emma's point of view. This narrative strategy forces the readers to sympathize with Emma and make ironic judgment on her behaviour. It also makes Emma a multidimensional character.

Emma is compared implicitly with other women in the novel. This allows the readers to assess her character. There are a lot of similarities between Jane and Emma but the fact that Jane is not financial independent highlights Emma's privileged nature. Mrs. Elton is independent like Emma but former's crude behaviour and pride forces the readers to observe Emma's refined nature. Emma's sister, Isabella, is described as a stereotypical traditional woman who is tender, and entirely devoted and dependent on her family. The narrator seems to prefer Emma's independence to her sister's traditional mannerism.

Mr Knightley

In the novel, Mr Knightley is a model of good sense. Right from the beginning of the novel, we find him correcting the excesses and mistakes of people around him. He is honest, but knows where to temper his honesty with diplomacy and compassion. Readers find him a trustworthy person who can provide them the accurate assessment of the other characters' behaviour. He is compassionate and protective towards women. She is considerate towards Jane, Harriet, and Miss Bates and helps them as well.

Knightley's love for Emma is the only emotion, which he is not able to handle properly. He decides that Frank is not a good person even before meeting him. Gradually, the unfolding of the events reveals that he is jealous of his 'rival'. When Knightley notices that Emma is a bit inclined towards Frank, he acts impulsively and leaves for London. When he comes back, he declares his love for Emma in an uncontrollable manner. However, this fact does not make him a failure but humanizes his character.

Knightley is also compared implicitly with various male members of his community. His brother, Mr John Knightley is clear-sightedness but not kindhearted and tactful like him. Both Frank and Knightley are intelligent, observant, affectionate and vibrant; but Frank uses his intelligence to conceal his true emotions and please others, whereas Knightley uses his intelligence to correct the excesses and mistakes of people around him.

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Frank Churchill

Frank Churchill is known for his attractive personality. He uses Emma as a screen to hide his secret engagement with Jane. He flirts with Emma even though he does not love her. He says what people want to hear in order to please them.

Jane Fairfax

Jane is a foil for Emma. The fact that she is not financially independent highlights Emma's privileged nature. She has no fortune but is equally talented and at music, more talented than Emma. She sees marriage as a route to be a woman of fortune without undergoing the drudgery of a working woman. Her lack of fortune means that if she does not marry soon she will have to take up a position as a governess. She compares the work of governess to slave trade.

Harriet Smith

She is Emma's friend in the novel. Emma takes the responsibility to find a match for her. In the beginning of the novel, Harriet is believed to be an illegitimate child though her parentage is not known. It is only at the end of the novel, that we come to know that she is a daughter of a well-to-do tradesman. Harriet is easily led by others; for instance, she refuses to marry Robert Martin just because Emma feels that he is not a 'gentleman' and is beneath her in social status. She is a catalyst through which Emma's misguided matchmaking attempts are depicted in the novel. It is because of her attraction towards Mr. Knightley that makes Emma realize that she loves Mr. Knightley. At the end of the novel, Emma supports Harriet's desire to marry Mr. Martin.

Philip Elton

He is a good-looking young vicar. Emma feels that he is a suitable match for Harriet. However, the situation becomes ironical when Emma comes to know that he is inclined towards her and not Harriet. Emma's implied remark that Harriet is his equal offends him and he quickly rushes to Bath and marries another girl there.

Augusta Elton

She is Philip Elton's wife. She is a wealthy woman but is a dominant and ostentatious woman who always tries to seek people's attention. Emma does not approve of her behaviour and dislikes her. She patronizes Jane Fairfax in the novel.

Mrs. Anne Weston

Formerly known as Miss Taylor, she was Emma's governess for 16 years before she marries Mr. Weston due to Emma's matchmaking attempts. She admires and adores Emma and remains her confidante throughout the novel. She also acts as her surrogate mother.

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Mr. Weston

He marries Miss Taylor who was Emma's governess. He is Frank Churchill's father by his first marriage. In the novel, he is shown as a cheerful man who loves socializing.

Isabella

She is Emma's elder sister and John Knightley's wife. In the novel, she is shown as a traditional girl who spends most of the time in taking care of her house and her children.

John Knightley

He is George Knightley's younger brother and Isabella's husband. He indulges in visits and vacations due to his family's wishes. He likes to stay at home.

Check Your Progress

7. Who is Mr. Knightley?
8. What is the background of Harriet Smith in the novel?

14.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Jane Austen had begun writing at an early age though only for her family circle. Her life amid English country provided her the opportunity to learn by heart the world of social pretentions and ambition, of balls and visits, and speculations about marrying. She found the raw materials for her novels in her daily routine, visits, shopping, sewing, gossip and other trivial matters.
2. *Persuasion* is a novel by Jane Austen that was published after her death.
3. Action in Austen's novels consists in little visits, morning calls, weddings, shopping expeditions, or the quizzing of new arrivals. These small actions and incidents go to make up the plots of her novels.
4. In *Pride and Prejudice* the scene wherein Darcy proposes to Elizabeth at Hunsford Personage is a fine psychological study. Darcy if outwardly composed and taciturn, is driven within by a conflict between his love for Elizabeth and hatred for her stupid relations which prevent him from marrying her.
5. Emma genuinely desires to change the lives of her social inferiors as well as her equals. Her overconfidence and her desire to change people's life make her go through some shocks, which later help her achieve a higher degree of self-knowledge.

6. Emma decides to protect Harriet Smith, 'the natural daughter of somebody', and decides to find a suitable match for her. In this attempt, she goes to the extent of breaking off Harriet's incipient love affairs with Mr Martin, a worthy and suitable match for her.
7. In the novel, Mr Knightley is a model of good sense. Right from the beginning of the novel, we find him correcting the excesses and mistakes of people around him. He is honest, but knows where to temper his honesty and diplomacy and compassion.
8. Harriet is Emma's friend in the novel. In the beginning of the novel, Harriet is believed to be an illegitimate child though her parentage is not known. It is only at the end of the novel, that we come to know that she is a daughter of a well-to-do tradesman.

14.7 SUMMARY

- Jane Austen was the greatest of all novelists of manners who raised the new genre of novel to a new level of art. She produced some of the greatest novels in history with her quietly penetrating vision of man, her ironic awareness of the claims of personal morality and those of social and economic propriety.
- Jane Austen was one of the greatest woman novelists of the nineteenth century. She was the daughter of a humble clergyman living at Stevenson, a little village among the Chalk hills of South England.
- Austen had begun writing at an early age though only for her family circle. Her life amid English country provided her the opportunity to learn by heart the world of social pretentions and ambition, of balls and visits, and speculations about marrying. Her full length novels are *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Northanger Abbey, Emma* and *Persuasion.*
- The world, which her books present to us, is essentially the 18th century world in its habits, taste and appearances.
- The place where she was living, provided a perfect setting for Jane Austen to write.
- The range of Jane Austen's novels was limited. She drew all her material from her own experience. She never went outside her experience, with the result that all her scenes belonged to South England where she had spent a considerable period of her life.
- Jane Austen defined her own boundaries and never stepped beyond them. These limitations were self-imposed and she always remained within the range of her imaginative inspiration and personal experience.

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- Jane Austen's novels do not represent stormy passions and high tragedy of emotional life. She was primarily concerned with the comedy of domestic life. But with her very mental makeup she was incapable of writing a tragedy or romance. Jane Austen was absolutely incapable of writing adventurous tales dealing with romantic reveries and death scenes.
- Jane Austen was a supreme realist. Her stories are all drawn from the life that she knew. *Emma* tells us of a delightful girl who is as she was in the years when Napoleon was the emperor.
- Jane Austen is a great creator of characters. She has created a picture-gallery filled with so many delightful characters. Her characters are not types but individuals. She portrays human characters with great precision and exactness.
- W. L. Cross aptly remarks, 'The style of Jane Austen cannot be separated from herself or her method. It is the natural easy flowing garment of her mind, delighting inconsistencies and infinite detail. It is so peculiarly her own that one cannot trace in it with any degree of certainty of the course of her reading.'
- Folly is the chief source of laughter in the novels of Jane Austen and she creates comic characters who provoke nothing but laughter.
- *Emma* is the story of a girl who is clever as well as rich. She genuinely desires to change the lives of her social inferiors as well as her equals.
- Emma takes up the responsibility to find a suitable match for Harriet Smith. The parentage of Harriet is not known. However, Emma believes that Harriet deserves to be a gentlemen's wife and asks her friend to consider Mr Elton for marriage, who is a village vicar.
- Mr Knightley is suspicious towards Frank and the incident of Frank's rushing back to London just to have his haircut makes him more suspicious towards him.
- Everyone comes to know that Frank has lost his aunt. This event paves the path for the unfolding pf the secret that Frank and Jane have been secretly engaged and he flirted with Emma in order to conceal his engagement with Jane.
- Emma wants Frank Churchill to marry Harriet but she is also attracted to him. There is an interesting tension between her admiration to his vitality and wit and her half-realized love for Mr Knightley.
- There is a significant point raised in the novel. The ritual of marriage should be consummated between families of equal status only then these are successful otherwise these become void.
- Another significant feature of the novel is the way in which it brings forth the idiosyncrasies of personal prejudices of the characters.

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- In the novel, Emma makes three major mistakes. First, she tried to help Harriet marry a gentlemen, when Harriet's social position commands that the farmer, who loves her, is best suited for her. Second, she flirts with Frank Churchill even though she does not have any intention to marry him. Third, she claims that she is committed to staying single and does not realize her own feelings that she is in love with Mr Knightley and wants to marry him.
- Knightley's love for Emma is the only emotion, which he is not able to handle properly. He decides that Frank is not a good person even before meeting him.
- Jane is a foil for Emma. The fact that she is not financially independent highlights Emma's privileged nature. She has no fortune but is equally talented and at music, more talented than Emma.
- Elton is a good-looking young vicar. Emma feels that he is a suitable match for Harriet. However, the situation becomes ironical when Emma comes to know that he is inclined towards her and not Harriet.
- Isabella is Emma's elder sister and John Knightley's wife. In the novel, she is shown as a traditional girl who spends most of the time in taking care of her house and her children.

14.8 KEY WORDS

- **Reverie:** It is a state of being pleasantly lost in one's thoughts; a daydream.
- **Grotesque:** It refers to something comically or repulsively ugly or distorted.
- **Satire:** It is a genre of literature, and sometimes graphic and performing arts, in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, corporations, government or society itself, into improvement.
- **Protagonist:** Protagonist is the leading character or one of the major characters in a play, film, novel, etc.
- **Vicar:** In the Church of England, an incumbent of a parish where tithes formerly passed to a chapter or religious house or layperson is called vicar.

14.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Brifly mention Jane Austen's early life.
2. Write a short note on the characterization of Jane Austen.
3. Assess Jane Austen as a novelist.

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4. Why did Emma believe that she could be a good matchmaker?
5. What are the themes in Austen's *Emma*?
6. Write short notes on the following characters:
   (i) Emma
   (ii) Frank Churchill
   (iii) Jane Fairfax
7. Analyse the plot construction of Austen's *Emma.*
8. Evaluate the issues that have been raised in the novel.

14.10 FURTHER READINGS

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