ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Indira Gandhi National Open University
School of Humanities

BEGC-110
BRITISH LITERATURE: 19TH CENTURY

Block

4

VICTORIAN POETRY-II

Block Introduction	**177**
UNIT 1 **Matthew Arnold-1**	**179**
UNIT 2 **Matthew Arnold-2**	**192**
UNIT 3 **Christina Rossetti**	**206**
UNIT 4 **Gerard Manley Hopkins**	**226**

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 174 6/21/2021 11:41:05 AM

EXPERTS COMMITTEE

Prof Ameena Kazi Ansari
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

Dr Anand Prakash
(Retd.) Hansraj College (DU), New Delhi

Dr Hema Raghavan
(Retd.) Principal, Gargi College (DU), New Delhi

Dr Nupur Samuel
Ambedkar University, New Delhi

Dr Ruchi Kaushik
SRCC (DU), New Delhi

Dr Ipshita Hajra Sasmal
Ambedkar University, New Delhi

Dr Cheryl R Jacob
Ambedkar University, New Delhi

Dr. Chhaya Sawhney
Gargi College, DU, New Delhi

Dr. Vandita Gautam
Motilal Nehru College (DU), Delhi

Dr. Chinganbam Anupama
Kalindi College (DU), New Delhi

Prof. Ramesh Menon
Symbiosis Institute of Management and Communication, Pune

Prof. Malati Mathur
Director, School of Humanities

IGNOU (ENGLISH FACULTY)

Prof. Neera Singh
Prof. Nandini Sahu
Prof. Parmod Kumar
Dr. Pema Eden Samdup
Ms. Mridula Rashmi Kindo
Dr. Malathy A

COORDINATION AND EDITING

Prof. Neera Singh
School of Humanities
IGNOU

COURSE PREPERATION

This course has been adapted from existing IGNOU material

SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Monika Syal, Assistant Executive (DP), SOH, IGNOU

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

VICTORIAN POETRY-II: BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Block 4- the last one of our course BEGC-110 (British Literature: 19th Century). This block is entitled Victorian Poetry-II, and we have taken up three eminent poets of the Victorian Age for study.

In **Unit 1** we have taken up Matthew Arnold and his three poems for detailed study. These are 'Shakespeare', 'To Marguerite', and 'Dover Beach'.

In **Unit 2,** we continue with Matthew Arnold and for detailed study we have taken up 'The Scholar Gypsy'.

In **Unit 3** we have chosen a fairly lengthy poem by Christina Rossetti, entitled 'Goblin Market'. At a first glance the length of the poem may intimidate you, but as you read it you will realize that it is a very simple poem and it reads like a story.

In **Unit 4** we have taken up two poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins – 'Pied Beauty' and 'The Windhover'.

With this we complete our course BEGC-110.

Best of Luck to you.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 1 MATTHEW ARNOLD-1

Structure

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Matthew Arnold: Life and Works

1.3 'Shakespeare'

1.3.1 Poem

1.3.2 Glossary

1.3.3 Discussion

1.4 'To Marguerite'

1.4.1 Poem

1.4.2 Glossary

1.4.3 Discussion: Paraphrase and Style

1.5 'Dover Beach'

1.5.1 Poem

1.5.2 Glossary

1.5.3 Discussion: Paraphrase and Style

1.6 Let Us Sum Up

1.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we shall read poems by the eminent poet and critic Matthew Arnold. After studying the Unit carefully you will be able to:

- write a biographical sketch of Matthew Arnold;
- discuss the three poems selected for you;
- analyse Arnold's poetic technique.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Arnold is well-known for his poetry as well as for his criticism of the society of his time. He is the poet of loss and separation who laments the passing of innocence of the earlier days of humankind. Let us now tell you briefly about the poems that we shall study in this unit. 'Shakespeare' (1849) is a sonnet which is a tribute to the outstanding genius of the great poet. 'To Marguerite' (1857) is also a short poem which you will read next. We have also selected one of Arnold's most famous poems 'Dover Beach' (1867), which is representative of his statement of poetic faith.

We shall first give you a brief introduction to the life and works of Matthew Arnold. Then we shall take up each poem, its theme, the main ideas and poetic technique. We have also given you some passages to explain with reference to the context. We hope you will complete these exercises as these will give you the practice that you require. Good-luck with your work.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

1.2 MATTHEW ARNOLD: LIFE AND WORKS

LIFE:

Matthew Arnold (1822-88) had an excellent education at one of the finest public schools in England, Rugby, where his father Dr. Arnold was headmaster. From there Arnold went up to Oxford, one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in England, where he also taught classics for two years. He was later appointed inspector of schools—a position he held for 35 years. In 1857, he was made Oxford Professor of Poetry and he continued in this appointment for 10 years. Arnold continued to write poetry till he was 45 years and then devoted most of his time to prose. He wrote prose of social criticism and tried to highlight the flaws of England's social and political structure. He believed that English society was made up of the Barbarians, the Philistines and the Populace. The Barbarians were the aristocracy who were totally insular to new ideas, the Philistines or the middle class was marked by vulgarity and dullness while the populace or the lower orders cared merely for food, beer and gin. Arnold hoped that the Middle Class would open its mind to culture which he defined as 'the knowledge of the best that has been thought and said in the world.'

WORKS

The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems	(1849)
Empodocles on Etna and Other Poems	(1852)
Poems. A New Edition. (Including 'Sohrab and Rustum')	(1853)
*Poems. Second Series (*Selections from 2 earlier vols. with 'Balder Dead')	(1854)
Merope	(1857)
England and the Italian Question	(1859)
On Translating Homer	(1861)
The Popular Education of France	(1861)
On Translating Homer : Last Words	(1862)
A French Eton	(1864)
Essays in Criticism : First Series (1865)	(1865)
On the Study of Celtic Literature , (1867)	(1867)
New Poems (restoring 'Empedocles on Etna')	(1867)
Culture and Anarchy	(1869)
Literature and Dogma	(1873)
Essays in Criticism : Second Series	(1888)

(Published posthumously)

1.3 'SHAKESPEARE'

You may be aware that there are two different kinds of sonnets—Petrarchan and Shakespearean. A Petrarchan sonnet is organized in two parts—an octet (8 lines) and a sestet (6 lines). One thought continues for the first eight lines and changes in the final sestet. A Shakespearean sonnet has 3 quatrains (4-line stanzas) and is rounded off by a couplet (2 lines). In this sonnet you will notice that the arrangement is different from these two kinds.

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 180 6/21/2021 11:41:05 AM

What is the sonnet about? The title 'Shakespeare' indicates that the poem is dedicated to the bard. Shakespeare (1564-1616), as we know, is one of the most celebrated dramatists and poets in history. As a poet he is remembered for his 154 sonnets and his longer poems *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). The present sonnet celebrates Shakespeare as a poet whose genius far transcended that of other poets.

Let us now read the poem.

1.3.1 Poem

SHAKESPEARE

Others abide our question 'Thou art free. a
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still, b
Out-topping knowledge. For the **loftiest hill** b
Who to the stars uncrowns his **majesty**, a
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea, a
Making the **heaven of heavens** his dwelling-place, c
Spares but the cloudy border of his base c
To the **foil'd** searching of **mortality** : a
And thou, who didst the **stars and sunbeams know**, d
Self-school'd, **self-scann'd**, self-honour'd, self-secure, e
Didst tread on earth **unguess'd** at.—Better so! d
All pains the immortal spirit must endure, e
All weakness which **impairs,** all griefs which bow, f
Find their **sole speech** in that **victorious brow**. f

1.3.2 Glossary

others abide our question : Other authors are easy to know, to understand.

thou art free : Shakespeare, on the other hand, does not fall within the scope of our understanding.

we ask and ask : his readers try to ask various questions, but his works defy final interpretation or explanation.

thou smilest and are still : Shakespeare has an enigmatic smile which gives nothing away; in other words, his works are enigmatic.

out-topping knowledge : going beyond our own understanding. Human knowledge has scaled new heights but so far Shakespeare lies beyond the purview of knowledge.

loftiest hill : other writers are like small hills, whereas Shakespeare towers the highest.

who to the stars majesty : as this hill is so high, its summit is not visible to human eyes. On the other hand, this is visible to the stars in the sky. In short, Arnold wishes to point out that the full extent of Shakespeare's achievement is not comprehensible to human beings.

planting : basing

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

his	:	the mountain is the metaphor for Shakespeare.
steadfast	:	firm
heaven of heavens	:	the highest part of the sky
spares	:	exposes
foil'd	:	unsuccessful
mortality	:	human beings
stars and sunbeams know	:	Shakespeare understood all aspects of nature.
self-school'd	:	self-taught-Shakespeare did not have much formal education.
self-scann'd	:	he himself was the best examiner/assessor of his work.
unguess'd at	:	Shakespeare's genius was not fully appreciated during his life.
impairs	:	weakens
sole speech	:	only expression
victorious brow	:	triumphant achievement.

1.3.3 Discussion

The sonnet, as we have seen is a tribute to the outstanding genius of Shakespeare. Shakespeare is the literary colossus who towers above other poets and writers, who can be understood, but it is difficult to unravel the mysterious and multi-dimensional achievements of Shakespeare.

Critical Analysis: Arnold begins the poem by making a simple statement. He says that other writers and poets still provide some answers to our questions. In short, we know a lot about them. Shakespeare, on the other hand, is free from such simple comprehension. That is, his life is shrouded in mystery. We cannot claim to understand it as we do in the case of others. In spite of all our queries, Shakespeare continues to smile enigmatically and calmly with an incomprehensible expression on his face. In short, Shakespeare goes beyond the limits of our understanding.

For the next 6 lines, a 'lofty hill' is the metaphor that Arnold uses for explaining this idea further. Shakespeare is like the highest mountain whose majestic peaks are only visible to the stars in the sky. This mountain has a firm base in the depths of the sea and from these depths it rises to the highest heavens. As the base of the mountain is submerged in the sea and its summit touches the zenith of the sky, neither its heights nor depths are visible to human beings. Only the lower slopes, covered in clouds can be seen by them. What does this mean? It is clear that both the heights and depths of Shakespeare's genius cannot be comprehended by us. We can only understand it partially and that too not very clearly.

Once Arnold has established the incomprehensible and inscrutable nature of Shakespeare's achievement, he extends his tribute by referring to his unique vision that was able to penetrate the mysteries of nature. Shakespeare did not have extensive schooling but taught himself in the school of life. He himself was the assessor of his own work, confident and secure of its enduring greatness. His contemporaries could not fathom or recognize his lofty achievement but he understood and honoured it himself. Arnold does

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 182 6/21/2021 11:41:05 AM

not regret this fact. On the contrary he thinks it was perhaps better this way. Arnold is probably making an oblique reference to the fact that those who are acknowledged 'great' in their own lifetimes are usually besieged by biographers who take detailed notes on their lives as Boswell did in the case of Johnson or Mrs. Gaskell in the case of Charlotte Brontë in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively. Shakespeare had no biographer and as such details of his life are somewhat hazy.

Arnold then refers to the great tragedies in which Shakespeare gave expression to all the sorrows, weaknesses and pains that flesh is heir to. What do you think he means by 'victorious brow'? Figuratively, it refers to Shakespeare whose works are a triumph of expression and an embodiment of all the aspects of human suffering.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) another eminent Victorian had also eulogized Shakespeare in *Heroes and Hero-Worship* as transcending the other writers of all generations through the sheer power of his inscrutable genius. In this sonnet, Arnold seems to be in agreement with all that Carlyle had to say and congratulates Shakespeare on defying the comprehension of readers and critics down the ages.

What is the picture of Shakespeare that Arnold wished to exalt? Is it that of a man of action or is it that of a calm contemplative thinker? The image of Shakespeare that emerges from this sonnet is that of an inscrutable enigmatic poet, whose towering genius is beyond the comprehension of mere mortals. The poet is intuitive, self-trained and sensitive to the sorrows and pains of human nature. He could fathom the secrets of nature and give them expression in his works.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Explain with reference to the context, the following lines:

For the loftiest hill
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality:

....

....

....

....

(Check your answer with that given at the end of this Unit.)

1.4 'TO MARGUERITE'

Let us now look at the lyric 'To Marguerite'

We have all heard of or read the Lucy poems by William Wordsworth. Lucy is a mysterious figure somewhat idealized. Marguerite is a similar person in Arnold's life—an inspiration for some of his finest love-lyrics. As we know,

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 183 6/21/2021 11:41:05 AM

Arnold is primarily an elegiac poet in whose works the melancholy and pessimism of the age finds expression.

Marguerite is a young girl who he met in Switzerland and who inspired him to write at least 21 poems. In 'Isolation: To Marguerite' (1853), he dwells upon the theme of loneliness upon his separation from Marguerite whom he does not describe. In 1857 a different poem 'To Marguerite' was written and the earlier one then came to be known simply as 'Isolation'. **It is the second poem that we shall study**. Here again the basic theme is the same: loneliness. But this loneliness is not personal: it is the general human condition. It is this feeling of alienation that links Arnold to the existentialists of the twentieth century. In both these poems, the poet reflects upon the isolation of the lovers and his own separation from Marguerite. Let us now read the poem.

1.4.1 Poem

TO MARGUERITE

Yes! in the sea of life **enisled**,
With echoing **straits** between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,

We mortal millions live ***alone***
The islands feel the **enclasping** flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,
And they are swept by **balms of spring**,
And in their **glens**, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour—

Oh! then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest **caverns** sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent!
Now round us spreads the watery plain
Oh might our **marges** meet again!

Who order'd, that their **longing's fire**,
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?
A God, a God their **severance** ruled;
And bade **betwixt** their shores to be
The **unplumb'd** salt, **estranging** sea.

1.4.2 Glossary

Stanza 1

enisled : made an island.of; isolated.

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 184 6/21/2021 11:41:05 AM

straits : gulfs
alone : the isolation of the individual is emphasized
enclasping : surrounding; endless; unending

Stanza 2

balms of spring : soothing breeze
glens : narrow valleys

Stanza 3

caverns : caves
marges : boundaries

Stanza 4

longing's fire : passionate desire
severance : breaking off
betwixt : between
unplumb'd : that which cannot be measured.
estranging : alienating

1.4.3 Discussion: Paraphrase and Style

Arnold was aware of the difficulties of the loss of faith and the complete isolation of the individual. This poem is not about any personal crisis as the title suggests but this personal loss inspired by separation from Marguerite has triggered off a more general feeling of the prevailing alienation besieging humankind with its attendant isolation and separation of one individual from another. This kind of feeling is well-known to people living in large metropolises like Mumbai, Delhi or Kolkata where most people are aware of the complete breakdown of community that one can still find in the villages and small towns even today.

Paraphrase

Let us first paraphrase the poem: Arnold begins with an emphatic 'Yes!' It is a revelation that has dawned upon him; an insight that he is convinced is true. He says that all of us are like islands interspersed in the sea of life. Between us the waters roar keeping us separate and apart so that each of us, the millions who constitute humanity, is alone. Note that Arnold has emphasized 'alone' by italicizing it. The islands are aware of the surrounding flow of the waters and they know that these flowing waves will continue to separate them from other islands and that these gulfs are insurmountable. In short, each person is doomed to a lonely existence. Quite a different sentiment from John Donne's poem which says 'No man is an island, Entire unto himself ....'

The second stanza suggests a mood of enchantment as experienced in romantic love. This feeling of complete isolation is somewhat alleviated when the moon lights up the other islands and soft spring breezes blow across them and when the heavenly song of the nightingale is carried across the separating gulfs to other islands. (The idea is carried over into the next stanza.) At that time a deep desire rises from the depths of the hearts of the lonely individuals, a desire that can only end in despair as it cannot be

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 185 6/21/2021 11:41:05 AM

fulfilled. 'Caverns' here refer to the innermost depths of the individual. The island metaphor continues throughout the poem. The longing and desire is nostalgia for the lost unity and fellow-feeling that once existed between human beings. The islands were once part of a continent and not dispersed and isolated as now. Each island is now divided by the sea and each desires that their boundaries would once again stand united.

In the last stanza, Arnold wants to know who is responsible for this state of affairs. Once the fire of longing and desire has been kindled in the human heart, who is responsible for seeing to it that it soon dies down? Who is it that frustrates their deep desires? The answer is that it is God who has decreed that human beings remain separated from each other. In order to do this He ordered the deep dividing sea to continue to flow between their shores. In other words, God has created the divisions that separate one human being from another by mysterious insurmountable differences. Don't you think these lines are particularly relevant to our society and the various problems of caste and communal hatred dividing one person from another?

What is the human predicament that the poem concerns itself with? The problem of the isolation and alienation of the individual is not just personal; it is universal. There is a sense of spiritual decline and collapse that goes with this sense of loss. Nature symbolizes the reconciling and healing touch which is felt in the moon, the gentle breezes and the nightingale's song. This arouses a longing for the past and for love and unity with other human beings.

Does Arnold suggest a remedy for this predicament? The last stanza clearly indicates that there is no remedy for the predicament that he defines. It is 'God' who 'ordered' this human condition—He made it part of the order of things. The tragic separation and isolation of life belongs to the very condition of creation when God 'bade' the waters to cover the earth.

Style

What is the rhyme scheme of this poem? ab ab cc, de de ff .... The image of the sea and the islands dotting the sea are effectively invoked in the first stanza. Apart from visual images, there are tactile images 'balms of spring' and auditory images 'nightingales divinely sing'. The island is a metaphor for the isolation and separation of the individual. The sea is a symbol of melancholy and despair. Just as the English channel, (as Kathleen Tillotson has suggested in *Poems* 122,) flows between and separates Arnold from Marguerite, similarly it is a symbol of the inseparable gulfs that exist between one human being and another. (The poem then suggests an impossibility of human communion.) The image of the sea is also potent in 'Dover Beach', a poem, we shall read in the next section.

Check Your Progress 2

i) In about 50-60 words, give the central idea of the poem 'To Marguerite'.

....

....

....

....

(Check your answer with that given at the end of this Unit.)

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 186 6/21/2021 11:41:05 AM

1.5 'DOVER BEACH'

'Dover Beach' is one of the most admired of Arnold's poems today. The sea features in this poem and you will notice that the sea is a recurring feature in most English literature. As we know that as England is an island, the sea is never far away. This is very similar to the heat and dust that is often featured in Indian literature. But the sea can mean different things to different poets and writers. For Byron, in his poem 'Ocean', the sea is an angry potent force that punishes man for his pettiness. The sea can be bountiful; it can be benevolent as it brings 'the sailor home from the sea'. Or it can separate lovers as it does in the context of 'To Marguerite'. Let us now see, how the sea is handled in 'Dover Beach'.

'Dover Beach', though written much earlier, was only published in 1857 in *New Poems*. In fact a manuscript of part of 'Dover Beach' dates back to June 1851 when Arnold went on his honeymoon with his wife Lucy. Nature is at its best as Lucy and Arnold look at the moon and the calm sea, and on this clear night can see the light on the French coast. Yet this perfect setting does not evoke any romantic feelings in the poet. On the other hand, the mood is one of melancholy and nostalgia for the loss of faith. Once again Arnold outlines the human condition and feels that love alone can somewhat lessen the pain of isolation and suffering. One of Arnold's most celebrated lyrics, the tone of this poem is almost conversational.

1.5.1 Poem

DOVER BEACH

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the **straits**;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the **tranquil bay.**
Come to the window, **sweet** is the night-air!
Only, from the **long line of spray**
Where the sea meets the **moon-blanch'd land,**
Listen! you hear the **grating roar**
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the **high, strand**,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With **tremulous cadence** slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in. 14
Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the **Aegean**, and it brought
Into his mind the **turbid** ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this **distant northern sea.**
The Sea of Faith 21

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 187 6/21/2021 11:41:05 AM

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright **girdle furl'd;**
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar, 25
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges **drear**
naked shingles of the world.
Ah, **love**, let us be true 28
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, 33
Nor **certitude**, nor peace, nor help for pain:
And we are here as on a **darkling** plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight.
Where **ignorant armies clash by night**. 37

1.5.2 Glossary

straits : the English Channel separating France and England.

gleams : Shines

tranquil bay : calm sea enclosed by the wide curve of the shore

sweet : pleasant

long line of spray : beach, where water hits the land.

moon-blanched : lit up by the moon

grating roar : harsh sound caused by the pebbles being moved by the incoming and receding waves.

high strand : high beach

tremulous cadence : trembling wavering rhythm.

Sophocles (Circa 496-406 B.C.) : In *Antigone* the Greek dramatist likens the curse of heaven to the ebb and flow of the sea. Sophocles is famous for the great tragedies *Antigone, Oedipus*, *Electra* among others.

Aegean : The part of the Mediterranean sea near Greece, where Aegeus jumped in and committed suicide, is called the Aegean.

turbid : muddy (unclear) tide

distant northern sea : the English Channel which is to the north of the Mediterranean.

sea of Faith : faith in religion

girdle : belt, but here–bright clothing

furl'd : folded/compressed/at ebb tide, as the sea retreats, it is unfurled and spread out

drear : dull

shingles : small pebbles on the shore

naked shingles : gravel beaches

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 188 6/21/2021 11:41:05 AM

love	:	refers to Lucy
certitude	:	certainty
darkling	:	darkened
ignorant armies clash by night	:	the image of a battle by night, when both friend and foe are confused in the darkness and it is not clear who is fighting whom and for what

1.5.3 Discussion: Paraphrase and Style

'Dover Beach' is a short poem, but it embraces a great range and depth of significance. What is Arnold's main pre-occupation in this poem? He ruminates on the loss of religious faith and the subsequent vulnerability of human beings to the sufferings and pains of life. It is only through a satisfying love-relationship that one can wrest a meaningful existence in an otherwise meaningless and hostile universe.

As you already know, Arnold spent a night in Dover while on his honeymoon trip with Lucy. Here he is standing at the window with Lucy by his side on an exceptionally clear night looking at the sea. Not only is it clear but Arnold's opening lines suggest a calm and stability: a kind of poise that Arnold probably desires for himself.

Paraphrase

Arnold observes that the sea is calm, the tide is high and the moon is shining on the English Channel. On the distant French coast he can see a slight flicker of light which shines briefly and then disappears. The white cliffs of Dover can be seen large and shining in the curve of the shore. The poet tenderly beckons his wife to the window where she too can enjoy the pleasant breeze. Upto this point nature is calm beautiful and soothing. But, from here on, the poet discerns the underlying grating sound which he describes at some length till the end of the first stanza. The poet draws his wife's attention to the moonlit beach and to the point where the waves lap the shore, the sound of the pebbles as they are dragged along the beach by the receding waves. These pebbles are once again pushed up the sloping beach as the tide returns. Thus there is constant sound and motion that begins and ceases and begins again. The trembling rhythm seems to symbolize some kind of unending sorrow.

Lines 14-20 carry forward this notion of eternity by harking back to the time of Sophocles. This 'grating roar' was probably also heard by Sophocles long ago on the shores of the Aegean sea and it was this, that perhaps induced in his mind the sense of the miseries in human life which are reflected in his great tragedies. Just as the sound of the ebb and flow of the waves was able to evoke the feeling of human misery in Sophocles' mind, so also it evokes similar thoughts in the mind of Arnold and his wife who stand much further north, separated from him by time and space.

From this reference to Sophocles and the past, Arnold returns to the immediate present ruminating philosophically on the spiritual decline that has besieged human beings. But this thinking is done in the shape of images. Arnold explains that at one time religious faith supported and helped mankind and was at its strongest. This religious faith was like a beautiful garment that engirdled the earth. In short, this faith was universal. But now

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 189 6/21/2021 11:41:05 AM

the poet can only hear the receding tide which draws back with a sad sound to the music of the night winds leaving the beach exposed and uncovered. Similarly, the poet is aware of the fact that people have lost faith in religion which has withdrawn from everywhere like the outgoing tide. This spiritual decline has left human beings vulnerable and exposed to the sorrows of life.

What can one do in such a situation? The poet appeals to Lucy once more. He believes that if they love each other truly, they will be able to discover some value in life. Loss of religious faith has made it impossible to believe that the universe is to some extent atuned to human needs. He says that the world they can see before them is beautiful like a dream. But inspite of its varied beauty it cannot offer either joy, love, hope or certainty to anyone. People can have no peace and continue to suffer pain.

From the sea image, the poet moves in the final lines to a startling new image---that of a field with a battle raging in the dark where it is not clear who is the friend or who the enemy or why they are fighting at all.

Style

The melancholy tone of the poem arises from a feeling of deep despair. The stanzas are of different length and the lines move with a steady and poised rhythm

'The sea is calm tonight
The tide is full ...'

The ebbing and flowing of the waves and the consequent 'grating roar' is evoked vividly in 'draw back' 'fling' 'begin, and cease, and then again begin'. J.D. Jump calls this 'a combination of metrical and syntactical means' a combination of sound and sense to present this wonderfully rich image. The lines

'But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind ....'.

are as Miriam Allott puts it 'Probably the most musically expressive passage in all of Arnold's poetry and a valid poetic equivalent for his feelings of loss, exposure and dismay'. (*Matthew Arnold : Selected Poems and Prose,* pp 278-9).

The image of the sea is present throughout the poem. But in the last 3 lines we are taken to a 'darkling plain'. The sea is calm at the outset. Slowly a 'grating roar' is discernible, an ebb and flow that turns the poet's thoughts to meditate on the loss of faith with which humanity was now beset. This loss of religious faith is depicted by the image of the receding tide with its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar'. What is the result of this loss of faith? Without religious faith to invest life with some meaning and sense of value, the world is like an anarchic battlefield in the dark where people ignorant of their friends and foes are engaged in a hideous clash.

As we know, poems with philosophic meditations are usually not very lyrical or appealing. However, 'Dover Beach' is both. How has Arnold succeeded

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 190 6/21/2021 11:41:05 AM

in creating this rich lyric? He has worked in images which have given a concrete aspect to his thought. These images then evoke delightful feelings in the reader who responds to the sheer visual power of the metaphors used. In all three poems we have noticed a melancholy strain. Arnold's poetry appeals primarily to the intellect but it also appeals to our senses through the use of powerful images, chief of which, as we have seen, is the sea.

Check Your Progress 3

In your own words, write down the theme of 'Dover Beach' in the space given below. (about 100 words)

....

....

....

....

....

(Check your answer with that given at the end of this Unit.)

1.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed

- the life and works of Matthew Arnold;
- three elegiac poems by Arnold which establish him as the melancholy poet who expressed the spirit of his times;
- the poetic technique of Arnold.

1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i) For a reference to context question you need to bear in mind the following points:

   a) start by saying which poem the lines are taken from and who is the author—one may briefly mention something about the specific characteristics of that poet's techniques.

   b) explain the background of the poem and how these lines fit into its overall context:

   c) paraphrase the lines and

   d) in conclusion make some remarks about the style of the poem.

Check Your Progress 2

i) A central idea is NOT a summary of the poem. We need to give the essence or main idea contained in the poem. In this poem it is the universal isolation of the human beings.

Check Your Progress 3

The theme of 'Dover Beach' seems to be the poet's concern with humanity having lost its religious faith and the subsequent vulnerability of human beings to the pain and sufferings of life. This, according to the poet, can only be regained by love for one another.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 191 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

UNIT 2 MATTHEW ARNOLD-2

Structure

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Matthew Arnold

2.3 ‘The Scholar-Gypsy’

- 2.3.1 Poem
- 2.3.2 Glossary
- 2.3.3 Paraphrase
- 2.3.4 Discussion

2.4 Let Us Sum Up

2.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- write about Matthew Arnold’s life and work;
- discuss Matthew Arnold’s poetry in detail with special reference to ‘The Scholar Gypsy’

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit we have discussed Arnold’s life in brief, as in the case of any individual, the experience of life certainly shapes the nature of his or her work to a large extent. We have already given you some details of his life in the previous unit. So in this unit we are just adding a few more details to it. The poem discussed here is one of Arnold’s choicest creations and it is considered to be a poem that was based on Joseph Glanvill’s recount of ‘The Vanity of Dogmatizing’. It opens up on an afternoon in the month of August with the poet recounting his usual chores. It’s a lovely poem that showcases the beauty of pastoral chores and life during this century. It is no doubt a long poem, but do not let that worry you. We have given you a complete paraphrase of the poem so it will be simple for you to understand it.

2.2 MATTHEW ARNOLD

Matthew Arnold was a writer of many genres, but it is chiefly as a poet and a critic that he now holds his place in English literature. He was the son of the famous head master of Rugby, and was educated at Winchester, Rugby and at Balliol College, Oxford, where he gained the Newdigate prize for poetry. Subsequently he became a Fellow of Oriel College (1845). In 1851 he was appointed an inspector of schools, and proved to be a capable official. In 1857 he was elected professor of poetry at Oxford. His life was busily uneventful, and in 1883, he resigned, receiving a pension from the government. Less than five years afterwards, he died suddenly of heart disease at Liverpool.

For subject matter, Arnold was very fond of classical themes, to which he gave a meditative and even melancholy cast, common in modern compositions. The nature of his poetry is didactic. His prose work is large in bulk and wide in range. Of them all, his critical essays are probably of the highest value. *Essays in Criticism* (1865 and 1889) contains the best of his critical work, which is marked by wide reading and careful thought. His judgements, usually sane and measured, are sometimes distorted a little by his views on life and politics. Hence it can be said that Arnold is a more commanding figure and has exercised a wider influence as a prose writer. His earlier life is preoccupied with verse and his later life with prose.

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

2.3 'THE SCHOLAR-GYPSY'

And now let us take up the poem prescribed for you. 'The Scholar gypsy' is based on a story about a scholar who abandoned academic life to join a band of gypsies. The various places and landmarks mentioned in the poem are all actual ones situated around Oxford.

2.3.1 Poem

THE SCHOLAR GYPSY

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

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—
Here will I sit and wait,

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 193 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

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

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

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

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

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 194 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frock'd boors
Had found him seated at their entering,

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

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!
Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer-nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the punt's rope chops round;
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

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

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

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

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

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

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge,
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou has climb'd the hill,
And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range;
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—
Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

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

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 196 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls
And numb the elastic powers.
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

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

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

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

Yes, we await it!—but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

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

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

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free, onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—
Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales
Freshen thy flowers as in former years
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark tingles, to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 198 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade and grow old at last, and die like ours.

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

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

2.3.2 Glossary

Wattled cotes : The poet here urges a shepherd to free the flock of sheep from its shed and let them be liberated. This symbolism of liberation from any sort of binding is there from the beginning in the poem.

Glanvil's Book : Ranulf de Glanvill (sometimes written Glanvil) was Chief justice of England during the reign of King Henry II and reputed author of a book on English law

Oxford Scholar poor : The *Vanity of Dogmatizing* by Glanvil was a reaction to scholasticism, the rigid analytical methodology then in vogue in universities across Europe, and it features a poverty-stricken scholar

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

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 199 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

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

2.3.3 Paraphrase

1) Arnold begins the poem in a pastoral mode by invoking an unnamed shepherd to go to the hills and release his sheep from their folds built of wattles (interwoven twigs). He exhorts him to feed his flocks to stop their hungry bleating. Later when the fields are covered in silence and men and dogs are resting from their labour, the shepherd can renew his search for the scholar gypsy who is believed to be still haunting the vicinity.

   The freeing of the sheep from their fold here is symbolic of liberation from any sort of binding. The quest of the shepherd for the scholar gypsy, at the behest of the poet, is unusual as it is not part of his rustic duties.

2) The poet then tells us how he will spend his time waiting all day long for the scholar gypsy to appear. He will sit in a shady corner of a field watching the reaper at his work. From there he can also hear the distant cries of other reapers and the bleating of the sheep from the uplands.

3) The third stanza presents a beautiful rural scene with Oxford in the distance. The spot chosen by the poet, where he will wait till sunset, is situated in a shady bower where beautiful flowers screen him from the sun. The perfume of the flowers is scattered everywhere and their petals shower down on the grass where the poet is lying watching the towers of Oxford.

4) Lying next to him on the grass is Glanvil's book *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* which mentions the story of a poor Oxford scholar who had abandoned his academic life and friends to join a band of gypsies. He had roamed the world with this wild tribe and had never returned. The poet says he had very often read this story. In fact, Arnold has based his poem 'The Scholar Gypsy' on this story from Glanvil's book.

5) Only once, during a chance meeting with two fellow-scholars in a street in Oxford, the Scholar had disclosed to them his plan to acquire the supernatural skill of the gypsies to control the minds of men. This he would then impart to the world, he said, but as yet he was waiting for a divine inspiration.

6) After this chance encounter, the Scholar gypsy was never again seen in Oxford. Arnold imagines him as a shadowy figure who can even now be glimpsed in the Berkshire and Oxfordshire countryside. It is rumoured that once in a while, shepherds have caught a glimpse of him in his gypsy attire roaming on the Hurst during Spring, or, sometimes, rustics have seen him sitting at the entrance to the alehouse.

7) The scholar, however, had soon escaped from the clatter and noise of the alehouse and disappeared. The poet, who is now in quest of the scholar gypsy, asks the shepherds to find him and even enquires from boys, working in fields, if they have seen the scholar passing that way. Sometimes, lying in a boat moored near the river bank, he speculates if the scholar ever haunts the quiet spots amidst the lush green Cumner hills which are visible from the boat.

   'The Scholar-Gypsy' is about a double quest–one of Arnold's for the lost scholar and the other of the scholar for a divine message from God. Arnold is in search of the scholar gypsy because if the scholar is successful in his quest of achieving the divine inspiration –"the spark from Heaven- Arnold through this knowledge will get answers to the theological questions troubling the nineteenth century mind.

8) The poet is aware of the scholar's liking for lonely places. Often during summer, ferry-riders at Oxford have seen him crossing the Thames in his boat, lost in thoughts, his fingers trailing the moonlit waters and his lap full of flowers picked from some far off lonely fields.

9) The ferry-riders lose sight of him when they land. It is rumoured that groups of young girls, coming into Fyfield from distant villages during summer to enjoy themselves, have also come across the scholar either roaming the fields at dusk or entering the gate to a public place. The girls declare they have often received gifts of beautiful flowers from him but cannot be sure of his whereabouts.

10) During the month of June, men going down to bathe in the river near Godstow Bridge after cutting the hay, have often seen the scholar sitting on the river bank in his strange gypsy, attire. But when they return after bathing, he is no longer seen there.

11) Sometimes he is seen near some isolated farmhouse on the Cumner Hills, and, at others, near barn gates watching the threshers at work. Children, frequenting the hill slopes from early mornings till late evenings have also seen him near pastures watching the grazing cows and then disappearing slowly amongst the tall grasses under the stars.

12) During Autumn, on the outskirts of Bagley wood where the gypsies have pitched their tents, he often walks past a black bird that sits fearlessly eating its food and watching him twirling a dry bunch of flowers in his hand as if waiting for some divine fire to descend from the heavens to ignite it.

13) Arnold claims to have once seen the scholar himself on a wooden bridge during winter. Cloaked against the thick falling snow, he saw him moving towards Hinksey ridge, climb the Cumner ranges, looking back once at the lit-up Christ Church and then disappear from sight perhaps to rest in some lonely barn.

14) However, the poet brushes off the thought of his having glimpsed the Scholar as a mere dream because the scholar-gypsy has been dead for the past two hundred years now since the time he had left Oxford

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

and joined the gypsies, as mentioned in Glanvil's book. He is perhaps lying buried somewhere in a grave overgrow with tall grasses under a yew tree.

15) Immediately, the poet rules out the thought of the scholar gypsy having died because to his mind all the changes, hardships and repeated shocks of life that wear out the powers and energies of mortal men, have not been suffered by the scholar. He is a genius who is not dead but taking a justly deserved pause in his quest.

16) Arnold is firmly of the opinion that if the scholar gypsy did not lead the life of the ordinary mortals, he cannot have died like them. What has kept him going is his one aim, one desire, one mission in life− that is his quest for "the spark from Heaven to fall" or some theological piece of knowledge to be revealed to him by God. This hope to achieve his goal is what has made him immortal and kept him alive and ageless in Glanvil's book forever, while generations of men have come and gone without leaving a mark behind.

17) The poet juxtaposes the peaceful time in which the scholar gypsy lived and the problems of his own times (the 19th century). Life then was simple but now the minds of the people are distracted by too many worldly things. They strive but are unclear about what they want from life. They are assailed by doubts and confusions that force them to lead a fractured existence. They too are waiting to find some solution, some meaning to their lives but without hope of finding any, unlike the scholar gypsy.

18) While the scholar is waiting hopefully for a divine revelation, the people of the poet's time appear like half-believers who have only casual faith in their own creeds. They neither have the insight nor the resolve to achieve their religious aspirations and falter very often in their beliefs. Nevertheless, Arnold feels even these half-believers are waiting for a "spark from Heaven".

19) The wait for divine inspiration is endless for most people and they suffer due to the delay. One amongst them (the scholar-gypsy) had suffered the most, initially when as a poor student he had joined the seat of learning at Oxford where he was miserable and had lost all hope. But, finally, when he had the wisdom to quit his intellectual pursuits and move out into open countryside in quest of his real goal, his hope revived and he was able to regain his peace of mind.

20) This could happen to only the wisest of men, like the scholar. People caught in the complexities of modern life can only wait in vain for their dream to materialise till their patience turns to despair and they give up hope of ever achieving the "spark from Heaven". Contrary to this, the scholar wanders freely through the countryside like a truant boy, nursing his goal with pure joy in his heart and the sense in his mind of achieving it.

21) In Arnold's opinion, the scholar-gypsy has been able to sustain his hope till now, because he has lived during simpler and innocent times, before the modern life came "with its sick hurry, its divided aims……". Therefore, to sustain it further, he should escape the diseased modern

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 202 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

life, and avoid contact with modern men with "heads o'ertax'd" and "palsied hearts". He must escape to the deep woods just as Dido, the Greek mythological character, ran away to escape her false friend.

22) The poets advises the scholar to always nurse his hope in solitude. He should spend the day in the shade of untresspassed forests and the night walking through glades and forest fringes, where no one follows him, till he emerges on a suitable spot on the hill slope. There he should rest among flowers and listen to the sound of the nightingale.

23) He further implores him to stay away from all such people who suffer from the mental anguish and strife of modern life otherwise his life too would be infected by it and lose its charm for him. He would then be easily distracted, become fickle in his aim, lose his evergreen youth to old age and die the death of ordinary men.

24) Arnold, therefore, begs the scholar to escape from the "sick hurry" and "divided aims" of the modern times to the peace and quiet of the countryside, away from any sort of human contact. He uses a simile to augment his request to the Scholar gypsy. A Tyrian merchant once saw from his ship at sea, a Greek ship laden with exotic merchandise heading towards Tyre. He knew he would have competition from these intruders in his own native country.

25) When he saw the Greek sailors landing on the shores of Tyre, he angrily turned his own ship and sailed away from there in all haste till he reached Iberia, where he unloaded his goods for the shy Iberians who had started gathering on the beach. Similarly, Arnold thinks, the Scholar should shun the competitive world and escape to the peaceful countryside.

    Matthew Arnold's plea to the scholar-gypsy to keep away from modern man is in no way a criticism of the 19th century people. He is just trying to explore the spiritual and emotional losses of his times through this poem.

2.3.4 Discussion

'The Scholar Gypsy' is often known as one of the best and most popular poems of Arnold. A poor Oxford university student constitutes the central character of 'The Scholar Gypsy' who abandoned his studies to learn about the supernatural powers of the gypsy people.

Arnold begins the poem in pastoral mode, invoking an unnamed shepherd and describing the beautiful rural scene, with Oxford in the distance. The very first stanza of the poem suggests that something is amiss because the speaker imagines the sheep at night on a "moon blanched green" and then persuades the shepherd to "again begin the quest." The moon acts like a symbol for the power of imagination and the word 'quest' appears to be a very loaded term for the rustic job of a shepherd.

The pastoralist background of the poem leads immediately to several themes. Most generally it represents, as it does for many poets, an escape from the intolerable world of court or affairs. He then repeats the gist of Glanvill's story, but extends it with an account of rumours that the scholar gypsy was again seen from time to time by shepherds, country boys, young

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 203 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

girls and reapers etc. around Oxford. Arnold thinks of him as a shadowy figure who can even now be seen from time to time in the Berkshire and Oxfordshire countryside, "waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall", and claims to have once seen him himself.

Arnold romanticizes the Oxford countryside, attributing to it his happiest days. Against this romantic background, then, Arnold places the quest for and of the scholar-gypsy, which gives added significance to the background

This major English pastoral elegy has been written in a ten-line stanza pattern, constituting a total of 250 lines. Arnold was not sure whether the scholar gypsy was still alive after two centuries, but then ruled out the thought of his death. He cannot have died like a normal man. Having renounced such a life, he is hence free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt. The sick hurry and divided aims characterize modern life. The poet implores the scholar gypsy to avoid all who suffer from it, in case he too should be infected and die.

Arnold ends with an extended simile of a Tyrian merchant seaman, who flees from the eruption of Greek competitors to seek a new world in Iberia. For Arnold, Christianity was dead, and nothing seemed to occupy its place that could give meaning to life. This situation resulted in a constant search, loneliness and a void in life. In other words it can be said that it was the confrontation between the wisdom of the heart and the wisdom of the head. The head is aware of the real condition of the modern world, but the heart is invariably drawn to the simpler life represented by the scholar.

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

Through this poem Arnold explores the monotony of modern life. He works the story on two levels— one about the scholar gypsy and the other is about the narrator himself, who is deeply impressed by the life and ideas of the Scholar gypsy. But the message is clear. The scholar gypsy has transcended life by giving up the pursuits of modern day living.

Arnold was of the belief that modern life was so tiring that it eventually wore down even the strongest of men. He uses the word "disease" for this kind of life to suggest the infectious nature of the malady. According to Arnold, everyone is infected by the disease of the rat race.

The scholar gypsy, however, has managed to overcome this malady and had turned his back on modern day living by renouncing society. He has turned his back on Oxford— which is the seat of learning and symbolizes modern life. A number of people want to do this but are unable to actually

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 204 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

renounce the pleasures and responsibilities of the world. The scholar gypsy has however successfully done it.

The contrast that Arnold presents between the pastoral life— represented by the serene, peaceful, rural setting on the one hand— with Oxford in the background representing the seat of learning and thus modern life. Pastoral imagery represents innocence and purity and a oneness with nature. Oxford represents the structured world which the scholar gypsy has renounced.

Even though the poet would like to renounce the rat race he feels unable to do so and therefore, is torn within by an inner conflict. His responsibilities do not allow him to give up modern life even though he feels the pressure of having to conform to the rules and dogmas of society.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Elaborate upon the theme of the poem 'The Scholar Gypsy'

....

....

....

....

ii) Do you think the Oxford countryside is romanticized in the poem?

....

....

....

....

(Check your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.)

2.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you read about the life of Matthew Arnold and examined one of his poems. You should now be able to examine appreciate and discuss Matthew Arnold's poems in general and 'The Scholar Gypsy' in particular, effectively.

2.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i) The main theme seems to be modern man's wish to escape from the sick hurry and divided aims that characterize modern life.

ii) Yes, Arnold romanticizes the Oxford countryside by presenting it as serene and peaceful. The pastoral imagery represents innocence and purity.

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 205 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

UNIT 3 CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Structure

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Christina Rossetti: Life and Works

3.3 'Goblin Market'

   3.3.1 Poem

   3.3.2 Discussion

3.4 Let Us Sum Up

3.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be familiar with:

- the life and times of Christina Rossetti
- the poem 'Goblin Market'

3.1 INTRODUCTION

When you initially take a look at the poem 'Goblin Market' you may be concerned by its length. It's almost 570 lines long! But we assure you that even though the length may seem to be formidable — the subject matter is simple and very easy to understand. In face it reads like a children's story and makes for a delightful reading. I can assure you that you will be mesmerized by the poem even in your first reading. Of course it does have a deeper meaning as well—like all good literary pieces. We will discuss that in our analysis of the poem.

To begin with let us take a look at the life events of the poetess and the times she lived in. These as we have already mentioned in our previous Units are very important to understand the work of a writer.

3.2 CHRISTINA ROSSETTI: LIFE AND WORKS

Christina Georgina Rossetti, pseudonym Ellen Alleyne (b. 1830—1894) was one of the most important nineteenth century English Pre-Raphaelite women poets, both in range and quality. Christina was the youngest child of Gabriele Rossetti and was the sister of the painter-poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In 1847 her grandfather Gaetano Polidori, printed on his private press a volume of her verses in which signs of poetic talent were already visible. In 1850, under the pseudonym Ellen Alleyne, she contributed seven poems to the *The Germ*. In 1853, when the Rossetti family was in financial difficulties, Christina helped her mother keep a school at Frome, Somerset, but it was not a success, and in 1854 the pair returned to London, where Christina's father died. In straitened circumstances, Christina entered on her life work of companionship to her mother, devotion to her religion, and the writing of her poetry. She was a firm High Church Anglican, and in 1850 she broke her engagement to the artist James Collinson, because he had

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

become a Roman Catholic. For similar reasons she rejected Charles Bagot Cayley, though a warm friendship remained between them.

In 1862 Christina Rossetti published *Goblin Market and Other Poems* and in 1866 *The Prince's Progress and Other Poems*, both with frontispiece and decorations by her brother Dante Gabriel. These two collections, which contain most of her finest work, established her among the poets of her day.

In 1871 Christina was stricken by Graves' disease, a thyroid disorder that marred her appearance and left her life in danger. She accepted her affliction with courage and resignation, sustained by religious faith, and she continued to publish, issuing one collection of poems in 1875 and *A Pageant and Other Poems* in 1881. But after the onset of her illness she mostly concentrated on devotional prose writings. *Time Flies* (1885): a reading diary of mixed verse and prose, is the most personal of these works. Christina was considered a possible successor to Lord Alfred Tennyson as poet laureate, but she developed a fatal cancer in 1891. *New Poems* (1896), published by her brother, contained unprinted and previously uncollected poems.

Though she was haunted by an ideal of spiritual purity that demanded self-denial, Christina resembled her brother Dante Gabriel in certain ways, for beneath her humility, her devotion, and her quiet, saint-like life lay a passionate and sensuous temperament, a keen critical perception, and a lively sense of humour. Part of her success as a poet arises from the fact that she apparently succeeded in uniting these two seemingly contradictory sides of her nature. There is a vein of the sentimental and didactic in her weaker verse, but at its best her poetry is strong, personal, and unforced, with a metrical cadence that is unmistakably her own. The transience of material things is a theme that recurs throughout her poetry, and the resigned but passionate sadness of unhappy love is often a dominant note.

While looking at Christina Rossetti's poetry, one must keep certain factors in mind. In the first place, it is important to remember that in the nineteenth-century Victorian Age there were several repressive forces constantly operating on women. Women were not supposed to be opinionated. They were conventionally required to simply conform to the male line of thought. Christina Rossetti was gifted with a sharp intelligent mind but the keenness of her mind was suppressed by the pressures of social propriety. She lived a more or less sheltered life with little contact with the world outside except through her brothers and their bohemian friends. Above all, what governed her actions throughout her life was her deep religious belief.

3.3 'GOBLIN MARKET'

'Goblin Market' is Christina Rossetti's best known poem. Unfortunately it is only in recent decades that it has received the attention it deserves. Formerly it was generally relegated to the children's literature or fantasy literature category. The reason for its neglect was partly because its' main characters are two young girls and partly because Christina Rossetti's talents remained undiscovered until she was resurrected by contemporary female critics.

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 207 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

3.3.1 Poem

Goblin Market

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine, 20
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy."

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,
Lizzie veiled her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
"Lie close," Laura said, 40

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 208 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

Pricking up her golden head:
"We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?"
"Come buy," call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.

"Oh," cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men."
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look;
Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook:
"Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds weight.
How fair the vine must grow 60
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Through those fruit bushes."
"No," said Lizzie, "No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us."
She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat's face,
One whisked a tail,
One tramped at a rat's pace,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves 80
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 209 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

Like a lily from the beck,
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen
Turned and trooped the goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
"Come buy, come buy."
When they reached where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One reared his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown 100
(Men sell not such in any town);
One heaved the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her:
"Come buy, come buy," was still their cry.
Laura stared but did not stir,
Longed but had no money:
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
In tones as smooth as honey,
The cat-faced purred,
The rat-faced spoke a word
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
One parrot-voiced and jolly
Cried "Pretty Goblin" still for "Pretty Polly;"—
One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
"Good folk, I have no coin;
To take were to purloin:
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,
And all my gold is on the furze 120
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather."
"You have much gold upon your head,"
They answered all together:

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 210 6/21/2021 11:41:06 AM

"Buy from us with a golden curl."
She clipped a precious golden lock,
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flowed that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
She sucked until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gathered up one kernel stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone. 140

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
"Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago 160
That never blow.
You should not loiter so."
"Nay, hush," said Laura:
"Nay, hush, my sister:
I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still;
To-morrow night I will

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Buy more;" and kissed her:
"Have done with sorrow;
I'll bring you plums to-morrow
Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead 180
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap."

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtained bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fallen snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipped with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gazed in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapped to and fro
Round their rest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crowed his warning, 200
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:
Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
Air'd and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
Talked as modest maidens should:

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 212 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags, 220
Then turning homeward said: "The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
But Laura loitered still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still
The dew not fallen, the wind not chill;
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
"Come buy, come buy,"
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single, 240
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, "O Laura, come;
I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:
You should not loiter longer at this brook:
Come with me home.
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
Each glowworm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows dark:
For clouds may gather
Though this is summer weather,

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 213 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

Put out the lights and drench us through;
Then if we lost our way what should we do?"

Laura turned cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
"Come buy our fruits, come buy."
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?
Must she no more such succous pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind?
Her tree of life drooped from the root: 260
She said not one word in her heart's sore ache;
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudg'd home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
So crept to bed, and lay
Silent till Lizzie slept;
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry:
"Come buy, come buy;"—
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon wax'd bright
Her hair grew thin and grey;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn 280
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watched for a waxing shoot,
But there came none;
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crowned trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 214 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook:
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
To watch her sister's cankerous care 300
Yet not to share.
She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy;"—
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men,
The yoke and stir
Poor Laura could not hear;
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,
But feared to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,
In earliest winter time
With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp winter time.

Till Laura dwindling 320
Seemed knocking at Death's door:
Then Lizzie weighed no more
Better and worse;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook:
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin
When they spied her peeping:
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 215 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,
Cat-like and rat-like, 340
Ratel- and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,
Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes,—
Hugged her and kissed her:
Squeezed and caressed her:
Stretched up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates:
"Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun, 360
Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them,
Pomegranates, figs."—

"Good folk," said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:
"Give me much and many: —
Held out her apron,
Tossed them her penny.
"Nay, take a seat with us,
Honour and eat with us,"
They answered grinning:
"Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful and starry:
Such fruits as these
No man can carry:
Half their bloom would fly,

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 216 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavour would pass by.
Sit down and feast with us, 380
Be welcome guest with us,
Cheer you and rest with us."—
"Thank you," said Lizzie: "But one waits
At home alone for me:
So without further parleying,
If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits though much and many,
Give me back my silver penny
I tossed you for a fee."—
They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling.
One called her proud,
Cross-grained, uncivil;
Their tones waxed loud,
Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbowed and jostled her, 400
Clawed with their nails,
Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood,—
Like a rock of blue-veined stone
Lashed by tides obstreperously,—
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,
Sending up a golden fire,—
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—
Like a royal virgin town

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 217 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

Topped with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguered by a fleet 420
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.
Though the goblins cuffed and caught her,
Coaxed and fought her,
Bullied and besought her,
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
Kicked and knocked her,
Mauled and mocked her,
Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syrupped all her face,
And lodged in dimples of her chin,
And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.
At last the evil people,
Worn out by her resistance,
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
Along whichever road they took, 440
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,
Lizzie went her way;
Knew not was it night or day;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse,—
Its bounce was music to her ear.
She ran and ran
As if she feared some goblin man
Dogged her with gibe or curse
Or something worse:
But not one goblin scurried after,
Nor was she pricked by fear; 460

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 218 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

The kind heart made her windy-paced
That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
And inward laughter.

She cried, "Laura," up the garden,
"Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me;
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men."

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutched her hair:
"Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden?
Must your light like mine be hidden, 480
Your young life like mine be wasted,
Undone in mine undoing,
And ruined in my ruin,
Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?"—
She clung about her sister,
Kissed and kissed and kissed her:
Tears once again
Refreshed her shrunken eyes,
Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth;
Shaking with anguish fear, and pain,
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loathed the feast:
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,
Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks streamed like the torch 500
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 219 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

Or like an eagle when she stems the light
Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins, knocked at her heart,
Met the fire smouldering there
And overbore its lesser flame;
She gorged on bitterness without a name:
Ah! fool, to choose such part
Of soul-consuming care!
Sense failed in the mortal strife:
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,
Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topped waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea, 520
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
That night long Lizzie watched by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
With tears and fanning leaves:
But when the first birds chirped about their eaves,
And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass
Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
And new buds with new day
Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laughed in the innocent old way,
Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice;
Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey, 540
Her breath was sweet as May
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years
Afterwards, when both were wives

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 220 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

With children of their own;
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
Their lives bound up in tender lives;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them of her early prime,
Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time:
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,
Their fruits like honey to the throat
But poison in the blood;
(Men sell not such in any town):
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote:
Then joining hands to little hands 560
Would bid them cling together,
"For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands." 567

3.3.2 Discussion

On the surface level 'Goblin Market' is what may be called a "story poem". Loosely speaking it may be placed in the ballad tradition. It is a narrative that follows a swift, racy pace, revolves around a (then) socially acceptable moral lesson. The distinctive feature lies in the fact this poem is about a female character, her fall from grace, and subsequent redemption. If we look at the theme we find similarities with the ambitious project tackled by Milton in his *Paradise Lost*. There are, however, significant differences. Christina Rossetti's poem speaks of no male characters, except for the goblins that are not human but half-animals, whereas Milton's epic speaks of the fall of Adam. 'Goblin Market' speaks of transgression by a female protagonist; the role of a Christ-like savior is taken up by another female character, the erring girl's sister. The central motif remains the same: succumbing to temptation, suffering as punishment, sacrifice and redemption.

In the very first lines (I-80), the poem lays bare the situation: there are two sisters, Laura and Lizzie, young, innocent, and virginal. And there is temptation that lurks everywhere in the form of strange, deformed goblins that appear as fruit-sellers to seduce and destroy the innocence of unsuspecting girls. The goblins are fearsome yet fascinating. One of the sisters, Laura, finds herself being drawn towards them despite her sibling's admonishments.

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 221 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

Lines 81-140 speak of Laura's transgression: she partakes of the Goblins fruit, paying for them with a symbolic lock of her golden hair, and returns home satisfied. A wise Lizzie upbraids her and reminds her of the harm the Goblins did to a certain Jeanie who had tasted their fruit and died in her youth. Laura, however, is sort of intoxicated with the Goblin's feast and pays little attention (141-183). As they fall asleep, they present a pretty picture (184-198), typically Pre-Raphaelite in its detailed description.

The following day, a change comes over the errant girl. She goes about her chores as usual but pines for the night when goblins would appear with their wares. However when the twilight gathers, her sister, Lizzie can hear the goblins call but Laura cannot. This makes Laura realize that her desire for more fruit from the goblins would never be satisfied, and that she is now doomed to a life of frustrated desire (199-268).

Lines 269-328 describe Laura's suffering and decline. It appears she will now suffer a fate as miserable as Jeanie's. Finally, when she is at death's door, Lizzie decides to save her somehow, so she goes to the goblin men, and asks for some fruit. The goblins insist that she should eat the fruit in their presence but she refuses to do so. Thereupon they are enraged and attack her with the fruit, trying to force her to eat. She stands stoically, braving their assault, and is covered with juices (329-446). In this dishevelled state, drenched with fruit-juices, Lizzie runs home and tells Laura to lick the juices off her. The ailing sister does so, and is saved but only after suffering a raging fever (447-542).

The concluding lines of the poem (543-567) shift the focus into the future and speak of the two sisters as grown women, contented with their homes and children, warning their daughters of the dangers that may befall them if they go astray, advising them to stand by each other in times of need.

This is the narrative at the obvious level. Writing in times when women were supposed to be angels in their house, it appears as though Christina Rossetti is reinforcing the Victorian ideal of womanhood. Laura is innocent and happy as long as she remains within the confines of domesticity, away from temptations of the outside world, particularly temptations related to female desires. Accepting the repressive norms of society, she could ensure for herself a trouble-free existence. However, when she breaks the social taboo, she has to suffer. Lizzie who admonishes her from time to time, acts as a moral voice of the times, repeating the socially correct message.

Some critics, referring to the poet's personal life and her rejection of men and marriage, read the poem as an expression of Christina Rossetti's underlying fear of sexuality. The goblins, in their evil, distorted guise, represent the latent fear of men that Christina Rossetti probably lived with. This may be related to the fact that there are no normal men in the narrative. Even when in the final stanza 'Goblin Market' tells of Laura and Lizzie in their mature years, neither their husbands nor their sons are mentioned. They are shown only in the company of their daughters and the close bonding between them is stressed. The concluding lines further strengthen the theme that sisterhood is powerful and this makes 'Goblin Market' an unmistakably feminist poem. No wonder, therefore, feminist critics discovered much to be lauded in the poem.

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 222 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

The two sisters of the poem, it has been argued, may be taken to represent two sides of the poet: one stern, self-denying and ascetic, the other sensuous, hedonistic, and self indulgent. Lizzie represents the society with its repressive norms while Laura is the rebel, questioning and transgressing those norms. In keeping with the Victorian ideology, Laura suffers because she breaks the rules. She pays a heavy price for not observing the moral code. And when she regains life and vitality through her sister by symbolically "eating" her, she is in a way ingesting the moral code, reconciling to and accepting the social norms she had earlier transgressed. Consequently, she can be happy once more.

Like the women portrayed by the other Pre-Raphaelite poets, 'Goblin Market' also gives us a picture of a woman who is weak and vulnerable. Laura, as she wilts away, is very close to the kind of women immortalized on the canvas by Dante Rossetti and his followers. Christina Rossetti was far too conditioned by the social milieu not to be influenced by the stereotype. And yet, being an intelligent, thinking person, she could not rest with merely the conventional portrait of women. So her protagonist is given other traits: a questioning mind (like her creator's), a spirit of adventure, and the courage to face the consequences of rebellion. Similarly, Lizzie, even though she represents the patriarchal order, is presented as an individual that one may not break: for instance when she stands firm as a rock, facing the onslaughts of the goblins. Contrasted with the evil role played by the male goblins, she takes on a positive, nurturing role as she risks her own life to save her sister and nurse her back to health once more. For this reason 'Goblin Market' remains a strong, woman-centered poem.

The poem may be compared to Keats 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' where a loitering knight encounters a beautiful woman and succumbs to her charms. The woman betrays him and he is doomed to pine forever more. Whereas Keats portrays a *femme* fatale (a deadly woman) Christina Rossetti in 'Goblin Market' portrays *les homme* fatales (dangerous men) in the horrendous band of goblins. She is concerned with how men manage to seduce women and then discard them once their object is fulfilled. According to the patriarchal Victorian ideology, women are attractive as long as they are virginal, but once "fallen" they are of no use and lose their charm. These are rules laid down by men (goblins in the poem) who are the lawmakers.

The parallel between the consumption of the fruit and the loss of chastity, thus, is obvious through the poem. And yet the theme is subtly dealt with, in keeping with the Victorian taboo of female sexuality. Christina Rossetti, even though she tackles a bold theme, does not openly flout convention. She veils her point so successfully through the allegory that "Goblin Market" is often mistaken for children's literature.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Discuss the surface and the deeper meaning of the poem.

....

....

....

....

....

....

ii) Do you think the goblins represent the male world? If so, is the poem an attack on patriarchy? Illustrate your answer with the help of the appearance, habitat, and profession of the goblins.

....

....

....

....

....

....

iii) Highlight the connection between poetry and painting in 'Goblin Market.'

....

....

....

....

....

....

iv) Make a list of the animals mentioned in the poem and note how they are all connected with the goblins. Try and assess the symbolic value of the animal imagery

....

....

....

....

....

....

(Check your answers with these given at the end of the Unit).

3.4 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have talked about Christina Rossetti and her extremely interesting poem 'Goblin Market'. It is a simple poem and very easy to understand. However, it has a deeper connotation which represents the values of the Victorian age.

3.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i) On the surface level the poem is a story of two sisters, one of whom eats some fruit given to her by goblins and falls very ill. Eventually, her sister saves her life. On a deeper level, it is about the fall from

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 224 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

grace and subsequent redemption of women who transgress from their moral path, and how they suffer because of this.

ii) Note that the goblins inhabit a glen — a shady, mysterious place and only emerge in the dark, after sundown. Also take into account that theirs is a forbidden world into which, maidens may stray only at the risk of their lives. Besides, they are merchants engaged in selling fruit that is not normal or seasonal, but enchanted and which has a disastrous effect on any girl who eats it. This fruit is given not at an honest price, but for a lock of hair (to Laura) or forcibly thrust (as attempted in Lizzie's case). The girls are either helplessly caught in the game the goblins play or else they, like Lizzie, must remain strong and ward them off.

iii) Compare the images and colours Christina Rossetti uses for the goblins with those used for the two sisters. Note how, she uses words the way an artist would use paints.

iv) The animals mentioned are: cat, rat, snail, wombat, ratel (badge). These animals are nocturnal and vermin like. They are perceived as despicable and problem causing.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 225 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

UNIT 4 GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Structure

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Gerard Manley Hopkins: Life and Works
4.3 'Pied Beauty' (1877) (p. 1918)
    4.3.1 Introduction
    4.3.2 Poem and Glossary
    4.3.3 Analysis
4.4 'The Windhover' (1877) (p.1918)
    4.4.1 Introduction
    4.4.2 Poem and Glossary
    4.4.3 Paraphrase
    4.4.4 Discussion
4.5 Let Us Sum Up
4.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- understand Gerard Manley Hopkins the poet, his life and works
- appreciate Hopkins' poem 'Pied Beauty'
- analyze the thematic as well as technical aspects of 'The Windhover'

4.1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

The first poem 'Pied Beauty' which was written in 1887 is a curtal sonnet, which means it is shorter than the traditional sonnet. The poem glorifies God who has created 'Pied Beauty': natural beauty with spots, blotches,

dots and speckles. Hopkins is different from the rest of the Nature poets as one who loves things for their unusual quirks, personal oddities and individual qualities.

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

4.2 GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS: LIFE AND WORKS

(Born: 28 July, 1844 Essex, England – Died: 8 June, 1889 Dublin, Ireland) Gerard Manley Hopkins was, born at Stratford, Essex, England, as the eldest of nine children to Manley Hopkins and Catherine Smith, a prosperous and artistic couple. His father was, by turn, the proprietor of a marine insurance firm, the British Consul General in Hawaii, Church Warden, and a published writer and reviewer. His mother was greatly fond of music and reading. They were deeply religious High Church Anglicans and Hopkins was inclined towards asceticism from his boyhood.

Hopkins' maternal aunt Maria Smith Giberne taught him to sketch. His talent was promoted by many and his first ambition was to be a painter. His early training in visual arts later helped him when Hopkins became a poet. While he was studying at the Highgate boarding school, he composed his first poem, 'The Escorial', at the age of ten, inspired by John Keats.

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

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

Hopkins went to learn theology at St. Beuno's Jesuit House in North Wales, which had a lasting influence on his creativity. There he came across Welsh poetry from which he fashioned his unique 'sprung rhythm'. At the encouragement of his superior, Hopkins broke his silence of seven

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 227 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

years to write 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' which praised the heroic self sacrifice of a group of Franciscan nuns whose ship sank in a storm. Though conventional in theme, the poem was daringly experimental, where he realized "the echo of a new rhythm" which he named "sprung rhythm".

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

Stanza 3 'The Wreck of the Deutschland'

You will notice the uneven lines, rhythmic and verbal effects and unusual word combinations. However, the poem was not published, as it was rejected by the Jesuit magazine. He continued to write poetry but these were read only in manuscript form by his friends. After working as a parish priest, teacher and preacher in several churches and institutions, Hopkins was appointed Professor of Greek Literature at University College, Dublin. He found the environment uncongenial and he was unhappy and overworked. In 1885, he started writing a series of sonnets beginning with "Carrion Comfort" that mirror his anguish, desolation and frustration and are known as "terrible sonnets". They showcase the great dilemma he felt in reconciling his immense fascination for the sensuous world and the equally powerful devotion to religious vocation.

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

Check Your Progress 1

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

....

....

....

....

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

....

....

....

....

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 228 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

iii) What was the immediate reason for the writing of the 'Wreck of the Deutschland'?

....

....

....

....

(Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.)

4.3 'PIED BEAUTY' (1877)

4.3.1 Introduction

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

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

4.3.2 Poem and Glossary

PIED BEAUTY

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

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

Glossary

dappled	:	spotted, speckled, pied, multi-coloured
couple-colour	:	two colours
brinded	:	also brindled; brownish yellow or gray coat with spots or streaks of darker colour
rose-moles	:	reddish spots on the skin
stipple	:	pattern of spots; a device in painting which marks a surface with numerous dots or specks
trout	:	a fish related to salmon
finch	:	a small bird
fallow	:	uncultivated land
tackle	:	equipment or gear for fishing
trim	:	equipment
counter, original, spare or strange	:	things which are unconventional and strange
adazzle	:	dazzling (Hopkins' coinage)
fathers-forth	:	creates, begets

4.3.3 Analysis

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

Hopkins starts with a eulogy of Lord the creator: "Glory be to God for dappled things". This is followed by an inventory of things which are dappled or spotted. He includes in this list, the sky that is dappled at dawn, with blotches of blue colour splashed against pale white, the contrast described as 'couple-colour' by Hopkins. It reminds him of "brinded cow" or 'brindled' or 'piebald' cow, whose hide is again a contrast of brown against white. Then he describes the trout fish which swims, that has its body painted [stippled] with rose coloured moles. The next image, a complex one, is of a chestnut, the meaty interior cradled within its hard shell falling out, hiding its smouldering brilliance like coals in a fire, black on the outside, but glowing within as it splits and falls. The tiny birds, finches, are multicoloured usually with specks on their wings; and the landscape of a farmland, enclosed in patches, forms a pattern according to the way in which it is cultivated or left fallow or freshly ploughed. The last example in the octave is taken from the world of man, where the tools and equipments of his trade, make a dappled pattern in their variety. Hopkins places man in his context – he is only a part of the extensive natural world. And even human achievements such as trade, gear, tackle and trim, can be seen only as a part of the larger scheme of things.

In the final five lines, Hopkins goes beyond the physical characteristics of the things he has described, and delves into their natures or moral qualities. Thus all things, highly original, unconventional and strange, whether they are freckled or fickle, with all their attributes of swiftness or slowness,

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 230 6/21/2021 11:41:07 AM

sweetness or sourness, brightness or dimness, come from him, the creator. In their multiplicity, the creatures affirm the permanence and immutability of God the father, and inspire the world to "Praise Him."

Hopkins follows the adulatory style of the Psalmist in the Old Testament in the opening line. Interestingly, he also ends on a note of veneration: "Praise him!" These opening and closing lines with their parallelism, rework the mottos of Jesuits, "to the greater Glory of God" and "praise to God always", making the poem akin to a ritual observance, thus giving it a traditional flavour. This tempers the unorthodoxy of the appreciation – the poets' fascination for dappled or spotted things.

The parallelism in the first and the last lines, correspond to the larger symmetry of the poem: the octave, starting with praise, moves on to a laudatory inventory of creatures; the sestet, starts with a description of the characteristics of creatures and ends by praising the creator. The poem runs on like an extended sentence, the long predicate that resembles a list, at last yields to a striking verb of creation in the penultimate sentence – "fathers-forth" – which is the volta, of the sonnet (In sonnets, the volta, or turn, is a rhetorical shift or dramatic change in thought and/or emotion), leading the reader to acknowledge the ultimate subject, God the creator. It takes the theological position that the great variety in the created word is a testimony to the infinite power of the Creator. It also takes a polemic/political stance against the uniformity and standardization which was a feature of Victorian society, by appreciating differences summed up in "fickle, freckled". Neither is Hopkins' appreciation merely an aesthetic one. By juxtaposing 'fickle' with 'freckled', Hopkins introduces a moral tenor, which imbues a mere physical description with a deeper and denser significance. It calls for an acceptance of unsightly and quirky things as beautiful creations of God. That their particular individualizing attributes are of mysterious derivation is brought to attention by Hopkins in the parenthetical musing: "who knows how?", hinting at its divine origin. Thus Hopkins deviates from conventional romanticism which sees beauty only in conventionally beautiful things.

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

Check Your Progress 2

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

....

....

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 231 6/21/2021 11:41:08 AM

....

....

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

....

....

....

....

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

....

....

....

....

(Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.)

4.4 'THE WINDHOVER' (1877)

4.4.1 Introduction

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

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

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

Hopkins considered 'The Windhover', "the best thing [he] ever wrote". Hopkins avoids the 'same and tame' cadence of conventional poetry which

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 232 6/21/2021 11:41:08 AM

he calls, Parnassian poetry, and writes in sprung rhythm making his poem come fierce and alive. (Parnassian poetry is competent poetry written without much inspiration. As from the heights of Parnassus, mountain sacred to the Muses according to Greek mythology). The poem with its vivid and condensed images, its words twisted out of present day meanings, to accommodate archaic ones, lends itself to several interpretations. We will read more about them when we discuss the poem in detail. Now let's read the poem carefully, not once but two or three times, with the help of the glossary given beneath.

4.4.2 Poem and Glossary

THE WINDHOVER

To Christ our Lord

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

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

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

Glossary

minion : darling, favourite

dauphin : crown prince or heir to the throne of France

Falcon : is a raptor [bird of prey], belonging to the family of falco, with sharp talons and curved beak. The kestrel which belongs to this family has brown coloured plumage. Falcons are used for the hunting game called falconry with the help of a trained bird of prey. There is a covert reference to the game in the poem.

wimpling : with folds, like in a wimple [a gathered head-dress for nuns]

buckle : 1) to fasten; 2) to give way under strain

chevalier : a knight; a chivalrous man; a cavalier

sillion : furrow; soil turned over by a plough; "sillion" is a medieval term for the small strip of land granted to monasteries to farm.

vermillion : a brilliant scarlet red colour

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 233 6/21/2021 11:41:08 AM

4.4.3 Paraphrase

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

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

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

Check Your Progress 3

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

....

....

....

....

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

....

....

....

....

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

....

....

....

....

(Check your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.)

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 234 6/21/2021 11:41:08 AM

4.4.4 Discussion

- The 'I' mentioned in the poem can be the poet himself, or the persona of the poet.
- The poem is mimetic and visual. The poet tries to capture the movement of the falcon through a series of verbal shots – montages. Montage is a cinematic term; it is a device in editing, which combines different shots to create a scene.
- The word 'caught' is extremely significant. The poet does not use tame words like 'saw' or 'beheld'. 'Caught' is in keeping with the image of falcon, which catches the prey. It is an epiphanic moment, when the inscape of the bird is 'caught' in the mind of the writer, with all its permutations, in a split second.
- The first line is an enjambment – a run on line – which spills over from the first to the second.
- The soundscapes of Hopkins' poem help us to 'catch' the inscape of the bird.
- Notice the alliterative repetition of /d/ sounds in the second line, they sound like a drum roll, accompanying the entry of a king, in this case, the dauphin.
- Also notice the repetition of sibilants in the line: "off forth on swing /As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend". Can you hear the sound of the skates cutting through the ice, as it glides over it?
- The bird by rebuffing the wind achieves or masters something in his successful negotiation. It is this act that fascinates the poet, whose heart comes out of hiding. But stepping out of one's ego and inhabiting another creature, as the poet does here, grants one sacramental joy of being alive.
- Hopkins uses synaesthetic images. The visual, auditory and tactile images are very effectively evoked. We can see, hear, and touch very vividly and clearly.
- The poem captures in detail, words and images of medieval chivalric culture: minion, dauphin, dappled, falcon, wimple, chevalier and sillion.
- Wimple – folded cloth – is part of a nun's headdress, which presses against her temples and keeps her hair back. In other words, the bird is exulting not only in the freedom of the air, but also in the resistance or the friction offered by it.
- In the line: "Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume", in order to make sense, you have to connect 'brute beauty' to 'plume' [the reddish brown plumage of kestrel which conveys its brute beauty; 'valour' to 'air' [air of bravery] and 'act' to 'pride'[proud act].
- The sonnet is in the Petrarchan mode. The octave presents the bird's flight. The sestet is an open avowal of the greater majesty of Christ, the chevalier.
- The poem is thematically, structurally and syntactically very challenging to the reader. But rewarding too.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Check Your Progress 4

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

....

....

....

....

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

....

....

....

....

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

....

....

....

....

(Check your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.)

4.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have been introduced to the life of Gerard Manley Hopkins, and examined two poems written by him. Both the poems are sonnets, but the first one is a curtal sonnet, while the second is written in the Petrarchan mode. We hope that you will be able to distinguish the features of both. We also hope that reading these poems has whetted your curiosity and appetite for more of Hopkins' poems.

4.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i) 'The Escorial'; at the age of ten.

ii) Cardinal Newman, one of the major figures of the Oxford movement or the Tractarianism, which resulted in the rise of Anglo-Catholicism; *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*

iii) The sinking of the ship Deutschland, which resulted in the martyrdom of five Franciscan Nuns, who sacrificed their lives to save others; and the urging of Hopkins' superior, to write a poem to commemorate the event

Check Your Progress 2

i) Read Stanza 1 of the poem; Check paragraph 2 in the analysis of the poem

BEGC-110_3rd Proof.indb 236 6/21/2021 11:41:08 AM

ii) Fathers-forth

iii) Any of the examples in the last paragraph of the analysis.

Check Your Progress 3

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

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

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

Check Your Progress 4

i) Minion, dauphin, falcon, wimpling, chevalier, sillion

ii) Morning's minion, kingdom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn falcon

iii) The ploughshare which shines due to friction when it cuts deep into the sillion; the ash-covered ember that glows gold-vermilion when it falls and breaks.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY