

**ALTERNATIVE ENGLISH**

**COURSE : ALTE – 101/102**

**B.A. General & Honours (1<sup>st</sup> Semester)/B.Com**

**BLOCK - I**

**G. B. SHOW : ARMS & THE MAN**

**Directorate of Open and Distance Learning**

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**ALTERNATIVE ENGLISH**  
**COURSE : ALTE – 101**  
**ARMS & THE MAN**

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**ARMS & THE MAN**

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## **BLOCK INTRODUCTION**

English drama had its origin in the religious plays of the Middle Ages called the Mystery and Miracle plays and it has passed through various stages of development. These plays were enactments of episodes of the Bible or of the lives of saints. Then came the Morality plays and Interludes as sources of entertainment for the medieval masses. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of Renaissance English drama entered the artistic phase which was largely secular in character, that is, it came out of the control of the church. Now tragedies, comedies and history plays were written. Theatre houses were developed to stage these dramas. During the Elizabethan period (1559-1603) drama became the dominant form of literature in England. Dramatists like Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Christopher Marlowe and others wrote great plays during this period. However during the mid-seventeenth century drama declined due to the Puritan rule (1649-1660) as theatres were closed down by the rulers for religious reasons. But after the restoration of monarchy the ban on theatre was lifted and the theatres began to be operative again. A new type of play came into being during this period called 'The Comedy of Manners'. Again in 18<sup>th</sup> century drama declined as a result of a royal policy of permitting only two play houses to remain operative. This discouraged free production of dramas. Nineteenth century was not very encouraging either and very few real good plays came out during this period. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, few English dramas were being written, except for 'closet drama', plays intended to be presented privately rather than on stage.

This substantially affected production of legitimate drama in England. A change came in the Victorian era with the profusion of London stages which staged farces, musical extravaganzas and comic operas. The twentieth century brought a sea change in the theme and structure of the play as it was an age of diverge influences. George Bernard Shaw is one of the exponents of modern drama. Now let us take up a detailed study of his play, *Arms and the Man*, prescribed for you.

*Arms and the Man* is a play that has no real imitators in English drama. It is a unique achievement of the playwright. He had demolished all the established norms cherished by conventional society. The glory of love and war without rationality has been challenged. It is often called as an Anti-Romantic play.

*Arms and the Man* is George Bernard Shaw's earliest plays written in 1894 when he was 38 years old. The success of this play has been consistent right from its first production. This play established Shaw's reputation as a leading playwright of the twentieth century. Shaw employs irony in the title of this play taken from the opening lines of the epic poem *The Aeneid* written in 19 century B.C by Roman poet Virgil—of arms and the man I sing... in which Virgil glorifies war. However Shaw proposes to attack the romantic idea of war and heroism in this play. He presents a realistic account of war and attempts to remove all pretensions of nobility from war. However, it is not an anti-war play; instead, it is a scathing satire on those attitudes glorifying war.

Hope, you will enjoy reading the play!

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The structure of this block is as under:

**UNIT – 1** An Introduction to George Bernard Shaw & drama in the twentieth century.

**UNIT – 2** *Arms and the Man*: introduction, and major themes.

**UNIT – 3** *Arms and the Man*: act-wise summary & major characters.

**UNIT-1**  
**AN INTRODUCTION TO GEORGE**  
**BERNARD SHAW & DRAMA IN THE**  
**TWENTIETH CENTURY**

**STRUCTURE**

- 1.0 Objectives
  - 1.1 Introduction
  - 1.2 George Bernard Shaw's Life
  - 1.3 His Early Education
  - 1.4 Shaw's Emergence in Literary field
  - 1.5 Shaw : As a Member of Zetetical Society
  - 1.6 Shaw and the Socialists
  - 1.7 Shaw's Marriage
  - 1.8 Shaw's Popularity
  - 1.9 Shaw's Personality and Character
  - 1.10 Reasons for the Growth of Drama in the Twentieth Century
  - 1.11 Main Characteristics of Modern Prose Drama
  - 1.12 Growth and Development of Modern Prose Drama
  - 1.13 Major plays of Shaw
- References
- Key Words
- Self Assessment Questions
- Suggested Readings

## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit helps you to understand the Modern drama of which G. B Shaw is one of the chief representatives. After going through this unit you should be in a position to :

- *recognize* the distinctive growth of modern prose drama
- *distinguish* the diverse cross-currents and influences of modern drama on the playwrights
- *relate* Shaw's life and learning with his works
- *outline* Shaw's literary life

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

G. B. Shaw the eminent dramatist in English literature was born at 3, Upper Synge Street, Dublin, on Saturday, July 26, 1856. He was the only son and the youngest of the three children of George Carr Shaw and his wife, Lucinda Elizabeth Gurly. Shaw was born in a protestant family. He had a number of uncles and aunts. His father was a second cousin to a baronet. His mother was the daughter of country gentleman. Whereas George Carr Shaw was a happy-go-lucky merchant, Lucinda was a capable and practical woman and had to try hard to make both ends meet. The parents of Shaw were poor simply because they had a position to keep up without enough money to keep it on.

## 1.2 GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S LIFE

Shaw once wrote: "I am supposed to be descended from Macduff and although I am not subject to feudal feelings, it pleases me that an ancestor of mine is a character in one of Shakespeare's plays." Actually, Shaw's father, George Carr Shaw, belonged to a family that had some aristocratic connections and the Shaw's with a strong clan feeling and not a little sense of superiority insisted on the children remaining aloof from the children of the vulgar people around. This snobbishness on the part of the family was responsible for instilling into the mind of Shaw a strong hatred of respectability.

Shaw's father was a drunkard and tippler. He did not care much about the family. Lucinda, Shaw's mother was almost half of her husband's age. Before her marriage, she did not know that her husband was so much addicted to drinking. Shaw's mother spent time in music and derived her consolation from music. Her married happiness was completely wrecked. Shaw was deeply influenced by his mother and inherited from her his sense and imaginative gift. Shaw describes his mother in the following manner: "She was from the technical point of view of a modern welfare worker, neither a mother nor a wife, and could only be classed as a Bohemian anarchist with lady-like habits".

It was George John Vandaleur Lee from whom his mother, learnt music. Shaw was influenced unconsciously by music. He became a competent critic of music as well as a master phonetician of the English language because of this influence.

When Lee shifted from Dublin, Shaw's mother also shifted with him; and they put up together in the same house. Shaw also took shelter there, and naturally he had the opportunity of attending many of the rehearsals of music in his mother's house. Shaw actually got by heart some of the operas, and oratorios and orchestral masterpieces of music composed by Beethoven, Gluck, Gounod, Handel, Mozart, Verdi and others.

The home in which Shaw was brought up was not a happy one. It was a graceless house, ill-mannered and impecunious. That is why; Shaw never got out of his bones the chill of poverty. Shaw's was a home where there was no love and little affection. It was ruled by a disillusioned young woman who had neither taste nor talent for domesticity, and was married to a furtive drunkard. This neglected life of the children had one advantage. They themselves moulded their character independently.

### **1.3 HIS EARLY EDUCATION**

Miss Caroline Hill was Shaw's first private tutor. She gave him the early education. Shaw's uncle, Mr. Carrol taught him Latin. Then he studied at the Wesley Connexional School, now known as the Wesley College. He was an average student in the class. His teachers considered him "a source of idleness in others, distracting them from their studies by interminable comic stories about a character".

Shaw was educated in the elementary schools. The first was the Dublin Wesleyan Connexional School, and the second was the Central Model Boys' School, Dublin. While at School, he used to feel very much shocked and ashamed to mark the attitude of the Protestants towards the Roman Catholics. His school-career ended in 1871, when he got the job of a junior clerk in the office of estate in Dublin on a petty salary of eighteen shillings a month which, of course, was raised after a year of service to forty shillings per month. Later on, he was employed as a cashier on a salary of one pound a week. Shaw's employers certified that he was a man of great business capacity, strict accuracy in accounts, and also perfectly reliable and trustworthy. But to his bad luck; his employees used to object to his discussions of politics and religion in the office. That is why they demanded a pledge from him to the effect that he would not indulge in such discussions while he would be working in his office. This pledge pinched Shaw's conscience because he felt that he was robbed of his freedom of speech, and therefore, he resigned his job. He left Dublin in 1872 and went to London to live with his mother and his sister Lucy.

### **1.4 SHAW'S EMERGENCE IN LITERARY FIELD**

Shaw spent his first months in London in learning his way about the place. He had spent all the money previously earned. His sister Lucy requested her mother to turn Shaw out if he did not seek a remunerative job. He thus became a musical critic of an unimportant weekly paper called *The Hornet*.

Thrown out of employment, Shaw set himself down to writing novels. His first novel was aptly titled as *Immaturity* (1879). It was not accepted for publication. Meanwhile, Shaw's cousin, Fanny Johnstone, a novelist of some repute in her time, introduced him to Arnold White, manager and secretary of the Edison Telephone Company of London, who offered him an apprenticeship "to be instructed in the profession of a telephone engineer."

In 1879, Shaw joined in a telephone Company. But within less than six months, he was promoted and his salary was raised at least twice. Later on, he had to lose his job because of some changes in the firm. He was offered reinstatement, but he refused to accept as he wanted to devote himself entirely to writing. He again began to write novels. He wrote *The Irrational Know*, *Love Among the Artists*, *Cashed Byron's Profession* and *An Unsocial socialist*.

### 1.5 AS A MEMBER OF ZETETICAL SOCIETY

Shaw came in touch with James Lecky who was an authority on music and musical instruments. He took him to a debating society called the Zetetical Society, the word Zetetical means seeking, presumably for the truth. Here Bernard Shaw made his first speech. It was at the Society that he met Sidney James, Beatrice Webb, with Sydney Oliver. Later on, these three became close friends and exercised a considerable influence on the world and a profound influence on British affairs.

### 1.6 SHAW AND THE SOCIALISTS

Shaw, on inspiration from Henry Mayer Hyndman, went to the British Museum to study Karl Marx's *Das Capital* in French original. It was in the British Museum that he first saw William Archer. He became friendly with him. The reading of Marx attracted Shaw towards Socialism. On 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1884, the Fabian Society came into existence as an offshoot of a society founded in 1883 by a group of followers of John Davidson's Fellowship of the New Life. This society tried to find out the answer of the question "why are the many poor?" Shaw was elected a member of the Fabian Society on September 5, 1884. Shaw along with Sidney Webb, Sidney Oliver and Graham Wallace influenced the affairs of the Society a great deal and gave it its literary reputation and its intellectual bias.

Shaw and Sydney Webb brought about certain important changes in the Fabian Society. Webb was an upper-division civil servant; he had an ultimate knowledge of administration. He had a gigantic memory, and also a very logical mind. Sidney and his wife Beatrice Webb carried on very important social investigations particularly with reference to the Poor Law and Local Government organization. Shaw became a fast friend of Webb. He says about Webb, "Quite the wisest thing I ever did was to force my friendship on him and to keep it; for from that time I was not merely futile to Shaw but to a committee of Webb and Shaw. The difference between Shaw with Webb's brains, knowledge and official experience and Shaw by himself was enormous. But as I was and am an



incorrigible histrionic mountebank, and Webb was the simplest of geniuses, I was often in the centre of the stage whilst he was invisible in the prompter's box. But then, in our honest opinion, Webb with all his knowledge, intellect and researches, could never have influenced the world had not Shaw been with him."

William Archer was another person with whom Shaw cultivated permanent friendship. Archer was a drama critic. He was the first to translate Ibsen's plays. Archer was attracted towards Shaw because Shaw was free from superstition. It was Archer who got Shaw his first job in the world of art. It was William Archer who inspired Shaw to write plays in place of novels. He suggested to him that they should collaborate in a play. "Archer confessed that, although he could construct a plot for a play, he could not write dialogue with any life in it; G. B. S. confessed that although he could write reams of flashing dialogue, he could not construct a plot. It seemed, then that heaven had intended them to join their talents together...The collaboration failed, chiefly because G.B.S was obviously incapable of collaborating with anybody. As well might the Falls of Niagara seek to collaborate with a barge as Shaw seeks to collaborate with Archer."

### **1.7 SHAW'S MARRIAGE**

Women hovered around Shaw like moths around a flame. He often dallied with their affection. He thus earned a reputation of being a philanderer and his passion was paper-

passion. Most of the time the women were the hunters and he hunted. Women exercised a great influence on him, and shaped his views on love and marriage.

Shaw had his first experience of love while he was staying in Dublin after his mother had deserted his father. He fell in love with a dark lady, but the lady had a sister. She wanted to marry Shaw to her sister, but Shaw declined the offer.

Shaw met Charlotte Frances Payne-Townshend in 1896. Her father was a member of the family of estate-agents by whom Bernard Shaw had been employed. She was a woman of great character and firmness of will and was dissimilar to Shaw in every respect. She felt discontentment with her life as an idle rich woman. When Shaw met her, she was more than thirty-eight. The fat years of Shaw had already begun. He was quite well off when he met 'Charlotte. They felt instantly attracted. At this stage of life, Shaw was tired of love-affairs and required a long rest.

In April 1898; Shaw, who had been overworking, broke down badly. A trivial injury to his foot, caused by a tightly-laced shoe, developed into necrosis of the bone and required two operations. For eighteen months, Shaw was on crutches. When Charlotte came to know about his leg-injury, she came back from Rome, cancelling her tour round the world with the Webbs. She visited him in Fitzroy Square and was appalled to see his room. She told him to go along with her to her house in the country where she would see that he was properly looked after. "But G.B.S. was careful of her reputation. If he was to go to her house, she must go to the

registrar and give notice of their marriage, which she did.” On June 1, 1898, the two were married. Shaw was then forty-two and Charlotte forty-one.

But this marriage was never consummated. Charlotte had a horror of sexual relations. Had Shaw been firmer, he would have overcome her - He paid her numerous little attentions. Charlotte however gave a settled and peaceful home but no children of course. Shaw’s life after Charlotte’s death was empty.

### **1.8 SHAW’S POPULARITY**

From 1894 onwards, Shaw’s work began to gain popularity. He published his own plays. He got first recognition as a dramatist in America with, *The Devil’s Disciple*. In 1904, he witnessed an extraordinary resurgence of dramatic literature to his credit. In the same year Shaw was adopted as a Progressive candidate for the London County Council. His constituency was South St. Pancras which Shaw had represented in the Vestry and its successor, the Borough Council. Shaw lost the election because he refused to conceal his opinions on certain local issues. Shaw had written almost all his best works by 1926. It was in this year that he was awarded the *Nobel Prize*. He did not accept honorary degrees, nor did he accept the Order of Merit awarded to him. He visited Russia and South Africa. He admired Russia and on his return said that heaven had been established in Russia. He also visited America.

After the death of Charlotte in 1943, Shaw’s life was completely withdrawn from the world in which he had flourished with so much vigour and gay abundance of mind and experience. He died on November 2, 1950, because of a broken leg and kidney trouble. He left substantial amount of money for improving English alphabet and spelling. The rest of his money was to be divided among the British’ Museum, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and the National Gallery of Ireland. Shaw wanted his body to be cremated and the ashes to be mingled with those of his wife. These together were to be scattered in the garden of his house at Ayot, St. Lawrence. This was done and the Westminster Abbey was deprived of the honour of holding the last remains of an illustrious man. W. H. Davies pays tribute “that cold practical thought, which is only common sense, but which, coming at the Psychological moment, when another people have lost their heads, reaches the height of a divine philosophy.” (W. H. Davies).

### **1.9 SHAW’S PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER**

In the words of G.K. Chesterton, “The brain of Bernard Shaw was like a wedge in the literal sense. Its sharpest end was always in front: and it split our society from end to end the moment it had entrance at all. As I have said he was long unheard of; but he had the tragedy of many authors, who were heard of long before they were heard When you had read any Shaw you read all Shaw. When you had seen one of his plays you waited for more. And when he brought them

out in volume form, you did what is repugnant to any literary man-you bought a book”

Of himself, Shaw said, “They will tell me that so-and-so is no charlatan. Well, I am. Like all dramatists, I am a natural born mountebank.” And of his superior talent, “I know of no man, with the possible exception of Homer, for whose intelligence, in comparison with my own, I have more contempt than love for Shakespeare.” His contempt for Americans, whom he had never met, became wrathful when his *Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*, staged in 1935, answered from across the sea: “Any reporter who has become stage-struck by seeing a dozen crude melodramas thinks himself qualified to deal with Sophocles, Shakespeare, Goethe, Ibsen and Tolstoy, to say nothing of myself.”

George Bernard Shaw is a myth and a maze: he is a legend. In *Sixteen Self-Sketches*, he speaks of himself: “G.B. S. is not a real person, he is a legend’ created by myself, a pose, a reputation. The real Shaw is not a bit like him.” Outwardly, he appears to be aggressive in his views and manners, a person who is always ready to correct and contradict others and one who dreads emotions. The real man however is quite different. As a man he was shy. When he was young, many women loved him, but he always felt nervous. He was pursued. Things swam before him when he made his maiden speech. He remained hidden and obscure while guests came to his house, though his wife tried very hard to persuade him to appear before the guests.

Both as a man and as a writer Shaw was a sympathizer of the poor. As a child he was taken to slums by the nurse, who went there to visit her friends secretly. The sight of poverty hurt his sensitive soul so much that he became a most determined enemy of poverty. He had sympathy for the underdogs of society. He had a large heart. He did more for his friends than they were willing to do. A unique thing noticed about him was that he would offer help even before it was demanded. If anyone showed him kindness in his need, he would remain grateful to him throughout his life.

Shaw was unique in many things. Yet he was ordinary and humble. He told his biographer Archibald Henderson: “Tell people I am really a normal, quiet, work-a-day sort of fellow, and that the most extraordinary thing about me is my ordinariness.” But Shaw was a mystery. Behind the mask of the clown was a most serious man. He was serious about everything he talked about, however flippant and light-hearted he might appear and he was never more serious when he was apparently flippant and unreasonably jocular.

Shaw was a man of good habits. He was a teetotaler. He also gave up eating meat. Eating meat for him was making one’s stomach a tomb for dead beasts. He hated cruelty of every kind. He was, against cruelty to animals. He dreaded emotion because he was a man of deep attachment and emotional nature. Many of his devoted friendships reveal his loving nature. He took great trouble throughout his life to show that he was superior to common affection and ordinary human sentiments, but he was intensely emotional.

Shaw loved wit and humour. He was a jocular fellow. His friend Granville Baker once rightly remarked, "You certainly are a merry fellow." He delighted in provoking and contradicting others. He affected levity; put a premium on impiety and impudence and challenged gods and established customs and institutions. There was in him irrepressible and boisterous laughter. The whole world appeared to him a vast comedy. Jokes and fun were used not only to cover up his great seriousness and agitated feelings but they were quite natural to him. He had an immense feeling for fun. His love for boisterous laughter increased during his old age. In the plays written after *Saint Joan*, there is much that is boisterous, farcical and funny. "G.B.S. laughed with his whole body. His laughter would start in his feet, which seemed to dance, and ran up his long legs, shaking them thoroughly as it ran, and then it caught hold of his shoulders and almost shook them off. Then he would fling up his arms, smiting his hands together as if they were cymbals, and his legs would begin to be riotous. Chesterton's laughter was a bubble and squeak in comparison with G.B.S.'s. He would chuckle like a child, but his body, being too fat, could not heave itself about as G.B.S.'s did. G.B.S. spread an infection of laughter all around him, and could make Charlotte cry with laughing." (St. John Ervine) - Professor Gilbert Murray called Shaw the man "who has filled many Lands, with Laughter."

Shaw was a rebel and an iconoclast. He was conservative in habits and appearance, but a rebel in mind. Like Shelley, he wanted to remake the world. He wanted to demolish old institutions and erect new ones in their place. He struck at

every existing convention and exposed its absurdity and uselessness. He discarded compromise. He was "the complete rebel in his mind, was remarkably conservative in his general behaviour."

Shaw was a great genius. His interests were multifarious. He was a cyclonic genius that swept away everything that came before it. He was a dramatist, a novelist, a philosopher, a Fabian socialist, a literary critic, a theologian and a musical expert. He was an enigmatic figure whom it was difficult to agree with and more difficult to understand. He was fully aware of his importance and once said that two events of tremendous importance which happened in the mid-nineteenth-century were his birth and the writing of a line by Tennyson: "God fulfils in many ways."

Shaw possessed a rare kind of intellect. He was witty and full of paradoxes. His knowledge was almost encyclopaedic. The face that Shaw put up was that of an aggressive, cold and rational materialist. He himself said: "Whether it be that I was born mad or a little too sane, my kingdom was not of this world: I was at home only with the mighty dead. Therefore, I had to become an actor, and create for myself a fantastic personality, fit and apt for dealing with men, and adaptable to the vigorous part I had to play as an author, journalist, creator, politician, committee man, man of the world, and so forth."

Shaw believed in free sex. Marriage to him was only a legal prostitution. He had several affairs with a number of women such as Alice Lockett, Jenny Patterson, Grace Gilchrist,

Florence Farr, May Morris, Ellen Terry and Charlotte to whom he was married. Thus Shaw earned the reputation of being a philanderer.

Nevertheless Shaw was a great genius, free from moral, social and ethical inhibitions. He was progressive and evolutionary. An optimist in an age of scepticism and disintegration of values, he promised a future in which life will be an intellectual ecstasy surpassing the ecstasies of saints and assured that even the dullest fools have some glimmer of it. The will he had left shows how simple and unpretentious he was. He had real love and sympathy for the poor and the down-trodden.

Shaw's fifty-three plays, five novels, several volumes of literary and social essays reflect his varied experience of life he had. His experiences remain as varied as the careers he had changed. He attacked all sorts of evils—social, religious, political and moral in his plays. He dealt with themes as complex and contemporary as prostitution, land-lordism, sex-marriage relations, monarchy-democracy debate that he earned for himself a reputation of a propagandist.

### **Check Your Progress**

How far has the membership of Fabian Society responsible for Shaw's socialist ideas?

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## **1.10 REASONS FOR THE GROWTH OF DRAMA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

Let us now study the reasons behind the emergence of prose drama as a source of entertainment as well as a medium of social message. The modern English drama in prose is known as the problem play because it deals with all kinds of problems. These problems relate to social, political, economic, religious, and scientific. The modern drama is also known as the drama of ideas because it is an intellectual exercise, discussing various viewpoints and also offering arguments for and against the viewpoints. It was Henrik Ibsen who profoundly influenced the modern English drama.

The beginning years of the 20th century witnessed the emergence of drama as a powerful literary force. Drama became more powerful than it was in the Victorian era. It began to sprout in new forms and new ways. Gradual disappearance of the ancient prejudice against theatre-going, a welcome relaxation of the censorship, a steady rise in standards of judgement due to the spread of education, an increase 'in leisure in the life of the ordinary man and woman, a deepening conviction that a certain amount of recreation is natural right of every human-being, and the remarkable competence in the theatre for amusement as well as the emergence of luminaries such as John Galsworthy and Shaw were the main factors responsible for the growth of modern English drama as a powerful literary force. We should also recognize the influence of the new producer with his theories of drama as a composite art.....a synthesis of all arts. The

arrival of the new scenic artist and the stage-electrician has revolutionized production of drama. But the greatest factor is the change in the dramatist himself. The modern dramatist takes drama too seriously. His purpose is the interpretation of life and play-writing has become an art as well as a craft. There has been a new renaissance for the growth of English drama in the 20th century. In quality as well as in quantity, the twentieth century has been a rich dramatic age. Different kinds of drama have been written during this period. On the one hand, prose drama in its naturalistic and realistic form has seen its hey day at the hands of Galsworthy and Shaw. On the other hand, poetic drama has flourished at its best in the hands of Yeats, Eliot and Fry.

### **1.11 MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MODERN PROSE DRAMA**

Modern prose drama, popularly known as 'the naturalistic', 'realistic', 'problem drama', or the 'drama of ideas' has become the mirror of modern life. Its central theme is bread and butter. The hero of the modern play is a rebel; he rebels against the present sordid world-order that has made a few happy and prosperous, and millions unhappy and miserable. He rebels against the wrong and unjust economic system that makes the society divided into the two parts of Haves and Have-nots. "Constantly questioning, constantly restless and dissatisfied seem the characters of these plays, especially when they are placed by the side of their predecessors, the placid heroes and clinging heroines of romantic drama." The hero

of the modern drama is by and large an ordinary creature, a common man.

Products of a period so keenly aware of social problems, these naturalistic and realistic drama deal with problems, social, domestic, or personal. Sometimes, they relate to the problems of religion, of youth and age, of labour and capital, and of sex and marriage. They treat love and sex scientifically. Victorian values about love and sex have been set aside by the modern dramatists. Class-war is also freely dealt with by these dramatists. The plays of naturalistic dramatists are true and real pictures of contemporary society.

These plays are the dramas of ideas and contain many a time long debates on the pros and cons of a problem. They contain vivid, full and faithful stage directions which conjure up in the minds of the readers the setting and atmosphere. These plays also preserve like the Greek dramas unities of time, place and action.

The New Drama is also remarkable for its keen interest in psychology. It is intellectual in appeal. 'Before the last decade of the nineteenth-century, Love had reigned as the queen of the theatre. But now Love was pulled down from this pedestal. Other themes were made use of and drama gained from this change. It assumed reality, naturalness, strength, maturity and variety. The lead in this was given once again by Ibsen's plays and by those of George Bernard Shaw who was bent on ousting the Love-goddess from the theatre.

The New Drama was not purposeless; it differed from Oscar Wilde's statement that art is neither moral nor immoral but

amoral. Shaw and Galsworthy did not believe in art for the sake of art-principle. They were in total disagreement with the view that art is only to delight. They treated art as a vehicle of propaganda and reform.

“Turning away from the emotional clap-trap of conventional drama, the New Drama, exhibited a tendency for restraint in action. The violence on the stage that was the traditional offering to the public was discarded. Melodramatic situation

#### Check Your Progress

Discuss the characteristics of modern drama.

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and sensational events were deemed out of fashion. Instead of duels on the stage and chairs being thrown around, another kind of battle came to be accepted as battle of wits, and a clash of ideas. The New Drama offered characters airing diverse views of subject, wills in contrast to one another and intellect coming to blows. The intellectual quality of the New Drama made the atmosphere suitable for something that has now come to be looked upon as part and parcel of it— the discussion scene.

### 1.12 GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN PROSE DRAMA

“Since the days of Sheridan and Goldsmith, there had been no worthwhile comedy until Robertson attempted to present a gently ironical view of life as it really existed. But the 1890’s were a turning-point. As Prof. Surendra Sahai has observed; “The eighteen-nineties witnessed a great dramatic revolution which changed the concept of drama in its various aspects. Many favourable circumstances brought about this change towards the close of the nineteenth century but, roughly the span of this movement could be said to begin from 1865. The restriction for production of plays only at the Covent Garden and the Drury Lane and the Little Haymarket Theatre, imposed by Charles II, was removed from musical shows. Between the Restoration period and the last quarter of the nineteenth century, English drama was at its lowest ebb, the only two redeeming names being those of Sheridan and Goldsmith.

The preparation of this dramatic revolution of the eighteen nineties began amid some conditions of general dissatisfaction. The Act of 1843 was the first step in the theatre movement. Dramatic genius had been stifled for long; this Act was a step towards emancipating it. But the mere passing of an Act could not suddenly rejuvenate the stifled dramatic activity. No significant improvements were made until 1865, when Mariet Wilton and Squire Bancroft produced at the Prince of Wales’ Theatre a play, titled *Society* by a new and innovative playwright Thomas William

Robertson, which can be considered as a convenient landmark for the beginning of New Drama.

The chief characteristics of change between the drama of 1800-1865 and 1865-1900 were these: the romantic tradition in play writing and acting yielded to a realistic approach; the stage manager, director or producer now came to hold a more, dominating position than before; the writer commanded respect and actors were sought for plays rather than plays for actors as in the past; new dramatists found opportunities which now were no longer restricted to the old and famous writers; the financial returns for writers greatly increased and became at par with what writers in other branches of literature received, particularly the novel. The most important and discernible feature of the New Drama is the changing taste of the audience from that of earlier times.

Robertson's *Society* reflected all these changes. He realized the needs of his time, and the managers helped him accomplish the evolution he had designed. As A. C. Baugh has observed, "In the mid-nineteenth-century, well before the 'renovation' of the theatre associated with the names of T.W. Robertson and Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, there was a vital and developing stage-craft, albeit unaccompanied by any literary drama worthy of the name. Since evasions of the old monopolies had been permitted, or at any rate winked at, the repeal of the Licensing Act (1843) caused little or no immediately perceptible change, though in the long run the effect was wholesome. The minor theatres were already coming into prominence. Reforms for which Robertson has

often been given credit, were, it is now recognized, under way before he appeared. Apart from technical innovations in the structure of the theatres and mounting of plays, there was evidence of progress in various kinds of drama. In melodrama, the development was from vulgar staginess to a considerable degree of dignity and fidelity to reality, and in naturalistic burlesque, as performed by Mme. Vestris and Charles Matthews, a piquant contrast, between the extravagance of sentiment and situation and the quietness of acting and deportment. Before 1865, a decidedly realistic kind of set had appeared in the London theatres. What was lacking - was a playwright to provide drama giving scope to the actors of the new school."

The playwrights who contributed a great deal during the nineties were Robertson, William S. Gilbert and Sullivan. But it is from Ibsenism that modern English prose drama bloomed fully.

**Check Your Progress** Make a brief statement on the development of modern prose drama.

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### 1.13 MAJOR PLAYS OF SHAW

#### *WIDOWERS' HOUSES (1892)*

This play deals with slum-landlordism, municipal jobbery, and the pecuniary and matrimonial ties between them and the peasant people with 'independent' income who imagine that such sordid matters do not touch their own lives. The play is an economic treatise in a dramatic form. The characters represent hypocrites and humbugs. The play proved to be a failure although it gave a shock to the public because it dealt with the evils of slum landlordism. Shaw at least won sufficient notoriety or fame which served as publicity for him.

#### *THE PHILANDERER (1893)*

It is a satire on the pseudo-Ibsenites and their attitude towards women. It depicts the new woman. Dr. Paramore is a young strenuous physician, who has discovered a new disease, and is delighted when he finds people suffering from it and cast down to despair when he finds that it does not exist. In other words, it is a sharp exposure of the dangers of 'idealism', the sacrifice of people to principles. He points out that excessive idealism exists nowhere so much as in the realm of physical science. The scientist seems to be more concerned about sickness than about the sick man. This theme of Dr. Paramore's disease is at once a most farcical philosophic thing in the play.

#### *MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION (1893)*

It is a play on prostitution. But it could not be put upon the stage because of the objections raised by J.T. Green and Lord Chamberlain. According to G. K. Chesterton, "It is concerned with a coarse mother and a cold daughter: the mother drives the ordinary' and dirty trade of harlotry: the daughter does not know till the end of the atrocious origin of all her own comfort and refinement. The daughter, when the discovery is made, freezes up into an iceberg of contempt, which is indeed a very womanly thing to do so. The mother explodes into pulverizing cynicism which is also very womanly. The dialogue is drastic and sweeping; the daughter says the trade is loathsome; the mother answers that she loathes it herself; that every healthy person does loathe the trade by which she lives. And beyond question the general effect of the play is that the trade is loathsome supposing anyone to be so insensible as to require to be told of the fact. Undoubtedly, the upshot is that a brothel is a miserable business and a brothel-keeper a miserable woman. The whole dramatic art of Shaw is, in the literal sense of the word, tragicomic. I mean that the comic part comes after the tragedy." On account of the theme of the play, it was banned by the censor of plays and aroused a storm of protest from several quarters.

Mrs. Warren like her sister came out of a slum and became a prostitute and prospered exceedingly. Her

sister, Lizzy, who does not appear in the play, collected so much money out of it that she has retired to a cathedral city to live in the odour of sanctity. Mrs. Warren becomes the Managing Director of a chain of hotel-brothels, scattered about Europe and one of her directors is Sir George Crofts, a country gentleman. She keeps her only daughter Vivie, who had been educated in good schools and at Cambridge, ignorant of the source of her income. Vivie insists on her right about knowing the name of her father but her mother does not know about it. The only thing, of which she is sure, is that Sir George Crofts is not her father. The culmination comes at the moment when Crofts tells Vivie and her lover Frank Gardner that her father is the vicar of the parish and implies that Frank is her half brother. However, there is a hint at the end of the play that the vicar, who had been a scallywag in his youth, is not her father, though he could 'have been. Vivie revolts and frees herself both from her mother and her lover. She is a modern and independent minded woman. She is entirely unromantic, a woman almost certain to live perpetual virginity. She is the sort of the woman Shaw professed to admire, though none of the women with whom he philandered, was in the least like her.

#### ***ARMS AND THE MAN (1894)***

The title of this play is based on Dryden's first line of

Virgil's *Aeneid* "Of arms and the man I sing..." (*Arma virumque cano*) and written in the background of the war between Serbia and Bulgaria in November 1885. The play opens in an atmosphere of military melodrama; the dashing officer of cavalry going off to death in an attitude, the lovely heroine left in tearful rapture, the brass-band, the noise of guns and the red fire. Into all this enters Bluntschli, the little sturdy crop-haired Swiss professional soldier, a man without a country but with a trade. He tells the army-adoring heroine frankly that she is a humbug; and she, after a moment's reflection, appears to agree with him. The play is like nearly all Shaw's plays, the dialogue of a conversion. By the end of it the young lady has lost all her military illusions and admires this mercenary soldier not because he faces guns, but because he faces facts.

In this play, the dramatist opposes the romantic notions about love and war. Raina is shown to be a girl, full of romantic illusions about love and war. Her lover Sergius is on the front. She is longingly waiting for his return when in almost romantic conditions, she finds a Swiss Officer, Bluntschli, seeking shelter in her bedroom. He has no illusions about war and love and he tries to shatter those of Raina through a series of shocks. He tells her that soldiering is not a heroic profession. It is a coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong and the enemy is weak. He thinks that carrying food in the battlefield is more important than carrying cartridge and that the best thing a soldier can do

is to save his life. When Sergius, the glory of a soldier returns, he finds it difficult to keep up the air of higher love. He is disillusioned with the way of fighting a battle. Raina catches him while he was flirting with Louka. Bluntschli impresses Raina's father with his capability and efficiency. He also brings to completion Raina's process of disillusionment with romantic notions of war. She breaks off with Sergius and decides to marry Bluntschli, her 'chocolate cream soldier.'

The original title of the play intended was "Alps and Balkans" because the story is based on an incident of war between Bulgaria and Serbia. The Petkoffs represent an aristocratic Bulgarian family, consisting of Major Petkoff, his wife Catherine and their daughter Raina. There are two servants Nicola and Louka through whom Shaw also brings in the theme of social class into the play. The marriage between Louka, the maid servant, and Sergius, the aristocratic military officer reinforces Shaw's socialistic ideas.

### ***CANDIDA (1895)***

In *Candida*, Shaw attacks economic system of society. He takes its most popular institution-marriage. Marriage is only a sexual contract between a man and a woman. Woman is economically dependent on man. So she is treated like a slave. James Morell is respected in society. He is a highly cultured man. He is an ideal

husband. He is very much devoted to his wife. One day, during the normal course of events he learns that he treats his wife like a slave. But his intentions are good. He literally dotes on his wife. But marriage for them is unsound from the socialistic point of view, because there is no real love between the two.

Eugene Marchbanks, the poet, falls in love with Candida. He is Morell's rival and a fitting contrast to him. He thinks that real love cannot exist amidst drudgery and jealousy. He himself is not jealous. Candida rejects him. She decides to live with her husband. But this does not make the poet jealous. His love for Candida does not diminish. But he is firm in his belief that Morell does not deserve Candida. Eugene knows that Candida is not happy. He wants to make her happy. Candida is given the chance to choose between the poet and her husband. She opts for the latter.

Through Eugene, Shaw expresses the hollowness of respectability and its ideal of happiness. Candida returns to her husband. She lives as a respectable wife of a respectable gentleman. The appearances are kept. But all these have no reality in them. They have a hollowness inside. They do not tell what life really is. It is the poet alone who has learnt this thing. He has known that life is 'nobler than that' (happiness).

It is in some ways Shaw's masterpiece. It tackles a domestic problem and shows that it is not sentimentalism but intelligence that governs life. This

explains why Candida eventually chooses the strong Morell and not the poet, Eugene, her sentimental lover. This play has more human warmth than many of Shaw's plays and the main interest is focused on the characterization rather than on any thesis. In this play, the dramatist does not attack love. Here is another irrational thing, He says "well it can't be evaded. So let us make it as a matter of fact, as rational, in short, as possible."

***THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE (1896)***

The scene is located in New Hampshire, in a wilderness of forests and mountains through which Burgoyne leads his army to Boston, and from that city down the Hudson to Albany. Incidentally, Burgoyne is dramatized as leading a campaign of brutality and terror, which is bearing false witness against the deal because, as it happened, "gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne was especially careful to respect the rights of civilians. Here is an outline of the plot.

The evil genius of the play is an American mother of Puritan stock who has woo "a large reputation for piety" by making herself as disagreeable as possible. Her son, Dick hero of the action, is a ne'er-do-well who escapes the maternal tyranny and hypocrisy running away to become a smuggler, an outcast, a willing disciple of the devil.

One of Burgoyne's victims is a clergyman called Anderson, condemned to be hanged because he has warned American rebels of the British approach. The British forces arrest Dick thinking him to be Dick and Dick never discloses his real identity and remains as Anderson under British custody. This act of Dick leaves a deep impression on Anderson's wife Judith who meets Dick in the prison and asks if he has acted from love for her. He scornfully refutes the romantic notion, telling her that he has acted according to "the law of my own nature", which forbade him to save himself by condemning another. He is being led out to death when he is saved from the gallows by another stage-trick. The moral of the play is dramatized in the final scene, when it is proposed that Dick shall take the clergyman's place in the pulpit also, because only disciple of the devil knows how to preach true religion.

In this play, "there is the picture of a hero who is guided by his own instinctive morality and makes light of all the accepted religion of the Church. The title is not an accurate description of the hero. He is not a disciple of God, but one who does not obey God is not necessarily a disciple of the Devil. Richard Dudgeon does not belong to any Church, whether of God or of Satan; for he is a man with an original morality and is guided by his own instincts. In the society about him, he is looked down upon as an outcast. There are dark insinuations about him, but he seems to have done nothing that is positively shady. Indeed, the people who accuse him

of devilry cannot quote any particular action that is devilish. They hate and curse him, because he does not accept their religion and morality. But the one action that he performs, in the course of the play, would appear to be noble, even according to their moral code. They, however, would regard it as a deed of self-sacrifice, done at the call of a moral force which lies outside the instincts; while for him this sacrifice is only a ratification of our inner will.” (S. C. Sen Gupta).

#### ***CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA (1898)***

In *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Shaw deals with a man who is “the master of his mind, the conceiver of ideas which he manipulates for his own purposes.” Shaw’s Caesar is quite different from the Caesar of Shakespeare, arrogant and ambitious and yet bestriding “the narrow world like a Colossus.” His Cleopatra, too, is not the Cleopatra of Shakespeare, the epitome of the eternal and irresistible feminine beauty, whom age cannot wither “nor custom stale her infinite variety.”

It is a puritanical play based on war against romance and heroism. In this play, Shaw has produced a play of artistic creation in the portrait of Caesar. Caesar is a Shavian hero. Shaw represents Caesar not so much as “bestriding the earth like a Colossus,” but rather walking the earth with a sort of stern levity, lightly touching the planet and yet spurning it away like a

stone. *Caesar and Cleopatra* is a noteworthy play from many points of view. It began a new way of handling historical subjects, material, informal, humorous, yet full of meaning. The play contains many brilliant scenes and fine phrases. There is no play of Shaw more certain to hold its own on the British stage. “This play does not aim at proving any general proposition, and comes much nearer to being a play than most of his works written in dramatic form.”

The play opens with Caesar, in whom evolutionary instinct is active and who feels that his genius has been constricted by the profession of a warrior, standing before Sphinx. He meets Cleopatra, a girl of sixteen, trying to escape the invading Romans. Shaw’s heroine administers a distinct shock to those who have read Shakespeare. She is the typical school-girl, impulsive, highly strung and giggly. She believes that Romans have “long noses, and ivory tusks and little tails, and seven arms with a hundred arrows in each: and they live on human flesh.”

Cleopatra has the instinctive cruelty of a child and talks of poisoning slaves and cutting off her brother’s head. Caesar, who has weakness for women, is amused and fascinated by Cleopatra. He takes Cleopatra to his palace, reveals his identity and compels her to give up her childishness and to assume her position as a queen. He is quite practical. In the second Act, Caesar is seen demanding money from Ptolemy. In the Third Act we

find Caesar besieged on the island of Phareahes. Cleopatra hidden in a roll of bedding, is carried to Caesar. In the later Acts, we see that Achilles is defeated and Ptolemy is killed. Cleopatra is the undisputed queen and Caesar departs with the promise of sending Antony to Egypt again.

#### ***MAN AND SUPERMAN (1903)***

Walkey advised Shaw to write a play on Don Juan. Shaw accepted the advice and wrote *Man and Superman*. It is one of Shaw's most important plays. It deals half seriously, half comically with woman's pursuit of her mate. The play is Shaw's first statement of his idea of the Life Force working through human-being toward perfection; and this, he feels here, can be reached only by the selective breeding which will eventually produce the superman. . The play is unconventional in its construction, especially in the Third Act, entitled "Don Juan in Hell", but it is a fine drama and contains three notable characters in Ann Whitefield, John Tanner, and Emery Straker.

*Man and Superman* is a matured work of Shaw. "In it," says A. C. Ward, "the ideas are more memorable than the character, and "there is little reliance upon stage-situation; but the tremendous stirring of moral and intellectual passion is compensational enough." In this play, the dramatist suggests a way of salvation for the human race through obedience to the Life Force, the

term he uses to indicate a power continually working upon the hearts of men and endeavouring to impel them towards better and fuller life. "Unlike Hardy's Immanent Will, Shaw's Life Force is represented as a power making consciously towards a state of existence far more abundantly vital than anything yet experienced by mankind. But the Life Force does not propose to work unaided; Men and women are required to act as willing and eager agents for the furtherance of its great work. The existing race of men, however (so Shaw thought in 1903), was too mean spirited and too self-centered to serve the Life-force, which would consequently be compelled to supersede Man by a more effective instrument of its will...the Superman. The means likely to be adopted for the production of the higher type were suggested in *Man and Superman*, where woman is indicated as Nature's contrivance for perpetuating its achievement and Man as "woman's contrivance for fulfilling Nature's behest, that the Superman should be born to replace the existing 'feverish selfish little cold of ailments and grievances.'

#### ***JOHN BULL'S OTHER ISLAND (1904)***

In this play, Shaw is directing his satire at the conventional Englishman, who is never so silly or sentimental, when he sees silliness and sentiment in the Irishman. Broadbent, the hero of the play, is an Englishman, who believes that he brings reason in treating the Irishmen, whereas in truth

they are all smiling at his illusions.

“The play,” observes A.C. Ward, “remains one of his most effective pieces, displaying his dramatic power-mastery of rhetoric and exalted prose, effective handling of stage-situation, skill in depicting character and sense of comedy.” According to E. Albert, the play “is a good-humoured satire on English and Irish prejudices as seen chiefly in the characters of Tom Broadbent and Larry Doyle, about whom the play revolves. It was originally written for the Irish National Theatre, but was not well-received there.”

#### ***MAJOR BARBARA (1905)***

*Major Barbara* deals with the paradoxical situation where the attempts of the Salvation Army to remedy social evils can only be continued through the charity of those whose money-getting has caused those evils. The play reveals the materialistic pessimism of Shaw. Here he depicts poverty as the epitome of all vices. ‘People say that poverty is no crime: Shaw says that poverty is a crime. It is a crime to endure it, a crime to be content with it, that it is the, mother of all crimes of brutality, corruption and fear.’ Here the dramatist shows that even the noblest enthusiasm of the girl who becomes a Salvation Army Officer fails under the brute money power of her father who is a modern capitalist. The political philosophy of *Major Barbara* is essentially

Marxist.

The main theme of the play is “the wickedness of curable poverty”. The First Act introduces us to a domineering mother Lady Britomart. She has been living away from her husband. Andrew Undershaft, her husband, also appears. He does not recognize his children. Then we come across Major Barbara, their elder daughter and a Major in the Salvation Army, Sarah, their younger daughter, Stephen, their son, a correct young man, Charles Lomax, a brainless suitor of Sarah and Adolphus Cusins, a professor of Greek, engaged to Barbara. Barbara wants to save the soul of her father and he wants to convert her to his philosophy of “money and gun power.”

Major Barbara soon gets disillusioned about her ideals. She comes to know that the army is dependent on the capitalists who are dealers in death and destruction. It is ultimately the money that governs.

Another contender for Barbara’s soul is her lover, Adolphus Cusins, a professor of Greek, who to please Barbara, puts his studies aside and plays the brass-drum in the Salvation Army Band. Cusins is important in the thematic structure of the play as he is the third member of the trinity which is to save society. Under shaft, following the tradition of his predecessors, disinherits his own son Stephen and adopts Adolphus as his protege and successor. Adolphus adds intellect to Undershaft’s power and Barbara’s moral fervour. Shaw’s hope for

the salvation of society, presumably, lay in this combination.

***THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA (1906)***

In this play a doctor who has developed a new cure for tuberculosis but has only enough of it for one patient. This causes a dilemma for the doctor as to whom to administer it to. The doctor then has to choose which patient he is going to give it to: a kindly poor medical colleague, or a talented yet very unpleasant young artist with a young and vivacious wife with whom the doctor is somewhat in love, which makes it even harder for the doctor to separate his motives for the decision. The extensive preface to the play points out that there is another dilemma: poor doctors are easily tempted to perform costly but useless (and in the best case harmless) operations or treatments on their patients for personal gain. "Can this man make better use of his leg than I of fifty pounds?"

This was reportedly inspired by the behaviour of a prominent Ear Nose and Throat specialist in London who had developed a simple and harmless operation to remove the uvula. This did not benefit any of his patients but made the surgeon a great deal of money.

The play also mentions (then) new developments in the germ theory of disease, namely opsonins, and included socialist and anti-vivisectionist viewpoints. Specifically, it could be considered as advocating a National Health Service, such as was created in Britain

four decades later - since a doctor who is employed by the state and gets a fixed salary for treating whoever needs medical attention would not face the dilemma discussed in the foreword.

The theme of the play remains contemporary: in any time, there will be treatments that are so scarce or costly that some people can have them while others cannot. Who is to decide, and on which grounds is the decision to be taken?

***HEARTBREAK HOUSE (1919)***

Shaw's doctrine of the Life Force is further developed in two of his plays— *Heartbreak House* and *Black to Methuselah* (1921). In *Heartbreak House* he gives a warning that cultured and leisured Europe will meet its doom if it did not undertake the mission of the Life Force. This play proved to be prophetic. There is little action and more talk in the play on - war, love, society, education, religion, politics and science. The play is full of propaganda, wit, paradox, philosophy and prophecy. The characters assume allegorical significance. Captain Shotover, "a figure larger than life and yet lifelike, reliving his past and creating his future in terms of his own fantastic logic" is the embodiment of old England. The house, built like a ship, suggests his own and his country's maritime history. Lady Aridane is Empire and her brother-in-law, Randall, representing Foreign Office, is in love



with her, Hesione Hushabye is Domesticity, the power of woman's love and authority at home. She has utterly domesticated Hector, embodying Heroism, who is reduced to telling romantic stories to ladies. Mazinni Dunn is the nineteenth century Liberal believing in progress, but too sentimental to be an intellectual force. As a result of it, he has become a tool in the hands of Boss Mongan, who is the symbol of capitalistic exploitation. But the characters, though fairly representative of cultured, leisured England before the war, are superbly themselves and full of life.

#### ***BACK TO METHUSELAH (1920)***

In *Back to Methuselah* Shaw once again considered the purpose of the Life Force and pronounced a great warning that if Man did not come up to the mark, he would be replaced by another set of beings. Shaw's doctrine in this respect was contrary to the Theory of Natural Selection, expounded by Darwin. Shaw wrote, "This does not mean that if man cannot find the remedy, no remedy will be found. The power that produces Man when the monkey was not up to mark, can produce a higher creature than Man if man does not come up to mark." What it means is that if Man is to be saved, Man must save himself. The play is pretentious and dull, showing most undramatic desire to reduce all human life to disembodied speculation. It lays emphasis on creative evolution. Shaw himself calls this play 'a world classic or nothing'.

The play begins with the story of Adam and Eve. The main problem in the Garden of Eden is not how to extend life but how to end it. Adam feels that he is not strong enough to bear eternity. Yet he does not want to endure life on the earth. The Serpent solves the dilemma by explaining to Eve the doctrine of creative imagination; "you imagine what you desire; you will/ what you imagine; and at last you create what you will." All they need to die is the will to die, and to ensure the perpetuation of life to will to create new life. Then in Adam's absence, he whispers the secret of sex into the ears of Eve. This will satisfy her desire for perpetuation and fulfillment which is greater than that of Adam.

The Second Act takes place a few centuries later. A variation on the theme of life and death, it is, in fact, a debate on the purpose of life between Eve, Adam and Cain.

#### ***SAINT JOAN (1923)***

*Saint Joan* is one of Shaw's finest plays. In it Shaw deals with the theme of independence of the true Protestant in opposition to the forces of organized society. Joan herself is a finely drawn character, and, in spite of its length and the great quantity of discussion it contains, the play is most effective on the stage. In this play, Shaw presents the life of the French girl, Saint Joan, who defied the British power and fought valiantly

for the freedom of her country. Saint Joan is captured and burnt as a witch. Later on, the greatness of Saint Joan is understood by the people and she is canonized in the Christian Church. The play is on a great subject and has grandeur of style fully worthy of it. The trial-scene in this play is one of the finest scenes in the whole of dramatic literature. Shaw has telescoped history from 1429 to 1431 in three and a half hours on the stage. In the First Scene, we see Captain Robert de Baudricourt, a self assertive and loud-mouthed man of vanity. His boldness is apparent from the very beginning as a country-maid looking after hens. That is why after an interview with Joan, Captain Robert agrees to give the girl a try. Her talk about her voices, her mission of freeing France and her strong will, sweeps Robert off his feet. He helps her to go to Chinon, the place of Dauphin's stay, in the company of Poulengey and three of his friends. Dauphin (later on, King Charles, the Seventh) comes. He is excited about Joan. At the suggestion of Bluebeard, it is decided to test if the Maid (Joan) is an angel. At the time of her admission to the court, Bluebeard will pretend to be the Dauphin to see if the girl can find him out. She tells Dauphin her divine mission of making him King and driving the English out of France. He is only to give his kingdom to Him and become the greatest king in the world as His steward and His bailiff, His soldier and His servant. And this will make the Soldiers of 'France the soldiers of God and the rebel -dukes the rebels against God. The Dauphin

gives the command of the army to the Maid, much against the wishes of La Tremouille.

Joan inspires the soldiers. The English are defeated at Orleans and at other places. The Dauphin is crowned a King Charles VII. But the conventional society turns against Joan, the moral genius of her time. They regard her as a heretic or a witch. The courtiers, knights and churchmen begin to hate her as they are jealous of her. The King, the Archbishop and the courtiers have no need of her now. The Archbishop regards her as proud and disobedient.

At last she is tried. In the trial scene, she is accused of heresy. When torture and burning are threatened, she recants momentarily. She is spared but she is condemned "to eat the bread of sorrow and drink the water of affliction" to the end of her earthly days in perpetual imprisonment. At last she is burnt for heresy.

In the epilogue, we are introduced to an event twenty five years after Joan's death. On the occasion of her rehabilitation by the Church in 1456, Joan meets again the men who were involved in her career; When a messenger from the Pope appears to announce the canonization of Joan, all, from Cauchon to King Charles, fall to their knees in adoration of the new saint, Yet when Joan acknowledges their praise by asking if she should return from the dead, a living woman, each except for a common soldier, again rejects her, humbly this time, and disappears. The epilogue ends with the anguished

cry of Joan: "Oh Go that maddest this beautiful earth when will it be ready to receive saints? How long, Oh Lord, how long?"

***MISALLIANCE (1910)***

The play deals with parent-child relationship. Mrs. Tarleton and Summerhays have a daughter and a son, Hypatia and John. The brother and sister do not have any affinity. Hypatia is going to be married to a rich man, Bentley. The story relates to Hypatia and her mother.

***PYGMALION (1912)***

It is a witty and highly entertaining study of class-distinction. It is based on the story of Pygmalion and Galatea; it is an amusing comedy with a particular interest for the lovers of phonetics. The play is a story of metamorphosis of Eliza Doolittle, a poor flower seller. The Pygmalion of Shaw is a Professor of phonetics Henry Higgins, with a magical command over phonetics, who can place any man within six miles on the basis of his speech. "He is of the energetic, scientific type, heartily, even violently interested in everything that can be studied as a scientific subject, and careless about himself and other people, including their feelings." He is a confirmed bachelor and has no feeling for women who, according to him, upset everything. Moreover, he can love, if he can love at all, only a woman who is 'as like his mother as possible.

One day, while standing under the portico of St. Paul's

church to protect himself from rain, he is impressed by a flower-girl. While he is taking notes of her accent, he is taken for a police informer and a humorous situation arises. He tells the people standing around him their native-places on the basis of their accents. Higgins tells Colonel Pickering that he can pass off this poor flower girl as duchess in three months time.

After a few months, Eliza comes to him to learn her lessons in phonetics so that she could be a lady in a shop. Charmed by her daring attempt, Higgins agrees to pass her off, as a duchess within three months, a thing which he has said in jest, by teaching her cultivated English, but he utterly ignores her feelings. In the meantime, her father Alfred Dolittle appears. Higgins thinks that he has come to blackmail him on account of his daughter's staying there. He is an interesting fellow and has come there not to take his daughter back, though Higgins tries to force her on him, but to get a fiver from him. Higgins is charmed by his frankly non-moral attitude and gives him a five pound note. Eliza successfully passes off as a duchess in the garden-party. This is a great event in the career of the Professor, and he and his friend feel greatly relieved.

***THE APPLE CART (1929)***

In *The Apple Cart*, Shaw deals with the problem of monarchy in a democratic country like England. He comes to the conclusion that the attempt to do away

with the institution of monarchy represented by King Magnus in the play, will ultimately spell ruin in society. The king is necessary to exercise a check on the activities of democratic leaders. In this play, Shaw is neither opposed to monarchy nor democracy but to capitalism, and his diatribes are directed against Breakages and Company that stands in the way of social and economic progress.

**Check Your Progress**

Make an assessment of Shaw as a modernist playwright

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**KEY WORDS**

Prose Plays : Plays written in prose.

Problem Pays : Play that deals with the problems of common people.

Metamorphosis: change of form

### SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

1. Trace the growth of English drama in the twentieth century.
2. Discuss some the themes of major plays of G. B. Shaw.

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## UNIT – 2

### ***ARMS AND THE MAN: INTRODUCTION, AND MAJOR THEMES***

#### STRUCTURE

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The theme of love, war, marriage, and class system
- 2.3 General Notes

References

Key Words

Self Assessment Questions

Suggested Readings

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit analyses the modernist elements in the play *Arms and the Man*. Shaw proves to be an iconoclast by demolishing the established values of love, war, marriage and class system. The play is often called an Anti-Romantic play. Shaw proves his point in this play. After going through this unit, you should be able to :

- *identify* the modernist elements in the play
- *assess* the play as an Anti-Romantic play
- *evaluate* Shaw's views regarding love, war, marriage and class system

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The title of the first two volumes of Bernard Shaw's dramatic works, *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* was published in 1898. It was chosen for the special purpose of showing that his plays were of a different kind from those that audiences and readers had been used to come across up to that time. Previously the two main divisions of drama were *tragedy* and *comedy*. In tragedy, someone had to die violently before the play ended. In comedy there was usually plenty of amusement but not much else. In Shaw's writing farcical comedy and violent death did not find much of importance. He also ignored melodramatic elements in his plays. Shaw wanted to present the stark reality of life of common people of his time in his plays. He was more concerned about the

numerous social issues of his time that made life miserable for a majority of people. He did use the words tragedy and comedy for two or three of his later plays, but even then the tragedies were not wholly tragic nor did the comedies free from seriousness.

*Arms and the Man*, the earliest of Shaw's 'pleasant' plays is both amusing and thought-provoking. It makes us laugh and at the same time it makes us think, for it effectively conveys serious messages concerning the society of his age. It made people laugh and had a thought-provoking message in 1894 that the conventional ideas about heroism in war love in marriage needs a serious review. What makes Shaw's plays enduring classics is that through light humour he could convey a serious message which seems as relevant now as they used to be when he wrote them. What he saw either to frown at or to smile at were not simply the temporary injustices or passing follies of his own generation but certain human characteristics which last from generation to generation though they may change their appearance as time pass by.

Shaw could have chosen any other country and nationality without altering the nature and habits of the characters. An English novelist, Anthony Hope, had written a popular romantic tale *The Prisoner of Zenda* about an imaginary country he called 'Ruritania'. This started a fashion for novels and plays with picturesque scenery and dashing uniforms and showy dresses, and anything of that kind has since been called 'Ruritanian'. Although Shaw took the name of an actual

country, *Arms and the Man* is best thought of as a 'Ruritanin' play, so far as its outward appearances are concerned. Although the characters of *Arms and the Man* are presented as Swiss and Bulgarian they have distinct British traits. Until he became famous Shaw no more hesitated to use familiar material than Shakespeare did. Both of them aimed at kinds of originality which did not depend upon plot or scenery or costumes. A Bulgarian setting for *Arms and the Man* made a stage picture that was attractive to ordinary theatre-goers who only wanted to be amused; but having once captured their attention, Shaw then set out to make them think and as a reward for thinking he also made them laugh.

## 2.2 THE THEME OF LOVE, WAR, & MARRIAGE

What was it Shaw wanted his audience to think about in connection with *Arms and the Man*? The play has two themes: one is *war*, the other is *marriage*. There is also a sub-theme of class system which deals with the relationship between upper and lower classes of the society. These themes are interwoven, for Shaw believed that while war is evil and stupid, and marriage desirable and good, both had become wrapped in romantic illusions which led to disastrous wars and also to unhappy marriages.

The romantic view of war is based on the idealistic notion that men fight because they are heroes, and that the soldier who takes the biggest risks win the greatest glory and is the greatest hero. In *Arms and the Man* Raina Petkoff intends,

at the time the play opens, to become the wife of Major Sergius Saranoff, who is then away fighting the Serbs. News has come home to Raina and her mother that Sergius has ridden bravely at the head of a victorious cavalry charge, and Raina rejoices 'because she can now believe that her betrothed is just as splendid and noble as he looks! that the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance!' In the opening scene of the play, after adoring Sergius's portrait, Raina goes to bed murmuring. 'My hero! My hero!' This is a lovelorn girl's romantic view of life, but then reality suddenly breaks in upon her.

An enemy officer, in headlong retreat with the defeated Serbs, rushes into her room from the outside balcony to take refuge. He is desperate through exhaustion and fear, and Raina sneers at him. Nevertheless, when the pursuers come to search the house, Raina hides the fugitive and denies having seen him. She learns, after the pursuit is over, that he is a Swiss mercenary fighting for the Serbs as a professional soldier. She is again contemptuous when he tells her that instead of ammunition he carries chocolate in his cartridge cases, having found that food is more useful in battle than bullets.

At Raina's request that he should describe the great Bulgarian cavalry charge the man tells her that its leader (whom she knows was Sergius) rode 'like an operatic tenor . . . with flashing eyes and lovely moustache. . . . thinking he'd done the cleverest thing ever known, whereas he ought to be court-

martialled for it. Of all the fools ever let loose on a field of battle; that man must be the very maddest. He and his regiment simply committed suicide. . . .’—or they would have committed suicide, the man goes on to say; only the Serbs had no ammunition left and therefore could not repel the charge. The scene ends with the man falling asleep through uncontrollable weariness, and Raina finds herself moved to pity by the suffering he has endured. She had imagined war as an exciting sport; she has now seen it as a dreadful reality through contact with one of the defeated.

Until the war of 1914-18 came to support the view that professional skill and caution in battle are no less desirable than physical courage, Shaw was supposed to have belittled soldiers *Arms and the Man*; and it took two world wars to prove beyond doubt that chocolate (symbolizing all kinds of food) is as necessary to an army as cartridges. He insisted that an army moves on its stomachs.

In the later scenes of the play the other aspect of the plot comes uppermost. The war has ended and the soldiers are home again. Sergius too has learned something of the realities of war and is so disgusted by them that he has sent in his resignation, saying ‘Soldiering ... is the coward’s art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm’s way when you are weak’. Yet Raina continues to treat him as a hero of romance until Captain Bluntschli comes to visit the Petkoff’s house and is discovered to be the man who took refuge in Raina’s room during the retreat. In an amusing scene of the kind that is especially typical of

Bernard Shaw, Bluntschli shows Raina her real character beneath the romantic mask that she has worn since her childhood. Not only had she substituted an imaginary Sergius for the real one, but she had also built up an imaginary self. Bluntschli is not deceived. He says to her: When you strike that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a word you say’. After pretending to be indignant, Raina surrenders and asks, ‘How did you find me out? . . . How strange it is to be talked to in such a way! You know, I’ve always gone on like that ... I mean the noble attitude and the thrilling voice ... I did it when I was a tiny child to my nurse. She believed in it. I do it before my parents. They believe in it. I do it before Sergius. He believes in it. But her Swiss visitor does not believe in it.

Bluntschli is not deceived, either, by Sergius or Raina; nor is Sergius blind to his own true nature. When he finds himself flirting with the servant maid, Louka, immediately after an adoring love scene with Raina, he analyses himself frankly: ‘I am surprised at myself, Louka. What would Sergius, the hero of Slivnitza, say if he saw me now? What would Serigus, the apostle of the higher love, say if he saw me now? What would the half-dozen Sergiuses who keep popping in and out of this handsome figure of mine say if they caught us here?’

When Raina succumbs at last to the man she calls her ‘chocolate cream soldier’, Bluntschli has cured her of the second of the two deceptions which ruled her life when the play began. She no longer thinks of war as a romantic game, nor does she any longer think of marriage as the mating of a



beautiful heroine and a handsome hero in a lifelong romantic dream. Instead of the ornamental and fickle Sergius, she takes as her husband, the plain Bluntschli, whose commonsense and six hotels in Switzerland will give her stability and comfort.

The realities of love and marriage became one of the most frequent themes in Shaw's plays throughout the remainder of his long life. He thought of marriage not as a means of satisfying the personal desires of individual men and women, nor as means of strengthening family ties, but as the means of bringing to birth a new and better generation. Though no one can predict with certainty the consequences of any marriage, Shaw never swerved from the conviction that marriage is solemn contract, not a frivolous domestic excursion. In *Arms and the Man* and often elsewhere he laughed at this and other solemnities, but behind the humours of the relationships of Raina, Sergius and Bluntschli lay the memories of Shaw's own childhood in a home shadowed by the failure of his own parent's marriage.

The rest of the play is mostly light-hearted fun, though amid the fun there are several shrewd hits at two sorts of snobbery: the snobbery of the manservant Nicola who regards his employers with cynical servility, despising them, yet humbling himself before them because 'That's what they like; and that's how you'll make most out of them' and the snobbery of the Petkoffs who think themselves better than their neighbours because they have a library and an electric bell. As an upholder of social equality Shaw was opposed to

any idea that servants are an inferior class. He held that all necessary work, however menial, is valuable as a service to the community. He also believed that it was mean and foolish to act as though the possession wealth, or any other material advantage, is a sign of personal superiority. People may not any longer think it impressive to have an electric bell in the house, but there are countries nowadays where families with television sets and motor cars feel as stupidly proud as the Petkoffs did with their bell and library.

### 2.3 GENERAL NOTES

Bernard Shaw gave careful personal attention to the printing of his plays; and for almost the whole of his career the printers, papermakers, binders and publishers acted as his agents and carried out his instructions. The fact that he made no change in his printers after 1898 or his publishers after 1903, up to the time of his death in 1950, is a dear sign of his fair dealing and loyalty to those who served him well. He made a number of important improvements in the printing-style of plays, which had before been badly printed on cheap paper and with little care for the convenience of readers. Shaw changed all that, and most other authors, printers, and publishers of plays followed his example.

He was the first to introduce detailed descriptions of scenery, furniture, stage properties, and (most important of all) of the characters in the play. Very often these descriptions give information which is intended to help the reader to get a

mental picture of the character, rather than to limit the freedom of the performer or of the stage producer. Examples of such description can be found in various places in *Arms and the Man*; one that can be quoted here is the statement on page 2 that Catherine Petkoff 'is determined to be a Viennese lady', a piece of information that helps the reader to know that she is a snob trying to pretend that she is a fashionable person.

Since such descriptions and the shorter stage-directions are printed in italic type, Shaw avoided as far as possible the use of italics for any other purpose. Ordinarily, italics are used for printing words that are to be emphasized, but Shaw used, instead, spaced letters. Thus, if the word 'glorious' was to be emphasized in speaking the phrase 'the world is really a glorious world' he would have it printed 'g l o r i o u s', not 'glorious'. This method not only avoided possible confusion with stage-directions in italic type, but it also represents what actually happens when we emphasize a word in speaking; we slow down our rate of speaking and the emphasized word occupies a longer time period just as the word more spaced on the paper when printed. But when the personal pronoun 'I' was to be emphasized, Shaw had to use the italic *I*.

Another peculiarity of Shaw's style of printing is the omission of apostrophes from contractions, such as I've (usually printed as I've = I have), they'll (they'll=they will), shan't=shall not), em ('em=them), wholl (who'll=who will), etc. This is sometimes a little confusing to the reader at first, but Shaw was thinking most of the way in which the such expressions are spoken.

It will also be seen that he did not use either quotation marks or italic type for the titles of books of plays: e.g., Preface, page vii, *The Black Cat*, *A Comedy of Sighs*, etc: and in the play, Act I, page. 20 has *Ernani*. In ordinary prints all these titles would be either in italic type or between quotation marks. (In the Introductions and Notes by the editor in this present volume, italic type is used.)

Shaw rarely printed a list of the characters at the front of the play though this is customary. In most other printed works. In *Arms and the Man* there is no short list of characters, in order to give the name of first performers: but this is an exception in Shaw. He preferred that he reader should not be introduced to the characters by name until they appeared in the text of the play, and sometimes he did not, even in the text, print the name of a character until another character had spoken it on the stage. In an the intruding soldier is named 'The Man' until halfway through of Act II, when Catherine Petkoff reads the name aloud from the visiting-card .brought in by the servant. From that point onward his name is used at the beginnings of his speeches in the printed text Bluntschli.

## REFERENCES

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**KEY WORDS**

The New Drama: in the closing years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, opinions and perceptions on many conventional practices began to be gradually reviewed in Britain and the word 'new' applied to denote a change of attitude and ideas.

**SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss *Arms and the Man* as the play against war and romantic ideas of love.

**SUGGESTED READINGS**

Williams, Raymond. *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*, Revd. as *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, Chatto & Windus. 1968. London.

**UNIT – 3*****ARMS AND THE MAN: ACT-WISE SUMMARY  
& MAJOR CHARACTERS*****STRUCTURE**

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Historical context
- 3.3 Plot summary
- 3.4 Summary preface
- 3.5 Actwise summary
  - 3.5.1 Brief summary of Act-I
  - 3.5.2 Analysis of Act-I
  - 3.5.3 Brief summary of Act-II
  - 3.5.4 Analysis of Act-II
  - 3.5.5 Brief summary of Act-III
  - 3.5.6 Analysis of Act-III
- 3.6.0 Characters
  - 3.6.1 Bluntschli
  - 3.6.2 Raina
  - 3.6.3 Sergius
  - 3.6.4 Louka
  - 3.6.5 Major Petkoff
  - 3.6.6 Cathrine
  - 3.6.7 Nicola
- 3.7 Themes
- 3.8 Style
  - Annotations
  - References
  - Key words
  - Self Assessment Questions
  - Suggested reading

### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be in a position to:

- *relate* the play to the historical background
- *outline* the plot structure and technique
- *analyze* the major characters of the play
- *distinguish* some of the unique features of Shavian plays

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Shaw was already a celebrity arts critic and socialist lecturer when he wrote *Arms and the Man* in 1894. One of Shaw's earliest attempts at writing for the theatre, it was also his first commercial success as a playwright. Although it played for only one season at an avant-garde theatre, thanks to the financial backing of a friend, it was later produced in America in 1895. Accustomed to the melodramas of the age, however, even sophisticated audiences often did not discern the serious purpose of Shaw's play. Thus, Shaw considered it a failure.

True success did not come until 1898, when *Arms and the Man* was published as one of the "pleasant" plays in Shaw's collection called *Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant*, and it subsequently gained popularity as a written work. Included in this collection of plays are lengthy explanatory prefaces, which note significant issues in the plays and which have been invaluable to critics. In place of brief stage directions, Shaw's plays also included lengthy instructions and

descriptions. Another unique aspect of *Arms and the Man* was its use of a woman as the central character.

Set during the four-month-long Serbo-Bulgarian War that occurred between November 1885 and March 1886, this play is a satire on the foolishness of glorifying something so terrible as war, as well as a satire on the foolishness of basing your affections on idealistic notions of love. These themes brought reality and a timeless lesson to the comic stage. Consequently, once Shaw's genius was recognized, *Arms and the Man* became one of Shaw's most popular plays and has remained a classic ever since.

### 3.2 SETTING OF THE PLAY (THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT)

Prince Alexander I, the Regent of Bulgaria, led the Bulgarian army against the Serbs who had declared war in November 1885. The Bulgarian army was helped by the Russians whereas the Serbs were led by Austrians. The Swiss supplied a large number of mercenaries and Captain Bluntschli is one such soldier fighting on the Serbian side. Such mercenaries had no feelings. At a crucial point Russia called back her officers and Bulgaria was left to fend for herself. In spite of such mishaps the Bulgarians were victorious in the Battle of Slivnitza in November 1885.

### 3.3 PLOT SUMMARY

It is November 1885, during the Serbo-Bulgarian War. Raina Petkoff, a young Bulgarian woman, is in her bedchamber when her mother, Catherine, enters and announces there has been a battle close by and that Raina's fiancé, Major Sergius Saranoff, was the hero of a cavalry charge. The women rejoice that Sergius has proven to be as heroic as they expected, but they soon turn to securing the house because of fighting in the streets. Nonetheless, a Serbian officer gains entry through Raina's shutters. Raina decides to hide him and she denies having seen anyone when she is questioned by a Russian officer who is hunting for a man seen climbing the water pipe to Raina's balcony. Raina covers well, and the Russian leaves without noticing the pistol on Raina's bed. When Raina hands the gun to the Serbian after the Russian leaves, the Serbian admits that the gun is not loaded because he carries chocolates in his cartridge belt instead of ammunition. He explains that he is a Swiss mercenary fighting for the Serbs because it is his profession to be a soldier and the Serbian war was close by. He adds that old, experienced soldiers carry food while only the young soldiers carry weapons. Shocked by this attitude, Raina criticizes him for being a poor soldier. He counters by describing what makes a real fool, not knowing that his version of the day's cavalry charge makes fun of her betrothed. She is incensed but agrees to let him stay once he impresses upon her the danger of going back out into the street. She tries to impress him with her family's

wealth and position, saying that they have the nobility to give refuge to an enemy. He pledges her safety and advises her to tell her mother about his presence, to keep matters proper. While she is gone, he falls into a deep sleep on her bed and he cannot be roused by a shocked Catherine. Raina takes pity on him and asks that they let him sleep.

On March 6, 1886, Raina's father, Major Paul Petkoff, comes home and announces the end of the war. Catherine is upset that the Serbians have agreed to a peace treaty, believing that her side should have a glorious victory. Major Saranoff arrives just after Petkoff makes comments indicating that Saranoff is not a talented military leader. Catherine praises Saranoff, but he announces that he is resigning from the army. Raina joins the conversation just before the discussion turns to a Swiss officer who bested the men in a horse trade and who had been, according to a friend's story, rescued by two Bulgarian ladies after a battle. Catherine and Raina pretend to be shocked by such unpatriotic behavior.

Catherine and Major Petkoff leave the two young people to have some time to alone. Raina and Sergius exchange all the silly platitudes expected of lovers about how much they missed each other and how they worship each other. However, while Raina is away to get her hat for a walk, Sergius flirts with the maid, Louka, whom he has apparently chased in the past. Louka protests his behavior and reveals that there is someone for whom Raina has real feelings, not the fake ones she puts on for Segius. Sergius becomes angry and insults Louka, although he is confused about his own feelings.

Sergius goes to help Petkoff with some final military business. In his absence, Catherine tells Raina that Petkoff has asked for the coat they gave the enemy soldier when he left. Just then, the Swiss officer, Captain Bluntschli, arrives to return the coat. The women try but fail to hurry him away before Petkoff and Sergius see him. Bluntschli offers to help them with the logistics of their troop movements, and Petkoff invites him to stay, much to the discomfort of the ladies.

Bluntschli is busy drawing up orders, and Saranoff signs them as everyone else is lounging in the library. Petkoff complains that he would be more comfortable in his old coat, but he cannot find it. Now that Bluntschli has returned it, Catherine insists that the coat is in the blue closet, where she placed it since the last time her husband looked. When the servant finds the coat in the appropriate closet, Petkoff dismisses the incident as a foible of old age.

When Saranoff and Petkoff go out to deliver orders to the couriers, Raina has a chance to talk with Bluntschli alone, and she lets him know that his story about his evening in her room made it through camp rumours all the way to her father and her fiancé. After bantering about honour and lies, Raina reveals that she had slipped her portrait and a note into her father's old coat when she gave it to Bluntschli. Unfortunately, Bluntschli never discovered it, and they realize that it could still be in the pocket. A messenger arrives with telegrams that tell Bluntschli that his father has died and that he must attend to the family business.

Louka and the manservant, Nicola, have an exchange about

Louka's ambitions and about the role of servants. Nicola realizes that it might be more to his advantage to let Louka marry Saranoff and to then become their servant. Later, Saranoff and Louka argue about whether Saranoff is afraid to express his love for Louka, and she reveals that Raina has fallen for Bluntschli. Saranoff challenges Bluntschli to a duel, but when Raina charges that she saw Saranoff with Louka, he backs off. Raina then stirs Saranoff's emotions by telling him that Louka is engaged to Nicola.

Petkoff enters, complaining that his coat had to be repaired. When Raina helps Petkoff put on the coat, she pulls the incriminating photo from the pocket and tosses it to Bluntschli, not knowing that her father has already seen the photo. When Petkoff does not find the photo in his pocket, the questioning begins about the photo's inscription to a "Chocolate Cream Soldier," and an avalanche of truthful revelations from all parties begins. Nicola wisely denies being engaged to Louka so she can marry Saranoff. As Catherine protests the dishonour to Raina, Louka injects that Raina would not have married Saranoff anyway because of Bluntschli. The Swiss captain is hesitant to declare himself in love until he learns that Raina is twenty-three years old, and is not the teenager he thought she was. Confident then that she is old enough to know her feelings, Bluntschli asks for Raina's hand in marriage. Again, Catherine protests because she thinks Bluntschli cannot provide for her daughter appropriately, so he tells them of his great wealth. Raina puts up a token protest about being sold to the highest

bidder, but Bluntschli reminds her that she fell in love with him before she knew he had any rank or money. She capitulates, and the play ends with everyone happy.

### **3.4 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE PREFACE TO *PLAYS PLEASANT***

Unlike *Pygmalion* or many of Shaw's other plays, there is no actual, separate preface to this particular play. However, there was a preface to the original volume of plays which contains this play and three others: *The Pleasant Plays*, 1898, revised in 1921. As Shaw noted elsewhere, a preface seldom or never concerns the play which is to follow the preface, and this preface is no exception. Instead, Shaw used this preface to comment upon the new style of drama (or simply what he calls New Drama), a name applied to dramas such as his or Ibsen's, plays which were not written to be commercial successes, but to be intellectual vehicles which would make the audience consider (or think about) their life — to be intellectually aware of their historical place in civilization. Shaw refuses to pander himself to popular demands for romantic (and thus unbelievable and unrealistic) situations. Ultimately, according to Shaw, the theatre should become a place for the airing of ideas and a place where sham and pretense can be exposed in a way that is delightful to the audience.

Shaw first wrote a full-length preface when he wrote *Man and Superman*. When *Arms and the Man* was first published

it did not have a preface. Later it was published in *Plays Pleasant* along with *Candida*, *You Never can Tell*, and *The Man of Destiny*. Shaw's prefaces are not necessarily related to the plays. The preface to the *Plays Pleasant* deals with 'New Drama' and 'New theatre'. The reason why he wrote plays was to prove that a real movement did exist where some modern playwrights wanted to write commercially non-viable plays to be staged through which they would convey their social messages. Ibsen had paved the way for naturalistic drama. The aim was to present characters in real life situations and plot would automatically evolve out of the conflict, "every drama must present a conflict. The end may be reconciliation or destruction; or as in real life itself, there may be no end; but the conflict is indispensable: no conflict no drama."

His *Plays Pleasant* were written to spread his views on the problems of society. To expose the evils of society he did not present a Law versus a villain representing good against evil but he tried to create life-like people who are a mixture of good and evil. In order to start a new movement in drama, it was not possible to take old drama and write something in contrast. The playwright must be something of a genius whose instinct inspires him to write something new. In the beginning only he is aware of the novelty and much later his innovations appeal to the imaginations of the people. This is precisely what Ibsen had done, but if Ibsen were asked how he did it, he would not be able to explain it. This ability makes the playwright something more than a mere entertainer.

It was important that the play be performed so that the ideas are conveyed to the people. Shaw therefore wrote *Candida* in such a way that production costs were minimal. He goes on to a discussion of problems faced by managers of theatres. Managers had to produce plays that would be financially successful which meant catering to the tastes of the audience. Some managers may take the risk of producing socially meaningful plays at low profits. Theatre had a social importance, "bad theatres are as mischievous as bad schools or bad churches". Giving examples of Dictators, Presidents and Prime Ministers, he states that public and private life had become theatrical. He claimed that theater was affecting the personal conduct of the people. It was, therefore, a moral obligation of playwrights and managers to present realistic situations instead of cheap pornographic fare supported by syndicates who financed production of plays and shared the profits. He expresses the need to establish a theater which would be as important as the National gallery and the British Museum were to art painting and literature. This would be possible only if the theatre had the financial support like the National Gallery or the British museum had. Another way to support promising writers would be the activity of amateur theatre groups and sponsorship from rich individuals who could take the risk of backing such writers. This would be the starting of a repertory. Repertory Theatres do not continue to perform the same play indefinitely but perform various plays for short durations to expose the public to a variety of theater. He even suggests a knighthood be given to managers of such theaters to encourage such theater activity.

Shaw then talks about the practical problems faced by the managers and actors to adapt to the demands of changing tastes. Shaw himself was accused of being an entertainer who lacked seriousness of purpose. Critics said that he was preoccupied with the "seamy side of life" and eccentricities. They claimed that Shaw used "a formula of treating bad as good and good as bad, important as trivial and trivial as important ..... and so forth." He explains that this misconception of the critics was due to the disagreement between the romantic morality of the plays. To prove his point he gives *Arms and the Man* as an example. He takes the case of Bluntschli who was not accepted by the critic because they found the character "fantastically improbable." The critics had to change their opinion when they actually spoke to military authorities. Shaw's argument was that the rescue operations of the Balkan States from the Turks was inspired by political and religious idealism; but such political and religious idealism could not survive the scathing attack on idealism presented in "Arms and the Man". According to Shaw, "idealism" is equivalent to romance in politics and morals and therefore, false. On the other hand, Shaw sees a lot of good in the world which would prevent chaos and anarchy to take over.

A hundred years have passed since Shaw wrote the preface. Concepts which shocked his contemporaries do not shock us anymore.



### 3.5 ACT WISE SUMMARY

#### 3.5.1 BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE FIRST ACT

The play opens at night in a lady's bedchamber in a small Bulgarian town in 1885, the year of the Serbo-Bulgarian war. The room is decorated in the worst possible taste, a taste reflected in the mistress' Catherine Petkoff's desire to seem as cultured and as Viennese as possible. But the room is furnished with only cheap bits of Viennese things; the other pieces of furniture come from the Turkish Ottoman Empire, reflecting the long occupation by the Turks of the Balkan Peninsula. On the balcony, standing and staring at the romantic beauty of the night, "intensely conscious that her own youth and beauty are a part of it," is young Raina Petkoff. Just inside, conspicuously visible, is a box of chocolate creams, which will play an important part later in this act and which will ultimately become a symbol of the type of war which Shaw will satirize.

Raina's mother, Catherine Petkoff, is a woman who could easily pass for a splendid specimen of the wife of a mountain fanner, but is determined to be a Viennese lady. As the play begins, Catherine is excited over the news that the Bulgarian forces have just won a splendid battle at Slivnitza against the Serbians, and the "hero of the hour, the idol of the regiment" who led them to victory is Raina's fiancé, Major Sergius Saranoff. She describes how Sergius boldly led a cavalry charge into the midst of the Serbs, scattering them in all directions. Raina wonders if such a popular hero will care

any longer for her little affections, but she is nonetheless delighted about the news. She wonders if heroes such as Sergius esteem such heroic ideas because they have read too much Byron and Pushkin. Real life, as she knows, is quite different.

They are interrupted by the entry of Louka, an attractive and proud peasant girl, who announces that the Serbs have been routed and have scattered throughout the town and that some of the fugitives have been chased into the neighborhood. Thus, the doors must be secured since there might be fighting and shooting in the street below. Raina is annoyed that the fugitives must be killed, but she is immediately corrected — in war, everyone can be killed. Catherine goes below to fasten up the doors, and Louka shows Raina how to fasten the shutters if there is any shooting and then leaves to help bolt the rest of the house.

Left alone, Raina picks up her fiancé's picture, raises it above her head like a priestess worshipping it, and calls the portrait her "soul's hero." As she prepares for bed, shots are suddenly heard in the distance and then some more shots are heard; these are much nearer. She scrambles out of bed, rapidly blows out the candles, and immediately darts back into bed. She hears more shots, and then she hears someone tampering with the shutters from outside; there is a glimmer of light, and then someone strikes a match and warns her not to try to run away. Raina is told to light a candle, and after she does so, she is able to see a man in a Serbian's officer's uniform; he is completely bespattered with mud and blood,

and he warns her that if it becomes necessary, he will shoot her because if he is caught, he will be killed — and he has no intention of dying. When they hear a disturbance outside the house, the Serbian officer quickly snatches Raina's cloak that she is about to use to cover herself; ungentlemanlike, he keeps it, knowing that she would not want a group of army officers searching her room when she is clad in only a sheer nightgown. There is more noise downstairs, and Louka is heard at the door; she says that there is a search party downstairs, and if Raina doesn't let them in, they will break down the door. Suddenly the Serbian officer loses his courage; he tells Raina that he is done for. He will shoot the first man who breaks in and "it will not be nice." Raina impulsively changes her mind and decides to hide him behind the curtains. Catherine, Louka, and a Russian officer dressed in a Bulgarian uniform enter, and after inspecting the balcony and hearing Raina testify that no one came in, they leave. (Louka, however, notices something behind the curtain and sees the revolver lying on the ottoman; she says nothing, however.) Raina slams and locks the door after them.

When the Serbian officer emerges and offers his thanks, he explains that he is not really a Serbian officer; he is a professional soldier, a Swiss citizen, in fact, and he now wishes that he had joined with the Bulgarians rather than with the Serbs. He asks to stay a minute to collect his thoughts, and Raina agrees, deciding to sit down also, but as she sits on the ottoman, she sits on the man's pistol, and she lets out a scream. Raina now realizes what it was that Louka was staring at, and she is surprised that the others

didn't notice it. She is frightened of the gun, but the soldier tells her there is no need to be — it is not loaded: he keeps chocolates rather than bullets in his cartridge holder. In fact, he wishes he had some chocolates now. In mock scorn, Raina goes to the chest of drawers and returns with a half-eaten box of chocolates, the remainder of which he immediately devours. Raina is shocked to hear him say that only foolish young soldiers or else stupid ones like those in charge of the recent attack on the Serbs at Slivnitsa carry bullets; wise and experienced soldiers carry chocolates. Then he offends her further (and still innocently, of course) by explaining how unprofessional the cavalry charge against the Serbs was, and if there had not been a stupid mistake on the part of the Serbs, the Bulgarians would have been massacred. Then the soldier says that the Bulgarian "hero," the leader of the troops, acted "like an operatic tenor . . . shouting his war-cry and charging like Don Quixote at the windmills." He says that the fellow was the laughingstock of everyone present: "Of all the fools let loose on a field of battle, that man must be the very maddest." Only a stupid mistake carried the day for him. Raina then takes the portrait of Sergius and shows it to the officer, who agrees that this was indeed the person who was "charging the windmills and imagining he was doing the finest thing."

Angry at the derogatory remarks about her "heroic" betrothed, Raina orders the stranger to leave. But he balks; he says that whereas he could climb up the balcony, he simply can't face the descent. He is so exhausted that he tells her to simply give out the alarm — he's beaten. Raina tries to spark some

courage in him, but realizes that he is more prudent than daring. Raina is at a loss; she simply doesn't know what to do with him: he can't be caught in the Petkoff house, the richest house in Bulgaria and the only one to have a library and an inside staircase. She then remembers an opera by Verdi, *Ermani*, in which a fugitive throws himself on the mercy of some aristocratic people; she thinks that perhaps this might be the solution because, according to the opera, the hospitality of a nobleman is sacred and inviolable. In response, the soldier tells her that his father is a hospitable man himself; in fact, he owns six hotels in Switzerland. Then falling asleep, he kisses her hand. Raina panics. She insists that he stay awake until she can fetch her mother, but before she can get out of the room, he has crawled into her bed and is asleep in such a trance that when Raina returns with her mother, they cannot shake him awake. His fatigue is so great that Raina tells her mother: "The poor darling is worn out. Let him sleep." This comment arouses Catherine's stern reproach, and the curtain falls on the first act.

### 3.5.2 ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST ACT

In reading a Shavian play, one should pay attention to Shaw's staging directions at the beginning of the act. As Shaw began his literary career as a novelist, his plays tend to have enormous stage directions focusing on every minute detail of the scene and physiognomy of characters. Thus his plays are something of a cross between dramatic literature and novel. The stage directions here call for the scenery to

convey the impression of cheap Viennese pretentious aristocracy incongruously combined with good, solid Bulgarian commonplace items. Likewise, since Raina will ultimately be seen as a person who will often assume a pose for dramatic effect, the act opens with her being (in Shaw's words) "intensely conscious of the romantic beauty of the night and of the fact that her own youth and beauty are part of it." As we find out later, she even listens at doors and waits until the proper moment to make the most effective, dramatic entrance.

As noted in the "Introduction", the title of this play is ironic since it comes from the opening line of Virgil's *Aeneid* ("Of arms and the man I sing. . ."), an epic which glorifies war and the hero in battle. Shaw will use the idea of the hero (Sergius) in war (the Serbo-Bulgarian war in 1885) in order to satirize not merely war itself, but the romantic glorification of war. In addition to this goal, he will also satirize romantic notions of valour and courage, affectation and pretense, and most important, misguided idealism. The dramatic shift that will occur in the play involves two romantic idealists (Raina and Sergius) who, rejecting their original positions instead of marrying each other, will each become engaged to a practical realist — Sergius to the practical and attractive servant, Louka, and Raina to the professional realist, Captain Bluntschli.

Raina is seen, at first, as the romantic idealist, but she is also characterized as being a fleeting realist when she wonders if her idealism and Sergius' idealism might be due simply to the fact that they have read so much poetry by

Byron and other romantics. Likewise, Raina wants to glory in the noble idealism of the war, but she is also deeply troubled by its cruelty: “What glory is there in killing wretched fugitives?” In this early comment, we have her rationale for her later hiding and, thus, her saving Bluntschli’s life.

Before meeting Bluntschli, Raina seems to want to live according to the romantic idealism to which she and Sergius aspire. She knows that he has, in effect, placed her on too high a pedestal, but she does want to make an effort to live “up to his high standards.” For example, after hearing of his heroic feats, she holds up his photo and “elevates it, like a priestess,” vowing never to be unworthy of him. This vow, however, as we soon see, will not last too long.

Captain Bluntschli’s arrival through the balcony doors is, in itself, a highly melodramatic and romantic stage entrance. In fact, almost everything about Act I is contrived — the lady’s bedroom, the concealment of the fugitive behind a curtain, the threat of a bloody fight, the matter of chocolate creams, and, finally, the enemy soldier falling asleep in the lady’s bed — all of this smacks of artificiality and is juxtaposed against Captain Bluntschli’s realistic appraisal of war and his matter-of-fact assertion that, from a practical viewpoint, Sergius’ military charge was as foolish as Don Quixote’s charge on the Windmills. And actually, while Raina ridicules Captain Bluntschli for his cowardice, for his hiding behind a woman’s curtains, for his inordinate fear (he has been under fire for three days and his nerves are “shot to pieces”), and for his extraordinary desire for

chocolate creams, she is nevertheless attracted to him, and even though she pretends to be offended at his comments about Sergius, she is secretly happy that her fiancé is not as perfect as we were earlier led to believe that he was.

At the end of the act, Raina returns to her artificial pretensions as she tries to impress Bluntschli with her family’s aristocratic aspirations, bragging that her father chose the only house in the city with an inside stairway, and a library, and, furthermore, Raina says, she attends the opera every year in Bucharest. Ironically, it is from romantic operas that Raina derives many of her romantic ideals, and she uses one of Verdi’s romantic operas as her rationale for hiding this practical Swiss professional soldier. The final irony of the act is that the professional man of war is sleeping as soundly as a baby in Raina’s bed, with her hovering over him, feeling protective about him.

When the play opens, we hear about the glorious exploits which were performed by Major Sergius Saranoff during his daring and magnificent cavalry raid, an event that profoundly affected the results of the war against the Serbs toward victory for the Bulgarians. He thus becomes Raina Petkoff’s ideal hero; yet the more that we learn about this raid, the more we realize that it was a futile, ridiculous gesture, one that bordered on an utter suicidal escapade.

In contrast, Captain Bluntschli’s actions in Raina’s bedroom strike us, at first, as being the actions of a coward. Bluntschli is a Swiss, a professional soldier fighting for the Serbs. He climbs up a water pipe and onto a balcony to escape capture,



### 3.5.3 BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE SECOND ACT

Act II begins four months later in the garden of Major Petkoff's house on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1886. In the meanwhile the war between the Bulgarians and the Serbians had ended. The treaty had been signed. The orders for the demobilization of the army had been issued. The Swiss Captain Bluntschli nick named as the 'Chocolate Cream Soldier' had met both Major Paul Petkoff and Major Sergius Saranoff on official business and settled the exchange of prisoners. He had cheated both Petkoff and Sergius into giving him fifty able bodied men for two hundred worn-out and worthless horses. Sergius had, on the suggestion of the Swiss, resigned his job from the Army. In the meantime both Petkoff and Sergius had been told by a friend of the Swiss about his escape from the clutches of the Bulgarian military by taking shelter in the bedroom of a young Bulgarian lady and being sent away disguised in an old coat of the master of the house.

The Act opens when the middle-aged man-servant Nicola is lecturing Louka on the importance of having proper respect for the upper class, but Louka has too independent a soul to ever be a "proper" servant. She has higher plans for herself than to marry someone like Nicola, who, she insists, has the "soul of a servant." Major Petkoff arrives home from the war, and his wife Catherine greets him with two bits of information: she suggests that Bulgaria should have annexed Serbia, and she tells him that she has had an electric bell installed in the library. Major Sergius Saranoff, Raina's fiancé and leader of the successful cavalry charge, arrives, and in the course of

discussing the end of the war, he and Major Petkoff recount the now-famous story of how a Swiss soldier escaped by climbing up a balcony and into the bedroom of a noble Bulgarian woman. The women are shocked that such a crude story would be told in front of them. When the Petkoffs go into the house, Raina and Sergius discuss their love for one another, and Raina romantically declares that the two of them have found a "higher love."

When Raina goes to get her hat so that they can go for a walk, Louka comes in, and Sergius asks if she knows how tiring it is to be involved with a "higher love." Then he immediately tries to embrace the attractive maid Louka. Since he is being so blatantly familiar, Louka declares that Miss Raina is no better than she; Raina, she says, has been having an affair while Sergius was away, but she refuses to tell Sergius who Raina's lover is, even though Sergius accidentally bruises Louka's arm while trying to wrest a confession from her. When he apologizes, Louka insists that he kiss her arm, but Sergius refuses and, at that moment, Raina re-enters. Sergius is then called away, and Catherine enters. The two ladies discuss how incensed they both are that Sergius related the tale about the escaping soldier. Raina, however, doesn't care if Sergius hears about it; she is tired of his stiff propriety. At that moment, Louka announces the presence of a Swiss officer with a carpetbag, calling for the lady of the house. His name is Captain Bluntschli. Instantly, they both know he is the "chocolate cream soldier" who is returning the Major's old coat that they disguised him in. As they make rapid, desperate plans to send him away, Major Petkoff hails Bluntschli and greets him warmly as the person



### 3.5.5 BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE THIRD ACT

It is Major Paul Petkoff's library and is the only library in Bulgaria. However, it is not much of a library. While Captain Bluntschli is still busy writing orders, Petkoff complains that without his old coat, he is feeling uncomfortable. He also complains that the old coat is missing from the blue closet where he had left it.

Catherine had, however, already removed the old coat from Bluntschli's carpet bag and hung it up in the blue closet. So she tells Petkoff that his old coat must be hanging where he had left it. He assures her that he had looked for the old coat in the blue closet and found it missing. Catherine then calls Nicola and asks him to bring It is master's old coat from the blue closet. Petkoff is cocksure that the old coat cannot be found in the blue closet. So he starts betting with Catherine and invites Bluntschli and Sergius to join the betting.

In the meanwhile, Bluntschli completes writing orders. He then asks Sergius to see the messengers who are to carry the papers, and to warn them, i.e. the messengers, that if the papers do not reach the headquarters within the fixed time they will be whipped mercilessly. As soon as Sergius goes out, Bluntschli tells Petkoff confidentially that the Major must follow Sergius just to see that he talks to the messengers properly. Petkoff, however, takes Catherine with him, saying that the messengers will be more frightened of her than of him. Thus the stage is cleared of Sergius, Petkoff, and Catherine. Only Bluntschli and Raina are left alone.

Bluntschli is surprised to see that the Major had to enlist the services of his wife for frightening the messengers into discipline. Raina also is surprised to see that Bluntschli does not pay her any compliments or thank her for having saved his life.

So, in order to remind him of the previous occasion when they had met and to elicit his admiration and gratitude for her, she puts three searching questions to him: How he looked nicer than on the previous occasion? Did he get back safely when sent out disguised in the Major's old coat? He answers the questions in an ordinary off-hand manner. Says that he looked nicer because he had washed and brushed and had breakfast and a good night's sleep. He had got back safely, and his friends were not angry but glad because they had all just run away themselves.

Since his admiration and gratitude were not forthcoming, she tells him that all about her and her room must have made a lovely story for his friends. He informs her that he had told the story to only one of his friends who would be discreet enough not to repeat it before others. She then complains to him saying that his friend had, at the time of the exchange of soldiers, told the story to her father and to Sergius. She also tells him that they do not, however, know that he was the fugitive or that he had taken shelter in her room. She fears that if Sergius were to know the true facts, he will challenge and kill him.

Bluntschli is deeply concerned on hearing all this but he advises Raina not to tell Sergius anything about the true facts.



However, Raina tells Bluntschli that she cannot deceive Sergius because her relation to him is the one really beautiful part of her life. Bluntschli thinks that by saying that she cannot deceive Sergius, Raina means to say that she does not want Sergius to find out that the story about the ice pudding was a false story.

Raina is, therefore, distressed to find herself thus bluntly exposed by Bluntschli. So she tells him not to talk in that flippant or lighthearted manner because she had, for the second time, lied just to save his life. She also tells him that she had lied for the first time just to save him from the clutches of the Russian officer.

Bluntschli comforts Raina by telling her not to be worried for having lied twice for saving his life. He then tells her of the two things that happen to a soldier so often that he comes to think nothing of them. These two things, he goes on to say, are hearing people tell lies, and getting his life saved in all sorts of ways and by all sorts of people.

Raina retorts and says that by hearing lies and getting his life saved, a soldier becomes incapable of faith and gratitude. Now Bluntschli's objection to the feeling of gratitude is that it ends in a feeling of hatred. However, she tells him that even animals are grateful and that if he is incapable of gratitude, then he is incapable of any noble sentiment.

Bluntschli now points out to Raina that Sergius also, like her, pretends to strike the noble attitude and speak in the thrilling voice. She wonders whether Sergius too is a pretender. Raina, therefore, tells Bluntschli that he must be despising her

because of her pretending and lying. However, he assures her that he does not at all despise her. Says he, "No, my dear young lady, no, no, no a thousand times. Pretending and lying becomes your youth and enhances your charms. I am not very different from your nurse, your parents, and your Sergius. I am your infatuated admirer."

Raina is pleased but not satisfied because Bluntschli has called himself her admirer but not her lover. So she tries to make him confess his love for her by asking him what he had thought of her for giving him her portrait. He is astonished to hear this because she had never given him her portrait. She informs him that she had put the portrait in one of the pockets of her father's old coat in which he was sent away disguised. He tells her that the portrait must still be in the pocket because he never found it. She is very angry; calls him stupid, and fears that her father might have found and seen it. Raina then asks Bluntschli, "Are you sure nobody touched the portrait?" He is not quite sure because he had, for the sake of safekeeping, pawned it and redeemed it only two days before coming to her house. The conversation carried on between Raina and Bluntschli is interrupted by the entry of Louka. The maid servant brings a heap of letters and telegrams which had been brought by a messenger for Bluntschli. Bluntschli opens one of the telegrams and reads the sad news of his father's death. Raina calls the news very sad and Louka crosses herself but he simply purses his lips and continues looking at the telegram and musing on the unexpected change in his arrangements. He then opens one of the letters which is from the family solicitor. He is amazed to discover from it that his father had left him a huge fortune.

Bluntschli then leaves the room hastily to give the messenger orders about starting for home in an hour.

In the meantime Sergius came to know the fugitive stay at Raina's bedchamber. Raina then suddenly guesses the truth that Louka, her maid-servant, must have been Sergius's informant. She says to Sergius, "you were with Louka this morning all that time after -Oh, what sort of god is this I have been worshipping!.. Do you know that I looked out of the window as I went upstairs, to have another sight 'Of my hero; and I saw something I did not understand then. I know that you were making love to her."

Sergius enjoys Raina's disenchantment and exclaims, "Raina, our romance is shattered. Life is a farce." Sergius next informs Bluntschli that he is not going to fight the duel with him because he is not a man but a machine. Bluntschli says to Sergius, "You found life to be a farce when you had discovered that Raina loved me. Now you have discovered that I am a machine without any magnetism in me. So you should know that Raina cannot love an automation or machine like me. Hence, I am no longer in your way to your marriage with Raina. Life should, therefore, be not a farce but something quite sensible and serious. You should, then, be quite happy to be re-united with Raina."

However, Raina says that Sergius's difficulties are not yet over because his new love is Louka and he must first fight a duel with Nicola to whom Louka is engaged. Sergius is quite upset on hearing this piece of news. Raina irritates Sergius by remarking sarcastically that he will be acting chivalrously

in marrying Louka and thus saving great beauty and intellect from being wasted on a middle-aged male servant like Nicola. Hearing this, Sergius loses all self-control and calls Raina a viper. She too gets angry and tells Bluntschli that Sergius has set Louka as a spy on them and that her reward for spying is that he makes love to her. Sergius calls Raina's charge as not only false but also monstrous. On being questioned by Raina, Sergius admits that Louka had told him about Captain Bluntschli's being in her room and that he had been making love to Louka when Louka told him so. However, he is interrupted by Raina who does not give him to qualify both of his statements. Raina then ends contemptuously by adding, "You admit that you had been making love to Louka while she told you that Captain Bluntschli was in my room. This proves conclusively that you have set Louka as a spy on Captain Bluntschli and myself."

On hearing this, Sergius now calls Raina a tiger cat. She complains to Bluntschli about this but he comforts her by saying, "What else can Sergius do, dear lady? He must defend himself somehow. Come: don't quarrel. What good does it do?"

In the meantime Petkoff turned up putting on the old coat, Petkoff is puzzled when he finds missing from his pocket a photograph of Raina with the inscription: "*Raina, to her Chocolate Cream Soldier: a Souvenir.*" His suspicions are aroused and he thinks that there is some mystery about the chocolate cream soldier. So he interrogates Nicola.

However, Petkoff says that Nicola may be sure, but he himself is not sure of Raina's telling the truth. He then

enquires of Sergius whether he is the chocolate cream soldier. But when Sergius denies, the Major wonders whether Raina sends things like that to other men. Sergius then tells the Major that the world is not such an innocent place as they used to think.

At last, Bluntschli informs the Major that he himself is the chocolate cream soldier, that Raina saved his life by giving him chocolate creams when he was starving, and that he was the fugitive about whom his friend, Stolz, had told the Major.

The Major gasps on hearing Bluntschli and remarks how the ladies had reacted to the story narrated to them in the morning. The Major then turns to Raina and rebukes for her indiscretion, saying, "You're a nice young woman, aren't you?" She defends herself by first diverting his mind from herself by saying that Sergius had changed his mind. The Major is exasperated and asks Raina as to which of the two gentlemen she is engaged to. She tells him that she is not engaged to either of the two. Next, she again tries to divert the Major's attention from herself by saying that Louka is the new object of Sergius's affections.

Catherine now comes in and finds Louka in Sergius's arms. Petkoff explains to his wife that Sergius is likely to marry Louka instead of Raina. Catherine tells Sergius that he is bound by his word to her and her husband. But his reply is that nothing binds him. Bluntschli congratulates Sergius for marrying a maid-servant to whom he really loves. Catherine now turns to Louka and rebukes her for telling stories against Raina. Louka assures Catherine that no lies have been told

about Raina and no harm been done to her. Louka explains herself by repeating what she had told Sergius that Raina will not marry him (i.e. Sergius) if the Swiss gentleman came back. Louka then confronts Raina, saying, "I thought you were fonder of Bluntschli than of Sergius. You know best whether I was right." Thus Louka proves that she is innocent of having told lies about, or doing any harm to Raina. However, both Catherine and Raina are annoyed because Louka has taken the liberty of addressing Raina as Raina and not as my lady or Miss Raina. Louka pleads equality and says, "I have a right to call her Raina: she calls me Louka." But Bluntschli is much surprised to hear Louka say that Raina will marry him instead of Sergius. To him the very idea of Raina marrying him is absurd and ridiculous.

Raina had simply saved his life and nothing objectionable had passed between them. She had never cared for him. There was a great contrast between their status-she was a rich Bulgarian Lady but he was a commonplace Swiss soldier who had hardly known what a decent life is after fifteen years of barracks and battles. Her imagination is full of fairy princes and noble natures and cavalry charges and the like whereas he is a matter-of-fact person. He is not a fit person to be her husband because he is a vagabond and a man who has spoiled all his chances in life by running away from home twice when a boy and going into the Army instead of going into his father's business. He takes all sorts of risks like climbing her balcony instead of diving into the nearest cellar, and he is led by idle curiosity in sneaking back to her to have another look at her instead of sending back the coat and going home

quietly. All that adventure, which was life or death to him, was only a school girl's game to her-chocolate creams and 'hide and seek'. If she had taken the affair seriously, she would not have sent him her photograph and written on the back of it the words, "Raina to her Chocolate Cream Soldier; a Souvenir." There is a great disparity between their ages-she is a young lady of seventeen and he is a fully grown-up man of double her age, i.e. thirty-five. Bluntschli feels complacent with his statement of facts. So he asks Raina if he has put everything right. Her reply is, "I quite agree with your account of yourself. You are a romantic idiot. Next time, I hope you will know the difference between a schoolgirl of seventeen and a woman of twenty three."

Bluntschli is taken aback to be called a romantic idiot. He is also stupefied to learn that Raina is not seventeen but twenty-three years old. On the other hand, Sergius enjoys, though grimly, his rival's discomfiture or embarrassment. Says he, "Bluntschli, my one last belief is gone. Your sagacity is a fraud, like everything else. You have less sense than even I." Though overwhelmed with the discovery that Raina is twenty three and not seventeen, Bluntschli swiftly makes up his mind and proposes formally to become a suitor for Raina's hand in place of Sergius.

Raina wonders how Bluntschli can have the courage to propose after having ridiculed her personality and her sentiment. However, he assures her that if he had known her to be twenty-three he would have taken seriously all that she had said to him earlier in the afternoon. Catherine's objection to the proposed marriage is that both the Petkoffs and the

Saranoffs belong to ancient and aristocratic families, but Bluntschli does not belong to any ancient or aristocratic family.

On the other hand, the Major's objection to the marriage is that Bhmtschli is not a man of position and will not be able to offer Raina the very comfortable establishment to which she is accustomed. Bluntschli, therefore, informs the huge wealth he has just then inherited-200 horses, 70 carriages, 4,000 table-cloths, 9,600 pairs of sheets and blankets, 2,400 cider-down quilts, 10,000 knives and forks, 10,000 desert spoons, 300 servants, 6 palatial establishments, 2 livery stables, one tea garden, and one private house. Bluntschli adds that he knows three native languages-French, Italian and German. Petkoff, who is overawed by the formidable list of Bluntschli's possessions, asks him if he is the Emperor of Switzerland. Bhmtschli informs the Major that he is a free citizen of his country's classless society.

Raina then tells Bluntschli that she had not shown those favours to the Emperor of Switzerland. He agrees with her but asks her to tell them as to whom she had shown those favours. With a shy smile, she tells them that she had shown those favours to her 'chocolate cream soldier'. With a boyish laugh of delight, he thanks her and says that will do.

### **3.5.6 ANALYSIS OF THE THIRD ACT**

In Act III, the horror and ludicrousness of war are brought into graphic focus through Bluntschli's account of his friend who was wounded and burned alive in a wood yard, and the

true instincts of love are revealed in Raina's love for Bluntschli, active and vital, beneath her feigned love for Sergius. The truth converges upon Sergius, and although his reaction is strongly tinged with Byronic despair, he is caught in the essence of reality which propels him toward Louka. He can now with an honest mind legalize his normal biological drives toward a pretty young woman, Louka, and at the same time he can fulfill his sense of courage in doing so.

Thus in Act III it is Bluntschli who has that combination of prosaicness and imagination which is necessary to solve the problem of the disposal of the Bulgarian cavalry; it is Sergius who is the machine, rubber-stamping the orders which come from Bluntschli's practical mind. The romantic image of Sergius deteriorates, not only in itself, but especially by contact and contrast with the efficiency of the Swiss captain. Bluntschli's ability and cool common sense tend to assume a romantic aura: he grows in stature as some of the elements of a superman begin to radiate from him, the man who has the natural genius to succeed where others fail. The crowning union of romance with the prosaic temperament occurs when Bluntschli admits to "an incurably romantic disposition." Romantically he ran away from home as a boy, romantically he joined the army, romantically he climbed Raina's balcony instead of seeking her cellar, and romantically he has returned. It is clear at last that his relationship with Raina has all along been more truly romantic than Sergius'. The point, however, is scarcely made before the Shavian brilliance juxtaposes it with Bluntschli's compromising misjudgment of Raina's age, followed by his prosaic

proposal and the magnificently bourgeois attraction and encumbrance of a chain of Swiss hotels. The romantic and the prosaic end in a magician's shuffle, and Sergius' final exclamation and question—"What a man! Is he a man?"—come too fast for the ambiguous reflection that in his romance Bluntschli is quite human, while in his prosaicness he is to some degree the Superman.

By Act III, Raina's romantic ideals about war and love have gone through a phase of disillusionment. She is merely clinging to the vestiges of her heroic romance with Sergius. Her remark, "My relation to him is the one really beautiful and noble part of my life," is as false in her own mind as is her subsequent assertion that she has lied only twice in her life. This is obviously play-acting, and though she still may have some illusions about Sergius, she certainly has few about the fraudulence of her own pretensions. When Bluntschli comments that he finds it impossible to believe a single word she says, she collapses from the heroic into the familiar: "How did you find me out?" She flatters herself that no one else has penetrated her façade, whereas Shaw has made it abundantly clear elsewhere that Louka, her mother Catherine, and her father, Paul all see through her. Only she and Sergius are fooled by her dream world, and even they cannot keep up with its demands. Recognizing the truth about herself, Raina can recognize the truth about Sergius as well; and when she discerns his flirtation with Louka, she tears him into little pieces of humiliation, laughing at herself at last in complete purgation, guessing Bluntschli's state of mind: "I daresay you think us a couple of grown-up babies, dont you?" In Act I she had concealed Bluntschli partly in

the spirit of the romance of the situation, but more basically out of compassion and maternal affection, the two qualities of romance and reality being joined. This joining is never present in her relationship with Sergius, a relationship she instinctively mistrusts, but it reappears in Act III, along with the realization that Bluntschli takes her as a woman, not as a tinsel goddess. Hence, Raina's role may generally be an evolution from romance to reality, but it is by no means remain unaffected by contradictory currents. She undergoes an education under the influence of Bluntschli, but it involves an awakening of her latent impulses and insights more than an alteration of her basic disposition.

#### Check Your Progress

1. How is Raina disillusioned with her romantic ideals of love and war?

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2. Make a note on the episode of 'Petkoff's coat' and what is its dramatic significance?

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## 3.6 CHARACTERS

### 3.6.1 Bluntschli

The most impressive and engaging character in *Arms and the Man* is Bluntschli. He makes a dramatic entry into the play. He dominates it throughout, and carries it to a happy ending. He is the most important character as well as the real hero of the play. Through him Shaw expresses ideas and opinions - he is his mouthpiece, his spokesperson. He is projected to show to the reader that in the world of today in which people's ideas and ideals, view-points and attitudes of life in general and to war in particular, are mostly confused, there are some persons like Bluntschli who can keep the balance between two.

He is about thirty five and is of medium stature. He does possess distinguishing features and appearance, but he is attractive. His eyes are quick and clear, indicative of his sharp intelligence. His manners are energetic and his bearing is manly. Bluntschli is a realist and a believer in realism. He is the only realist in the play - he alone suffers from no vision and no illusion. He may have a shop-keeper's mind, he may behave like a machine, he may even be a creature without the heart, but he never mistakes the unreal for the real shadow. He considers things just as he finds them. That is why he takes the news of his father's death so coolly. He agrees to marry Raina. He solves the problem of the return of the three regiments easily. He does not quarrel with anybody but plays as a friend to everybody.

Bluntschli is chivalrous. His first appearance does not indicate so. At first Raina dislikes him. But later on, we find him chivalrous. Even Raina accepts that he is a gentleman. He has a soft corner for Raina. Yet he wants that she and Sergius should compromise and marry. He makes an active attempt for it. This shows his chivalry. When Raina shows love to him, he does not take it seriously. He does not like to take advantage of the protestations of an immature girl. It is later on when he realizes that she is grown-up that he comes forward with the offer of marriage to her. All these things show that he is perfectly chivalrous. We may at first call him as a coward, who shivers at the very idea of capture by enemy. But we soon find that he possesses a sort of cool and quiet courage. The most admirable quality which gives unique distinction to his character is detachment. He does not take life too seriously. The best proof of his overmastering personality is that in his brief encounter with Raina, he almost succeeds in knocking all romantic illusions out of her mind. He wins the hearts not only of Raina and Catherine, but also of Petkoff and Sergius. When the play ends, we too feel like exclaiming with Sergius: 'What a man !'

His apparent listlessness covers his shrewdness. But we quite frequently get glimpses of it. These qualities are not borne out only by the words of other characters in the play, but also in his own actions. In the matter of the exchange of war prisoners, he befools both Petkoff and Sergius. He helps Petkoff in sending back soldiers. He wins Raina in the end. All these things prove his wisdom, cleverness and intelligence. His dealing with Raina in her bedroom, his dealing with

Petkoff and Sergius in the matter of the exchange of prisoners, his curing of Raina and Sergius of their romantic idealism — all reveal his shrewdness.

He takes fancy for Raina. He does not boast of his qualities. Everybody is impressed by his practical outlook. It is this practical outlook that cures Raina of her disease of romance and it is this practical outlook that solves Petkoff's problem of sending soldiers. Practical approach to all things is the secret of his success. It is with this judgement that he snatches away Raina: Then his judgement of Sergius and his cavalry charge is wise. He is the first man to see through Raina.

He joins the Army only on account of his love for romance and adventure. He himself says—"I am a vagabond, a man who has spoiled all his chances in life through incurably romantic disposition. I ran away from home twice when I was a boy. I went into the Army instead of my father's business. I climbed the balcony when a man of sense would have dived into the closest cellar. I came sneaking back to have another look at the young lady, when any other man of my age would have sent the coat back and gone quietly home". He has always realized that total pragmatism can be as unrealistic as overblown idealism and he has always tried to maintain a balance between the two. However, over the course of the play, this balance flip-flops as he changes from a soldier who looks askance at love, to a man who is leaving the army to get married and to take care of his father's business. Thus the man who changed Raina's and Sergius's lives has also had his own life transformed. His appeal to

Raina to accept him as her husband is also romantic. But he is so realistic and practical that he hardly seems adventurous and romantic - that is why Sergius calls him a machine. He does not easily get excited. Had he been emotional, he would have taken Raina's pinching words to heart and would have gone out of her bedroom and that would have meant death. He is always cool and collected. He meets all the crises calmly and philosophically.

He is always well-balanced between two extremes. He has emotion and reason, sentiment and thought, foresight and insight, impulse and determination, conventionality and originality, intellect and instinct. He has a wonderful sense of humour. He laughs at romanticism, but he does so in a very subtle manner. His talk with Raina and Sergius sparkles with touches of his humour. The way he tries to pronounce Petkoff' shows his sense of humour. His caricaturing of Sergius as 'Don Quixote' is another example of his humour.

He is a professional soldier who has joined Army only because he has to earn a living. His whole attitude about war and other aspects of life concerning war is that of a professional soldier. He himself says, "I am a professional soldier. I fight when I have to, and I am very glad to get out of it when I haven't to". He is a discreet soldier. He feels that every man has the instinct of self-preservation and that is true about the soldier as well. He adheres to the adage "Discretion is the best part of valour.'

He does not take it as something grand. He believes that war

dehumanizes man and makes him a moral and spiritual coward. He is convinced that in a period of peace man can live like man, while in the time of war, he becomes a beast and leads the life of a brute.

Both Sergius and Bluntschli have love for Raina, but are different from each other. There is a lot of romanticism in Sergius's love, but Bluntschli has a sense of realism in it also. He has a soft corner for Raina, but he does not want to come in the way of her and Sergius. On the contrary, he sincerely wishes that they should compromise and marry.

Shaw has written this play with the object of exposing the idle romantic notions held by people regarding war and love. He has created Bluntschli to serve as his spokesman and to express his realistic and commonsense points of view - to put through his satire on romantic idealism about war and love. Bluntschli is a typical Shavian hero. He is a practical man who has no illusions about life and things. The romantic glow about war or love holds no fascination for him. He hates war and does not take it to be grand and glorious, he feels that war should be avoided. He seems to agree with the Napoleonic maxim that an army marches on its stomach. He himself fills his pockets with cream chocolates in place of bullets. He cures Raina and Sergius of their romantic ideas on war. The same contempt for sentiment characterizes his attitude towards love. He thinks that love is a folly and marriage is a biological necessity and that there is nothing glorious or glamorous about them. Bluntschli is a new type of hero. In him, Shaw has made his first attempt to



demonstrate that the flesh and blood man is much more of a hero than the statue and the legend.

### 3.6.2 RAINA PETKOFF

Raina is the heroine of the play. She has extraordinary physical charms. Her intelligence is also extraordinary; her attitude towards life is quite abnormal - her whole make up is attractive and beautiful. Shaw presents her as typical of the upper middle class in its philistinism and ridiculous ineptitude.

Raina's world is too idealistically romantic. She lives in the realm of romantic idealism, far from the world of grim reality. She adores her fiance, Sergius. He has gone to the war, as an ideal hero. She looks upon him as one of the knights of the ancient days of chivalry come to life again. This view of hers has been created and pampered by the romantic dreams of life gathered from Byron, Pushkin, and the several operas she has witnessed. When she hears of his bravery in the war, she is overwhelmed. She takes his portrait in her hands and elevates it like a priestess. When she meets him after his return from the front, she most romantically calls him, 'My hero my king.' She is an embodiment of romantic idealism, in every breath and fibre of hers there echoes a romantic note.

Besides being excessively romantic and idealistic, she is poetic too. She has all the characteristics that go to make one a romantic poet living in a world of dreamy idealism. At our

first introduction with her, she seems to possess a poetic love for nature. In the opening of the play we find her in the balcony of her bedroom, looking far and near into the starlit night, intensely conscious of the romantic beauty of nature.

Raina has an alert mind. She is able to adjust herself to the changed circumstances and situation. It is by this inborn alertness of mind and heart that she saves Bluntschli. It is on account of this quality that she quickly discovers the hollowness of her romantic attitude towards life, love and war. It is due to this quality that she finds out Sergius in his true colours and rejects him, and realises the worth of Bluntschli and accepts him. She is brave and courageous when Bluntschli breaks into her bedroom and threatens her with a pistol, she does not shriek or cry. She tries to face the situation boldly. When he speaks of having frightened her, she laughingly says "Frighten me? Do you know, Sir, though I am only a woman, I think I am at heart as brave as you."

She has very tender heart. She always pities the persons who are suffering and are in trouble. It is on account of this quality that she gives shelter to Bluntschli, an enemy of her country. When she hears about the cruelties of the war, she exclaims, "I wish our people were not so cruel. What glory is there in killing wretched fugitives?" Again, when she is told of Bluntschli's friend having been burnt alive, she is shocked and cries out, "How horrible!" She is not suspicious and suspecting. Though a woman, with all the failings of woman, she is above these vices.

Though Raina has certain outstanding qualities but she is a snob. As she is the daughter of snobbish parents, it is natural for her to be a snob. She is proud of her being a Petkoff. Like her mother, she is also a prey to a feeling of social superiority and she has inherited an equal anxiety to appear civilized and fashionable. Raina has all the qualities as well as the weaknesses of a woman. She is very jealous. When her mother praises Sergius, she feels jealous and says, 'I sometimes wish you could marry him instead of me.' With regard to Louka's affair, she is jealous again. The following reference of Louka to Sergius very dearly reflects her jealousy. "A shocking sacrifice, isn't it? Such beauty! Such intellect! Such modesty! wasted on a middle-aged servant-man! Really, Sergius, you cannot stand-by and allow such a thing. It would be unworthy of your chivalry!" Sergius loses his control and calls her a 'viper' and cat', and that she is, for she has all the venom of a viper and all the ferocity of a tiger cat. She always tries to put up and keep up appearances. She always thinks of being considered fashionable and aristocratic. She is artificial and hypocritical like many other members of her sex.

In spite of her womanly weaknesses, she is always dignified. She sees Sergius making love to Louka, but does not behave about it in an undignified manner. She does not make a scene. She keeps the affair to her heart, and reveals it only when she is forced to do so.

Raina is something of a medieval Madonna, whose only aim in life, is to adore and worship a hero romantically. She

believes that the highest and noblest aspiration of a romantic maiden, like herself, is to paint in her mind a picture of a man exceedingly handsome, extremely romantic, exceptionally brave and extraordinarily adventurous. She finds such a man in Sergius and she worships his bravery and chivalry in her heart. In the beginning, Raina feels nothing but contempt for Bluntschli. She thinks him a coward and mockingly calls him a 'chocolate cream soldier'. But as the play advances, she learns more and more of Bluntschli's worth and she gets closer and closer to him. At last, she comes to her real self.

The end of the play shows conversion of Raina to the realities of life. In the beginning, we find her as a romantic lady, who does not take life as it is, but in the end, she is cured of her romanticism. She has been living marooned in the island of her fantastic romantic idealism. But, at last, she sees the realities of life and enters the world of concrete realism, where there is no romantic illusion, no utopian idealism, but only facts and grim facts.

Raina, we are to understand, was at heart a realist, or at least is not one of the incurable romantic disposition. Really speaking there is a gradual unfolding of her character in the play. We cannot say that she passes from romanticism to realism; we can rather say that she begins to shed the former as she comes to grips with actuality. With all her romantic dreams shattered, she becomes quite sensible girl, her rose-tainted views of life taking at last a sober, rather a natural colour.

But this halo vanishes when Bluntschli enters her life. With his merciless logic and uncompromising realism, he disillusioned her mind of its cherished notions. He shows Sergius's supreme adventures as a quixotic blunder which an ironic fate converted into a triumph. He makes her realize that war is not an exciting sport, but a horrible evil; that soldiers fight because they are paid to fight; they are not heroes; like ordinary human beings they prefer chocolates to bullets and love life as the dearest thing in the world. He thus cures her diseased views about the war.

Bluntschli's personality does not affect merely her notions about war; it disillusioned her of her ideas of 'Higher Love' also. She also feels attracted to him in their very first encounter. When he returns, his influence becomes stronger. He alone frankly tells her that when she strikes a noble attitude and speaks in a thrilling voice, he is led to admire her. She not only realizes that she has substituted an imaginary Sergius for the real one, but also that she has been building up an imaginary self, far removed from reality. She gets more attracted to the man who helps her in this realization. Her conception of 'Higher Love' collapses completely when she sees Sergius making overtures to Louka; she is terribly shaken up to see her hero falling towards her maid. All her rosy visions fade away, and she gets ready to face life as it is. Thus, Bluntschli acts as a moral doctor, restoring to her a sane and healthy outlook of life.

The central character in the play, Raina learns to discard her foolish ideals about love in exchange for real love. Raina is

central because Catherine and Paul Petkoff are her parents, Sergius is her fiancé, Louka and Nicola are her family's servants, and Bluntschli is her dream soldier. The play starts in her bedroom, where we learn what a dreamy romantic idea she has about love and war, before the enemy soldier comes through her window and begins to shatter her fairy-tale illusions with his realism.

Shaw was known for creating lively, willful, and articulate female characters. He also often included a youthful character in his plays, one who could express a childish approach to life. Raina fits both these descriptions. She is unworldly and sometimes acts like a spoiled child to get her way. Catherine points out that Raina always times her entrances to get the most attention. Nonetheless, Raina is intelligent. She probably wouldn't have fallen for Bluntschli if she had not been open to his arguments and if she were not smart enough to see the differences in qualities between Bluntschli and Saranoff. She is also honest enough with herself to realize that she is not truly in love with Saranoff, but was just playing a role to meet social expectations. Raina has enough bravery and compassion to aid an enemy soldier in need, and she is courageous and adventurous enough to take a risk with Bluntschli and to start a new life.

### 3.6.3 SERGIUS

Major Saranoff is Raina's fiancé, and he is a shining example of Raina and her mother's romanticized image of a hero. He

is almost quixotic in his attempt to live up to this image, especially in battle, for it is hopeless to try to embody a myth. Thus, Shaw uses this character to show that these romanticized ideals were probably nonsense all along. Sergius is often referred to as the Byronic hero or as the Hamlet of this play because he has an underlying despair about life. He clings to his idealized image of himself because he is afraid to find out who he really is. He knows that he is a different person with Raina than he is with Louka, and Louka has pointed out his hypocritical behaviors to him. Sergius realizes that there must be more to himself than the idealized soldier the young ladies worship, but of the other selves that he has observed in himself he says: "One of them is a hero, another a buffoon, another a humbug, another perhaps a bit of a blackguard." He is disconcerted by the feeling that "everything I think is mocked by everything I do." In losing Raina and declaring his love for Louka, Sergius is freed to be himself and to discover his own values.

Shaw wrote *Arms and the Man* with a determined intention of exposing some of the shams that influence our life and outlook. He wanted to prick the bubble of romance which surrounds institutions like war and marriage. This disillusionment is chiefly worked out through the character of Sergius. He seems to have modelled himself on Byron's heroes. Romantic mystery and romantic glamour cling to him like an aura. By his pose and attitude which are carefully studied, he produces an impression wherever he goes. His figure is suited to the part he plays. He is tall and handsome,

with an air of brave do and distinction about him. He is the type of the Balkan mountaineer chieftain, tempered by the advent of western civilized ideas and manners. The dramatist, in his elaborate stage direction, analyses his nature as that of an imaginative barbarian who has developed a sturdy critical sense. He has learnt the art of introspection, of analyzing himself and his motives, thus developing a half tragic, half ironic attitude to things. But the romantic in his character is still to the fore, and this is continuously fed by those about him, who find in him the dashing hero, the nineteenth century counterpart of the knights of the bygone age of chivalry.

He is a soldier and a brave one. It is on account of his bravery that he makes the cavalry charge that wins the memorable battle at Slivnitsa. No one would have taken the courage to attack the battery with the help of cavalry. He looks romantically towards war. He thinks that war has a grandeur and heroism attached to it. He joins army not to earn his bread, but to earn glory and honour. He is greatly chivalrous. He behaves with Raina in a very chivalrous manner. When Louka feels insulted, he openly accepts her. He himself says, 'A gentleman has no right to hurt a woman under any circumstances.' And he maintains that attitude throughout. Although every character of the play calls him a fool, yet he cannot be denied the quality of intelligence and commonsense. When he smells of some affair between Raina and Bluntschli and utters the following sentence, he clearly shows that he has those qualities. 'Would you have come here if nothing had passed between you and Raina except at the muzzle of your pistol?' He is a red rebel. How rebelliously he resigns

his post in the Army as well as love for Raina!

He has certain good qualities but he is intemperate and unbalanced. Had he not been suffering from those two drawbacks, he would not have suffered the defeat in his life. He cannot wait for long time as he lacks patience. After his famous cavalry charge, he dreams of getting military honours, and having failed, he resigns his post. It is his romantic attitude that makes him an extremist. Were he not so, he would have succeeded in life.

Every decent human being apologizes for his or her fault, but Sergius does not do so. He thinks that greatness lies in not apologizing for his wrong attitude. He thinks that he is very intelligent, very brave and very wise. It is on account of this misconception that he makes the cavalry charge and, later on, resigns his post in the Army. While talking about his Slivnitza victory he says, 'I won the battle the wrong way when our worthy Russian generals were losing it the right way.' This vanity is the result of self-conceitedness. Psychologically, he seems to be complex because one does not know what he will do. His ideas and actions are not reconcilable. He is a living anomaly and in qualities he has something of the cynic as well as the egoist in him. The realization that he cannot live up to the ideals cherished by his mind makes him drift into a cynical mood. His power of introspection makes him realize that he is a bundle of contradictions. As he tells Louka, he is half- a dozen Sergiuses in one. He is not able to discover the real Sergius in the midst of his middle. He has 'Higher Love'

for Raina. This love is based on romantic ideas and ideals. He worships her as a goddess. It is a Platonic love, a Utopian one. But sexless love is as impossible as the horns of rabbit. He is soon fed up with his 'Higher Love', and seeks comfort in Louka's physical love. This love is based on passion. Tired of 'Higher Love', he realizes that a man must have a woman's heart as well as her body. His flirtation with Louka is a biological thing. Soon he is convinced that he would match better with her and he openly accepts her. This is nothing but the conquest of passion and reality over romanticism.

As Louka is a foil to Raina, Sergius is a foil to Bluntschli. He acts as a background to Bluntschli and highlights his realism and other practical qualities. But he is too much of a fool even to serve as a contrast to the brilliant Bluntschli. Of course, Shaw believes that all romantic soldiers are stupid. But that is a belief which has to be demonstrated by means of an artistic portrayal. Shaw ought to have shown Sergius first as a romantic soldier and then a fool. But Sergius is represented as essentially a fool, and a soldier and lover only by accident.

In the beginning of the play, he seems a true hero, the figure of dreamy romance come to life. But with the advent of Bluntschli, the disrobing of this knight-errant slowly begins. The Swiss tells Raina that Sergius charge was a capital mistake, a repetition of Don Quixote's famous charge against the windmill. It was by a lucky stroke of fortune that the foolish venture resulted in a memorable victory; otherwise it would have gone in history as one of the greatest blunders ever committed by a cavalry officer. The stinging satire in

Bluntschli's description and his frank laugh when he finds the foolish officer to be Raina's lover begin the disillusionment in our minds.

When Sergius returns from the war, he himself is disillusioned. Bluntschli's view regarding the charge has been shared by Sergius's senior officers too. So he has been denied his promotion and he had had to save his honour by resigning from the Army. In the process, his ideas about war are thoroughly changed.

There still remains the illusion about love. He thinks himself the apostle of 'Higher Love'; his ideas of love are as fanciful and romantic as his ideas of war. He is in love with Raina, and considers himself her worshipper, ready to die in her service. When he returns from the war, he meets Raina and they stage a scene of 'Higher Love'. But as soon as her back is turned, he runs to Louka to seek relief in her physical charms. This is perhaps the real Sergius who obeys his natural instinct in making true love. His disillusionment is due to his experiences, and to Bluntschli's realism, and to Louka's working on him-she confronts him with his own contradictions and exposes his true self, and instills into him the necessary courage. Nobody in the play suffers so bitterly as Sergius does due to his disillusionment about the romance of love and war. He is forced by, the tyranny of this disillusionment to resign his military post and to marry the house-maid instead of the house mistress. Thus, Sergius is an interesting character, a good subject for an analytical study.

### 3.6.4 LOUKA

Shaw always strongly advocated the cause of social equality. He continuously attacked the convenient philosophy that servants are inferior set of beings whose duty is to serve and promote the happiness of their superiors. A socialist at heart, he never could suffer the so-called air of superiority that birth or wealth seemed to confer those who had nothing else to recommend them. Hence he tried to represent in his plays the new type of servant, conscious of rights and unwilling to grant superiority tamely. Louka is an impressive representative of this class. She is a maid-servant of the Petkoffs. But she has not the soul of a servant. She is ambitious to get a status in society and her youth and beauty help her to realize her ambition.

Louka is quite a realist and practical in her attitude towards life. She knows what a man wants from a woman and she also knows how to give it to him. It is on account of this that she succeeds in capturing Sergius. She has no illusions about rank, position, gentility, etc. All the affected airs are blown out of Sergius by the breath of her sharp wit and sharp tongue.

We come across her shrewdness when she comes to rouse Raina to allow the search by the Russian officer. She sees Bluntschli's revolver lying on the divan and draws the correct conclusion. She knows how to use the secrets and situations; in fact, this ability helps her to get Sergius and to rise in social status. She also knows woman's nature she know that every woman is jealous of the other. She exploits Raina's jealous in winning over Sergius. She is a good judge of men and their

weaknesses – she plays upon Sergius’s vanity and envy and secures him for herself. Her shrewdness to judge human nature is well testified by her following remark that she makes to Sergius, ‘I know the difference between the sort of manner you and Miss Raina put on before each and the real manner.’ Her shrewdness makes her a correct judge of the affairs of heart. She very correctly judges the inclination of Raina for Bluntschli, and sees that she has a chance for Sergius. In the love contest between Louka and Raina, the reader is bound to appreciate Louka’s tactics and her knowledge of the affairs of the heart for winning Sergius over to her side, while everybody is sure to declare Raina a foolish woman who does not know the art of even retaining the man who has already betrothed to her.

She knows how to act on a particular occasion. She receives a bruise while Sergius tries to make love to her. And she uses it as a mark of victory in the war of love against Raina, and that is why she proudly displays the wound of heroism. Whatever the quality she may have but she is not a disciplined and subdued maid. She always has a look of defiance on her face. Perhaps life with the Petkoff has taught her the hollowness in all their snobbery, and made her feel an increasing contempt for their posing and professions. She is slightly afraid of Catherine, but towards Raina, her attitude is insolent and impertinent. She exhibits it from the start when she, without being asked, instructs Raina about the way the shutters can easily be opened. While leaving the bedroom, she does not leave with a courtesy.

She shows her lips at Raina knowingly and gives an insolent laugh. This defiance characterizes her all through. She deliberately sends Bluntschli’s bag with Nicola to exasperate Raina and Catherine. Her attitude towards Bluntschli is also not polite and courteous. She flings the sheaf of letters and telegrams on his table. When Sergius accepts her as his wife, she behaves all the more insolently. She starts talking to Raina and Catherine as if they were her equals; she gives up even the ordinary decency of addressing Raina as ‘Miss Raina’ and Catherine as ‘Madam’. Her whole attitude to her status is revealed in her conversation with Nicola. She refuses to mend her manners and declares that she will continue to be defiant. She blames Nicola for having the soul of a servant and implies that she is not meant for such a life.

Her behaviour towards Nicola, to whom she is engaged, is quite arrogant. She talks to him as his superior. She despises him and he too recognizes that she has a soul above her station. So, in the end, he decides to make use of her for a commercial motive. ‘I intend,’ he declares to Petkoff, ‘to set up’ a shop later on in Sofia and I look forward to her custom and recommendation should she marry into the nobility.’ Nicola wisely forgoes his claim on her.

When Catherine asks her to fasten the shutters of Raina’s bedroom windows, she fastens them no doubt, but tells Raina, in all confidence, ‘If you like the shutters open, just give them a push like this’ and demonstrates how shutters can be opened. This is mischievous and unbecoming of a maid. Again, when she talks about Bluntschli to Raina, she

talks in a mischievous manner. She tries to find out whether Raina has a soft corner for Bluntschli. In order to find this out, she disparages Bluntschli and extols Sergius. Her behaviour towards Sergius with reference to Raina is also mischievous and vile.

Some of her actions may be called mean. She does not treat everybody at his or her level. She tries to blacken the character of Raina in the eyes of Sergius by telling him a lie that Raina makes love to Bluntschli behind his back. She also talks about the Petkoff family in a way which cannot be called decent. When Nicola advises her to be respectful to the family, she says, 'I know some family secrets, they would not care to have told, young as I am. Let them quarrel with me if they dare'. Though she is uneducated and has come from the countryside she follows fashion closely and looks quite lady-like.

There is a vast difference between Raina and Louka. One is the mistress and the other is the maid, but their lives come into conflict when Louka designs to marry Sergius who is betrothed to Raina.

Both of them are almost the same age and are equally beautiful. Raina has natural charm which has been enhanced by proper care while Louka has the impressive beauty of the unsophisticated peasant girl. Sergius falls a prey to Louka's charm; even Bluntschli pays it a compliment.

Raina is a romanticist and Louka is a realist. Raina is squarely a sentimental maiden. She has a dreamy sort of character;

full of speculative idealism and emotions. Louka is entirely different from Raina. She is a stern realist. She never looks at the world and life through the rosy spectacles of romance. Louka does not possess the charm of Raina. In spite of her early angularities and complexes, we cannot help liking Raina for the sympathy with which she treats the fugitive; the daring spirit and the presence of mind she displays in crises is worth admiring. But Louka is a better judge of men and matters and that is why she scores over Raina.

She succeeds in winning over Sergius by playing a coquette. She displays her physical charms in such a way that the foolish fellow falls an easy prey to them. She makes Nicola her tool for her engagement with him serves her as a means of getting Sergius. Raina her victim as she paints Raina in a lurid light and Sergius her target as she plays upon his jealousy and vanity and traps him. She exploits all possible situations to her advantage and succeeds in her task. Nicola advises her to accept her position in life, but she rejects his downcast philosophy and eventually wins her man and a new life.

Shaw proves his point as he says in his Preface to 'Man and Superman' that man is no longer a victor in the 'duel of sex' and this is clearly proved in the present play by the triumph of Louka over Sergius and of Raina over Bluntschli.

### **3.6.5 MAJOR PETKOFF**

Major Petkoff is the one purely comic figure in the play. From the moment of his entry, he contributes a great deal to the



light hearted atmosphere that prevails in spite of the tensions and complications. He is a harmless good man, aware of his limitations, and used to a routine in life which he loves to stick to and cherish. He is an easy-going, self-satisfied person, who has nothing to complain about, if everything goes according to routine.

He has some notions, which are connected with his position as the head of a rich and cultured family. But he has little or no brains and not much of common sense. He is thus described: 'He is a cheerful, excitable, insignificant, unpolished man of about 50, naturally unambitious except as to his income and his importance in local society, but just now he is greatly pleased with the military rank which the war has thrust on him, as a man of consequences in his town. The fever of patriotism which the Serbian attack roused in all the Bulgarians has pulled him through the war, but he is obviously glad to be home again. It is characteristic of him that the first thing he does after his return from the war is to take his seat at the breakfast table and ask for his favourite combination of coffee and cognac. He feels that this old habits and old traditions are good. He is not prepared to give them up in the name of modern fashion.

He is always conscious of his social status and military distinction. It is these notions that prompt him to tell Catherine that clothes should not be spread to be dried at the place where visitors can see them. When Catherine enquires of him whether he behaved himself properly before Russian officers: he assures her by saying that he did his best and cared to let

them know that he had a library. Again, when Bluntschli works on the plan of sending soldiers, he interrupts him every now and then-he wants to show he can be of help to him. So we see that he is proud and self-conceited. His wife seems to have greater control over his subordinates than he himself. When Bluntschli asks him to look to the proper sending of soldiers, he takes his wife along with him saying that she would manage it better. This shows that he does not have control over persons on whom he should have.

He is happy to be back home. He remarks to Catherine: 'Ah, you haven't been campaigning; you don't know how pleasant it is for us to sit after a good lunch with nothing to do but to enjoy ourselves.' This shows his liking for ease and comfort.

He is unfit for planning or conducting military operations. This is shown in his concern about the dispersal of troops and his enthusiastic relief when Bluntschli solves the problem for him. The only thing he can do well is to lose his temper with and swear at Nicola. He says, 'Begone, you butterfingere donkey..... Scoundrel!

We see him being befooled on several occasions. Bluntschli takes advantage of this weakness of Petkoff and exchanges 50 able bodied men for 200 worn-out horses. He is often deceived by his wife and daughter. They make him believe things that are simply unbelievable. The episodes of the 'chocolate cream soldier' and the cost bear testimony are the examples. But Petkoff seems such a simpleton because he is easy-going; otherwise he has a good deal of intelligence in him. As soon as he comes home, he tries to inquire about his

old coat. He had heard the story of a Swiss soldier being given shelter in a Bulgarian house and having been sent away disguised in an old coat of the master of the house.

Probably he wants to ascertain that the story did not occur in his own house. When Catherine talks about Sergius's promotion, Petkoff immediately points out his foolish action on the battlefield and says that he does not deserve it. This shows that he knows which man should be given which status. When Raina impulsively addresses Bluntschli as the 'chocolate cream soldier', and Catherine tries to save the situation by concocting a story about Nicola dropping the plates over a soldier's figure in cream chocolate made by Raina, he gets suspicious. He doubts Raina's suddenly developed culinary interest and Nicola's carelessness. But with his characteristic simplicity he drops the matter.

A striking characteristic of Major Petkoff is that he is fond of humour, jest and merriment. He takes joy in making merry and cracking jokes. Once, he says to Louka, "Well, the Serbs haven't run away with you, have they?" He also makes jest at Raina's taking to cooking. In regard to Nicola's way of working, he enquires of him whether he has taken to drinking. So we see that he has a merry-making temperament. When Bluntschli proposes for Raina's hand, he demurs at first, because Bluntschli appears to him to be only a soldier of fortune, possessing nothing of his own. But his father's heart is soon satisfied when Bluntschli enumerates in detail all that he possesses. His pride is not hurt at all, therefore, when Raina, instead of marrying Sergius, a man of his own set, bestows

her choice on Bluntschli.

He is neither simple nor a simpleton. The secret of his character is that he does not give expression to his real self even before his wife or daughter or friends. He is a loving husband and a dutiful father and a generous friend. He tells everything in a spirit of resignation and that is why he is not discontented like Sergius or fussy like Catherine.

### 3.6.6 CATHERINE PETKOFF

Catherine, the true representative of Balkan Society is the wife of Major Petkoff. Shaw has created her to show the theatrical and often comic aping of western ways by a people who had just thrown away the shackles of Turkish slavery. She is a woman past forty, with the strong physique of a mountain-farmer's wife. Her splendid black hair and eyes are apt to impress people. She is very much concerned about her social status and the need to live upto it. As a member of a rich reputed family, she is conscious of superiority that she is anxious to exhibit. She takes pride in having a library and flights of stairs in the house. Her newest acquisition is an electric bell, and with that she feels she has reached the acme of civilized life. She considers all these things as the mark of her aristocracy and modern culture. She has got certain habits such as washing her face and neck daily in order to make up her personal looks just as modern women mostly do.

When she hears of Bluntschli being in Raina's bedroom, she gets scandalized and feels annoyed. Her snobbery is again

seen when Sergius decides to marry Louka, and Louka addresses Raina as 'Raina' and herself as 'Catherine'. Again, when she learns of Raina's decision to marry Bluntschli, she starts talking of her family status and of the comfortable life Raina is used to.

But, in spite of this snobbery, it must be admitted that Catherine is a strong minded and resourceful woman. It is fairly obvious that she rules the home. She is a successful housewife. She not only keeps her servants under her control, but also runs the home smoothly and efficiently. Like Raina, Catherine, too is a great worshipper of heroism, and that is why she rejoices very much when she comes to know of the victory at Slivnitza, and that is why she gets disappointed when she is informed by her husband about the termination of the war. Similarly, she also feels that life has to be viewed from a romantic angle. It is on account of this reason that she has a great regard for Sergius and wants Raina to be married to him; in fact, she scolds her for keeping him waiting for a year before giving her final consent to marry him.

She wants Raina to marry Sergius only because he is rich. When he learns that Bluntschli also has inherited fabulous wealth, she does not object to Raina's marrying him. She is very solicitous about Raina's health and happiness. That is why she wants her to be married to a rich person. She is over affectionate towards her. Even when Raina is impertinent towards her and does something which is not to her liking, she puts up with it. Raina gives shelter to Bluntschli against the wishes of Catherine, but Catherine

not only puts up with it, but also tries to conceal the fact by manufacturing several lies.

But Catherine, with all the skill in the management of the household and with all her commanding personality, does not possess common insight in human character. Raina, Louka, Nicola, Sergius all behave, in her presence, in one manner and at the back, in another manner, but she never senses the fun or mischief behind any of their actions.

### **3.6.7 NICOLA**

Nicola is the other representative from the lower social ranks. He is introduced as a contrast to Louka. While Louka is defiant in her servility and anxious to escape from its shame, Nicola appears to derive the greatest contentment from his position.

He is a middle-aged man with an intelligent look and quiet manners. He has been a servant to the Petkoffs for ten years and he has a certain pride in the status that the connection with such an important family has conferred upon him. He has learnt the danger of defying such powerful people as his employers, and has realized that a little humility always brings security and happiness. So he advises Louka to mend her manners and not to be insolent in her attitude towards her superiors. He asks her to be like him. Louka, being in possession of some family secrets, thinks that she can afford to be insolent and defiant. But Nicola points out to her that her word will not be credited by others while being sacked.

He says he too knows family secrets, but he knows the value of a discreet silence.

Nicola's attitude is not the result of any inborn love of slavery. It is the reaction of a cynical mind to what is inevitable. In his heart of hearts, he says only contempt for his employers, but he is servile before them because that is the only way in which he can get the most out of them.

A wily servant, Nicola covers for Raina and Catherine's intrigues. He believes that class division is an indisputable system, and he advises Louka to accept her place. He found Louka, taught her how to be a proper servant, and plans to marry her, but he comes to see how Louka's marriage to Sergius would create an advantage for both Louka and for himself. Thus, he changes his story about his engagement to Louka, and he promotes Louka's ambitions. Ultimately, Nicola wants to run his own business, so he will do whatever it takes to stay in favour with potential patrons, while taking advantage of opportunities to earn extra capital for special services.

Nicola is typical servant in a great house. He combines obsequiousness with shrewdness. His shrewdness is quite remarkable. He sees the game but that has been going on even before Louka is very sure of getting Sergius. He is a suitor to Louka's hand and he has taken money from his master to celebrate his betrothal. He is very practical and business-minded. When he sees that he is losing his girl to Sergius, he is not worried at all; on the contrary he feels glad; he gives up all his claims to her hand with the hope that her marriage into

the nobility will be a great help to him in the future.

### 3.7 THEMES

In line after line, Shaw satirizes the romantic notions about war that glorify a grisly business. If not for the comic dialogue, the audience would more easily recognize that they are being presented with a soldier who has escaped from a horrific battle after three days of being under fire. He is exhausted, starving, and being pursued. Such is the experience of a real soldier. Late in the play, Shaw throws in a gruesome report on the death of the man who told Bluntschli's secret about staying in Raina's bedroom; there is nothing comic or heroic about being shot in the hip and then burned to death. When Raina expresses horror at such a death, Sergius adds, "And how ridiculous! Oh, war! War! The dream of patriots and heroes! A fraud, Bluntschli, a hollow sham." This kind of description caused Shaw's critics to accuse him of baseness, of trying to destroy the heroic concept. That a soldier would prefer food to cartridges in his belt was considered ludicrous by critics, but in the introduction to *Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant*, Shaw was reported to have said that all he had to do was introduce any doubters to the first six real soldiers they came across, and his stage soldier would prove authentic.

It is also noteworthy that Catherine is dissatisfied with a peace treaty because, in her unrealistic vision of glorious war, there is supposed to be a crushing rout of the enemy followed by celebrations of a heroic victory. Shaw's message here is that there can be peaceful alternatives to perpetual fighting. He

was dedicated throughout his life to curbing violence, especially that of wars, and *Arms and the Man* was one of the vehicles he used to plead his case.

Shaw was a master flirt and he enjoyed the playful farce of romantic intrigues. But he recognized that playing a game differed from serious love, and he tried to convey as much in *Arms and the Man*, which is subtitled “An Anti-Romantic Comedy.” In the play, Raina and Sergius have paired themselves for all the wrong reasons: because their social status requires a mate from the same social level; and because Sergius plays the role of the type of hero that Raina has been taught to admire, and Raina plays the role that Sergius expects from a woman of her station. The problem is that neither is portraying his/her real self, so their love is based on outward appearances, not on the true person beneath the facade. They are both acting out a romance according to their idealized standards for courtship rather than according to their innermost feelings. Just as the cheerleader is expected to fall for the star quarterback, Raina has fallen for her brave army officer who looks handsome in his uniform. When Bluntschli and Louka force Raina and Sergius to examine their true feelings, Raina and Sergius discover that they have the courage and desire to follow their hearts instead of seeking to meet social expectations.

As a socialist, Shaw believed in the equality of all people and he abhorred discrimination based on gender or social class. These beliefs are evident in the relationships portrayed in *Arms and the Man*. Shaw allows a maid to succeed in her

ambitions to better herself by marrying Sergius, an officer and a gentleman. This match also means that Sergius has developed the courage to free himself from the expectations of his class and instead marry the woman he loves. The silliness of Catherine’s character is used to show the illogical nature of class snobbery, as she clearly makes divisions between her family and the servants, even though, or perhaps because, the Petkoffs themselves have only recently climbed the social ladder. The play also attacks divisions of rank, as Captain Bluntschli has leadership abilities that the superior-ranking officers, Majors Petkoff and Saranoff, do not have, illustrating the fact that ability has little to do with rank. Ability also has little to do with class, as exemplified by the character of Nicola, who is declared the ablest, and certainly the wildest, character in the play.

*Arms and the Man* illustrates the conflict between idealism and realism. The romantic ideal of war as a glorious opportunity for a man to display courage and honour is dispelled when Sergius admits that his heroic cavalry charge that won the battle was the wrong thing to do. His notable action does not get him his promotion and Sergius learns that “Soldiering, my dear madam, is the coward’s art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm’s way when you are weak.”

Sergius and Raina must face the fact that their ideals about love are false. Fortunately, both of them are actually released by this knowledge to pursue their true loves. But first, Sergius goes through a period of despair in which he questions whether

life is futile if the ideals by which he has set his standards of conduct fail to hold up when exposed to reality. This question is an underlying current throughout the play. Shaw gives a happy resolution, but it is a serious question that most people must face in life.

Much is made of Bluntschli's realism—i.e., keeping chocolates instead of ammunition in his cartridge belt, showing contempt for sentimentality, and reacting in a practical manner to his father's death. However, Nicola is the consummate realist in the play. Nicola's message is: adapt, exploit, survive. Bluntschli proves to have a romantic side, after all, and thus is the most balanced character in the play in that he seems to know when to temper his romanticism with realism and when to stick to his ideals.

### 3.8 STYLE

Although already established as a model for romances prior to the publication of Anthony Hope's popular 1894 novel *The Prisoner of Zenda*, Ruritanian romance takes its name from the imaginary country of Ruritania found in Hope's book. This type of story generally includes intrigue, adventure, sword fights, and star-crossed lovers, ingredients that are all found in *Arms and the Man*. However, Shaw ultimately attacks this genre by exaggerating the absurdities of the plot and by transforming the typically cookie-cutter characters into people facing reality. He thus inverts the conventions of melodrama and inserts critical commentary into the cleverly funny lines

of his play. There is the threat of a sword fight that never comes to fruition, since Bluntschli is too sensible to accept Saranoff's challenge—which illustrates Shaw's belief that dueling is stupid. Romance also plays a big role in *Arms and the Man*, but, again, Shaw turns the tables by having the heroine and her fiancé abandon their idealized relationship, which would have been prized in a Ruritanian romance, for a more realistic and truer love.

One standard trait of comedic plays—often used by Shakespeare and also used by Shaw in *Arms and the Man*—is the use of an ending in which all the confusions of the play are resolved, and every romantic figure winds up with his or her ideal partner. The gimmicks in *Arms and the Man* of the lost coat and the incriminating inscription on the hidden photograph are also ploys that are typical of comedy. The gimmicks serve as catalysts to spark the humorous confusion, and work as objects around which the plot turns. In Shaw's hands, however, comedy is serious business disguised by farce. Always an innovator, Shaw introduced moral instruction into comedic plays, rather than taking the conventional route of writing essays or lectures to communicate his views.

Shaw does not simply dismiss Raina's idealism in favor of Bluntschli's pragmatism. He replaces her shallow ideals with more worthy ones. By the end of the play, Raina understands that a man like Bluntschli is more of a real hero than Sergius. The audience also discovers that Bluntschli's practical nature is not without romance because he has come back to see Raina rather than sending the coat back by courier. In fact, he admits

to Sergius that he “climbed the balcony of this house when a man of sense would have dived into the nearest cellar.” Together, Raina, Bluntschli, and Sergius attain a new realism that sees love and heroism as they really should be, according to Shaw. Thus Shaw does not reject romance and heroism, but rather brings his characters to an understanding of a higher definition of these values. That is, the course of the play has worked to maneuver the characters and the audience into a new position and thus redefine romance and heroism according to the light of realism.

#### ANNOTATIONS

- a. I’ve no ammunition. What use are cartridges in battle? I always carry chocolate instead; and I finished the last cake of that hours ago.
- b. And you have never been absent from my thoughts for a moment Sergius: I think we two have found the higher love.
- c. Do you like gratitude? I dont. If pity is akin to love, gratitude is akin to the other thing.
- d. Ah, true, dear young lady; you are always right. I know how good you’ve been to me: to my last hour I shall remember those three chocolate creams. It was unsoldierly but it was angelic.
- e. I mean that I belong to the family of the Petkoffs, the richest and best known in our country.

- f. I trust you, I love you, you will never disappoint me Sergius.
- g. Life isn’t a farce, but something quite sensible and serious, what further obstacle is there to your happiness.
- h. I did not give them to the Emperor of Switzerland.
- i. I appealed to you as a fugitive, a beggar and a starving man. You accepted me. You give your hand to kiss, your bed to sleep in, and your roof to shelter me.

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1. G. K. Chesterton, *George Bernard Shaw*, London (John Lane) 1990, enlarged 1935
2. J. P. Hackett, *Shaw, George Versus Bernard*, London (Sheed & Ward), 1937

#### KEY WORDS

Turkish Ottoman : an oblong padded couch serving as a divan

Chaff : the husks detached from ears of corn during threshing and easily blown away.

**SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

1. Draw the character sketch of Raina.
2. Draw the character sketch of Bluntschli.
3. Make your assessment on the role of the minor characters in the development of the play.
4. Assess the characters of Nicola and Louka and bring out how Shaw uses their characters to attack the capitalist class system of the society.

**SUGGESTED READINGS**

1. Edmund Fuller, *George Bernard Shaw : Critic of Western Morale*, Charles Scribner's Sons. 1950 New York & London.
2. H. L. Mencken, *George Bernard Shaw: His play*, John W. Luce. 1905 Boston and London.



# ALTERNATIVE ENGLISH

COURSE : ALTE - 101

## BLOCK - II, III, IV, V POETRY & ESSAY WRITING

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## **BLOCK INTRODUCTION**

Block II, Block III and Block IV have been designed so as to accommodate diverse poets and poems. Block II begin with the 16th century's well-known bard, William Shakespeare. He was an English poet and playwright. widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. The prescribed poetic pieces - "You too, Brutus" and "Winter"- are extracts from two of his well-known plays, *Julius Ceaser* and *Love's Labour's Lost* respectively. They are a mark of Shakespeare's versatile talent. Next Unit is devoted to a poem by William Cowper, one of the most popular poets of his time who changed the direction of 18th century poetry by writing of everyday life and scenes of the English countryside. "The Poplar Field" is a poignant expression of a feeling of anguish at the sight of the poplars cruelly levelled to the ground. Here we find Cowper's fine sensitivity to nature. In this, he anticipates the great nature poetry of the Romantic Movement. Unit 3 takes you to the great English Romantic Poet, William Wordsworth. "The Green Linnet" is a nature poem, where the speaker views his time spent in the outdoors as a sort of celebration of the world and he embraces springtime, nature, and its creatures as friends. The poem is representative of Romantic nature-love and worship.

Block III deals with another three poet. Unit I is on a poem by G.M. Hopkins, one of the leading Victorian poets. He is regarded by different readers as the greatest Victorian poet of religion, of nature, or of melancholy. The prescribed poem, "Binsey Poplars" mourns the cutting of his "aspens dear", trees whose delicate beauty resided not only in their

appearance, but in the way they created "airy cages" to tame the sunlight. This poem grieves over the wholesale destruction of the natural world. Unit 2 familiarizes you with Lawrence George Durrell, an expatriate British novelist, poet, dramatist, and travel writer. He was born in India. His English father and Irish - English mother were also born in India. This mix of nationalities mark Durrell's creative imagination. The poem "Sarajevo" shows the danger that ethnic and religious insularity can bring into an otherwise innocent world. The third unit deals with the most important English language poet of the 20th century, Thomas Stearne Eliot. The poem "To the Indians who died in Africa" reflects Eliot's knowledge of the Indian scriptures and his use of them in a convincing manner. The occasion of the poem was World War II with its attendant horrors. The treatment of the poem reveals the modernist trends.

Block IV will familiarize you with two Indian poets Vikram Seth and A.K. Ramanujan; and one Irish poet Seamus Heaney. The first unit deals two sonnets from a verse novel *The Golden Gate* by Vikram Seth. Unit two introduces you to the poem 'Invisible Bodies' by the Indian English poet, A.K. Ramanujan. And the last unit, talks about a poem by the Irish poet, Seamus Heaney - "The Plantation".

In short, these three blocks would bring to you a range of different poetic techniques and styles through the poetic art of diverse poets, giving you a glimpse of the richness of the poetic genre.

Hope you would enjoy reading these Blocks !

## **BLOCK - II**

### **POETRY - 1**

## UNIT - 1: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

"You, too, Brutus", "Winter"

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### STRUCTURE

1.0 Objectives

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### 1.0 OBJECTIVES:

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Familiarize yourself with the works of William Shakespeare.

- Appreciate the extracts 'You, Too, Brutus' and 'Winter'.
- Relate our experiences in life with the poems.

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION:

In the previous block (Block I), we have discussed Modern English Drama from which you have obtained a fairly good idea of the literary development in the 20th century in its historical perspective. In this Block, we are going to introduce you to William Shakespeare, who is one of the greatest English poets and dramatists of English literature. Shakespeare wrote some thirty seven plays and scores of poems, which establish him as the finest writer not only of the Elizabethan age, but also of all times. His works still continue to amaze us with their artistic and universal appeal. In this Block, we are going to discuss two poetic extracts from Shakespeare's plays, namely "You, Too, Brutus" from 'Julius Caesar' and "Winter" from 'Love's Labour's Lost'.

#### STOP TO CONSIDER

##### Elizabethan Age

Period of Queen Elizabeth I of England (1558-1603), which was considered the golden age of English history. The age saw the flowering of poetry, music and literature. It was also the age of William Shakespeare and is more famous for theatre, and plays composed by the bard and others great play wrights of the age. The rich dramatic literature of the Elizabethan Age still invites us to read and enjoy them as great works of art.

## 1.2 ABOUT THE POET

### 1.2.1 LIFE

Surprisingly, very little is known of Shakespeare's life. Therefore, there is no authentic source to write an accurate biography of Shakespeare. Most of his biographies are written on the basis of assumptions.

William Shakespeare was born on or about the 23rd of April, 1564, at Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire. His mother *Mary* had eight children, with Shakespeare being the third. His father, *John Shakespeare* was a fairly prosperous glove maker and trader who owned several houses in Stratford and became the town's Mayor when Shakespeare was a boy. The young Shakespeare probably studied in the local grammar school and hunted and played sports in the open fields behind his home. When Shakespeare turned 14 years old, his father lost his property and fell into debt. Shakespeare probably left school to help support his family. But it is not exactly clear what occupation did he follow for the next eight years. However, a potentially reliable claim is that during his father's financial decline Shakespeare had been a schoolmaster in the country. The next definite information about William Shakespeare is that the young man, at 19, married *Anne Hathaway* who was some eight years older than him. In 1583, it is recorded that Anne gave birth to their eldest child, Susanna, and the twins, Hamnet and Judith, were born to the couple in 1585. By 1592, the family was living in London where Shakespeare was busy acting in plays and writing his own dramas.

From 1592 to 1594, the Plague kept most London theaters closed, so the dramatist turned to writing poetry during this period, and his poems, which were actually published unlike his plays, became popular with the masses and contributed to his good reputation as a writer. From 1594 to the end of his career, Shakespeare belonged to the same theatrical company, known first as Lord Chamberlain's Men and then as the King's Company. It is also known that he was both a leader and stockholder in this acting organization which became the most prosperous group in London, and that he was meeting with both financial success and critical acclaim. The exact date and the precise cause of Shakespeare's death are unknown: one local tradition asserts that the *Bard* died on 23 April, 1616, of a chill caught after a night of drinking with fellow playwrights *Ben Jonson* and *Michael Drayton*. Shakespeare was, in fact, buried three days later, exactly 52 years after his baptism.

#### WORDS TO KNOW:

Biography - Life history

Mayor - The head of a town or city, elected by the public

Acclaim - praise

Bard - Poet, writer

#### 1.2.2 HIS WORKS

Shakespeare's complete Works form one of the greatest legacies of English literature. No other writer's plays and poetry have been produced so many times in so many countries

and translated into so many languages. One of the major reasons for Shakespeare's popularity is the variety of rich characters that he successfully creates, from drunkards and paid murderers to Princes and kings and from absurd fools and court jesters to wise and noble generals. Each character springs vividly to life upon the stage and, as they speak their beautiful verse or prose, the characters remind the viewers of their own personalities, traits, and flaws. He surpasses the other Elizabethan playwrights by superior poetry of great delicacy, sensitivity, variety and dramatic appropriateness. His lyric and narrative poetry is closer to the conventional product of his time but, especially in his sonnets and songs from his plays, it is often marked by a combination of imagination, deep and sincere emotion that is lacking in similar works of his contemporaries.

Shakespeare's plays are divided into *Comedies*, *Histories*, *Tragedies*, *Tragi-Comedies* and *Romance*. The following is a list of his dramatic works.

Comedy	Historical	Tragedy	Poetry
All's Well That Ends Well	Henry IV, Part I	Antony & Cleopatra	The Phoenix and the Turtle
As You Like It	Henry IV, Part II	Coriolanus	The Rape of Lucrece
The Comedy of Errors	Henry V	Hamlet	Venus and Adonis
Cymbeline	Henry VI, Part I	Julius Caesar	Sonnets
Love's Labours Lost	Henry VI, Part II	King Lear	
Measure for Measure	Henry VI, Part III	Macbeth	
The Merry Wives of Windsor	Henry VIII	Othello	
The Merchant of Venice	King John	Romeo & Juliet	
A Midsummer Night's Dream	Richard II	Timon of Athens	
Much Ado About Nothing	Richard III	Titus Andronicus	
Pericles, Prince of Tyre			
Taming of the Shrew			
The Tempest			
Troilus and Cressida			
Twelfth Night			
Two Gentlemen of Verona			
Winter's Tale			

The most famous of these are *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo & Juliet* and *As You like It*.

Shakespeare's plays were published in the quarto edition which began to appear in 1597. A complete edition of his plays appeared in 1623. It was published by his friends John Heminges and Henry Condell. This is known as the first folio, the first folio is the fully authorised edition of the plays.

William Shakespeare's poems are recognized by many as classics in the genre. From "*A Lover's Complaint*" to "*Venus and Adonis*", Shakespeare's poems have been rivaled but rarely surpassed and as such, they have remained popular with poets and readers alike. Shakespeare's Sonnets (154 in number) are the most enduring specimens of his poetic genius. Most of the sonnets deal with the themes of time, mortality and love.

Shakespeare was popular in his own day and much admired by his contemporaries. Shakespeare definitely has had a direct significant influence in the shaping of English literature and the development of the English language. In the period of Romanticism, interest in him and his works was revived in the criticism of T.S Eliot, Charles Lamb, and William Hazlitt, and later Shakespearean enthusiasm grew to the point of adulation with German and other European playwrights as one of their own authors.

It is a fact that Shakespeare's command of language and the magic of expression cannot be easily surpassed. As Matthew Arnold says : "Shakespeare is the king of poetic rhythm and style as well as the king of the realm of thought in his dazzling prose and exuberant verse. Shakespeare has succeeded in giving

us the most varied, the most harmonious verse which has ever sounded upon the human ear since the Greeks."

#### **WORDS TO KNOW:**

1) Folio : A folio is a book or pamphlet made up of one or more full sheets of paper, on each sheet of which four pages of text are printed, two on each side; each sheet is then folded one time to produce two leaves. Each leaf of a folio book is thus one half the size of the original sheet.

2) Quarto : A quarto is a book or pamphlet made up of one or more full sheets of paper on which 8 pages of text were printed, which were then folded two times to produce four leaves. Each leaf of a quarto book thus represents one fourth the size of the original sheet.

### **1.3 YOU, TOO, BRUTUS**

In the exact dramatic context, this poem is a long speech by Julius Caesar in Shakespeare's famous historical play "Julius Caesar". It is to be found in Act III, Scene I of the play and the lines are from 58 to 73. The scene is located in the Senate House of Rome. Caesar in the preceding scene is surrounded by the conspirators who are ready to assassinate him then and there. Reasons for murder of Caesar are that Caesar, in their view, had been endangering the state and the citizens by being overambitious and power-hungry. They think that too much power has made Caesar, the chief ruler of Rome, incapable of showing mercy to anyone. On behalf of the conspirators, Metellus Cimber pleads with Caesar to be so kind as to annul the decree or sentence of banishment upon his brother Publius

Cimber. Brutus, much respected by Caesar, joins Metellus in pleading for a freedom of repeal for Publius Cimber. In his astonishment, Caesar exclaims, "What, Brutus!". Cassius, another conspirator, also pleads for Cimber. In reply, which gives us the poem we are now to read, Caesar strongly asserts his firmness in refusing to lift the decree which he himself had given earlier on good grounds. Soon after Caesar ends his speech, Casca, a conspirator, stabs Caesar. The conspirators do the same one after another and finally it is Brutus who stabs Caesar. Seeing Brutus, Caesar cries out in anguish and surprise: "Et tu, Brute? Then fall, Caesar", and he dies. These words 'Et tu Brute' are in Latin, and in English they mean, "You, too, Brutus." The words express Caesar's sadness and surprise at being stabbed even by Brutus, whose integrity and friendship he valued throughout his life.

In order to understand the significance of the title, you should know the dramatic context as given here. You should also understand that the title of the poem is not given by Shakespeare and it does not arise from the situation that precedes Caesar's speech, but it is Caesar's response to Brutus' stabbing him after the speech.

#### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:**

1. From which Shakespearean play is the poem extracted ?

Ans:.....

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2. Who is the speaker of the poem?

Ans:.....

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3. What follows after the speech?

Ans:.....

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**TEXT OF THE POEM**

I could be well moved, if I were as you.  
 If I could pray to move, prayers would move me;  
 But I am constant as the Northern Star.  
 Of whose true-fixed and resting quality  
 There is no fellow in the firmament.  
 The skies are painted with unnumbered sparks,  
 They are all fire, and every one doth shine,  
 But there's but one in all doth hold his place.

So in the world, 'This furnished well with men,  
 And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive;  
 Yet in the number I do know but one  
 That unassailable holds on his rank,  
 Unshaked of motion, And that I am he,  
 Let me a little show it, even in this,  
 That I was constant Cimber should be banished,  
 And constant do remain to keep him so.

- *Julius Caesar in Julius Caesar*

(Act III, Scene I, lines 58-73)

**WORDS TO KNOW**

**Northern Star :** the pole star. It is fixed at the same position in the sky and its position helps determine the direction and navigate at night.

**Firmament :** the sky as viewed as a solid arch

**Unassailable :** infallible, one who cannot be dislodged from his course

**1.3.1. SUMMARY OF THE POEM**

In his response to the repeated requests by his noblemen Metellus, Brutus and Cassius, Caesar strongly asserts his firmness in refusing to lift the decree of banishment upon Publius Cimber, the brother of Metellus. Caesar thinks that he was right in giving the sentence and that it cannot be changed now. Caesar is constant as the Northern Star, and his decision cannot be altered. Just as

the Northern Star which remains static amidst many shining stars in the sky, there is only Caesar among many who cannot be moved. He declares himself to be "as constant as the northern star." While every man might be a fiery star, all the stars move but Caesar is the unassailable and unshaken one. Showing a bit of his firmness proclaims that he was constant in his sentence of banishment and also constant in his stand in the midst of pressure exerted by the Senators.

### 1.3.2. CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM

The theme of the poem is Caesar's constancy, his firmness in declining to change the sentence he had given earlier. Other men may change when moved by prayers, but he is steadfast like the Northern Star, not and never to be shaken by emotion. The theme of Caesar's constancy is reinforced by the imagery of the Northern Star.

This poetic dialogue from Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" revolves round the single theme of constancy and so it has its perfect unity of thought and feeling. The speaker, Julius Caesar, is a royal personage and so he uses a language worthy of a cultivated and aristocratic man of learning. Caesar here has to make a simple statement to turn down an earnest request for softening a harsh sentence, but he makes it with poetically adorned and intensified language and thoughts worthy of a royal personage. The poetic images in the passage are not too many, but the one image likening himself to the Northern Star and the other image likening the world to the sky turn out to be exactly the right vehicles for getting his sense across to his listeners. This passage is

written in blank verse and the words used are not too complex, and once the reader gets a clear sense of the context in which the speech is made, the meanings get across with clarity and force. There are strong suggestion of the rise and fall of the excited but controlled speaking voice, which is finely dramatic from start to finish. Caesar talks about such remote and marvellous things like the Northern Star, the sky with its other heavenly bodies, and the rare human virtue of constancy and determination in character. Indeed, the workmanship is without any blemish, and could not have been finer for a speech by a mighty and powerful man. The speech is at once great poetry and great drama. It is a powerful statement of Caesar's position, his constancy or firmness like that of the Northern Star.

#### WORDS TO KNOW

Blank verse: Poetry that has a regular rhythm, but which does not rhyme.

### 1.4. WINTER

The prescribed poem is one of the two songs found in Act V, Scene II of "Love's Labour's Lost". The first song is called "Spring" and the second one that closes the play is "Winter". Neither of them needs to be taken as deriving directly from the dramatic action of the play. They also do not get back to and bear upon the dramatic action in any significant way. It is however convenient to remember that spring is generally associated with love in Renaissance literature and winter with death. The play in fact ends its main action when the news of the death of the King of France is

brought by messengers to the Princess of France now in the kingdom of Navarre. This news suspends the ensuing love relations for the period of a year that engaged the Princess too, and the theme of winter fits into this. Earlier, the songs are described as "in praise of the Owl and the Cuckoo". The Cuckoo figures in "Spring" and the owl in "Winter". When the singing of the songs is suggested to the King of Navarre, he readily agrees. And then the songs come one after another. This was a kind of musical entertainment at the end of a play that the Elizabethan audiences loved.

The cuckoo is a migrating bird which reaches England in April, which is the beginning of spring. Cuckoo also refers to a meadow-plant with pale lilac flower blooming in April and "Spring" dwells on both the bird and the flower. Both the songs seem to be folk songs somewhat refashioned by the poet for the play. Unlike the cuckoo in "Spring", it is the nocturnal owl, sometimes taken to be a bird of ill omen if not death; that figures in "Winter". But the owl here is said to be striking a "merry note", not a melancholy one.

#### TEXT OF THE POEM

When icicles hang by the wall,  
 And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,  
 And Tom bears logs into the Hall,  
 And milk comes frozen home in pail,  
 When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,  
 Then nightly sings the staring owl:

'Tu-who;

Tu-whit, Tu-who- A merry note,

While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,

And coughing drowns the parson's saw,

And birds sit brooding in the snow

And Marian's nose looks red and raw,

When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,

Then nightly sings the staring owl:

Tu-who;

Tu-whit, Tu-who' - A merry note,

While the greasy Joan doth keel the pot. - in "*Love's Labour's Lost*"

(Act V, Scene II)

#### WORDS TO KNOW

Icicles : pointed pieces of ice

Nipped : to have a painful or injurious effect because of the cold, frozen

Keel : to cool ( a hot liquid) by stirring, skimming

Saw: a short phrase or sentence that states a general truth about life or gives advice.

Roasted crabs : crab apples, a fruit.

### 1.4.1. SUMMARY OF THE POEM

In the winter scene described here Dick blows on his numb fingers to warm them. The cows' milk freezes in the pail between barn and house because of the chilly temperature. The "nipp'd" blood refers to the painful feelings caused by bumps and other contact of our flesh in extremely cold weather. Surprisingly at that time the song of the night owl that we often associate with mournfulness is 'a merry note'. Joan is greasy from her labours at the cooking stove as she cools the pot of hot liquids by stirring.

Wintry wind escalates the chill factor. Churchgoers are afflicted with coughs that drown the parson's homily, but no one misses much since the sermon, referred to as a "saw" or a speech of hackneyed repetition, is something all have heard before. Birds sit "brooding in the snow;" sorrowfully. There is then reference to running nose of Marian and crab apple roasting and hissing on the bowl, while ironically, the song of the night owl is again of 'a merry note'.

#### WORDS TO KNOW

Greasy: covered in a lot of grease or oil

Parson: Priest, clergyman

Homily: a speech or piece of writing giving advice on the correct way, manners etc.

Sermon: a talk on moral or religious subject, usually given by a religious leader at Church.

Brooding: thinking seriously, upset

### 1.4.2. CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM

The Poem describes daytime as well as nocturnal winter scenes, and also men and women at work in farms. The poem may be called pastoral because it portrays life in the country of maids and shepherds. Interestingly, the mournful songs of the owl at night are said to be a "merry note", Similarly, the happy springtime songs of the cuckoo in the poem called "Spring" are taken as a "word of fear, Unpleasing to the married ear". This is paradoxical, but the simple descriptions are what these poems are primarily about.

This is a descriptive poem, setting out for us some winter scenes with telling details. In its simplicity, it is much like a folk song, but then, Shakespeare's artistry must have enriched it in some ways. Unlike "You, too, Brutus", which presents to us men of dignity like Caesar and the other noble Romans, and is spoken in high poetic style, this poem talks about simple folks like Dick, Tom, Joan and Marian who are farmhands. The men of the highest social status in it is the parson speaking out his sermon full of proverbial wisdom, but not securing attention as the coughing in the Church drowns it. "Winter" presents a shepherd, a man carrying logs, milk frozen in the pail, the blood becoming thick in the cold, the owl hooting, people who are coughing, Marian with her running nose, birds crowding together to keep warm, food roasting and hissing on the bowl, and so on. Life in "Winter" is commonplace. It is a life that goes on more or less in harmony with the rhythm of nature regardless of its seasonal harshness and discomfort. This poem is a song, a musical piece, surely sung in Elizabethan times to the accompaniment of an instrument.

### WORDS TO KNOW

Shepherd: a person who takes care of sheep.

Pail: a bucket, container

### 1.5 LET US SUM UP

In "You too, Brutus" the speech by Caesar is in blank verse, which is at once poetic and dramatic; while "Winter" is written in rhyme which presents the folk life. Unlike the other poem which is full of high sounding words; Shakespeare uses homely words in "Winter". The two poems of Shakespeare show in a small way how different Shakespeare's words, images, and styles could be as his subjects demanded.

#### References and suggested Reading:

1. Bijoy Kumar Danta (ed), *Musings*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp 1-2.
2. G. B. Harrison (ed) *Shakespeare, Shaw and the Ancients*, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., New York, 1960, p.17.
3. Legouis and Cazamian, *History of English Literature*, Macmillan India Limited, First Indian Edition 1981, Reprinted 1987, pp 289-315
4. Peter Alexander (ed), *Shakespeare : Complete Works*, The English Language Book Society and Collins, London, 1980, p. 197.

#### Suggested Questions:

1. What is the significance of the title "You too, Brutus".
2. Describe the details of the winter scene in "Winter".

**Unit - 2**  
**William Cowper "The Poplar Field"**

**STRUCTURE**

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 About the poet

2.2.1 William Cowper's life

2.2.2 William Cowper's Works

2.3 Text of the Poem

2.4 About the Poem

2.4.1 Summary of the poem

2.4.2 Critical Appreciation of the poem

2.5 Let us sum up

2.6 References

Glossary

Probable Questions

Suggested Reading



## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we are going to introduce one of the pre-Romantic poets William Cowper of English Literature. We also look at the life and works of Cowper along with the particular poem prescribed for your study. After studying this unit, you will be able to -

- formulate an idea about the life and works of William Cowper.
- Identify his poetic genius.
- Explain the literary terms used in the poem
- Appreciate the poem as a whole.

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

As you have gone through the different poems of English literature since your school days. Poems are one of the best ways of expressing ideas & feeling. Now let us begin with William Cowper's poem, the Poplar Field. Cowper in this particular poem presents his concern for the English countryside being influenced by industrialization and urbanization that occurred in the 18th century.

This unit begins with an introduction of the life and works of William Cowper which will be followed by a brief account of the poem and its critical appreciation.

## 2.2 ABOUT THE POET

### 2.2.1 WILLIAM COWPER'S LIFE

William Cowper was born at Great Burkhurst, where his father was a rector. After the death of his mother when he was six, he was first sent to a local boarding school and then to Westminster School in London. In 1749, he began to study law, but his career in that profession had little success and ended in 1763 with an attack of madness during which he suffered from the delusion that he was ineluctably doomed. After treatment in an asylum at St. Alban's, he met the Unwins, a pious and evangelical family, with whom he went to live, first at Huntingdon and then at Olney. There he remained until nearly the end of his life, when his cousin, John Johnson, took him and Mrs. Unwin to East Anglia. He died at East Dereham in Norfolk.

### 2.2.2 WILLIAM COWPER'S WORKS

There is perhaps no more pathetic life story in the history of English literature, than that of William Cowper. Cowper's poems were produced late in life, but in bulk the work is large. His first published work was a number of hymns contributed to the *Olney Hymns* (1779), one of the classics of Evangelical literature. They are notable for their direct sincerity and several of them are still among the best known of English hymns. This *Poems* (1782) contains little that is noteworthy. The bulk of it is taken up with a collection of satirical set pieces in heroic couplets, quite in the usual manner. One of Cowper's best known poems - 'I am monarch

of all I survey' finds place in the *Poems*. His next work is *The Task* (1985), a long poem in blank verse; dealing with simple and familiar themes and containing many fine descriptions of country scenes. *The Task* has several interesting pieces. The first part of *The Task* is named *The Sofa* in which the poet meditates on the effect of luxury and the increase of wealth. From *The Sofa* he turned to *The Timepiece* and later on to 'The Garden' 'The Winter Walk at Nori'. At the end of this volume comes *the ballad of John Gilpin* which presents an excellent example of Cowper's prim but springtly humour. Another significant poem of his later period is *The Castway*.

Heroic Couplet : Lines of iambic pentameter which rhymes in pairs : aa, bb, and so on. The adjective 'Heroic Couplet' was applied in later seventeenth century, because of the frequent use of such couplets in 'heroic' (that is, epic) poems and plays. This verse form was introduced into English poetry by Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of English poetry, and has been in constant employment even since.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. What is the most pathetic incident in William Cowper's life.

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2. What is the best known poem of William Cowper?

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3. What are the literary works of William Cowper?

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**2.3 TEXT OF THE POEM, "THE POPLAR FIELD"**

THE poplar are fell'd! farewell to the shade  
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade;  
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,  
Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

Twelve years have elapsed since I last took a view  
Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew;  
And now in the grass behold they are laid,  
And the tree is my seat that once lent me a shade!



The blackbird has fled to another retreat  
 Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat,  
 And the scene where his melody charm'd me before  
 Resounds with his sweet-flowing ditty no more.

My fugitive years are all hasting away,  
 And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,  
 With a turf on my breast and a stone at my head,  
 Ere another such grove shall arise in its stead.

The change both my heart and my fancy employs,  
 I reflect on the frailty of man and his joys;  
 Short-lived as we are, yet our pleasures, we see,  
 Have a still shorter date, and die sooner than we.

## 2.4 ABOUT THE POEM

Cowper's "The Poplar Field" is concerned with the English countryside which are being threatened by industrialisation and urbanization in the 18th century. The sight of the field Poplars makes the poet reflect on the transitory nature of all things including human life, the stumps of trees which once gave shade, now provide seats for people. This makes the poet think that probably he would have breathed his last and laid to rest flat on the ground much before such a grove come up again.

### 2.4.1 SUMMARY OF THE POEM

The poem projects on open field where the tall poplar trees have already been cut. It makes the poet very sad as he would no longer be able to enjoy its charming. Altogether, the poet could take no rest under the shadow of the poplar trees. The poet feels that all that was in the field have been desurfed and only remains the memory of the Sweet Poplar field which was full of soft wind and the reflection of the poplar trees unbraced by the river Ouse. The poet remembered the sweet visit to the field that he had made twelve years ago. On account of the barnunus in the field the blackbird takes a fresh shelter in the hazel nut tree. The poet expects his death before the growth of other poplar trees in the field. Now the poet feels that all the beauty that Nature has bestowed upon us, is transitory. Nothing remains in this world forever.

### 2.4.2 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM

William Cowper's poetry breathes a sympathy which shows a long association with the world of reality and an intimate knowledge of its way. It is poetry of the house, set amid the peaceful surroundings of a green countryside, typically English. In 'The Poplar Fields' he treats of all still commonplaces, but it represents the elementary truths of the heart, rather than of intelligence. Cowper sees the field full of poplar trees, but these have been cut down. The field is bare now. It gives neither shade nor enjoyment. But at

one time it was full of joy, with soft sounds of wind, the enchanting reflection of the poplar trees in the river house. The blackbird sang in it with full throated ease. All these things have now become past and dwindle in the mind only. The blackbird now takes 'shelter in the hazelnut trees hiding himself from the heat. The poet now realizes that all the things bestowed by Nature are transitory and so, he wishes his death before the growth of another poplar trees in the field.

Cowper in this poem shows his love for Nature, but this poem of Nature has not the ardaer for passion. This poem is characterized by a keen thought subdued warmth and feeds on the freshest perceptions. Here his description of Nature is perfectly natural. He is one of the best descriptive poets in English literature. The description of rural scenery and rural life has hardly been surpassed by any other poet. While having gone through this poem, one feels that Cowper has been endowed with a wonderful gift of observation as he describes scenes and objects with perfect truthfulness and accuracy and relates and these with human life. This makes "The Poplar Field" rearly wonderfull life like.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Questions:**

1. What happened in the 18th Century in England?

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2. How was the field, before twelve years?

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3. What does the poet feel after discovering the felling poplar trees.

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**2.5 LET US SUM UP**

In this unit, we have learnt about William Cowper's life and his literary activites. Further, we have gone through the theme of the poem 'The Poplar Field' along with its summary and critical appreciation. This critical appreciation of the poem will help us to compare this poem with other ones. Besides, this will help us to have a better idea about the poet.

**REFERENCES:**

1. Bijoy K Danta, *Musings*, Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd., First Published, 2008, Pg. 5-6.
2. Ifor Evans, *A Short History of English Literature*, Perguin Books Ltd., Harmon & Worth, Middle Sex, England, 4th Revised and Enlarged Edition, 1979.

**GLOSSARY**

**Poplar** - a tall, fast growing tree, often grown in shelter belts or for wood and pulp.

**Whispering** - speak very softly using one's breath rather than one's throat. Practically it refers to rustle or murmur softly.

**Colonnade** - a series of columns set up regular intervals to support a roof or series of arches.

**Ouse** - a river in England.

**Blackbird** - a thrush of which the male has all black plumage and a yellowbill and the female is brown, an American songbird with largely black plumage.

**Hazel** - tree of the birch family, bearing edible nuts.

**Ditty** - short, simple song

**Fugitive** - a fleeing or elusive thing.

**Turf** - grass and the surface layer of earth held together by its roots, a piece of such grass and earth cut from the ground.

**PROBABLE QUESTIONS**

1. Prepare a note on the biographical sketch of William Cowper.
2. What is the central theme of 'The Poplar Field'?
3. Give the summary of the poem 'The Poplar Field'.
4. Write a critical appreciation of the poem 'The Poplar Field'.

**SUGGESTED READING**

1. M.H. Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, Macmillan India limited, reprinted 1991.
2. William Hutton Hudson, *An outline History of English Literature*, B.I. Publication Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi 110001, Indian Edition Reprinted, 1994.

**Unit - III****Title : William Wordsworth's 'The Green Linnet'****STRUCTURE**

## 3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 About the poet

3.2.1 William Wordsworth's Life

3.2.2 William Wordsworth's Poetical works

3.2.3 Growth and Development of  
Wordsworth's Love for Nature

3.3 Text of the Poem

3.4 About the poem

3.4.1 Summary of the poem

3.4.2 Critical appreciation of the poem

3.5 Let us Sum up

References

Glossary

Probable Questions

Suggested Reading



### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we are going to introduce to you one of the greatest Poets of English Literature, William. Besides, you will get a brief description of the life and works of Wordsworth along with the particular poem prescribed for your study. After studying this unit, you will be able to

- ♦ Formulate an idea about the life and works of William Wordsworth.
- ♦ Assess his poetic genius
- ♦ Evaluate Wordsworth as a Romantic Poet
- ♦ Explain the literary terms used in the poem
- ♦ Appreciate the poem as a whole.

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

As you have gone through the literary works of William Cowper, the pre-Romantic Poet in English literature, and have tasted his poem, now let us begin with William Wordsworth's poem "The Green Linnet". Wordsworth in this poem celebrates the spirit of the green linnet which sings in full throated case. Here Wordsworth presents his feelings that the exultant bird defies all constraints as it tries to emulate the spirit behind creation.

### 3.2 ABOUT THE POET

#### 3.2.1. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S LIFE

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth, Cumberland, in the lake district, on 7th April, 1770 He was the second oldest of five children of Folum and Anne Cooksen Wordsworth. His father was law agent and rent collector for lord Lonsdole, and the family was at this period reasonably well off. William attended the Hawshead Grammer School, near Winderners, until his matriculation at St. Folins College, Cambridge. He was an indifferent Scholar at Cambridge and when he graduated had little sense of his future vocations. In the year after his graduation he went to France where he contrasted not only radical republican sympathics but also with an affair with Annette Vallon, to whom his illegitimate daughter, Cardine was born in 1792. Wordsworth returned to England where his political sympathics changed as the fortunes of liberty in France declined. Supported by a bequest from a friend, he settled, with his sister Dorothy, near Bistol. It was here that he met Coleridge and that their famous friendship began. In 1798, the two poets published 'Lyrical Ballads' together and in the same year they visited Germany. In 1799, Wordsworth and his Sister settled in the lake district. In 1802, having come into a patrimony long decayed by a litigation, he married Marry Hutchinson. In 1813 he was granted the sincere of Distributor of Stamps for Westmorland. His life, meanwhile, was a quiet one; the production of editions of his poems was steady and his reputation, especially after 1815, steadily increased. In 1839 he was honoured by Oxford University with the degree of Doctor of Civil Law and in 1843, he become the Poet Laureate. For seven years he worked hard and died 1850.

### 3.2.2 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S POETICAL WORKS

William Wordsworth began his career as a poet at quite an early age when he was yet a student at Hawkshead Grammar School. His earliest verse was composed under the influence of Alexander Pope and were 'a famous imitation of Pope's versification'. At the university he composed poems which found a place in college magazines. Of his work as a university student 'An Evening Walk' (1793) and 'Descriptive Slitches' (1793) are worthy of notice. In style these poems don't exhibit any originality, but exhibit the eye of the poet for nature. The first fruit of his genius was given out in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). The publication of this monumental work ushered in the new era of romanticism in poetry and discarded the old, artificial, superfluous and hackneyed theory of English poetry of the previous age. The first edition of the 'Lyrical Ballads' consisted of twenty three poems, of which most were from Wordsworth's pen and four from his friend Coleridge's fertile imagination. 'The Preface to the Lyrical Ballads' was perhaps remarkable like the poems themselves for in the Preface the theory of new poetry of the romantic age was laid down with great detail leaving no scope for ambiguity and doubt. It was in the Preface that Wordsworth made bold and categorical statements regarding the nature of poetry, the function of criticism and the role of the poet as a creative artist. Wordsworth's "The Prelude" is an autobiographical poem consisting of four books. The Prelude was intended to form part of a vast philosophical work called *The Recluse* which was never

completed. The Prelude was commenced in 1799 and was completed in 1805, but was published a year after the poets' death in 1850. His next creation was published in 1814. It is based on the poet's love for Nature. Wordsworth published in 1807 two volumes of poems which represent the fine flower of his genius. His remarkable lyrics are included in these two volumes and some of these are - The Solitary Reaper, The Green Linnet, Daffodils, Ode on Intimations of Immortality etc.

Besides, Wordsworth revived the Petrarchan vogue of writing sonnets, and he was the main figure who brought the sonnet back to its pristine perfection and popular favour. He wrote approximately five hundred sonnets. The memorable sonnets of Wordsworth are - It is a beautiful evening, calm and free, The World is too much with us, Westminster Bridge, London 1802, To Milton etc.

In fact, Wordsworth was one of the greatest English poets and had an exceptional influence on the development of English literature. He mastered all the major verse forms, lyrics, ballads, odes, sonnets, narrative poetry and reflective verse.

#### STOP TO THINK

##### Romantic Movement in English Literature:

The publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 proved to be a landmark in the history of the revival of the Romantic Movement in England. It was also a revolt against the neo-classical school of Alexander Pope and

Dr. Samuel Johnson. In the poetry of the Romantic Movement, the interest of poets was transferred from town to country life and from the artificial decoration and a drawing rooms to the natural beauty and liveliness of Nature. Some of the major writers of time were the poets William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron and John Keats, the essayists Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt and the novelists Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott.

### 3.2.3. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF WORDSWORTH'S LOVE FOR NATURE :

The predominantly spiritual tone of Wordsworth's appreciation of Nature was not a continued focus from the day of childhood to the days of maturity and philosophic insight into the heart of things. In *The Prelude* or *The Growth of a Poet's Mind*, we have a complete picture of the evaluation of the various stages of his appreciation of nature beginning with the physical plane and ending with the mystical and spiritualistic interpretation of nature. The poet's conception of Nature advanced and developed as he grew in years. His attitude towards nature may be classified under three leads - (i) the period of the senses, (ii) the period of the senses and (iii) the period of the imagination and the soul. We shall now deal with these phases of Wordsworth's appreciation and interpretation of Nature.

- (i) The period of the senses : Wordsworth's childhood days were spent in the midst of beautiful sights and sounds

of nature. The child Wordsworth looked up on Nature as a source of and scene for animal pleasure like skating, riding, fishing and walking. Wordsworth's first love of Nature was a healthy boy's delight in outdoor life.

- (ii) The Period of the Senses : In this stage, Wordsworth developed a passion for the sensuous beauty of Nature. As he grew up, his 'Coarser pleasures' lost their charm for him and Nature was loved with an unreflecting passion altogether unforced by intellectual interest or associations. Now he viewed Nature with a purely physical passion. All his joys came to an end with his experiences of human suffering in France. The French Revolution opened his eyes and made him realize the dignity of the common man. During this period his love of Nature was linked with the love of man.
- (iii) The period of the imagination and the Soul : The previous stage was soon followed by the final stage of the spiritual interpretation of Nature. Now he felt that 'there is a spirit in the woods'. From now onwards, he realized a divine principle reigning in the heart of Nature. At this stage the foundation of Wordsworth's entire existence was his mode of serving God in Nature and Nature in God. The faith of the poet was that there is the eternal spirit that pervades all the objects of Nature.

**STOP TO CONSIDER**

The French Revolution : The French Revolution that broke out 1789 stirred the whole of Europe to its depth and left a powerful impression on the Romantic poets of England. The ideals of the revolution were - Liberty, Equity and Fraternity. These ideals were in conformity with the principles of the Romantic poet. Wordsworth was the first great Romantic poet who came under the influence of the Revolution.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

(i) In which year was, *The Lyrical Ballads* published?

.....  
 .....

(ii) What is the importance of *The Lyrical Ballads*?

.....  
 .....

(iii) Mention the poetical works of Wordsworth.

.....  
 .....

(iv) In which year the French Revolution started?

.....  
 .....

**3.3. TEXT OF THE POEM****The Green Linnet**

Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed  
 Their snow-white blossoms on my head,  
 With brightest sunshine round me spread  
 Of Spring's unclouded weather,  
 In this sequester'd nook how sweet  
 To sit upon my orchard-seat!  
 And flowers and birds once more to greet,  
 My last year's friends together !

One have I mark'd, the happiest guest

In all this covert of the blest:-

Hail to thee, far above the rest

In joy of voice and pinion!

Thou, Linnet! in thy green array

Presiding Spirit here to-day,

Dost lead the revels of the May;

And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,

Make all one band of paramours,

Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,

Art sole in thy employment;



A Life, a Presence like the Air,  
 Scattering thy gladness without care,  
 Too blest with any one to pair,  
 Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid you tuft of hazel trees  
 That twinkle to the gusty breeze,  
 Behold him perch'd in ecstasies  
 Yet seeming still to hover;  
 There! Where the flutter of his wings  
 Upon his back and body flings  
 Shadows and sunny glimmerings,  
 That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives -  
 A brother of the dancing leaves;  
 Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves  
 Pours forth his song in gushes;  
 As if by that exulting strain  
 He mock'd and treated with disdain  
 The voiceless form he chose to feign,  
 While fluttering in the bushes.

### 3.4 ABOUT THE POEM

#### 3.4.1 SUMMARY OF THE POEM

The poem 'The Green Linnet' celebrates the spirit of the green linnet which sings in full throated case. As the bird sings, oblivious to anything but its own enjoyment, the poet feels that it is blessed. The green feathers of the bird make it hard to be spotted amongst the leaves as it flits about. There is a feeling that the exultant bird defies all constraints as it tries to emulate the spirit behind creation.

The poet feels that the green linnet is not an ordinary bird. The poet gets an imaginative vision of the bird that it has some visionary power and can transform this physical vision into a celestial beauty.

#### 3.4.2 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM

"The Green Linnet" is among the best bird poems of Wordsworth. It reminds us of his own 'To the Cuckoo', 'To a Skylark'. All the there birds are 'Spirits' or 'voices' rather than birds. Wordsworth's cuckoo is 'a wondering voice', 'an invisible thing', 'a mystery'.

His skylark is an 'ethereal minstrel', a pilgrim of the sky' who despises the earth and this 'green linnet' is a bird who keeps pouring an the earth his full heart somewhere' from Heaven, or near it'.

The title of the poem 'The Green Linnet' is rather descriptive. The poem is not about the bird and its physical

description is not the subject of the poem, but it is a faithful record of the poet's state of mind at the time of his seeing the bird and it deals with such weighty issues as reality and imagination.

The poet celebrates himself in the exciting joy of the bird and it also becomes a source of joy for him. The green linnet thus becomes a symbol of joy and it is not joy in the ordinary sense, but of a spiritual nature than physical one.

The poem is not about how the poet is under the fruit bearing branches of a tree with flowers which can be compared with snow. It appears to him that the branches leave its flower from above and the poet considered if as a divine bless. By the by, the poet welcomes the friend who is the green linnet as the bird presides over the whole sacred beauty of Nature in that orchard. The green linnet is more particular as he resides at a distance from the common birds and insects yet there is a boundage among them and it is not physical but spiritual one. At this moment the poet realizes that the bird has a life and its body is not but the 'presence like the Air'. He is a part of the unseen pleasure and as the bird flies, he mocks at the voiceless form of his body that attains higher quality with its flight and breaking the silence he bestows upon us the divines bliss, the divine pleasure.

In conclusion, it may be noted that the green linnet is an expression of divine pleasure and an air of sanguineners blows from its flight. The ethereal quality of the bird surprises the poet Wordsworth.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the feeling of the poet about the green linnet?

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

2. What are the other poems of Wordsworth that have birds as their subject matter?

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

3. What does the green linnet symbolise?

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

### 3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have learnt about William Wordsworth's life and his literary achievements. We also learn the growth and development of Wordsworth's love for Nature. Further we have gone through the summary of the poem 'The Green Linnet' along with the critical appreciation. This study of the unit will help you to compare Wordsworth with other poets of the Romantic age of English literature. This will help you

to acquire a better idea about the poet and his age.

## REFERENCES

1. Bijoy Kr. Danta, *Musings*, Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd., First Published, 2008, Pp. 8-10.
2. William J. Long, *English Literature : Its History and Its Significance*, Kalyani Publishers, 5th Indian Reprint, 1977.

## GLOSSARY

<b>Baugh</b>	- a main branch of a tree
<b>Sequestered</b>	- removed from others, secluded.
<b>Nook</b>	- a swell recess or scheduled spot
<b>Covert</b>	- not openly acknowledged, a feather covering the base of a main flight or tail feather of a bird.
<b>Pinion</b>	- the end joint of a bird's wing.
<b>Linnet</b>	- a Songbird.
<b>Array</b>	- an impressive display or range of a particular thing.
<b>Reveal</b>	- engage in lively and noisy festivities.
<b>Dominion</b>	- sovereign authority, a governed ferritory
<b>Paramour</b>	- a sweetheart
<b>Yon</b>	- younder, that or those at a distance
<b>Tuft</b>	- a bunch of threads, grass or hair, held or

growing together at the base

<b>Hazel</b>	- tree of the break family, bearing edible nuts
<b>Gusty</b>	- a brief, strong rush of wind
<b>Breezy</b>	- soft wind
<b>Ecstasies</b>	- joy
<b>Hover</b>	- to stay suspended or flutter in the air near one place.
<b>Flutter</b>	- fly unsteadily by flapping the wings quickly and lightly.
<b>Fling</b>	- throw forcefully.
<b>Dazzle</b>	- blind temporarily, overwhelm with an impressive quality.
<b>Cottage</b>	- caves - the lower edges of the cottage roof.
<b>Gush</b>	- send out or flow in a rapid and plentiful stream.
<b>Feign</b>	- pretend

## PROBABLE QUESTIONS

1. Prepare a biographical sketch of William Wordsworth.
2. Name the poets, essayists and novelists of the Roamtic Period of English literature.
3. Write a note on the growth and development of Wordsworths love of Nature.

4. Give the summary of the poem 'The Green Linnet'.

#### **SUGGESTED READING**

1. M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Macmillan India Limited, Reprinted 1991.
2. William Hunry Hudson, *An Outline History of English Literature*, B.I. Publication, Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi - 110001, Indian Zdition Reprinted 1994.

## **BLOCK - III**

### **POETRY - 2**

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### **Unit - I**

**Title : G.M.HOPKINS, "Binsey Poplars"**

#### **STRUCTURE**

##### 1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 About the poet

1.2.1 William Wordsworth's Life

1.2.2 William Wordsworth's Poetical works

1.2.3 Growth and Development of  
Wordsworth's Love for Nature

1.3 Text of the Poem

1.4 About the poem

1.4.1 Summary of the poem

1.4.2 Critical appreciation of the poem

1.5 Let us Sum up

References

Glossary

Probable Questions

Suggested Reading

## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

Block III of this course titled "POETRY II" will acquaint you with English poetry from the Late Victorian age to the Modern age. Block III consists of poems written by three poets-G.M. Hopkins, Gerald Durrell and T.S. Eliot, discussed in Units I, II and III respectively. Unit I shall introduce you to G.M. Hopkins, a Victorian poet whose works were published posthumously to receive acclaim as heralding/ ushering in the era of modernist poetry. After reading this unit you should be able to

- Study a prescribed text (poem in this case) in context (background information about the poet and the period).
- Understand the term "Modernism" in the context of English literature.
- Critically appreciate the prescribed poem.
- Answer textual questions based on the poem.
- Explain stanzas with "reference to the context".

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Block II has acquainted you with English poets of the Elizabethan and the Romantic period of English poetry. You have read poems written by Shakespeare, Cowper and Wordsworth and have learnt to analyze poems critically. **Block III** will introduce you to G.M. Hopkins, Lawrence Durrell and T.S. Eliot. These three poets represent the essence of modernism in English poetry in terms of theme

and style. This unit will inform you briefly about the period of English literature which is termed as "The Modern Age". You will acquire information about the poets and be able to place their poems against the backdrop of historical and literary events of the age. Block III is divided into three units, each dealing with a poet and the prescribed poem. Unit I focuses on G.M. Hopkins and his poem "Binsey Poplars" prescribed for your study. Units II and III are on T.S. Eliot's poem "To the Indians who Died in Africa" and Lawrence Durrell's poem "Sarajevo" respectively.

### 1.2.1 The "Modern Age" of English literature:

Modernism as a literary movement reached its height in Europe between 1900 and the middle 1920s. Modernist literature addressed aesthetic problems similar to those examined in non-literary forms of contemporaneous Modernist art, such as Modernist painting.

**1.2.2 Modernism**, in its broadest sense, is modern thought, character, or practice. More specifically, the term describes the **modernist movement**, its set of cultural tendencies and array of associated cultural movements, originally arising from wide-scale and far-reaching changes in the Western society during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Modernism was a revolt against the conservative values of realism. Arguably the most paradigmatic motive of modernism is the rejection of tradition and its reprise, incorporation, rewriting, recapitulation, revision and parody in new forms. Modernism rejected the lingering certainty of Enlightenment and also rejected the existence of a compassionate, all-powerful Creator God.

In general, the term modernism encompasses the activities and output of those who felt the "traditional" forms of art, architecture, literature, religious faith, social organization and daily life were becoming outdated in the new economic, social, and political conditions of an emerging fully industrialized world.

**1.2.3 Modernist literature** is the literary expression of the tendencies of modernism, especially high modernism. (the Modernist movement that started after the World War I). Modernistic literature tends to revolve around the themes of individualism, the randomness of life, mistrust of institutions (government, religion) and the disbelief in any absolute truths. It attempts to evolve a literary structure that departs from conventionality and realism. In terms of style and structure, modernism brought in innovations with form and language.



Modernist poets experimented and innovated with new techniques and revival of archaic diction. Language was terse, condensed and packed with meaning. Modernism therefore ushered in new thoughts and practices in literature and writers invested in unconventional ideas, which found expression in thematic, stylistic and structural innovations.

#### 1.2.4 THE POET

**Gerard Manley Hopkins** was born in 1844 and died in 1889. He went from Highgate School to Balliol College, Oxford. He became a Roman Catholic in 1866 and soon after joined the Jesuit order. As a devout Jesuit, Hopkins considered it a religious duty to discontinue writing poetry, but when a shipwreck in December 1875 caused the drowning of five Franciscan nuns he was inspired to compose his outstanding poem *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. He was not only a profoundly religious poet but he was also an able scholar with an exceptionally austere, subtle and complex mind. He abandoned the romantic style of poetry. Although he adopted metrical forms and verse techniques which owed something to Donne and other metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, he was more an innovator than a borrower. He used the term "sprung rhythm" to describe his own system of prosody. He used the term "inscape" to denote his aim in the treatment of subject material. Hopkins was deeply influenced by Duns Scotus and also by the Anglo-Saxon use of alliterative meter. His poetry is characterized by technical novelty and subtle undercurrents of emotion. During his lifetime no work of Hopkins was published, but after the posthumous publication of his collected poems (1918) he profoundly influenced the younger generation of modernist poets in England and America who were experimenting with new forms of expression in the early decades of the twentieth century.

### 1.2.5 G.M. HOPKINS AS A MODERN POET:

G.M. Hopkins is known as one of the first modern poets of English literature. However, Hopkins' modernism is expressed in his innovative techniques of writing poetry and stylistic experimentations. His "inscape" and "instress" and his revival of the Anglo-Saxon alliterative meter lend uniqueness to his poetry and reinforce his claim as a modern poet. However, his themes were mostly religious as he was a devout Jesuit priest and his nature poetry was infused with his devotion and faith in God. In other words, Hopkins' is a modernist poet primarily in terms of the unique structure and style of his poetry rather than their thematic content, which is late Victorian and traditional.

In his journals, Gerard Manley Hopkins used two terms, "inscape" and "instress". By "inscape" he means the unified complex of characteristics that give each thing its uniqueness and that differentiate it from other things, and by "instress" he means either the force of being which holds the inscape together or the impulse from the inscape which carries it whole into the mind of the beholder:

There is one notable dead tree . . . the inscape markedly holding its most simple and beautiful oneness up from the ground through a graceful swerve below (I think) the spring of the branches up to the tops of the timber. I saw the inscape freshly, as if my mind were still growing, though with a companion the eye and the ear are for the most part shut and instress cannot come.

The concept of inscape shares much with

Wordsworth's "spots of time," Emerson's "moments," and Joyce's "epiphanies," showing it to be a characteristically Romantic and post-Romantic idea. But Hopkins' inscape is also fundamentally religious: a glimpse of the inscape of a thing shows us why God created it. "Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:/ . . myself it speaks and spells,/ Crying Whát I dó is me: for that I came. "

Hopkins occupies an important place in the poetic line that reaches from the major Romantic poets, especially Wordsworth and Keats, through Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites to Pater, Yeats and the symbolists, and finally to Ezra Pound and the Imagists. His insistence that inscape was the essence of poetry ("Poetry is in fact speech employed to carry the inscape of speech for the inscape's sake") and that consequently, what he called "Parnassian" poetry (i.e., competent verse written without inspiration) was to be avoided has much in common with the aestheticism of Walter Pater (one of his tutors at Oxford) and the Art for Art's Sake movement, and sounds very much like the theoretical pronouncements of the Imagists of the early twentieth century.

### 1.2.6 THE POEM "BINSEY POPLARS" (1879)

My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,  
 Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,  
 All felled, felled, are all felled;



Of a fresh and following folded rank  
 Not spared, not one  
 That dandled a sandalled  
 Shadow that swam or sank  
 On meadow and river and wind-wandering weed-winding  
 bank.  
 O if we but knew what we do  
 When we delve or hew-  
 Hack and rack the growing green!  
 Since country is so tender  
 To touch, her being so slender,  
 That, like this sleek and seeing ball  
 But a prick will make no eye at all,  
 Where we, even where we mean  
 To mend her we end her,  
 When we hew or delve:  
 After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.  
 Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve  
 Strokes of havoc unselfe  
 The sweet especial scene,  
 Rural scene, a rural scene,  
 Sweet especial rural scene.

### 1.2.7 : ABOUT THE POEM

This poem was written in reaction to an incident in March 1879. Writing to his friend Canon Dixon after a visit to Godstow, Hopkins lamented "I am sorry to say that the aspens that lined the river are everyone felled." In this poem Hopkins laments the destruction of the rural scene due to the felling of the poplar trees. Hopkins expresses his concerns for the felled trees as well as for Nature. Hopkins' attitude to nature is reflected in the poem. The poet is alarmed at the reckless felling of trees and considers this almost equivalent to maiming the green countryside. Hopkins believes that if this reckless destruction of nature continues nothing will be left for the posterity. Significantly, for Hopkins Nature is so utterly delicate that we might cause her further harm while attempting to mend and restore the harm we have caused it. In this poem Hopkins anticipates the modern environmentalists.

### 1.2.8: SUMMARY

The poet mourns the cutting of his "aspens dear", trees whose delicate beauty resided not only in their appearance, but in the way they created "airy cages" to trap the sunlight. these lovely trees, Hopkins laments, have all been "felled". He compares them to an army of soldiers obliterated. He remembers the way their "sandalled" shadows played along the winding bank where river and meadow met. Hopkins grieves over the reckless destruction of the natural world, which takes place because people fail to realize the

implications of their actions. To "delve or hew" (dig, as in mining, or chop down trees) is to treat the earth too harshly, for "country" is something "so tender" that the least damage can change it irrevocably. The poet offers as an analogy the pricking of an eyeball, an organ whose mechanisms are subtle and powerful, though the tissues are infinitely delicate: to prick it even slightly, changes it completely from what it was to something unrecognizable (and useless). Indeed, even an action that is meant to be beneficial can affect the landscape in this way, Hopkins says. The earth held beauties before our time that "after-comers" will have no idea of, since they are now lost forever. It takes so little (only "ten or twelve strokes") to "unselve" the landscape, or alter it so completely that it is no longer itself.

### 1.2.9: FORM

This poem is written in "sprung rhythm," the innovative metric form developed by Hopkins. In sprung rhythm the number of accents in a line are counted, but the number of syllables are not. The result, in this poem, is that Hopkins is able to group accented syllables together, creating striking onomatopoeic effects. In the third line, for example, the heavy recurrence of the accented words "all" and "felled" strike the ear like the blows of an ax on the tree trunks. However, in the final three lines the repetition of phrases works differently. Here the technique achieves a more wistful and song-like quality; the chanted phrase "sweet especial rural scene" evokes the numb incomprehension of grief and

the unwillingness of a bereaved heart to let go. This poem offers a good example of the way Hopkins chooses, alters, and invents words with a view to creating sonorousness of his poems. Here, he uses "dandled" (instead of a more familiar word such as "dangled") to create a rhyme with "sandalled" and to echo the consonants in the final three lines of the stanza.

Hopkins points out how the narrow-minded priorities of an age bent on standardization and regularity contribute to an obliteration of beauty. Nature allows both lines and curves, and lets them interplay in infinitely complex and subtle ways; the line of trees, while also straight and orderly like soldiers, nevertheless follows the curve of the river, so that *their* "rank" is "following" and "folded," caught up in intricate interrelations rather than being merely rigid, efficient, and abstract. Its shadows, which are cross-hatched like sandal straps and constantly changing, offer another example of the patterning of nature. This passage expresses something of what Hopkins means by the word "inscape": the notion of "inscape" refers both to an object's perfect individualism and to the object's possession of an internal order governing its "selving" and connecting it to other objects in the world.

### 1.2.10 CRITICAL COMMENTS/ APPRECIATION

This poem is a dirge for a landscape that Hopkins had known intimately while studying at Oxford. Hopkins here recapitulates the ideas expressed in some of his earlier poems

about the individuality of the natural object and the idea that its very being is a kind of expression. Hopkins refers to this expression as "selving," and maintains that this "selving" is ultimately always an expression of God, his creative power. The word appears here (as "unselves"), and also in "As Kingfishers Catch Fire." Here, Hopkins emphasizes the fragility of the self or the selving: Even a slight alteration can cause a thing to cease to be what it most essentially is. In describing the beauty of the aspens, Hopkins focuses on the way they interact with and affect the space and atmosphere around them, changing the quality of the light and contributing to the elaborate natural patterning along the bank of the river. Because of these interrelations, felling a grove not only eradicates the trees, but also "unselves" the whole countryside.

The poem likens the line of trees to a rank of soldiers. The military image implies that the industrial development of the countryside equals a kind of (too often unrecognized) warfare. The natural curves and winding of the river bank contrast with the rigid linearity of man-made arrangements of objects, a rigidity implied by the soldiers marching in formation. Hopkins points out how the narrow-minded priorities of an age bent on standardization and regularity contributes to an obliteration of beauty. Nature allows both lines and curves, and lets them interplay in infinitely complex and subtle ways; the line of trees, while also straight and orderly like soldiers, nevertheless follows the curve of the river, so that their "rank" is "following" and "folded," caught up in intricate interrelations rather than being merely rigid,

efficient, and abstract. Its shadows, which are cross-hatched like sandal straps and constantly changing, offer another example of the patterning of nature. This passage expresses something of what Hopkins means by the word "inscape": the notion of "inscape" refers both to an object's perfect individualism and to the object's possession of an internal order governing its "selving" and connecting it to other objects in the world.

The pricked eyeball makes a startling and painful image; in case the readers have not yet shared Hopkins's acute pain over the felled poplars, the poet makes sure we cringe now. The image suggests that when the trees disappear from sight, the ramifications are as tragic as the loss of our very organ of vision. The implication is that we are harmed as much as the landscape; Hopkins wants us to feel this as a real loss to ourselves. Not only will the landscape not be there, but we will no longer be able to see it—in this way, it really is as if our eyes were punctured. For Hopkins, the patterning of the natural world is always a reflection of God and a mode of access to God; thus this devastation has implications for our ability to be religious people and to be in touch with the divine presence. The narrowness of the industrial mindset loses sight of these wider implications. Hopkins puts this blindness in a biblical context with his echoes of Jesus' phrase at his own crucifixion: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Hopkins used poetry to express his religious devotion, drawing his images from the natural world. He found nature inspiring and developed his theories of inscape and instress

to explore the manifestation of God in every living thing. According to these theories, the recognition of an object's unique identity, which was bestowed upon that object by God, brings us closer to Christ. Similarly, the beauty of the natural world-and our appreciation of that beauty-helps us worship God.

### 1.2.11: ANNOTATIONS

**My aspens dear :** Hopkins' address to the felled aspens. This is an instance of unusual collocation which reveals his intense love for the felled aspens. In English language, the words 'my' and 'dear' are normally used as a term of endearment to address a beloved person.

**aspen :** any of the several kinds of poplar with leaves that flutter in the slightest breeze.

**quell :** to put down or suppress by force.

**airy cages :** the aspen foliage which flutters in the breeze traps sunlight as though in a cage.

**Quelled . . . sun :** a keen observation on the part of Hopkins. It is an unusually powerful image that he evokes here. Even the leaping sun seems to be caught up in the "airy cages", i.e. the foliage of the aspens.

**All felled. . . felled :** Note the repeated use of the word 'felled' It suggests the horror which Hopkins felt when to his utter dismay he discovered that not even a single aspen had been spared.

**of a fresh . . . rank :** Refers to the rows of aspens, now all

felled. The poem likens the line of trees to a rank of soldiers. The military image implies that the industrial development of the countryside equals a kind of (too often unrecognized) warfare. The natural curves and winding of the river bank contrast with the rigid linearity of man-made arrangements of objects, a rigidity implied by the soldiers marching in formation.

**Not spared . . . bank :** Hopkins is alarmed at the insensitivity of those who felled the rows of aspens and for not having cared to spare the trees which cast their shadows on the meadow and the river. The words 'dandled' and 'sandalled' evoke a powerful image of Mother Nature, nourishing and sustaining mankind.

**dandled :** Word associated with children. Dandled is a word often used of bouncing a child up and down on one's knees. Here, dancing shadows of the swaying trees on the stream and meadows.

**sandalled:** The poplar shadows, which are cross-hatched like sandal straps and constantly changing, offer an example of the patterning of nature.

**O . . . green :** Hopkins here suggests that human beings are not fully aware of the harm they cause to the countryside.

**delve or hew / Hack and rack :** Very many ways in which human beings cause harm to Nature and the countryside.

**O if . . . growing green :** Hopkins wishes that human beings were aware of the harm they do to Nature. Unfortunately people exhibit the contrary behaviour and by their insensitiveness cause harm to Nature.

**Growing green :** flourishing verdure of the countryside.

**Country :** Countryside.

**Tender :** Delicate.

**Sleek :** Smooth and glossy.

**Seeing ball :** Refers to human eye. 'Ball' here refers to the eye ball.

**... make no eye at all :** any damage caused to the eye.

**Where we ... her :** These lines are connected with the earlier lines "since country is so tender . . . ". Since the countryside is delicate and susceptible to irreparable damage Hopkins argues that human beings might further ruin it while attempting to restore the damage they have caused to the countryside.

**After-comes :** Future generations.

**When we hew or delve . . . been :** When people go on "hew(ing)" and "delv(ing)" they mutilate the beauty of the countryside. Hopkins is apprehensive that the beauty of the countryside is at stake and fears that the future generation might be deprived of its beauty.

**Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve :** Only a few strokes of the axe were sufficient to fell each tree.

**strokes of havoc :** strokes of destruction.

**unselve :** Refers to robbing the countryside of its essence. Hopkins here recapitulates the ideas expressed in some of his earlier poems about the individuality of the natural object and the idea that its very being is a kind of expression.

Hopkins refers to this expression as "selving," and maintains that this "selving" is ultimately always an expression of God, his creative power. The word appears here as "unselves." Here, Hopkins emphasizes the fragility of the self or the selving; even a slight alteration can cause a thing to cease to be what it most essentially is. In describing the beauty of the aspens, Hopkins focuses on the way they interact with and affect the space and atmosphere around them, changing the quality of the light and contributing to the elaborate natural patterning along the bank of the river. Because of these interrelations, felling a grove not only eradicates the trees, but also "unselves" the whole countryside.

**Ten or twelve . . . scene :** These lines describe how a few heavy strokes of the axe felled entire rows of aspens, which earlier had heightened the beauty of the countryside.

#### ACTIVITIES TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions:

i) Why does Hopkins refer to the felled aspen trees as "dear"? What is the significance of expressions like "my" and "dear"?

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ii) Identify and describe the images used in the poem to convey pain and a sense of loss at the felling of the trees.

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iii) Write briefly on Hopkins' use of alliterations. Give examples from the poem.

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iv) Which stanza of the poem shows Hopkins' use of "inscape" and "instress"?

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v) Show how Hopkins' unusual diction and his "sprung rhythm" make "Binsey Poplars" a unique nature poem.

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vi) Write a short summary of the poem in your own words.

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2. What do you understand by the term "modern age"?
3. Write a brief note on the characteristics of modernist literature.
4. Prepare a note on the modern and traditional elements in Hopkins' poetry.
5. Write a note on Hopkins' concept of "inscape" and "instress".
6. Explain with reference to the context the following lines:
  - a) "My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,  
Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,

All felled, felled, are all felled;  
 Of a fresh and following folded rank  
 Not spared, not one"  
 That dandled a sandalled

- b) Shadow that swam or sank  
 On meadow and river and wind-wandering weed-  
 winding bank.  
 O if we but knew what we do  
 When we delve or hew-  
 Hack and rack the growing green!
- c) Since country is so tender  
 To touch, her being so slender,  
 That, like this sleek and seeing ball  
 But a prick will make no eye at all,  
 Where we, even where we mean  
 To mend her we end her,  
 When we hew or delve:
- d) After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.  
 Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve  
 Strokes of havoc unselfe  
 The sweet especial scene,  
 Rural scene, a rural scene,  
 Sweet especial rural scene.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. G. M. Hopkins as a 'modern' poet.
2. Themes and style in Hopkins' poetry.
3. Definitions and examples of Inscape and Instress.
4. Theme/ central idea of the poem "Binsey Poplars."
5. Hopkins' style in "Binsey Poplars"-use of innovative techniques in diction, meter and rhythm
6. Hopkins as a nature poet.
7. Images used in the poem.
8. Steps to write a reference to the context-
9. i) Mention the name of the poet and poem from which the lines have been quoted.  
 ii) Explain the quoted lines briefly, placing them in context i.e. the lines have to be connected to the preceding and following lines which have not been quoted but the meaning of which you are expected to know.  
 iii) Remember that your explanation has to be written in the context of the entire poem.

Note: The annotations, summary and critical comments provided in this unit will help you to write explanations with reference to the context. You must read the poem carefully and familiarize yourself with every line of the poem. This will help you to understand and remember the lines so that you can recall them when required.

**TEST YOURSELF:**

1. Identify and discuss Hopkins' concerns in the poem.
2. Show the difference of attitude to Nature between Hopkins and those who felled the trees?
3. "Hopkins was an environmental conservationist ahead of his times". Illustrate the statement with reference to the poem.
4. Critically appreciate the poem "Binsey Poplars."
5. Think about some of the images that occur in the poem "Binsey Poplars" and discuss why they are appropriate to the theme that most concerned him in this poem.
7. Hopkins is famous as a poet of both nature and religion. How does he combine these two traditional poetic subjects, and to what effect in "Binsey Poplars"?
8. Does Hopkins's poetry more closely resemble Romantic or Modernist poetry? Explain with reference to "Binsey Poplars".

**SUGGESTED READING**

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**Unit - II**  
**LAWRENCE DURRELL'S "SARAJEVO"**

**STRUCTURE**

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 About the poet

2.2.1 Lawrence Durrell's Life &  
Works

2.3 Text of the poem

2.4 About the poem

2.4.1. Content of the poem

2.4.2 Critical appreciation of the poem

2.5 Let us Sum up

2.6 References

Glossary

Probable Questions

Suggested Reading



## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we are going to introduce one of the modern poets of English literature, Lawrence Durrell, Here you will find a brief description of the life and works of Durrell along with the particular poem prescribed for your study. After studying this unit, you will be able to

- ◆ formulate an idea about the life and works of Lawrence Durrell
- ◆ Assess his poetic genius
- ◆ Explain the literary terms used in the poem.
- ◆ Appreciate the poem as a whole.

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

As you have gone through the literary works of William Wordsworth, the greatest Romantic poet in English literature and have acquired the idea of his feeling for nature, now let us deal with Lawrence Durrell's poem "Sarajeyo". Durrell in this poem expresses his view that war is futile, whatever the reasons or provocations behind it. Durrell offers a critique of war taking us to the trouble torn city of Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## 2.2 ABOUT THE POET

George Lawrence Durrell is a British poet, novelist and travel writer.

**2.2.1 Lawrence Durrell's life and work :** Durrell was born in India in 1912. His father was a civil engineer working for the British. Durrell spent most of his life in the Mediterranean region, after in diplomatic posts. Durrell was first recognized as a poet. His collections include "A Private Country" (1943), Cities, Plains and People (1946). On Seeming to Presume (1948), The Tree of Idlers (1955) and Collected Poems (1960). His maiden novel of interest, The Black Book; (1938), is mildly pornographic fantasia, crowded by prostitutes and failed artists. He came to limelight with the publication of Justine (1957). His first volume of Alexandria Quartet Balthazar and Mountolive followed in 1958 and Clea in 1960. All these novels deal with the events during the period of second World War. The novel Clea according to Durrell is 'an investigation of modern love'. Principal characters include the narrator L.G. Darley and his Greek mistress Helina, the British ambassador Mountolive, the British intelligence agent Pursewarden, the artist Clea and Justine, who is a Jewish and her Coptic husband Nessim. Durrell's later novels include Tunc (1968), Nunguam (1970), Monsiem (1974) and Constance (1982). Lawrence's best known travel books are Prospero's Cell (1945) based on his pre-war years in Corfu, Reflections on a Marine Venus (1953), based on his experience as Information officer in Rhodes.

Lawrence's brother was also a writer. His younger brother Gerald Malcolm Durrell (1925-95) is well known for his popular accounts of animal life. His works include the Overloaded Ark (1953), My family and other Animals

(1956) and *Island Zoo* (1961). Lawrence George Durell demised in the year 1990.

### STOP TO THINK

George Lawrence Durell was born in India in 1912. He demised from the world in 1990. He has multifaceted personality. As a literary artist he established his position as a poet, novelist and travel writer. He has written poems, novels and travelogues, this collections include *Country, Cities, Plains and People on Seminy to presume*, *The Tree of Idlexers*.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Name some important novels written by George Lawrence Durell?

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2. Name some travel novels of George Lawrence Durell.

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### 2.3 TEXT OF THE POEM

BOSNIA. November, And the mountain roads  
 Earthbound but matching perfectly these long  
 And passionate self-communings counter-march,  
 Balanced on scarps of trap, ramble or blunder  
 Over traverses of clud: and here they move,  
 Mule-beams like insects harnessed by a bell  
 Upon the leaf-edge of a winter sky,  
 And down at last into this lap of stone.

Between four cataracts of rock: a town  
 Peopled by sleepy eagles, Whispering only  
 Of the sunburnt herdsman's hoppers play:  
 A sterile earth quickened shards of rock  
 Where nothing grows; not even in his sleep,

Where minarets have twisted up like sugar  
 And a river, curdled with blond ice, drives on  
 Tinkling among the mule-teams and the mountaineers,  
 Under the bridges and the wooden trellises  
 Which tame the air and promise us a peace  
 Harmless with nightingales. None are singing now.

No history much? Perhaps. Only this ominous

Dark beauty flowering under veils

Trapped in the sepectrum of a dying style:

A village like an instinct to rush,

Copmosed around the echo of a pistol-shot.

#### **2.4 ABOUT THE POEM :**

'Sarajevo' is a poem that deals with the meditation on the futility of war, whatever the reasons or provocations behind it. Durrell offers a critique of war while giving a bird's eyeview of the city of Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia and Harzegoviva. The city is known for its long and bitter history of war and violence, after due to the interference of outsiders. The city developed as a trading centre and a major stronghold of Islamic culture after the Turkish invasion in the 15th Century. In 1878 the city came under the Austro Hungarian Empire and was often used as a pawn to solice family feuds. The 1914 assassination of Arclduke Francis Fudinand by a Surbian naficndist not only precipitated World War I but also drew the city into it. The city has remained a winters to war and violence spiraling into a complex civil war among Subian nationalicts and Bosnian Muslims. While the city has been paradoxically divided against itself in war and peace, the city's artists has defunded its multic thnic and multicultural ethos, represented by its melting pot arclifecture and cuisine, after hinting at the interlacing of Austrian, Hungarian, Turkish Surb and Bosnian culture.

#### **1.4.1 CONTENT OF THE POEMS**

The poem 'Sarajevo' shows the danger that ethnic and religious insularity can bring into an otherwise innocent world. The poem develops as the spreker zooms in an the cityscape from a mountain top. The visual mobility is generated by a camera eye perspective that is matched by a corresponding physical trip down a mountain road. The poem relics an the technique of combining visual and psycric image clusters. This combination insures a dynamism which is the result of images charging one another. The fact that roads are built by making use of brocken rocks and natural debris is ironical in that roads facilitate not only communication but also war. Human intervention in nature leads to the creation of virtual wastelands, both in war and peace. Durrell uses symbolism in poetry but insures that sens symbols are not abstract. The city emerges as a witness to the sound and fury not only of war but also peace, meant to defind or be defended by economy and religion. Traditionally human civilization have treated economic development as a sign of material success, and religious pursuit as one of spiritual enhancement. The violence of human incounters in Sarajevo, whether generated by war or economic growth or religious pursuits, may appear considerably muted now due to the distance between the moment of occurrence and the moment of writing the violent potential of human incounters remains nonetheless. War is obviously responsible for violence. Durrell wonders if human activities meant for fastering peace and progress, faith in the Supreme Spirit and economic development respectively, can be or should be sun in isolation from their potential for violence.

#### 2.4.2 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM

The poem deals with the fertility of war. Before coming to war the poet gives the history of Sarajevo. Though blessed with serene beauty of nature the peace of Sarajevo was disturbed by one unfortunate incident. Sarajevo is a mountainous city in Bosnia. It was one of six regions including Croatia, Dalmotia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. Sarajevo became international hotped, when the murder of Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria took place in 1914. this murder immediately sparked off the First World War of 1914-1918.

The month of November for Sarajevo proved futile. The entire region was engulfed by the sounds of War. The people who were earlier living with peace and calm forgot the basis tenents of humanity. They were divided on the basis of caste, creed and religion. The people belonging to different faiths did not keep their peace and brotherherd. Every people became the prey of disappointment. They lacked the faith among themselves. They forgot the divine instruction of the gods. The divine words from minarets did not come as their rescue. The innocent world became the fry pan of ethnic division and religious insecurity. Winter is the symbol of dryness of emotions and passions. The people lacked the warmers of feeling to greet one another. The winter has not only taken over the nature but it has taken over the heart of the people. Sarajevo which happens to magic of geography as it has been situated with great balance among the mountain last its beauty. Earlier there was also balance among the

people. The love and amity among the people evaporated.

As the following lines say so;

Balanced on scraps of trap, ramble or blunder

Over traverses of cloud; and here they move,

Mull - teams like insects harnessed by a bell.

And down at last into this lap of stone.

Earlier Sarajevo was deserted place. But with her beautiful blessing of nature it attracted the attention of the people. The people from different places come to reside there. The beauty proved a blessing. The land which earlier was sterile become productive. The land turned to be the blessing for the people. Earlier this land had nothing to give to the people. As these lines extract the idea,

A sterile earth quickened shards of rock where nothing grows, not even in his sleep,

But the people of different religious and ethnic groups from different places migrated to Sarajevo. A beautiful existence of human civilization bloomed in Sarajevo. The God was prayed from the minarets. The beautiful river accentuated the beauty of the place. A divine grace and beauty appeared on that region. The air had the aroma of peace. The people were living in peace and angelic relation. The love and respect only dominated that region.

Suddenly everything collapsed. A beauty appeared in Sarajevo. The beauty was dark. The beauty was not associated with angelic touch. It was the beauty of killing. 'Dark' became the lifeline of Sarajevo. The naked dance of death, decay and

devastation became the order of the day. The exploration of bomb and pistol shot had taken over the peaceful atmosphere. The people lost their peace and they became enemy to one another. As the following lines say so;

No history much? Perhaps. Only this ominous  
 Dark beauty flowering under veils  
 Trapped in the spectrum of a dying style;  
 A village like an instinct left to rush  
 Composed around the echo of a pistol shot.

The glory of history departed. The ugliness of war and pity of War have taken over the Sarjevo.

Durrell has used symbols to convey his thoughts. It is a way of literary technique which a poet employs to dive deep into ideas. The poet has used the symbols like 'pistol-shot'; '6 minarets'; 'sterile' 'cataracts' and several others to convey his thoughts.

The poem depicts the literary subject but the poet has also given the historical significance and geographical setting of the poem.

### STOP TO THINK

Lawrence Durrell was born in India. The poem deals with the first World War. He has taken the geographical and historical forces in dealing with the theme of the poem. He has used symbols to convey his thoughts and ideas in the poem. Durrell's poem is remarkable for the depiction of a beautiful landscape.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Sarjevo is a War poem. Discuss

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2. Critically analyse the poem Sarjevo.

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### 2.5 LET US SUM UP

Sarjevo is a war poem. It deals with the fertility of War. Sarjevo was the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Later it became the part of European nation Yugoslavia. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia it once again separated from that country. The first World War began with the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand by a Serbian nationalist. The Sarjevo witnessed War and violence. The multiethnic and multi-cultural ethos was destroyed by the devastation of War. The culture was at stake. To convey this fertility of war the poet has employed symbols. These symbols are the stylistic device to convey more ideas in few words. This is the beauty of this poem.

## 2.6 REFERENCES :

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## GLOSSARY

**Traverses** - Cross a rock face by means of sideway movements from one practicable line of ascent or descent to another.

**Self-Communings** - self administration of religious wisdom, here the work of self-fashioned prophets, more likely create confusion and religious divide among the masses.

**Harnessed** - a set of straps and fitting by which a horse or other draughts animal is fastened.

Scrap - a steep slope.

**Cataracts** - large water falls.

**Shards** - a fragment or broken piece

**Minarets** - twisted up like sugar - strange convoluted shapes in the minareto.

**Trellise** - structure of wood crossing each other in an open pattern of squares diamonds, etc. On which creeping plants are trained.

**Spectrum** - a continuous range or entire extent.

**Composed around the echo of a pistol** - unknown violence in the shot air.

## PROBABLE QUESTIONS

1. Prepare a note on the practical works of Laurence durrell.
2. Who was Laurence Durrell's brother? Mention his literary works.
3. Why Saroyev famous for ?
4. What does the poem 'Srajevo' deal with?
5. Give the summary of the poem 'Sarajevo'.
6. Write a critical appreciation of the poem 'Sarajevo'.

## SUGGESTED READING

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**Unit - III**  
**T.S. ELIOT : TO THE INDIANS WHO DIED**  
**IN AFRICA**

**STRUCTURE**

3.1 OBJECTIVES

3.2 INTRODUCTON

3.3 T.S. Eliot- the poet

3.3.1 His Life

3.3.2 His Works

3.4 The text of the poem

3.4.1 Explanation of the poem

3.4.2 Poetic Technique

3.5 Let us sum up

3.6 Further Readings

3.7 Possible Questions





### 3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to-

- ◆ gather some basic and necessary information regarding the life and works of T.S. Eliot.
- ◆ explain the poem To The Indians Who Died in Africa
- ◆ describe the poetic devices and the language used by the poet
- ◆ analyse the poem critically

### 3.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the poem "To The Indians Who Died in Africa" by T.S Eliot, one of the well-known poets writing during the twentieth century. His name can be taken as one cultivating the various trends of literature such as poetry, drama and criticism during the Modern Period in English literature. The poem that brought fame to Eliot "The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock" published in 1915 is considered as one of the masterpieces of the modernist movement in literature.

Let us have a very brief idea of the modernist movement so that you can contextualize the poem discussed here. The modernist movement in English literature refers to that set of cultural changes in the western society during the late 19th and early 20th centuries which influenced the literature of that period. The followers of this movement felt the need of newness in art and culture instead of

repeating the traditional forms. Hence, the writers supporting this movement tried to bring into literature new trends, new styles and techniques and as a whole mourned at the fragmentation of human life and society.

T.S. Eliot being a poet, playwright and critic of the 20th century brought into his oeuvre diverse issues related to human life, society, culture etc. He is well-known for his critical outlook, his self-reflexivity, his complex yet vivid perceptions regarding human life and you can see all these being reflected in his poems.

In this unit you will get an overview of the life and works of Eliot and an explanation of the poem prescribed. You will also be acquainted with the various poetic devices and the style and language employed by the poet.

### 3.3 T.S ELIOT- THE POET

Eliot has been one of the most daring innovators of twentieth-century poetry. Never compromising either with the public or indeed with language itself, he has followed his belief that poetry should aim at a representation of the complexities of modern civilization in language and that such representation necessarily leads to difficulty in poetry. Despite this difficulty his influence on modern poetic diction has been immense.

Eliot's poetry basically reflects his major critical concepts such as *the theory of impersonality*, *the idea of the objective correlative*, *the mythical method* etc. Being a

modernist poet with a consciousness of history as a mode of education, a source of enlightenment, a revitalizing force of life, Eliot in his poems accumulates history and man's engagement with it. As a poet he explores both the modern and the ancient or mythic worlds. His poems can be read as diverse ways of dealing with human life and its patterns.

#### **STOP TO CONSIDER**

*T.S. Eliot's theory of impersonality* denotes his belief that a poem should not be considered as an expression of the poet's thoughts, feelings and emotions. In his essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' Eliot stresses on a writer's having the sense of tradition or "the pastness of the past and its contemporaneity" which instills a disciplined self-consciousness in the artist. According to him a poet's personality should be transformed into an art-emotion without any direct bearing on his personal life.

Another idea associated with Eliot is of the *objective correlative* which in his own words is "a set of objects, a situation, chain of events which shall be formula of that particular emotion" and this is the only artistic way of expression of emotion in any work of art.

#### **3.3.1 HIS LIFE**

Thomas Stearns Eliot (26 Sept. 1888-4 Jan. 1965), poet, critic, playwright and editor, was born in St. Louis, Missouri, as the son of Henry Ware Eliot, president of the

Hydraulic-Press Brick Company, and Charlotte Champe Stearns, a former teacher, an energetic social work volunteer at the Humanity Club of St. Louis, and an amateur poet. His paternal grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot, had been a protégé of William Ellery Channing, the dean of American Unitarianism. He founded the Unitarian church in St. Louis and soon became a pillar of the then southwestern city's religious and civic life. Eliot was educated at Harvard and did graduate work in philosophy at the Sorbonne, Harvard, and Merton College, Oxford. He later settled in England, where he was for a time a schoolmaster and a bank clerk, and eventually literary editor for the publishing house Faber & Faber, of which he later became a director. In December 1908 a book Eliot found in the Harvard Union library changed his life: Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1895) introduced him to the poetry of Jules Laforgue, and Laforgue's combination of ironic elegance and psychological nuance gave his juvenile literary efforts a voice. By 1909-1910 his poetic vocation had been confirmed: he joined the board and was briefly secretary of Harvard's literary magazine, *The Advocate*. He also founded and edited the exclusive and influential literary journal *The Criterion* during the seventeen years of its publication (1922-1939).

In 1927, Eliot became a British citizen and about the same time entered the Anglican Church. He received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1948 and died in London in 1965.

### 3.3.2 HIS WORKS

Being a poet, a dramatist and renowned critic of his time Eliot has to his name several major works. His volumes of poetry include *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917), *Poems* (1919), *The Waste Land* (1922), *Poems, 1909-1925* (1925), *Ash Wednesday* (1930), *East Coker* (1940), *Burnt Norton* (1941), *The Dry Salvages* (1941), *Four Quartets* (1943), *The Complete Poems and Plays* (1952), *Collected Poems* (1962).

His first book of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations* published in 1917 immediately established him as a leading poet of the avant-garde. With the publication of *The Waste Land* in 1922, which was published in the journal named *The Criterion* now considered by many, to be the single most influential poetic work of the twentieth century, Eliot's reputation began to grow to nearly mythic proportions; by 1930, and for the next thirty years, he was the most dominant figure in poetry and literary criticism in the English-speaking world.

As a poet, Eliot transmuted his affinity for the English metaphysical poets of the 17th century, most notably John Donne and the 19th century French symbolist poets including Charles Baudelaire and Jules Laforgue into radical innovations in poetic technique and subject matter. His poems in many respects articulated the disillusionment of a younger post-World-War-I generation with the values and conventions-both literary and social-of the Victorian era.

As a critic also, he had an enormous impact on

contemporary literary taste, propounding views that, after his conversion to orthodox Christianity in the late thirties, were increasingly based in social and religious conservatism. His major works of literary criticism include *The Sacred Wood* (1920), *Andrew Marvell* (1922), *For Lancelot Andrews* (1928), *Dante* (1929), *Tradition and Experimentation in Present-Day Literature* (1929), *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931), *John Dryden* (1932), *After Strange Gods* (1933), *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), *Elizabethan Essays* (1934), *Essays Ancient and Modern* (1936), *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1940), *The Classics and The Man of Letters* (1942), *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1949), *Poetry and Drama* (1951), *Religious Drama: Mediaeval and Modern* (1954), *The Three Voices of Poetry* (1954).

Eliot has to his name some of the major plays in twentieth century English literature such as *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932), *The Rock* (1934), *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1950), *The Confidential Clerk* (1953), and *The Elder Statesman* (1958). He is famous for his effort to revive the trend of poetic drama in English Literature.

Eliot's meeting with Ezra Pound on 22 September 1914 was of decisive importance in shaping his literary career. It was Pound who first recognized Eliot's poetic genius; it was Pound who brought him to the notice of literary circles in Britain and in United States and secured him a regular platform in the magazine *The Egoist*. Eliot's critical writings from 1917 onwards form a singularly coherent whole and

are the best available introductions to his poetry. He himself has recognised the relation between his verse and criticism: *"The best of my literary criticism- apart from a few notorious phrases which have had a truly embarrassing success in the world- consists of essays on poets and poetic dramatists who had influenced me. It is a by-product of my private poetry-workshop; or a prolongation of the thinking that went into the information of my own verse."* (The Frontiers of Criticism, 1957)

**\* CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. What does the term 'modernist' mean to you?

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 .....

2. Write the names of the volumes of poetry written by T.S. Eliot.

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

3. What according to you are the major subject matters of Eliot's poetry?

.....  
 .....

**3.4 TEXT OF THE POEM**

**TO THE INDIANS WHO DIED IN AFRICA**

A man's destination is his own village,  
 His own fire, and his wife's cooking;  
 To sit in front of his own door at sunset  
 And see his grandson, and his neighbour's grandson  
 Playing in the dust together.

Scarred but secure, he has many memories  
 Which return at the hour of conversation,  
 (The warm or the cool hour, according to the climate)  
 Of foreign men, who fought in foreign places,  
 Foreign to each other.  
 A man's destination is not his destiny,  
 Every country is home to one man  
 And exile to another. Where a man dies bravely  
 At one with his destiny, that soil is his.  
 Let his village remember.

This was not your land, or ours: but a village in the Midlands,  
 And one in the Five Rivers, may have the same graveyard.  
 Let those who go home tell the same story of you:  
 Of action with a common purpose, action  
 None the less fruitful if neither you nor we  
 Know, until the judgement after death,  
 What is the fruit of action.

### 3.4.1 EXPLANATION OF THE POEM

The poem 'To the Indians who died in Africa' is based upon the British and Indian soldiers who died fighting in the Wars against the German forces in North Africa in 1942. Eliot through the insight of a veteran soldier explores the destiny of human being and pays tribute to those brave soldiers who dedicated their lives for the cause of another nation.

The first stanza of the poem is about the general perception that the pre-determined end of a human being is his life with his family and society. It brings before the reader the superannuated life of a war soldier. A person who has returned home from the war is fortunate to live his later life happily with his family. His comfortable life around his fire-place enjoying his wife's cooking, feeling happy to watch his grandson and his neighbor's grandson playing together makes him a person to be envied since all the soldiers fighting in a war are not fortunate enough to return home alive.

The second stanza is about the war memories of the veteran soldier. Amidst his cozy and secured life he remembers the days of the war. His conversation with the family members often centres around those warm and cool memories that come out in accordance with the warmth and the coldness of the climate. He talks about his fellow soldiers foreign to each other fighting in foreign places.

The third stanza of the poem is the insight of the same soldier that a man's pre-determined end is not always his destiny. A soldier's destiny might lead him to his death in a

foreign land. So the land may be foreign to him but that soil belongs to him and this should be revered by the people to whose land he belong. The stanza shows the blurring of borders between home and abroad. Because, for a soldier there is no place called home. It is his death which decides to where he belongs.

The last stanza of the poem pays tribute to all the British and Indian soldiers fighting for England against the German forces. The veteran soldier addressing the Indian soldiers says that the land where they were fighting i.e. North Africa was not their land and perhaps their own land which is a village in the Midlands for the speaker himself and any such village in India (Five Rivers) for the Indian soldiers have the same graveyard. The veteran soldier wishes those Indian soldiers who return home victorious to tell about their fellow Indian soldiers who lost their live in the war. Those who return alive and those return dead to their country were fighting for the same purpose and hence if we can realize the greatness of those dead soldiers that will be the best fruit of their action.

Thus the poem is a tribute to all those Indian soldiers who died in Africa. Through the persona of a British veteran soldier Eliot is appreciating the valor and greatness of those Indian soldiers for whom England was a foreign land and despite that they accepted courageous deaths in another foreign land i.e Africa. Eliot, through the poem conveys the message that a proper realization of the greatness of these soldiers by their countrymen will be the best possible tribute one can pay for them.

**\*CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. Do you think the poem "To The Indians Who Died in Africa" has a coherent structure?

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2. What do you think is the dominant theme of the poem? Is it the life of the veteran soldier or the tragic lives of the Indian soldiers that gets prominence in the poem ?

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**3.4.2 POETIC TECHNIQUE**

T.S. Eliot's poetry, as you have known from the introduction, is characteristic of the complexities and ambiguities of the modern world. In the words of Stephen Spender "Ritualistic is, it seems to me, the word that best describes Eliot's attitude to life. He had a vision of the relationship of the living with the dead through the patterns of rituals that extend into the modern world the pieties that remain unaltered from the past. He thought that when these

rituals were disrupted -- and when, in deed, the observance of them was not the foremost aim of the living -- there would be no connection of the living with the dead, of the present with the past." A master of poetic syntax, a poet who shuddered to repeat himself, a dramatist of the terrors of the inner life and of the evasions of conscience, Eliot remains one of the twentieth century's major poets.

The poem 'To the Indians who died in Africa' is a beautiful example of the style and language employed by T.S. Eliot. As you have known from the introduction part that Eliot's poems basically explores the modern life and its various aspects, you can perhaps see a reflection of that in this poem. The complexities and business of modern life makes people self-centered and indifferent towards the social system. Hence through this poem Eliot is trying to rejuvenate that sense of harmony and unity while dealing with the life of those people who devoted their lives for a foreign nation and its people. The style and the language of the poem are quite suitable to the theme.

T.S. Eliot is known for his use of complex and experimental figures of speech. However, in this poem you will find that the images and the metaphors used, are expressive of their own ideas. For example his use of the image of 'fire' (line 2), 'sunset', 'door' (line 3), 'dust' (line 4) are expressive of the war soldier's life, his different moods and the coziness of his life amidst his family. The image of the 'graveyard' in line 17 suggests death which is inevitable for man and also reflective of the soil where man finally takes his rest. The poem has a particular structure where the

first three stanzas consisting of five lines each ponder over the general destiny of human being; whereas the final stanza, consisting of seven lines, brings before the reader the poet's realization and the reason of exploring the human destiny in general in the previous stanzas. Thus the structural pattern of the poem also adds to its value.

Unlike Eliot's famous poems such as 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', 'The Waste Land' etc. this poem makes use of a simple and vivid language. If you read the poem aloud you will be able to notice this feature. His use of the words such as 'destination', 'destiny', etc. are expressive of the subject -matter itself.

Eliot's mastery of language, his humanitarian outlook and overall deep reverence towards the foreign soldiers make the poem worth reading. The poem also reflects Eliot's philosophy of life as he ponders over the uncertain nature of life.

**\* CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- 1. Write a note on the use of language of the poem To The 'Indians Who Died in Africa'?

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- 2. Write a critical appreciation of the poem.

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**3.5 LET US SUM UP**

T.S. Eliot's poetry, as you have read in this unit, is an amalgamation of the different facets of human life and society. His depth of thought, his concern for human civilization, and his use of unusual poetic devices, all these make his poems worth reading. His poems give the reader an opportunity to look at the day-to-day world from a different and critical perspective. In summing up his poem 'To The Indians Who Died in Africa' it can be representative of Eliot's deep concern for the alien nature of human life especially of the soldiers. The poem is a reverence for all those who fought for a nation which was not their 'home'. It reveals before the reader the cruelty of war and at the same time glorifies the heroic lives of the soldiers. You might be able to notice a reflection of the British society of Eliot's time in the poem although the poem is not specific to one place, rather a study of the soldiers' heroic lives all over the world.

### 3.6 FURTHER READINGS

1. Jain, Manju: *Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press: 1992.
2. Kumar, Shiv K. *T.S. Eliot: Three Essays*, Calcutta: Oxford University Press: 1974.
3. Scofield, Martin: *T.S. Eliot: The Poems*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

### 3.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the theme of alienation as reflected in the poem 'To The Indians Who Died in Africa'.
2. Critically evaluate the poem 'To The Indians Who Died in Africa'.
3. How does Eliot reveal his deep concern for the Indian soldiers through the poem'?
4. What picture of the modern world has been portrayed by Eliot in the poem 'To The Indians Who Died in Africa' ?
5. Write a critical note on Eliots use of language in 'To The Indians who died Africa'.

# BLOCK - IV

## POETRY - 3



**Unit - I**  
**Vikram Seth, From *Golden Gate***  
**("Cats and Scholars")**

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**STRUCTURE**

1.0 Objectives

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1.2 The Poet

1.2.2 The Golden Gate

1.2.3 "Cats and Scholars"

1.2.4 The Sonnet form

1.2.5 Sonnet 6.16: Summary & Critical Comments

1.2.6 Sonnet 6.16: Octave & Annotations

1.2.7 Sonnet 6.16: Sestet

1.2.8 Sonnet 6.21: Summary & Critical Comments

1.2.9 Sonnet 6.21: Octave & Annotations

1.2.10 Sestet & Annotations

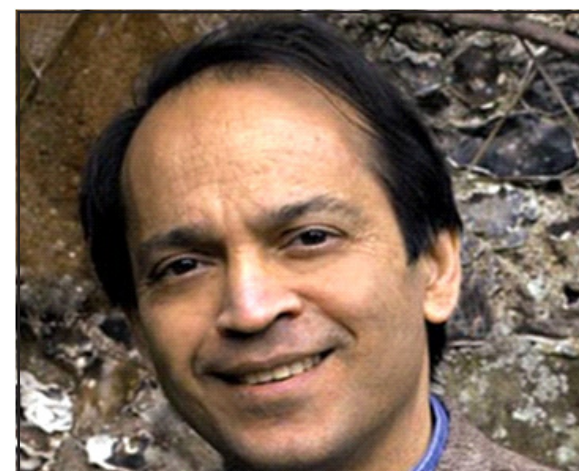
## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

Block IV of this course titled "POETRY 3" will acquaint you with English poetry of the Modern age written by Indian and Irish authors. Block IV consists of poems written by three poets-Vikram Seth, Ramanujan and Seamus Heaney, discussed in Units I, II and III respectively. Unit I shall introduce you to Vikram Seth, a contemporary poet, of Indian origin, presently settled in the United States of America. He has been acclaimed as one of the most gifted writers of present times. He has been instrumental in catapulting the novel as not only a serious genre of literature but in reviving a rarely used mixed genre-a novel written in verse. His Golden Gate is a unique example of innovation in terms of welding an archaic technique and style with contemporary themes and issues. Two sonnets from the section titled "Cats and Scholars" are to be studied in this unit. After reading this unit you should be able to

- ❖ Study a prescribed text (poem in this case) in context (biographical information about the poet and the period).
- ❖ Analyze the thematic and stylistic contents of the two sonnets prescribed for study.
- ❖ Learn the distinctive features of Seth's poetry.
- ❖ Critically appreciate the prescribed poem.
- ❖ Answer textual questions based on the poem.
- ❖ Explain stanzas with "reference to the context".

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

**Block III** has acquainted you with English poets of in the Victorian and Modern periods of English poetry. You have read poems written by G.M. Hopkins, Lawrence Durrell and T.S. Eliot. These three poets represent the essence of modernism in English poetry in terms of theme and style. You have gathered information about the period of English literature which is termed as "*The Modern Age*," have read about the poets and learnt to place their poems against the backdrop of historical and literary events of the age. **Block IV** is divided into three units, each dealing with a poet and the prescribed poems. Unit I deals with the Indian English writer Vikram Seth's poetry. His unique verse novel *The Golden Gate* has won worldwide critical acclaim. From the section titled "Cats and Scholars" of this novel, two sonnets have been selected for your study -Sonnets 6.16 & 6.21. Units II and III are on Indian English writer Ramanujan and his poem "Invisible Bodies" and Irish English writer & Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney and his poem "Plantation" respectively.



### 1.2.1 THE POET

**Born:** June 20, 1952

**Achievement:** Won the WH Smith Literary Award and the Commonwealth Writers Prize for his novel, *A Suitable Boy*. His travelogue "*From Heaven Lake: Travels through Sinkiang and Tibet*" won the Thomas Cook Travel Book Award.

Vikram Seth is a famous Indian poet, novelist, travel writer, librettist, children's writer, biographer and memoirist.

A small, wiry soap opera enthusiast with well defined features & a ready smile, Seth was born on June 20, 1952 at Kolkata. His father Prem Seth was an employee of the Bata India Limited shoe company who migrated to post-Partition India from West Punjab in Pakistan. Vikram Seth's childhood was spent in the town of Batanagar near Calcutta, Patna, and London. His mother Leila Seth was the first woman judge of the Delhi High Court as well as the first woman to become Chief Justice of a state High Court. She was the Chief Justice of Shimla High Court. Vikram Seth is the eldest of three children-- his brother conducts Buddhist meditational tours and his youngest sister serves as an Austrian diplomat (Robinson, Rachlin).

**Education:** Seth did his schooling from The Doon School in Dehradun. He took his undergraduate degree in philosophy, politics and economics from Oxford University. He was enrolled in postgraduate economics courses at Stanford

University and was also attached to Nanjing University for his intended doctoral dissertation on Chinese population planning.

While at Stanford, Seth was also a Wallace Stegner Fellow in Creative Writing during 1977-78. From 1980 to 82, he studied classical Chinese poetry and different languages at Nanjing University, China. Seth mentions that he "never had any passion for economics, not what I felt for writing poetry" (Robinson).

**Works:** Vikram Seth published eight notable works -- six collections of poetry and two novels -- with the ninth a novel soon to come. During the period before and after Seth published his first novel, he contributed poetic works for more than a decade. Seth's books of poetry include

**Works:** i) Vikram Seth's first novel, *The Golden Gate* (1986), describes the experiences of a group of friends living in California.

ii) His other novel, *A Suitable Boy* (1993) is an acclaimed epic of Indian life. The novel won the WH Smith Literary Award and the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Overall Winner, Best Book). Set in India in the early 1950s, it is the story of a young girl, Lata, and her search for a husband.

iii) *An Equal Music* (1999), is the story of a violinist haunted by the memory of a former lover.

iv) Vikram Seth has also written a travelogue "*From Heaven Lake: Travels Through Sinkiang and Tibet*" (1983). The book is an account of a journey through Tibet, China and Nepal that won the Thomas Cook Travel Book Award.

v) He also wrote a libretto, *Arion and the Dolphin* (1994), which was performed at the English

*Mappings* (1980), *From Heaven Lake* (1983), which discusses a hitchhiking trip through Nepal into India that Seth took while studying in China, *The Humble Administrator's Garden* (1985), *All You Who Sleep Tonight* (1990), *Beastly Tales* (1991), and *Three Chinese Poets* (1992). These works broach a variety of subjects indicative of Seth's education and experiences, evidenced in a passage from *All You Who Sleep Tonight* entitled "Sit" (Seth, 20). In 1986, Vikram Seth wrote *The Golden Gate*, his first novel, called "Byronesque" by some critics (Perry).

**1.2.2 *The Golden Gate***, which is a novel composed entirely of rhyming tetrameter sonnets - 690 of them to be precise - is a satirical romance describing the stories of young professionals in San Francisco throughout their quests and questions to find, then deal with, love in their own lives as well as each others'. After this initial work, Seth slowly produced *A Suitable Boy*, the 1,349 page colossus whose publication in 1993 propelled Seth into public spotlight.

National Opera in June 1994, with music by Alec Roth. Seth is also an accomplished poet.

vi) His works in poetry include *Mappings* (1980), *The Humble Administrator's Garden* (1985), which was a winner of the Commonwealth Poetry Prize (Asia), and *All You Who Sleep Tonight* (1990).

vii) Vikram Seth has written a story book for children-- *Beastly Tales from Here and There* (1992), which consists of ten stories about animals told in verse.

viii) Vikram Seth's latest work is *Two Lives* (2005). The book is a memoir of the marriage of his great uncle and aunt.

***The Golden Gate*** is a 307 page novel narrated in the form of verses, i.e. in the form of sonnets. The dedication and acknowledgement are also written as sonnets. A satiric romance, the story explores issues related to religious guilt, the nuclear arms race, sexuality, love & death.

The story revolves around John, a twenty-six year old young, successful man, who has everything in life, but longs for a loving soul mate. He seeks help from his one-time girlfriend Janet (now his best friend), who places an advertisement, calling for eligible girls for John, much against his wish. However, through the advertisement, he meets Liz Dorati, a lawyer, and they strike an instant rapport with each other. After a few dates, they decide to live together.

Parallely, the author gives a picture of Phil (John's friend) who is estranged from his wife and living with his child. Phil has a homosexual relationship with Liz's brother Ed. John and Liz subsequently realise that they are not made for each other, as their tastes are poles apart, and they separate. Liz finds solace in Phil (who by now ends his relationship with Ed) and they get married. Left alone again, John turns to Janet for affection, which she offers wholeheartedly. They enjoy each other's company and their relationship is poised on the threshold of a rediscovery of their love when, in an unfortunate accident, Janet dies. Once again John is alone and lonely. He wakes up in the middle of the night dreaming about Janet and misses her every moment. He ransacks her house, to find if there is any

evidence that she had been in love with him and finds a letter. He is left with memories for the rest of his life.

The strain in the love life of John and Liz is brought out with playful humour, through the narration of apparently trifling incidents like John and Liz's pet cat's mutual dislike for each other. While the cat, which has been pampered and spoilt, having had his adorable mistress all to himself all these years, "reacts to competition" and bares its claws on John, he in his turn cannot hide his ill feelings towards the animal:

"That mangy misbegotten cat,  
I hate the beast and I can't fake it."

Apart from the ironical treatment of the theme of adjustment and understanding in a live-in relationship (tantamount to marriage, sans the legal bondage), Seth plumbs the depths of the contemporary & modern man's resistance to and scepticism of yielding to another's wishes; giving of oneself unselfishly and his inability to mould himself even for love. His disillusionment complete, John parts ways with Liz. His realisation of Janet's true love for him comes too late and in the end, he is alone again, now a changed man whose perceptions of life and love have deepened, to make him a better person. The gripping narrative does not allow the readers' interest to slacken. Frequently, the author involves the reader in a discourse and leading him through the life stories of the characters. Vikram Seth's sonnet novel in the High Tech era of Reagan, New Wave and Silicon Valley has Shakespearian voice -

overs expressing hopes and misgivings. The novel is written in Tetrameter sonnets inspired by the classic novel-in-verse *Eugene Onegin* by Pushkin.

Seth's characters are taken from the world of late twentieth century San Francisco peninsula-- a computer engineer, a sculptor, a political activist and a grower of wine grapes. So unusual was this undertaking in the decade of President Reagan and New Wave music that Seth occasionally breaks into explanations and complaints about his odd choice of genre. The rhyme and meter of the tetrameter sonnets add a clipped and hurried pace to the proceedings in the novel. The reader feels that the pace is slightly accelerated, recalling the technique of a silent movie. This, added to the strong rhyme scheme, might have threatened to make the book seem anachronistic, because Seth feels compelled to apologize in verse to his readers midway through the story. Happily, however, the brisk meter and rhyme work together to give the book a bright and energetic feel. Even though the skies are not always sunny over *The Golden Gate* -- the characters experience loneliness, grief, love, hatred, lust, guilt, and a variety of other human emotions-- the story never slows down or takes itself too seriously. The reader experiences a delight in the delicious play of humour in the narrative. The novel has a strong element of affectionate satire which endears the reader.

The likelihood of commercial success of this book had seemed highly doubtful -- and the scepticism of friends as to the novel's viability is facetiously quoted within the novel;

but the verse novel received wide acclaim (Gore Vidal dubbed it "The Great California Novel") and achieved healthy sales. The novel elicited enthusiastic critical response, with commentators praising it as a work of technical virtuosity suffused with wit and accessible language that moves from elevated literary allusion to colloquial speech. *The Golden Gate* is regarded as a bold achievement, a triumph of rhyme and meter. D.J. Enright commented : "*The Golden Gate* is a technical triumph, unparalleled ...in English. We may not have scorned the sonnet, but we shall hardly have thought it capable of this sustained sequentiality, speed, elegance, wit and depth of insight." David Lehman concurred, arguing that in *The Golden Gate* "Seth makes us care about his characters, proposes a moral criticism of their lives and captures his California setting with a joyous wit little seen in narrative poetry this side of Lord Byron."

In addition to Vikram Seth's literary and poetic achievements, he was commissioned by the English National Opera to write a libretto based on the Greek legend of Arion and Dolphin. The opera was performed for the first time in June, 1994. Orion Children's Books subsequently published a picture book based on the opera in which Vikram Seth's words are illustrated by the internationally acclaimed artist Jane Ray. The book has since been made into a twenty five minute animated special entitled "Arion and the Dolphin" which has been shown in Australia, Canada, Iceland, Malta, New Zealand, and throughout the United Kingdom.

### 1.2.3 CATS AND SCHOLARS: SONNETS 6.16 & 6.21 :

Titled "Cats and Scholars" where "a cat reacts to competition", this section of the novel in verse includes Sonnet 6.16 and Sonnet 6.21. Here, the couple John and Liz have begun to live together as lovers. John, who is a computer engineer has taken a dislike to Liz's ( a lawyer by profession) cat Charlemagne. The old cat reciprocates with fierce hatred. The cat's "reaction" to "competition" - as John has now replaced him in his adored mistress' bed and her affections -- is narrated with hilarious humour. John overreacts to the tom cat's destructive antics while the beast focuses his feral hatred on John's belongings and even manages to sabotage his boss's urgent phone calls by "shorting" the telephone cable. The uncanny, almost human reaction of the disgruntled tom cat puts the couple in a ridiculous dilemma, which is modern in its essence -- at its crux lies John's inability to accept and adjust with the realities of living with another individual as this entails relinquishing self-centredness. The humorous treatment of the problem in no way undermines the seriousness of it as the reader is aware that the apparently comical conflicts could well lead to real misunderstanding and finally a break in the relationship.

### 1.2.4 THE SONNET FORM

The Sonnet form was imported from Italy during the Revival of Classical Learning in English literature. This form of writing poetry was popularized by Petrarch, a famous Italian

poet. The sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines. A typical petrarchan sonnet has three stanzas -- two quatrains and a sestet. A quatrain is a stanza of four lines; a sestet is a stanza of six lines. Traditionally the first quatrain introduces the subject, the second complicates the subject, and the sestet resolves or alters the subject in some way.

The Rhyme scheme of abba abba is found in the quatrains, and cdc dcd with some variations in the sestet. Traditionally the poet seeks to make the rhymes in the sestet as different as possible from the two quatrains.

Vikram Seth has used two quatrains as an octave (eight lines) and a sestet, following the Petrarchan sonnet structure but has brought in variation in the rhyme scheme.

Personification has been used in the Seth's sonnets, which is again a Petrarchan feature. Personification is an attribution of human qualities to an idea, an inanimate object, or an animal. In Seth's sonnets, the cat Charlemagne has been invested with human qualities and attributes.

### **1.2.5 SONNET 6.16: SUMMARY AND CRITICAL COMMENTS**

Charlemagne's objection to John's presence in a territory it considers its own is presented in a series of mock serious rhetorical questions that the cat seemingly places. Why, it argues, would it forgo the pleasure of scratching and biting the "pair of trousers" that "present themselves" for its feral pleasure? Unlike "lesser mousers" – the common

cats who chase and hunt mice, it would rather direct its predator instincts towards the destruction of John's belongings and thus his peace of mind. It would therefore gnaw the telephone wire; "short the cord" just when it "sensed" John was expecting an urgent call from his "curt boss, who can't afford / To waste time". It would then engage in the important matter of nonchalantly shredding to bits John's project report. Why would then Charlemagne, (like it's namesake, the legendary French crusader) yearn for insipid food when he could satiate it's thirst for it's enemy's "heart's blood"? In other words, Liz's cat Charlemagne is engaged in a single minded vendetta against its bitter foe and competitor John, Liz's present boyfriend & lover. The octave has the rhyme scheme abab, ccdd. The sestet is written in the rhyme scheme aeea, dd.

### **1.2.6 SONNET 6.16: OCTAVE (THE FIRST SECTION CONTAINING EIGHT LINES) AND ANNOTATIONS**

**Why scratch a scratching post when trousers  
Present themselves? Why bite a bone?  
Why hunt mere mice like lesser mousers  
When, having gnawed the telephone  
Receiver when you sensed the presage  
Of an impending urgent message  
From John's curt boss, who can't afford  
To waste time, you can short the cord**

**ANNOTATIONS:****Why scratch a scratching post . . . present themselves :**

Charlemagne questions the need to sharpen it's claws against a post when better objects like John's trousers are around.

**Lesser Mousers :** Inferior hunters or warriors

**Presage :** Foreboding, omen.

**Curt :** An American expression; implying a person of few words. Also implies strictness.

**Short the cord :** Short - circuit the telephone line by chewing the wire.

**1.2.7 SONNET 6.16: SESTET (SECTION CONTAINING SIX LINES)**

**Why vex yourself with paltry matters**  
**When a report named Bipartite**  
*Para - Models of Missile Flight*  
**Can casually be torn to tatters ?**  
**And why, in short, crave vapid food**  
**When you can drink your foe's heart's blood**

**ANNOTATIONS:****Vex yourself with paltry matters. . .to tatters ? :**

Charlemagne questions the necessity of concerning oneself with trivialities when one

could direct ones attention to important matters like tearing up John's Project Report on "Missile Flight".

**Vex :** Bother, worry.

**Paltry :** Trivial

**Bipartite . . .Missile Flight :** Reference to nuclear weapons & deals in American President Ronald Reagan's hi-tech era.

**Vapid food :** Insipid, tasteless food.

**Foe :** Enemy.

**"Foe's heart's blood" :** Literally means the heart's blood of the enemy. Metaphorically refers to injuring or hurting the enemy - here John.

**1.2.8 SONNET 6.21: SUMMARY AND CRITICAL COMMENTS**

In the previous sonnet segment (6.20) the poet has narrated Liz's tom cat's staunch loyalty towards his mistress. Named Charlmagne, he followed his mistress everywhere, even to her law college. However, in his adoration, he was neither submissive nor docile. Like his namesake, he was a warrior, passionate and fiercely independent. The cat gave "his time" unconditionally to his adored mistress and as she stroked him while immersed in her scholarly pursuits (reading reference works), he "purred to her". Sonnet 6.21 analyses the emotions reflected in his purr. It may reflect



the affectionate fidelity of a "one-person cat" – an amusing reference to the cat's singular love towards a human being of his choice. The purr may reflect memories of his younger days, when, in his prime, he "scattered . . . in disorder" his rivals in love -- the hissing and spitting alley cats -- to claim the she-cat (the prize) as his own. The purr may even express the mellowing love of his mature old age, masking the flavour of his earlier young and full blooded passion (the metaphor of vintage wine adds spice to the delicate humour of the lines). Locked out of his mistress' bedroom (which Liz now shares with John), the furious old cat "roar(s)" at the insult and with wounded pride paws at the closed door in vain. The rhyme scheme in the octave is abab,aacc. The rhyme scheme in the sestet is ecce, dd.

**1.2.9 SONNET 6.21: OCTAVE (EIGHT LINES) & ANNOTATIONS:**

**What did that purr reflect? The tender  
 Fealty of a one - person cat?  
 Or memories of nights of splendor  
 When with a snarling caveat  
 The territorial marauder  
 Scattered his rivals in disorder  
 To quench some she-cat's arching wiles  
 Upon the clattering star-lit tiles?**

**ANNOTATIONS:**

**What did . . . reflect ? :** Refers to Liz's absent-minded stroking of the cat's fur and his contented reaction (purr)

**Fealty :** Loyalty, fidelity

**Memories . . . starlit tiles :** Charlemagne's reminiscences of his younger days of glorious love conquests when he could accept the challenge of rival tom cats, scatter their ranks and establish his supremacy over them.

**Snarling Caveat :** Caveat, a legal term, a decree. Here refers to Chalemagne's hissing challenge to his advesaries (alley - cats).

**Territorial marauder :** Intruder encroaching upon others' domain

**Scattered :** Dispersed

**Quench :** Sate

**Arching wiles :** Refers to the cunning she cat's strategies of enchanting and wooing the tom cat. 'Arching' suggests the curving backbone, an alluring gesture of the she cat.

**Clattering :** Ringing, echoing.

**Star-lit tiles :** Polished tiles of the dark corridors faintly lit with reflected star light.

**1.2.10 SESTET (SIX LINES) & ANNOTATIONS:**

**Or, as he aged, the sweet security  
of love that mellows in old casks  
Whose ebbing essence molds and masks  
The vintage of its youthful purity?  
Old Cat, who with the injured roar  
Of lions, once more paws the door!**

**ANNOTATIONS:**

**Mellows . . . old casks:** Refers to the practice of brewing wine in wooden barrels. Here suggestive of the maturing flavour of the old cat's love.

**Mellows:** Ripens

**Old casks:** Old wooden barrels

**Ebbing essence:** Fading fragrance

**Vintage:** Referring to something from the past, of high quality.

**Paws:** Scratches (American usage)

**4.3 ACTIVITIES TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. What is a sonnet? Mention the structure of a petrarchan sonnet.
2. What is the central idea of Sonnet 6.16?
3. What is the central idea of Sonnet 6.21?

4. Write a note on Vikram Seth's education and achievements.
5. How is Seth's *Golden Gate* different from usual novels?
6. Discuss the theme, structure and style of *The Golden Gate*.
7. What is the central idea of the section "Cats and Scholars"?
8. Explain with reference to the context, the Octave in Sonnet 6.16.
9. Explain with reference to the context, the sestet in Sonnet 6.21.
10. Who is Charlemagne? Why is he angry with John?
11. What revenge does Charlemagne seek to take?
12. Comment on Seth's use of humour in the two sonnets prescribed for study.
13. Show how Seth's humour exposes the ridiculousness of John and Liz's dilemma.

**4.4 POINTS TO REMEMBER**

1. Biographical information on Vikram Seth.
2. Seth's literary work and achievements.
3. *The Golden Gate* as a verse novel-uniqueness of form and structure.
4. Theme of *The Golden Gate*.
5. Use of humour and irony in *The Golden Gate*.
6. Central idea of "Cats and Scholars".

7. The Sonnet form-structure and style.
8. Variations in structure and style of the sonnet form in Seth's poetry.
9. Textual Analysis of Sonnets 6.16 and 6.21.
10. Explanation of stanzas with reference to the context.

#### 4.5 TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Seth's poetry is "infused with charm, elegance and wit." Examine the two sonnets prescribed for your study in the light of this statement.
2. Attempt a critical appreciation of the two sonnets from *The Golden Gate* prescribed in your syllabus.
3. Show how Seth's seemingly frivolous and mocking narrative explores the peculiar dilemma of a couple living together.
4. Describe, after Seth, Charlemagne's singular hatred and jealousy of John.
5. How does the cat "react to competition"? Illustrate from the two sonnets in your syllabus.
6. What according to the poet, does Charlemagne's "purr" reflect?

#### 4.6 SUGGESTED READING

1. Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 2004.
2. en.wikipedia.org

3. www.poets.org
4. www.poemhunter.com
5. www.amazon.com
6. www.geocities.com
7. www.uvm.edu
8. www.universalteacher.org

#### 4.7 REFERENCES

1. *Post Musing*. Eds. Pratik Chowdhury & Madhumita Purkayastha, Tushar Publishing House, Dibrugarh: Assam. ©2007 ISBN- 81-7680-014-7
2. Wikipedia (Internet Source)
3. Chaudhuri, Amit (ed.). *The Vintage Book of Modern Indian Literature*. New York: Vintage, 2004:508-537.

**Unit - II**  
**INVISIBLE BODIES BY A.K. RAMANUJAN**

**STRUCTURE**

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 A.K Ramanujan- the poet

2.2.1 His Life

2.2.2 His Works

2.3 The text of the poem

2.3.1 Explanation of the poem

2.3.2 Poetic Technique

2.4 Let us sum up

2.5 Further Readings

Possible Questions



## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to-

- \* evaluate the poem critically
- \* write about the various poetic devices used in the poem
- \* judge the poem in its totality.

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the poem 'Invisible Bodies' by A.K. Ramanujan. A.K. Ramanujan is an Indian English poet, a translator, a folklorist and an eminent scholar of South Asian language and culture. Being a poet and writing during the post-independence era, Ramanujan, through his poems, explores the modern Indian society and brings before the reader diverse issues homogenous and ambiguous as well. The poem prescribed for you is a remarkable example of Ramanujan's insight and concern for the downtrodden. Living in post-independence India Ramanujan is utterly frustrated with the changing social scenario which led him to write about these negative changes in his poetry. The poem 'Invisible Bodies' is a crucial instance of dehumanization in modern Indian society.

In this unit you will get an overview of the life and works of A.K Ramanujan and an explanation of the poem prescribed. You will also be acquainted with the various poetic devices and the style and language employed by the poet.

## 2.2 A.K RAMANUJAN- THE POET

The first thing that demands attention in an assessment of A.K Ramanujan as a poet is that he wrote in English which is not his mother tongue. In case of all Indian English poets or writers this remains a of significant fact. Although, Ramanujan spent most of his adult life in America, yet his poetry, in general, is about the experiences he gathered during the years he passed in India. As a poet A.K. Ramanujan shows his exquisite workmanship and fondness in playing with words. According to A.K. Mehrotra, "Ramanujan's theme is the inadequacy of masks and the necessity of having them...and the mask is identical with his face." This comment of Mehrotra reveals how Ramanujan is aware of his social role and at the same time tries to initialize the movements of positive change in the society of which he is a part. His poems are the best mirror. But his poems are not the passive reflection of the reality, they reflect the image rather penetrating deep into the society and search for the available sources of remedy.

### 2.2.1 HIS LIFE-

A. K. Ramanujan, born in Mysore, India in 1929, came to the U.S. in 1959, where he remained until his death in Chicago on July 13, 1993 (Ramazani, 1988). Not only was Ramanujan a transnational figure, but he was also a trans-disciplinary scholar, working as a poet, translator, linguist, and folklorist. Although he wrote primarily in English, he was fluent in both Kannada, the common public language of Mysore, and Tamil, the language of his family, as well.

Ramanujan received his B.A and M.A in English language and literature from the University of Mysore. He then spent some time teaching at several universities in South India before getting a graduate diploma in theoretical linguistics from Deccan University in Poona in 1958. The following year, he went to Indiana University where he got a Ph.D. in linguistics in 1963.

In 1962, he became an assistant professor at the University of Chicago, where he was affiliated throughout the rest of his career. However, he did teach at several other U.S. universities at times, including Harvard, University of Wisconsin, University of Michigan, University of California at Berkeley, and Carlton College. At the University of Chicago, Ramanujan was instrumental in shaping the South Asian Studies program. He worked in the departments of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, Linguistics, and with the Committee on Social Thought. In 1976, the government of India awarded him the "Padma Shri," and in 1983, he was given the MacArthur Prize Fellowship.

### 2.2.2 HIS WORK-

A.K Ramanujan has to his credit more than fifteen books which include verse in English and Kannada. His verse works include *The Striders* (1966), *Relations* (1971), *Selected Poems* (1976), *Second Sight* (1986), *Hokkulalli Huvilla* (No Lotus in the Navel, 1969), *Mattu Itara Padyagalu* (And Other Poems, 1977).

Ramanujan's theoretical and aesthetic contributions span

several disciplinary areas. In his cultural essays such as "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?" (1990) he explains cultural ideologies and behavioral manifestations in terms of an Indian psychology he calls "context-sensitive" thinking. In his work in folklore studies, Ramanujan highlights the intertextuality of the Indian oral and written literary tradition. His essay "Where Mirrors Are Windows: Toward an Anthology of Reflections" (1989), and his commentaries in "The Interior Landscape: Love Poems" from a "Classical Tamil Anthology" (1967) and "Folktales from India", "Oral Tales from Twenty Indian Languages" (1991) are good examples of his work in Indian folklore studies. His ideas about Indian sociolinguistics, language change, and linguistic creativity can be found in his 1964 essay written with W. Bright, "Sociolinguistic Variation and Language Change." A collected work of his poetry was posthumously published in 1995 as *The Collected Poems of A. K. Ramanujan*, which includes poems from several previously-published volumes of poetry as well as some unpublished poems. Reviewer Bruce King called Ramanujan, along with two other transcultural poets, "Indo-Anglian harbingers of literary modernism" This description highlights several characteristics of Ramanujan's poetry, perhaps less common in other transcultural poetry. Characteristics of his modernist style include harsh realism and hints at a kind of confessional style.

As a scholar and translator of works in the South Indian languages Kannada and Tamil, Ramanujan worked to make non-Sanskrit Indian literature acknowledged in the realm of South Asian studies. His translation works include Interior

*Landscapes: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology* (1967), *Speaking of Siva* (1973), *Samskara* (1976), *Hymns for the Drowning* (1981), *Poems of Love and War* (1985) and *A Flowering Tree and Other Oral Tales from India*. In *The Interior Landscape* (1967) Ramanujan covers another sense of intertextuality which lies in the symbolic evocation common in Tamil poetry.

### 2.3 TEXT OF THE POEM- INVISIBLE BODIES

**Turning the corner of the street  
he found three newborn puppies  
in a gutter with a mother curled  
around them.**

**Turning the corner of the street  
She found newborn naked baby,  
Male, battered, dead in the manhole  
with no mother around.**

**Turning the corner of the street  
The boy stepped on the junkie  
lying in the allery, covered with flies,  
a dog sniffing his crotch.**

**Just any day, not only after a riot,  
even among the gamboges maples of fall  
streets are full of bodies, invisible  
to the girl under the twirling parasol.**

### 2.3.1 EXPLANATION OF THE POEM

**The title of the poem suggests a sense of implicitness since** the word 'body' or 'bodies' is about visibility; whereas the poet talks about invisible bodies. It is this paradoxical nature of virtual reality that Ramanujan explores in this poem. He is questioning that particular mode of reality when 'bodies' or in other words significant realities fail to draw the attention of the significant parts of that reality.

The first stanza of the poem presents before the reader a particular scene where a pedestrian, referred as the 'he' in the poem, comes across three new-born puppies in a gutter with their caring mother around them. Such a scene is very common in the big cities of India and through the first stanza the poet is referring to a general sight in an Indian city. However, it also refers to the caring nature of every mother, be it human or animal. This very idea is what the poet is concerned with, and in the next stanzas he juxtaposes this universal idea of motherhood with that of the modern outlook towards life.

The second stanza of the poem presents another picture where a female pedestrian comes across a newborn naked baby lying dead in the manhole with no mother around. This scene is quite contrary to the earlier one because here the poet is focusing upon the absence of the mother and upon the inhumanity of modern people. For the puppies it is natural to take birth in the gutter but for a baby it is unfortunate and at the same time suggestive of the hollowness and complexities of so-called civilized human being.

The third stanza of the poem presents yet another picture where another pedestrian who is a boy unknowingly treads upon a drug addict lying in the narrow passage with a dog and flies around him. This scene is suggestive of the degradation and annihilation of modern civilization.

The last stanza of the poem gives a kind of ironical conclusion that such sights are common any day and yet are not capable of producing any interest in the minds of the high-class people of the society represented by the girl with a parasol. The poet harshly criticizes the modern human civilization where human beings become 'invisible' for each other. First of all, the human bodies are common in the streets at any time regardless of any riot, is suggestive of the fall of humanity. And secondly, the ignorance and indifference of the rich towards this poor section is again reflective of the discrimination within human beings.

Thus the poem 'Invisible Bodies' is the result of Ramanujan's anxiety over the changing norms of humanity and morality. Through the poem he visits the modern human society and tries to find out the reasons behind its gradual degradation. The existence of social hierarchy and power-structure are criticized by the poet. However, the poem is also expressive of the inner turmoil of the poet caused by this social decadence.

### **\*CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. Bring out the similarities among the first three stanzas of the poem?

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

2. What are the poet's objects of criticism in the poem?

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

### **2.3.2 POETIC TECHNIQUE**

You have already acquired a precise knowledge of the various aspects of A.K Ramanujan's poetry. The width and the depth of the subject-matters of his poetry demand a treatment peculiar to other Indian English poets. Ramanujan's poems are marked with unique structural pattern, precise use of language, initiation of complex and serious images and a highly critical attitude towards the Indian society. His love for the society and a wish to mobilize it can be noticed in most of his poems. Some of his well-read poems such as 'Entries from a Catalogue of Fears', 'The



Hindoo: the Only Risk', 'Highway Stripper' etc. bring before the reader the familiar cotes of life in an unfamiliar way. In a note in "Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets" Ramanujan comments on his own poetry, "English and my disciplines give me my outer forms- linguistic, metrical, logical and other ways of shaping experience, and my thirty years in India, my frequent visits and field trips, my personal and professional preoccupation with Tamil and Kannada, the classics and folklore give me my substance, my inner forms, images and symbols."

The poem 'Invisible Bodies' can be read as a reflection of the disturbances going on in the poet's mind. Ramanujan's brilliant use of imagery, the structural unity of the poem and the language of the poem add to its value as an ironical projection of modern life. The images such as the 'puppies', the 'naked baby', the 'manhole', the 'flies', the 'dog', the drug addict's 'crotch', the 'gamboge', the 'maple tree', the 'parasol' all are suggestive of different psychological and physical realities. The bodies of the puppies and the naked baby offer a contrast between the animal and the human world which is not only physical but reflective of the position they get in society, which is reverse in case of this poem. The poet's picture of these two worlds catches the eye of the reader because therein lies his criticism. The image of the 'manhole' is associated with the garbage produced by people and as the poet situates a dead baby there it again implies the inhumane attitude of man towards man. In the same way the images of the 'gamboge' and the 'maple tree' are reflective of the different seasons which have their own characteristics. On the other

hand the 'parasol' of the girl is suggestive of her privileged social status.

The poem has a definite structure in which four stanzas consisting of four lines each are combined together by their similarity of content. Perhaps you have noticed that the first three stanzas begin with the same sentence. It is only the gender or the age of the observer or the pedestrian that are changing. Whereas the first three stanzas present three different pictures, the final stanza is a kind of summation of the experience of the earlier stanzas. The last stanza, in a way discloses the bitter truth of humanity. Such an organic structure is the most significant mark of Ramanujan's poetry and the fact they subsequently endorse the subject matter of the poem is worth analysis. You can sense this from even the way the poems appear on the page, the care taken in the margin and from the overall design of the poem. A.K. Mehrotra has compared him in this regard to George Herbert, the Metaphysical poet well-known for his concentration on poetic design.

The language of A.K. Ramanujan is transparent and lucid. His use of a simple language to draw a familiar picture makes the poem much more vivid and meaningful. The pithiness and the directness of his diction make the poem a visible reality not only in words but also in the form of a series of pictures. The introductory line of the first three stanzas 'turning the corner of the street' is representative of the sudden exposure of the harsh reality right after every 'turning' or in other words after every turn of the journey

called 'life'. Moreover, the third stanza of the poem where the pedestrian boy encounters a drug addict lying in a pitiable situation is reflective of the degradation of the social-moral norms. The image of the drug addict's crotch being sniffed by a stray-dog suggests the poet's mourning at the poverty of humane provision in modern life. The image is strongly reflective of modern urban corruption which is gradually dominating the world as well.

**\*CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. Write a note on Ramanujan's use of language in Invisible Bodies.

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

2. Do you think the proper understanding of Ramanujan's emphasis upon the structure of all poem help us understand the poem itself?

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

**2.4 LET US SUM UP**

This unit has introduced you to the poet A.K Ramanujan and one of his well-known poems 'Invisible Bodies'. Ramanujan's literary career as a poet is replete with his critical perspective towards life and his penetration into the depth of the philosophies of life. As you have known his subject matters are current to the Indian society and as a poet he has respect for his obligation towards his society. The poem 'Invisible Bodies' is a portrait of the modern Indian society lacking insight, morality and above all an identity of its own. You have also known from this unit that Ramanujan is very particular about the structure in a poem and is suggestive of the subject-matter of the poem. A critical analysis of Ramanujan's poem helps you understand not only his poetic motives, but provides a glimpse of the modern human civilization as well.

**2.5 FURTHER READING**

1. King, Bruce: Modern Indian Poetry in English, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2001.
2. King, Bruce: Three Indian Poets (Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Dom Moraes), Madras, Oxford University Press, 1991.

**POSSIBLE QUESTIONS**

1. Write a critical note on A.K. Ramanujan's perception of the modern world as reflected in the poem Invisible Bodies.
2. Do you think Ramanujan's use of language is at par with the subject-matter of the poem?
3. How far the structural design of the poem Invisible Bodies carries forward the theme of the poem?
4. Write a note on the poetic technique of A.K. Ramanujan with special reference to the poem Invisible Bodies.

**Unit - III****SEAMUS HEANEY, " THE PLANTATION"****STRUCTURE**

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 The Poet, Seamus Heaney

3.2.1 Heaney's Life

3.2.2 Heaney's Poetry

3.3 "The Plantation" : Annotations

3.4 Summary and Critical Comments

Activities to check you progress

Points to Remember

Test your knowledge

Suggested Reading

References

### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

Block IV of this course titled "POETRY 3" will acquaint you with English poetry of the Modern age written by Indian and Irish authors. Block IV consists of poems written by three poets-Vikram Seth, Ramanujan and Seamus Heaney, discussed in Units I, II and III respectively. Unit III shall introduce you to Seamus Heaney, an English poet of Irish origin. He is also a playwright, translator, lecturer and recipient of the 1995 Nobel Prize in Literature. His poem "The Plantation" is to be studied in this unit. After reading this unit you should be able to

- ◆ Study a prescribed text (poem in this case) in context (biographical information about the poet and the period).
- ◆ Analyze the thematic and stylistic contents of the poem prescribed for study.
- ◆ Learn the distinctive features of Heaney's poetry.
- ◆ Critically appreciate the prescribed poem.
- ◆ Answer textual questions based on the poem.
- ◆ Explain stanzas with "reference to the context".

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Block III has acquainted you with English poets writing in the Victorian and Modern periods of English poetry. You have read poems written by G.M. Hopkins, Lawrence Durrell and T.S. Eliot. These three poets represent the essence of

modernism in English poetry in terms of theme and style. You have read about the period of English literature which is termed as "The Modern Age," have read about the poets and learnt to place their poems against the backdrop of historical and literary events of the age. Block IV is divided into three units, each dealing with a poet and the prescribed poem. You have already read Units I and II that are on Indian English writers Vikram Seth and Ramanujan respectively. Unit III deals with the Irish English writer & Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney and his poem "Plantation". Robert Lowell has called him "the most important Irish poet since Yeats" and many others, including the academic John Sutherland, have echoed the sentiment that he is "the greatest poet of our age".



*Seamus Heaney*

### 3.2 THE POET: SEAMUS HEANEY

**Born :** April 13, 1939

**Achievements :** As well as the Nobel Prize in Literature, Heaney has received the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize (1968), the E. M. Forster Award (1975), the Golden Wreath of Poetry (2001), T. S. Eliot Prize (2006) and two Whitbread Prizes (1996 and 1999). He has been a member of Aosdána since its foundation and has been Saoi since 1997. He was both the Harvard and the Oxford Professor of Poetry and was made a Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres in 1996. Heaney's personal papers are held by the National Library of Ireland.

#### 3.2.1 HEANEY'S LIFE

**Seamus Heaney** was born on April 13, 1939, in Castledawson, County Derry, Northern Ireland. Born at Mossbawn farmhouse between Castledawson and Toomebridge, he now resides in Dublin.

He earned a teacher's certificate in English at St. Joseph's College in Belfast and in 1963 took a position as a lecturer in English at that school, beginning an academic career that would lead, through Queen's University Belfast, where his first books of poems were written, to positions including Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard and the Oxford Professor of Poetry. While at St. Joseph's he began to write, joining a poetry workshop with

Derek Mahon, Michael Longley, and others under the guidance of Philip Hobsbaum. Seamus Heaney is a Foreign Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and held the chair of Professor of Poetry at Oxford from 1989 to 1994. In 1995 he received the Nobel Prize in Literature. Heaney has been a resident of Dublin since 1976, but since 1981 he has spent part of each year teaching at Harvard University.

In 1965 he married Marie Devlin, and the following year he published "Death of a Naturalist". Since then Heaney has published hundreds more, in such collections as *Opened Ground* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), which was named a New York Times Notable Book of The Year; *The Spirit Level* (1996); *Selected Poems 1966-1987* (1990); and *Sweeney Astray* (1984). He has also written several volumes of criticism, including *The Redress of Poetry* (1995). Heaney's most recent translation is *Beowulf* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000), which won the Whitbread Book of the Year Award. He is also co-translator, with Stanislaw Baranczak, of *Laments : Poems of Jan Kochanowski* (1995), and co-author, with Joseph Brodsky and Derek Walcott, of a collection of essays entitled *Homage to Robert Frost* (1996).

#### 3.2.2 HEANEY'S POETRY:

Seamus Heaney's poetry is grounded in actual, local detail, often in memories of Derry or observation of his adopted home in the Republic of Ireland. Recent Irish history

is one of the strongest influences on these details, appearing in its most outspoken form in the poems from *North*, but often obliquely present elsewhere. In 'Fosterling', Heaney writes of "waiting until I was nearly fifty / to credit marvels"; his later poetry is certainly open to the marvellous, such as the mysterious ship that appears to the monks in the extract from 'Squarings'. His ability to unite this with the local is praised in his Nobel nomination for poems "which exalt everyday miracles".

With "Digging", placed appropriately as the first poem of his first book, Heaney defined his territory. He dug into his memory, uncovering first his father and then, going deeper, his grandfather. In this and many later poems, his concern has been to give a voice to the silent and oppressed. In 1967, his political pre-occupations were brought into sharper focus by his reading of *The Bog People* by P.V. Glob, a Danish archaeologist. This opened his eyes to deeper levels of mythic and historical congruence.

Heaney's perception that the Irish "bog is a memory bank", in that it preserves everything thrown into it, produced the powerful bog poems of *North* (1975). By then, feeling constrained by the role of political poet being thrust on him, he had crossed the border to live in the Irish Republic. The troubles of Ireland continue to surface in the poems he has written since, but the richer harmonies of *Field Work* (1979), *Station Island* (1984), *The Haw Lantern* (1987), and *Seeing Things* (1991) confirm the wisdom of his decision to move south and the truth of Robert Lowell's judgement that Heaney is "the best Irish poet since W.B. Yeats."

Images of dark and light appear frequently in poetic tradition. For Seamus Heaney, who is more attached to tradition than most, darkness and light dramatize his most pressing concerns. Darkness is persistently linked to Heaney's adolescent fears of sex and death, and light to their possible transcendence. Heaney's second book *Door into the Dark* indicates a significant psychological advance. Rather than run from the dark, Heaney now faces up to it with grim determination, or actively seeks it out. He mines the metaphor of "door into the dark" so extensively that many of his poems can be read allegorically. Still preoccupied with country matters-- with farming, fishing, thatching, forging-- he casts his rural persona in roles that dramatize the oppositions duelling in his imagination. Dark and light are now associated with speech & writing, forgetting & remembering, expiration & inspiration, blindness & insight, destruction & creation.

Heaney's poems are intensely self-reflexive as they investigate their own perplexed making. Although Blake Morrison claims that "*Door into the Dark* is more promise than fulfilment, more hovering on the threshold than a decisive arrival," Heaney's narrators restlessly cross back and forth over thresholds. Like traditional Christian meditations, their crossings from confusion to revelation, from mute blindness to luminous communion with the divine, are overshadowed by the Cross itself.

A major theme cluster of 20th century Irish poets were "Faultlines, limits & transgressions". The pastoral focus of Heaney's work foreground his pre-occupations with rural

settings. In a Wordsworthian manner, he focuses upon the sources & resources of his own poetic power.

### 3.3 THE PLANTATION : ANNOTATIONS

Any point in that wood  
was a centre, birch trunks  
Ghosting your bearings,  
Improving charmed rings

**Any point . . . centre :** Suggesting the absence of a fixed point of reference.

**Ghosting your bearings :** Blurring and/or confusing the traveller's direction.

**Charmed rings :** Magical rings. Allusion to the meadows in the forest supposed to be frequented by elves and fairies.

Wherever you stopped.  
Though you walked a straight line  
It might be a circle you travelled  
With toadstools and stumps

Always repeating themselves  
Or did you re-pass them?  
Here were bleyberries quilting the floor,  
The black char of a fire.

**Though you walked . . . stumps :** Suggests the possibility of getting lost despite coming across familiar landmarks.

**Circle:** Circular path that the traveller may have taken but also implies confusion. The association of circles with black magic is significant in this context.

**Toadstools :** An umbrella shaped fungus, some of them poisonous. Traditionally, toadstools have been associated with witchcraft and sorcery. Here, suggestive of the enchanting power of nature

**Here were . . . char of a fire :** Type of berries carpeting the floor like grey-black fire ash.

And having found them once  
You were sure to find them again.  
Someone had always been there  
Though always you were alone.

Lovers, birdwatchers,  
Campers, gypsies and tramps  
Left some trace of their trades  
Or their excrement.

**And having found . . .**

**you were alone. :** Natural landmarks could have changed to befuddle the intruder. However, traces of human activities like "the black char of a fire" reminds him that "someone" had "always been there". Yet, this journey had to be undertaken alone. The "crossings from confusion to revelation" over the

threshold of nature have to be achieved alone. Man's primeval encounter with nature is both old and new and is forever apprehended in seclusion.

**Lovers, birdwatchers :** Both prefer seclusion. Lovers stray into the woods for privacy and birdwatchers come there to observe birds undisturbed in their solitary sojourn.

**Campers, gypsies and tramps :** Intruders in the territory of nature who leave traces of their occupation or activity.

**Campers :** Holiday makers.

**Gypsies :** Wandering people who live a nomadic life.

**Tramp :** Person who travels the road as a vagrant.

**Excrement :** Faeces, human waste.

Hedging the road so  
It invited all comers  
To the hush and the hush  
of its whispering treadmill,

Its limits defined,  
So they thought, from outside.  
They must have been thankful  
For the hum of the traffic

If they ventured in  
Past the picnickers' belt  
Or began to recall  
Tales of fog on the mountains.

**Hedging :** Bordering.

**To the hush . . .whispering treadmill :** The soft and spongy forest floor mutes the travellers' footfalls.

**It's limits... hum of the traffic:** The threshold of nature is defined by the road hedging the plantation. The road signifies human presence and familiar human activity and by extension, assurance as well as certainty. However, it may be a deception.

**Ventured :** Dared to advance strayed.

**Picnickers' belt :** The safe zone or the no-risk, predictable zone.

**Tales of fog on the mountains:** Unknown dangers, frightening stories of getting lost in mountain mists.

You had to come back  
To learn how to lose yourself,  
To be pilot and stray - witch,  
Hansel and Gretel in one.

**Pilot and stray -** Polar opposites - suggesting a combination of direction and deviation.

**You had to ...in one-** Nature always allows the intruder to return to her fold. The intruder having once crossed the threshold of nature has to learn to lose himself in order to acquire knowledge. He has to unlearn-- shed prior knowledge and prejudice to become receptive and innocent -- to be able to comprehend the mysteries of nature, in other words acquire wisdom.



**Witch** - Symbolizes wisdom, evil, menace, disorder and sinister forces. Traditionally, the figure of the witch has been associated with sorcery and evil power. However, originally, the witch was regarded as the wise woman ('witch' literally means wise). The Christian myth of the Fall and the association of Eve with temptation accentuates the duality of knowledge.

**Hansel & Gretel** - Symbolize bewildered innocence, ignorance. Refers to the fairytale of Hansel and Gretel, two young children who lost themselves in the forest and unknowingly transgressed into the witch's territory (chocolate house).

### 3.4 SUMMARY AND CRITICAL COMMENTS

"The Plantation" refers to a cultivation of trees that "hedge" or border the road. While the manicured borders of a plantation suggest man's attempt of delimiting nature, man's transgressions into the deeper woods suggest both encroachment and adventure, danger as well as challenge. Reminiscent of American poet Robert Frost's problematic treatment of the dark forces of nature, Heaney's "The Plantation", first published in *Door Into the Dark* in 1969, evokes the magical and the mysterious in nature. The poem is replete with allusions from Gaelic and Celtic folklore, fairytale and myth like "charmed rings", "toadstools and stumps", "tales of fog on the mountains", "witch,/Hansel and Gretel", thus weaving the marvellous into the ordinary and thereby exalting it. The reader addressed directly as "you"

could, as he walked into the wood, be enveloped with a sense of *dejà vous*, as he passes the birch trunks or toadstools and stumps as if he has "re-passed" them. The familiar natural landmarks could change and befuddle the traveller as the beneficent natural order may change or revert to primitive disorder, destroying idylls and posing menace. The traces of human activity left behind by "lovers, bird-watchers,/Campers, gypsies or tramps" indicate that "someone had always been there". The trepidation of the traveller, who had perchance strayed into an unfamiliar terrain is heightened by the suggestion that "always", he is "alone", a solitary trip undertaken possibly on an impulse. Yet, the wood here, bearing traces of other travellers, is just the threshold or "door" into the darker mysteries of the charmed world of nature. Here the wood borders the road and the relief of those who venture into it is suggested by their thankfulness at the "hum of traffic" -- the familiar human world is comfortingly within reach. However, in assuming that nature's boundary or "limit" has been defined, they have discounted the powerful lure of nature. "The picnickers' belt" suggests the safe zone, beyond which lie the unknown dangers of the deep woods. The last stanza of the poem tempts the traveller to "learn how to lose" himself -- to enter the portals of the charmed, magic world of nature. The allusion to the fairy tale of Hansel and Gretel serves not only to reinforce the magical quality of the reader's encounter with the unknown, devious & even dangerous elements of nature but also the combination of innocence & wisdom that compels the traveller to come

back. The fear as well as anticipation of maturity brings him back into the folds of nature. The choice to take up the challenge of beckoning nature is paradoxically conscious and deliberate as well as instinctive and impulsive. In the final count, the Frostian "lovely, dark and deep" woods lure the reader to initiate a second encounter with the world of nature -- carrying forward and possibly culminating the experience that had been deferred by the Frostian persona in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening."

**ACTIVITIES TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. What is the central idea of "The Plantation"?

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2. Write a note on Heaney's education and achievements.

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3. Discuss the theme, structure and style of "The Plantation".

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4. Explain with reference to the context the following stanza:

"You had to come back  
 To learn how to lose yourself,  
 To be pilot and stray - witch,  
 Hansel and Gretel in one."

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5. Explain with reference to the context, the following stanza:

"And having found them once  
 You were sure to find them again.

Someone had always been there  
Though always you were alone."

6. What are the symbols used by Heaney in the poem?

7. How does Heaney describe human encroachment in the precincts of nature?

8. What does "tales of fog on the mountains" signify?

9. Which words and phrases in the poem evoke the mysterious and mythical elements of nature?

10. How does the poet distinguish between manicured and familiar nature with the primitive and mysterious nature in "The Plantation"?

**POINTS TO REMEMBER**

1. Biographical information on Seamus Heaney.
2. Heaney's literary work and achievements.
3. Theme of "The Plantation".
4. Use of symbols in "The Plantation".

5. Significance of the title.
6. Use of myths and element of mystery in "The Plantation".
7. Explanation of stanzas with reference to the context.

### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Show how Heaney's poem evokes the magical and mysterious in nature.
2. How does nature in the poem seem to confuse the traveller?
3. Why does the poet invite the traveller only to "lose yourself"?
4. Examine the significance of the title of the poem.
5. Why does Heaney consider man's presence in nature as an act of trespass?
6. Identify and analyse some of Heaney's poetic concerns in the poem.
7. Critically comment on the note of promise as well as Frostian deferral towards the end of the poem.
8. Attempt a critical appreciation of "The Plantation".

### SUGGESTED READING

1. [www.bachelorsandmasters.com](http://www.bachelorsandmasters.com)
2. [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

3. [www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org)
4. [www.poemhunter.com](http://www.poemhunter.com)
5. [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
6. [www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com)
7. [www.uvm.edu](http://www.uvm.edu)
8. [www.universalteacher.org](http://www.universalteacher.org)
9. [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)
10. 1993: *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney* ed. by Elmer Andrews, ISBN 0-231-11926-7
11. 1993: *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet* by Michael Parker, ISBN 0-333-47181-4
12. 1995: *Critical essays on Seamus Heaney* ed. by Robert F. Garratt, ISBN 0-7838-0004-5
13. 1998: *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* by Neil Corcoran, ISBN 0-571-17747-6
14. 2009: *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney* edited by Bernard O'Donoghue
15. 2010: "Working Nation(s): Seamus Heaney's 'Digging' and the Work Ethic in Post-Colonial and Minority Writing", by Ivan Cañadas[49]

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2. Wikipedia (Internet Source)
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4. [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org).

## **BLOCK - V**

### **ESSAY WRITING**

## CONTENTS

Unit - 1 What is an Essay	(161-176)
Unit - 2 Essay and its Types	(177-194)

### **BLOCK INTRODUCTION: ESSAYS**

You are now going to read about a means of written communication, namely essays. This block on essay writing has been divided into two units. The first unit deals with the basics like, definition, characteristics, structure and the process of writing an essay. The second unit recalls the essay writing process and also moves forward to discuss the different kind of essays. There can be no single process for writing a good essay, though there are some definite guidelines which can go a long way in making your essay efficient. Effective and skillful writing can be acquired through constant practice and writing. So, we have provided you with practice questions at regular intervals so that you can work on your writing after going through the guidelines as well as the examples. Hope, after working on these you would be able to evoke your individual style of writing that is both skillful and effective.

Essay is a form of literature that refers to a piece of writing through which the author expresses his feelings and opinions on certain topics. In modern usage, the word 'essay' has become the mainstay of academics communication. It refers to an academic paper which communicates new information to other people who share a common background of knowledge. This makes the study of essay a very large field. But, keeping in view the scope of your syllabus we have here dealt with only those essays which you write in your examinations, which are supposed to be assessed, and which communicates to your tutor/evaluator how much you know or you have grasped.

Hope this block would help you to develop a good essay-writing style of your own.



## UNIT 1

### WHAT IS AN ESSAY?

#### Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Characteristics of a good essay
  - 1.2.1 Unity
  - 1.2.2 Coherence
  - 1.2.3 Relevance
  - 1.2.4 Proportion
- 1.3 Structuring an essay
  - 1.3.1 Introduction
  - 1.3.2 Body
  - 1.3.3 Conclusion
- 1.4 Essay writing : the process
  - 1.4.1 Planning
  - 1.4.2 Shaping
  - 1.4.3 Writing
  - 1.4.4 Revising
  - 1.4.5 Editing
- 1.5 Let us sum up
  - Activity
  - Suggested Readings

## 1.0 Objectives

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

- ❖ *identify* the characteristics of a good essay.
- ❖ *plan, structure, and write* essays from choosing a title to drafting a conclusion.
- ❖ *develop* your own version of the writing process and adapt it to the audience, purpose and writing situation.

## 1.1 Introduction

In your 'English Communication Course' you have already come across sentence making and paragraph writing. A paragraph is a carefully and deliberately ordered arrangement of sentences built around a central theme or topic. Every paragraph should have a central theme either stated in general terms in one sentence and reinforced by the other sentences, or implied when all the sentences are taken together. But, you cannot always say all you want to (say) in one paragraph. A number of paragraphs written in order, and talking about one thing, is called an essay.

An essay is usually defined as a short composition in prose on a particular subject. It is short enough to be read at one sitting; and long enough for you to put your opinion about a particular subject, with evidence to support your opinion. Expression of one's own personal ideas or opinions on the topic is the most characteristic quality of an essay. An essay must be individual, allusive and reminiscent. It should have the appearance of unpremeditated ease. However, writing an essay is not simply a matter of getting the required number of words down on paper. You must do all you can to make your essay interesting so that it will hold the reader's attention and leave him with a definite unity of impression.

### Stop to Consider

The word 'essay', as we use it today, comes from the French term *essai*, meaning *attempt*. It was first used by the French writer Michel de Montaigne, whose *Essais* were published in 1580. He wrote about his feelings and opinions on certain topics like idleness, agony, etc. in the late sixteenth century. The Elizabethan scholar, Francis Bacon brought the form into the English language when he published a collection called *Essaies* in 1597. Since then, the essay has gradually developed into a major form of academic communication.

The essay which is written for academic purposes is an academic 'paper' which communicates new information to other people who share a common background of knowledge. But the kind of essay that you write in school or for your examinations is a means of communicating information to your tutor about yourself, and how much you know. These essays are your attempt at expressing your ideas on a subject in good and effective English. Henceforward, we will consider an essay as an exercise in composition.

## 1.2 Characteristics of a good essay

The charm of an essay vanishes when there is a sense of effort, an attempt to prove something or a desire to argue. Though an essay should seem to be flowing from the writer's pen unpremeditated, its contents should have a structure which will be enjoyable to read and at the same time leave a definite impression in the reader's mind.

Let us now look at some of the characteristics that make a good essay —



**1.2.1 Unity** :- This means that the essay should deal with one main subject, and that all the parts of the essay should be clearly connected with that subject.

**1.2.2 Coherence** :- This means that there should be logical sequence of thought, and suitable devices used to link the parts of the sentences together. This requires logical relationship between:

- each paragraph and the ones before and after it.
- each sentence and the ones before and after it.
- ideas or sentences in various parts of the essay.

**1.2.3 Relevance** :- This means that you should not include information which is not important for the subject of the essay.

**1.2.4 Proportion** :- You only have a limited time to write an examination essay. In that time, you may or may not be able to write more than 400 words. Yet you need to include a certain number of points, some of which are more important than others. Proportion means getting all these points in the time / space available and giving most time / space to the most important ones.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Do you think that an essay should reveal the personal feelings and opinions of the writer?

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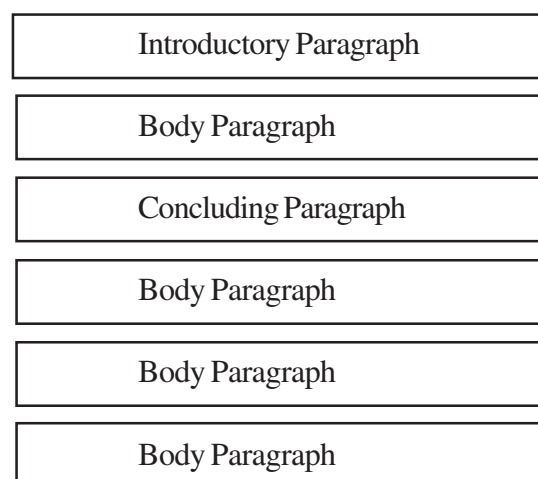
2. List the characteristics of a good essay.

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**1.3 Structuring an Essay**

An essay is an organized piece of writing. Your first task is to choose the subject. While attempting an essay in your examination, try to choose, if possible, a subject on which you have some first-hand knowledge. This will enable you to impart the personal touch to your writing.

Once you have chosen your subject, a number of ideas connected with the subject will come to your mind. With the help of these ideas you have to prepare the outlines of the essay and subsequently plan it carefully. Then you try to shape your material by arranging the various points or ideas in the most effective order and organize them in different paragraphs. This means that the essay will consist of several paragraphs which are arranged in a way that there is a beginning, middle and an end. The beginning you write will consist of an introductory paragraph which will state the thesis statement or main idea of the essay; and the end will consist of a concluding paragraph which will summarize or tie up the general argument or idea of the essay. The middle of the essay is the part where you will have to develop your ideas in support of the thesis statement; and it will consist of a number of paragraphs. Let me give you a diagrammatic illustration of the structure of the essay:



### 1.3.1 Introduction

The introduction of an essay must be good enough to hold the reader's attention and make him feel impelled to write on. There are many ways in which you can begin your writing. In this opening paragraph you need to state clearly what you are going to write about, which sources you will call upon to support your argument and also what you hope to demonstrate. What you are trying to do in this part of your writing is to focus on the little bit of information about which you are going to argue an opinion. That is, you are stating the thesis statement or main idea of the essay. The thesis statement is often complex as it contains ideas which will be developed in the subsequent paragraphs of the essay.

#### Stop to Consider:

An effective thesis statement suggests your essay's direction, emphasis, and scope. The thesis statement is usually a single, concise sentence, direct and straightforward and includes no vague, abstract language, overly complex terminology, or unnecessary details that might confuse or mislead readers. It communicates the most important idea of the essay.

### 1.3.2 Body

After you have written a good introduction and stated your thesis statement, it will not be too hard for you to write the body of your essay. This is the place where you will have to develop your ideas that you hinted in the introduction. You will have to put some evidence to support your point of view.

The body of the essay is composed of several paragraphs. Each paragraph of your essay will be quite similar in the sense that each will deal with one distinct aspect of the subject. Each paragraph will give contextualized evidence and weave that evidence into the cloth of argument. These paragraphs are also called supporting paragraphs as they present ideas or material that support the main ideas put forth in the introduction.

### 1.3.3 Conclusion

The final part of the essay – the conclusion, is the easiest and also the hardest part of the essay. It is easy in the sense that you need not add a new idea here, but restate that the preceding argument made in the introduction is valid. It is toughest in the sense that in addition to restating the argument, you need to point out where your argument stands with respect to other ideas about the same topic.

## 1.4 Essay writing : the process

Writing is a constant process of decision making, of selecting, deleting and rearranging materials. We can roughly divide the writing process in the following stages:

- Planning
- Shaping

- Writing
- Revising
- Editing

#### 1.4.1 Planning

To write effectively we must have a definite planning with us. This planning begins right from the moment we decide on our subject matter, and well before we actually put our ideas on paper. While planning, we have to choose our subject and write down all the points / ideas that we can think of. We have to consider our purpose of writing, the audience whom we target and the tone of our writing. Before we move forward read the following paragraphs:

(A)

I shall never forget one of my childhood experiences. I was trying to climb a tree when my foot slipped and I fell and fainted. My friends could not see me breathing and thought I was dead. They all ran away and left me. Meanwhile, I regained consciousness and found that I could not move anything. I could neither get up nor cry for help. I was having a terrible headache and an awful pain in my back. At last, I could see someone coming: it was my uncle! I was never so happy to see anyone as I was to see dear Uncle Tagore.

(B)

There is no doubt that the years of slaughter have left whale numbers severely depleted. The present biomass of large whales is reckoned at around 23 million tones, a reduction of two thirds since the turn of the century. Some

species such as the blue humpback and right whales have been reduced to a few thousand. Some are showing signs of recovery although the blue whales of the southern oceans remain a cause for concern yet. Even though the great whales are no longer threatened with extinction, nobody, not the scientists or the conservationists or the whalers has any idea of how many whales are left. The question everyone is asking is what can be done to increase whale population.

After going through the above two paragraphs what differences do you notice? Are they planned and written in the same way? No, they aren't. The purpose of the first paragraph is to express emotions whereas that of the second is to inform. The tone of the first paragraph is personal and conversational, and is written in the first person. The tone of the second paragraph is more distant and formal, and has a critical outlook. Now let us come to the need of meeting the expectations of the audience. If we consider that you are writing an examination paper, then your audience is your instructor or evaluator. What can he expect? He expects correct information, standard grammar and correct spelling, a logical presentation of ideas, and some stylistic fluency. He wants your ideas to be clear and specific.

So, when you plan an essay you first make an outline of the essay with the help of all the relevant points that come to your mind. You will have to keep an eye on these factors like determining your purpose, identifying your audience, setting your tone.

**Stop To Consider:**

## CHECKLIST: DETERMINING YOUR PURPOSE

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| ✓ to express emotions?   | ✓ to speculate?         |
| ✓ to inform?             | ✓ to warn?              |
| ✓ to persuade?           | ✓ to reassure?          |
| ✓ to explain?            | ✓ to take a stand?      |
| ✓ to amuse or entertain? | ✓ to identify problems? |
| ✓ to evaluate?           | ✓ to suggest solutions? |
| ✓ to discover?           | ✓ to define causes?     |
| ✓ to analyze?            | ✓ to predict effects?   |
| ✓ to debunk?             | ✓ to reflect?           |
| ✓ to draw comparisons?   | ✓ to create?            |
| ✓ to make an analogy?    | ✓ to communicate?       |
| ✓ to define?             | ✓ to observe?           |
| ✓ to criticize?          | ✓ to interpret?         |
| ✓ to satirize?           | ✓ to instruct?          |

Courtesy: Lawrence Shaffer, *Skills in Writing*

**1.4.2 Shaping**

After you have jotted down your ideas, you have to arrange the main points in proper sequence, and then all the sub-points in proper order. Preparing the outlines of the essay in note form can help you structure the essay into paragraphs.

Suppose you have to write an essay on 'Noise Pollution'. This being a very pertinent problem of the modern world, many ideas will come to your mind. You may think of the following points:

**Noise Pollution**

- Fouling of the environment
- Many types of pollution: water, air, land
- Noise pollution: high intensity
- Sound measure: decibel
- Machine sounds
- Factory sound
- Sounds from systems of communication
- Music systems
- Harms mind, health, behavior
- Various diseases
- Legislations
- Public awareness
- Horticulture

Now let us make an outline of the essay by arranging these points under various headings:

**Noise Pollution**

1. Introduction
  - a) Sound and its normal frequency
  - b) Definition of noise pollution
2. Causes of noise pollution
  - a) Household gadgets – mixer-grinder, vacuum cleaner, coolers, etc
  - b) Loudly played radio, T.V., music systems, etc.
  - c) Small scale industries
  - d) Large scale industries
  - e) Rail, buses, motorbikes, airplane, ships, etc

- 3. Harmful effects of noise pollution
  - a) Affects peace of mind, health and behavior
  - b) Headache, hearing impairment, other sensory and nervous disorder
- 4. Steps to control noise pollution
  - a) Legislation
  - b) Public awareness
  - c) Planting more and more trees
- 5. Impression on noise pollution in the current electronic age

With this outline as a guide you should be in a position to write the essay conveniently: Point no.1 making the introductory paragraph, nos. 2, 3, and 4 making the middle, and no. 5 making the conclusion. However, this outline is only to aid your understanding of the writing process and to assist your writing; it should not appear in the fair copy of your essay. (In your examinations, if you require, you can make this outline in a rough space.)

**Check Your Progress:**

Q. Write an essay of around 400-500 words on “Noise Pollution” with the help of the outlines you have read just now.

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**1.4.3 Writing**

Once you have a proper plan and shape of your ideas on the subject, just start writing. Many of you might fear that you will not write well or you have nothing much to say. But if you start with whatever you know, without wasting time, may help you uncover new ideas and new connections more quickly. You can take breaks in between, read whatever you have written and again think on the subject. If you have an outline already prepared, then you can think of improvising each point and sub-point as you progress in your writing.

The introduction should clearly state the thesis statement. The introduction should be short, arresting and pertinent to the subject. The body paragraphs should clearly develop ideas in support of the thesis statement. The paragraphs must be well

organized, with a topic sentence in each paragraph. A topic sentence expresses the main idea of the paragraph and the rest of the sentences in the paragraph serve to explain or expand or support the ideas expressed in the topic sentence. The concluding paragraph should give a sense of completion, perhaps restating your thesis.

#### 1.4.4 Revising

Revision is a natural part of the writing process. Once you have completed writing your essay, you should go through it once again. Reread and focus on the content and organization; focus on paragraph, sentences and words; and focus on editing. After rereading the whole essay, try to see –

- whether your tone is consistent with your purpose.
- whether thesis and support are logically related, with each body paragraph supporting your thesis statement.
- whether your thesis statement is clearly and specifically worded.
- whether you have discussed everything promised by the thesis statement.
- whether you have included any irrelevant point.
- whether your ideas have a logical sequence.
- whether your readers can follow the pattern of your essay comfortably.

#### 1.3.5 Editing

Editing is another essential feature of the writing process. As you edit, try to concentrate on grammar, punctuation, mechanics and spelling.

#### Check Your Progress:

1. What are the three essential parts of an essay?

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2. Try to make an outline of an essay on 'Importance of games in a student's life'.

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3. Write a thesis statement for the subject, 'Travel as a part of education'.

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#### 1.5 Let us sum up

In this unit I have tried to familiarize you with the process of essay writing both through theoretical descriptions of the process and also through examples. However, these guidelines

on writing are not the best possible ones or should be assumed always to be applicable. My main motive is to bring you into a habit of constant writing and rewriting. And I believe that your practice and further research in this field will help you to evolve a writing process of your own and adapt it to the audience, purpose and writing situation.

### Activity:

Q. Draft an essay on the following topics:

1. A visit to a circus
2. Smoking
3. The use and abuse of strikes
4. Happy Memories
5. Value of Time
6. "A Woman's place is in the home"
7. Popular Superstitions
8. A local election
9. The charm of poetry
10. Music

### Suggested Readings :

- Singh, Vandana R. (2010) *The Written Word*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press
- Wren and Martin(2010) *High School English Grammar & Composition*, New Delhi: S Chand & Company Ltd.
- Alexander, L G (2001) *Essays and Letter Writing*, Patna: Orient Longman Ltd.
- Shaffer, Lawrence (2007) *Skills in Writing*, Delhi: Ivy Publishing House.

## UNIT 2

### ESSAY AND ITS TYPES

#### Structure

- 2.0 Objective
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning an essay
  - 2.2.1 The example
  - 2.2.2 Analysis of the example
- 2.3 Types of essay
  - 2.3.1 Expository Essay
  - 2.3.2 Descriptive Essay
  - 2.3.3 Narrative Essay
  - 2.3.4 Argumentative Essay
- 2.4 Let us sum up

Activities

Suggested Reading

## 2.0 Objectives

This unit should help you to:

- ❖ *recall* the essay writing process through an example.
- ❖ *classify* the types of essay.
- ❖ *build* your essay depending on the essay type.

## 2.1 Introduction

In the previous unit you have come across the characteristics of a good essay and also familiarized yourself with one process of essay writing. In this unit, we will try to recall our understanding of essay writing by analyzing an example essay. This analysis will take into consideration all the aspects of essay you have learnt so far. Then we will discuss the types of essay and their salient features. A sound knowledge of these kinds would surely help you to handle different essay topics with ease and command.

## 2.2 Learning an essay

Here you have an essay on ‘The Value of Games’. (This is surely not the best possible writing on the subject, but just an example to assist your understanding.) Read the essay carefully and the analysis that follows.

### 2.2.1 The example

#### The Value of Games

(1) <sup>1</sup>The modern age is also known as the ‘machine age’. <sup>2</sup>The technical advancements in every field have catalyzed the pace of human activities too. <sup>3</sup>Man has been virtually turned into a machine. <sup>4</sup>This

transformation has called for an excessive work load on human brains and limbs. <sup>5</sup>In such a scenario, the much needed recreation can be provided by games. <sup>6</sup>As the proverb goes, “A healthy mind (lives) in a healthy body”. <sup>7</sup>The importance of games in life should not be underestimated, for without them, it is harder for a person to be sound in body and mind.

(2) <sup>8</sup>Games and sports refresh the mind and prepare it for more work to be undertaken. <sup>9</sup>They are also valuable from the health point of view. <sup>10</sup>While playing games, a person is in the company of nature; where he breaths fresh air. <sup>11</sup>No matter how intelligent a person is, he cannot make use of his intelligence unless he has a sound physic. <sup>12</sup>Any form of game is useful, provided it gives the body an opportunity to take regular physical exercise.

(3) <sup>13</sup>The most important lesson that games and sports teach a person is the sense of discipline. <sup>14</sup>They also teach him toughness, honesty, equality, brotherhood and love. <sup>15</sup>The spirit of sportsmanship enables one to deal with life in a wise and mature way. <sup>16</sup>For life has its ups and downs just like games where one experiences both winning and losing. <sup>17</sup>This truth is embodied in the Olympic motto: “The important thing in playing is not the winning or the losing, but the participation”.

(4) <sup>18</sup>Games and sports should promote goodwill and amity. <sup>19</sup>But, there should be a healthy spirit of competition, not rivalry. <sup>20</sup>Use of unfair means only in order to win the game kills the spirit of the game. <sup>21</sup>For we should remember that winning is not important over playing. <sup>22</sup>Moreover, from the health point of view, it is the physical exercise that is more important than the games themselves. <sup>23</sup>And there are other ways of getting it too, as for instance yoga.



(5) <sup>24</sup>Nevertheless, playing games is a valuable activity. <sup>25</sup>A regular and wise participation in games can ensure physical fitness for a better living in modern times. (348 words)

### 2.2.2 Analysis of the example

After going through the composition what structure comes to you at the first look? Obviously, that there are five paragraphs and 25 sentences.

Let us first examine how the paragraphs have been organized:

Paragraph 1 introduces the subject, and makes a general statement about the importance of games in the present times.

Paragraph 2 deals with the benefits to health.

Paragraph 3 deals with the moral benefits.

Paragraph 4 deals with some moral disadvantages or dangers.

Paragraph 5 forms the conclusion by stating the writer's opinion, taking into account all that has been said in the paragraphs 2, 3 and 4.

So the essay has got an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

An essay consists of paragraphs. Now we shall examine each paragraph of this essay more closely. You can see for yourself how the various points relevant to the topic have been carefully developed in different paragraphs.

#### ➤ Paragraph 1

Sentence 1 makes a general statement about the modern times.

Sentences 2, 3 and 4 explain the characteristics features of the age and the consequent changes in human behavior that it has called forth.

Sentence 5 justifies the usefulness of games in this scenario.

Sentence 6 is a well-known quotation.

Sentence 7 asserts the need of games in life; and can be called the thesis statement of the essay.

#### ➤ Paragraph 2

Sentence 8 states one of the many reasons for the statement made in sentence 7.

Sentence 9 puts forth the main idea of the paragraph.

Sentence 10 is a development of the main idea of the paragraph.

Sentence 11 is a further development of the idea in sentence 8.

Sentence 12 sums up the main idea of the paragraph.

#### ➤ Paragraph 3

Sentence 13 and 14 give other reasons for the claim made in sentence 7.

Sentence 15 is the topic sentence of the paragraph.

Sentence 16 and 17 builds up the support for the topic sentence. We also see the use of another quotation.

#### ➤ Paragraph 4

Sentence 18 gives yet another reason for sentence 7.

Sentence 19 begins with the signal, 'but'. So we have something which is contrary to that which we have read so far.

Sentence 20 and 21 is an explanation of the signal used in Sentence 19.

Sentence 21 begins with another signal, 'moreover'; which signals at another point in support of Sentence 19.

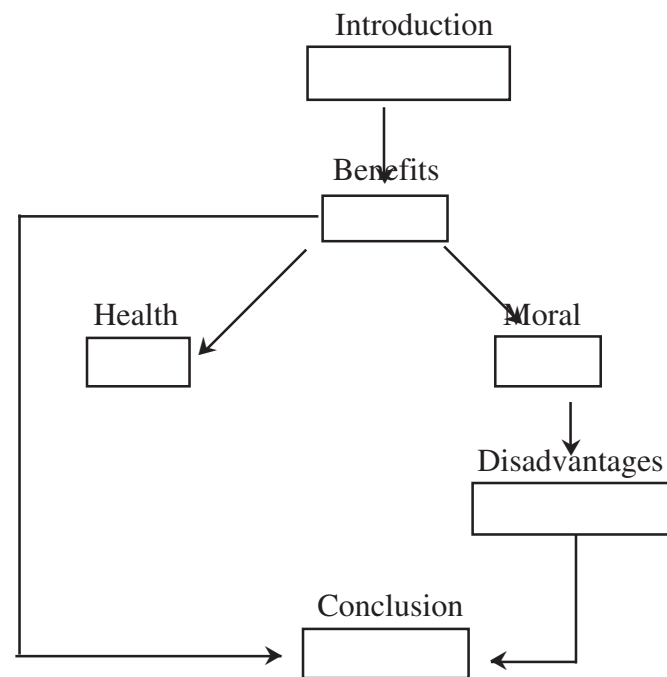
Sentence 22 supports the claim made in Sentence 21.

➤ Paragraph 5

Sentence 23 has got another important signal, ‘nevertheless’. The writer has mentioned both the advantages and disadvantages of playing games. The signal tells that he would sum up in favour of the advantages.

Sentence 24 sums up the author’s views. The word ‘wise’ balances the disadvantages in favour of the author.

A diagrammatic representation of the structure of the essay would be as follows:



Let us now try to see if this essay has all the four characteristics of a good essay, that is, unity, coherence, relevance, and proportion:

- Unity : The author has made a general analysis of games. The unity would have been spoilt if he had put information about one particular game or compared the merits of different

games.

- Coherence : As we have analyzed the essay sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph, we find that there is a logical sequence of thought. Coherence could have been spoilt if sentence 16 was to be written after sentence 8.
- Relevance : All the ideas or information provided in the essay are significant to the essay topic. For instance, a reference to India’s victory in the cricket world cup 2011 would have been something irrelevant to this essay topic. Or a sentence like, “Games rejuvenates a person’s mind and body.” would have been relevant after sentence 9.
- Proportion : The essay appears to be proportioned. Had the author put just one or two lines on the disadvantages of games, the proportion would have been spoilt.

### Stop To Consider

People often learn quotations for use in essays. This is a good thing to do, provided that you do not use them too much. In the above example the author has used two quotations, which very nicely contributes to the subject of the essay. The use of quotations helps to hold the reader’s attention. However, remember that sometimes the use of hackneyed (i.e. often used) quotations bores the reader instead of interesting him.

### 2.3 Types of Essay

We can classify essays as belonging to one or other of the following groups:

- Expository Essays
- Descriptive Essays

- Narrative Essays
- Argumentative Essays

The above classification of essays into various classes is not mutually exclusive; and many a times an essay takes the peculiarities of more than one class. However, this classification is useful for you because how you write or organize your essay will usually depend on what type of essay you have to write.

### 2.3.1 Expository Essay

Exposition is writing that explains ideas or concepts. An expository essay consists of an explanation of some subject. It answers the questions, 'how?' and 'why?'. The subjects of an expository essay can vary from things to processes; and also to ideas or people.

This kind of writing is aimed at the reader's reason, not his emotions. It needs first, facts and second, logical order. Naturally, when we are trying to explain a concept to a reader, we need to be clear and concise. To explain a thing clearly to other people is not an easy matter, for although the explanation may be perfectly clear to you it may not be at all clear to them; or, what is perhaps more usual, an explanation which is easily understood by some people may be completely unintelligible to others.

It is important to be logical and try to take the reader from one step to the next in a proper sequence. And one of the best ways to make your meanings clear is by giving definite illustrations of each important point you are attempting to explain.

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Let me give you a small example :

### Hazards of Rag-picking for children

Rag-picking by children on rotting garbage mounds presents a very unpleasant picture to human eyes. Small children who should have been studying in schools rummage through the garbage for trinkets or other things. They sell it to *Kabariwalas* to earn a few bucks to help their parents.

However, they are unaware of the hazards to which they are exposed. For example, these garbage mounds are live bombs composed of deadly viruses of various diseases. This becomes more pronounced on the mounds of hospital waste. Unwary of these consequences, these children spend their childhood on these rotting heaps of garbage.

It is ironical that nobody thinks of these teeming millions on these mounds. In spending their childhood over there, these children face the rough and tough life which has far-reaching consequences on them later. Earning a few rupees this way, they become unmindful of various nuances of social life. For want of proper education, they adopt this profession as they grow up. And this profession has its own hazards. They acquire bad habits like stealing and other anti-social activities. Due to this they land themselves in various problems. Thus, their future is bleak and dreary.

The government and other NGOs should come forward to curb this rag-picking especially by these children. Also, the learned section of the society can contribute to this cause by encouraging and guiding such children to free and compulsory elementary education provided by the government.

**Check Your Progress :**

Q. Write essays of 400-500 words on each of the subjects given below: *(Use the space at the end of the block for your answer)*

- i. How to ride a horse?
- ii. How to play cricket?
- iii. Peace promote progress
- iv. Why money is so important?
- v. Intelligentsia are like 'beacon lights'

**2.3.2 Descriptive Essay**

A descriptive essay consists of a description of some places or things, aspects or phenomenon of nature, which has been seen, heard, read or experienced. Some examples of topics for descriptive essay are: the Taj Mahal, a tsunami, a steam engine, etc.

Description has two elements: the observer/ writer, and what he has observed. These two elements give us two main sub-divisions:

- If what is observed is more important, the description is factual and objective. It is intended to inform the reader. The writer regards himself as a kind of camera, recording details without allowing his own feelings to appear.
- If it is the observer who is more important, the description may be impressionistic or creative. It is intended to entertain, or to provide a 'picture', or to arouse emotions in the reader. The writer's feelings may be stated openly or they may be implied.

Let me give you an example:

**The Railway Station**

The railway station is an important place in the railway network spreading in a country. All the trains going and coming by that city stop at it. Naturally, it is a place having the infrastructure of a railway station. It has long platforms near the rail tracks. There are benches on these platforms which are used by passengers waiting for their trains. There are various stalls offering eatables etc. eg tea stalls, book stalls etc. At a busy railway station there are vendors selling various things which are needed by the passengers.

The railway station has various offices like the office of the Station Master, the Goods Clerk, the Railway Retiring Room, Passengers Waiting Rooms, etc. Large stacks of goods are seen waiting being boarded for their destinations. A few over bridges add beauty to the scene of a railway station.

The railway station comes to life when a train arrives. There is lot of activity, hubbub and confusion among the passengers. This scene presents a lively scene. Some passengers rush inside the train, some rush out. There is a kind of melee. But when the train leaves, the railway station becomes a dead place, at least, till another train comes in.

**A Scene at a Railway Station**

Scenes at a railway station allow one a kind of introduction to mini India. At a railway station, the scene presents every kind of culture that is the essential India. One can see the poorest of the poor and the richest of the rich. The scene is at its richest when a train comes in and when it leaves, it seems almost deserted and desolate.

Last Sunday, I went to the railway station in the city to see off my friend. We had reached about half an hour before the

train was to arrive. The platform was full of human heads. Coolies were busy in carrying luggage from one platform to the other. The train my friend was to catch was due to arrive at platform no. 4. This was already throbbing with every kind of human activity common to a railway platform. The passengers were moving to and fro. Some were browsing at the book stalls, while some were sipping tea at tea stalls. Many passengers were drowsing sitting at the benches. The vendors were selling their wares with typical sounds. One could see people from Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Arunachal Pradesh, etc. This was clear from their dresses and languages. The children were running here and there. It was a sheer fun for them.

Soon all looks turned in the direction from which the train was to come. Within moments the train arrived. There was jostling, elbowing, pushing and pulling by the passengers who wanted to alight from and board the train. No one bothered about the convenience of the women, the aged and the children. Cries, shrieking could be heard from all the compartments. My friend got a seat in the reserved compartment. Soon the train gave a whistle as the green signal was given. After the guard's giving a whistle and waving the green signal, the train started moving. Soon the platform wore a deserted look. I returned home after some time.

#### **Check Your Progress :**

Q. Write essays of 400-500 words on each of the subjects given below: *(Use the space at the end of the block for your answer)*

- i. A Supermarket
- ii. A Day in the Seaside
- iii. The Book Fair in your college
- iv. A Thunderstorm
- v. The things that annoy me

### **2.3.3 Narrative Essay**

A narrative essay consists of narration of some events or a series of events. The purpose of narration is to tell the reader what happened. What happened may be real or imaginary, truth or fiction. Narration requires an order of time. The happenings must be given in the order in which they occurred. In writing your essay a good selection of detail is important. You cannot write everything in the allotted time and space. So you have to choose only those details which are relevant to your purpose. Narration is often used for story - telling, historical writing, and biography.

An example may assist your understanding:

#### **A Journey by Train**

Trains have always fascinated me. Even as a boy I used to slip out of the house and go to the railway station. I would stand on the over bridge. I would watch with wonder the signals go red or green and the trains come and go.

So when last week my father decided to go to Guwahati, I insisted on going with him. We reached the railway station at 7am. The Kamakhya Express from Dibrugarh came on time. We boarded it. I occupied a window-seat. The guard blew his whistle and waved the green flag. The engine whistled in reply and the train moved.

Soon it gathered speed. It ran forward at a terrific speed. The fields ran in the opposite direction. My father dozed off. The train rattled along. It crossed streams and rivers making queer sounds. Soon we reached Simluri. There it stopped for some time. The Intercity Express came from Guwahati. Father woke up and took a cup of tea.

The long train resumed the journey. At nine we reached Mariani. There it stopped for a couple of minutes. After two hours it halted at

Dimapur, a business town. Many people boarded the train there. A ticket examiner came to our compartment. He found a young boy travelling without a ticket. The boy tried to explain why he could not buy a ticket before boarding the train at Mariani. His explanation did not satisfy the ticket examiner. So he had to pay the fine besides the fare.

At five in the afternoon the train steamed into the Guwahati station with a thundering sound. We got down the train. It was a very pleasant journey.

**Check Your Progress:**

Q. Write essays of 400-500 words on each of the subjects given below: *(Use the space at the end of the block for your answer)*

- i. A stitch in time saves nine
- ii. A street quarrel
- iii. A rolling stone gathers no moss
- iv. An excursion
- v. My first day in the hostel

#### 2.3.4 Argumentative Essay

Argumentation is used to prove something, or to disprove something, or to persuade the reader that the writer's opinion / point of view / theory, etc., is correct or sensible. To induce other people to think as we do, on the particular matter under discussion, is not a very easy task. While writing argumentative essays, the meaning of the subject is usually immediately clear. Take for example the topic: "Is the cinema harmful to children?". The meaning of the subject should be fairly clear to you. The difficulty lies not in interpretation, but in deciding the best way to

handle the subject. Before attempting to plan your essay you need to define your attitude: whether you will agree for or against, or give viewpoints without committing yourself to one side or the other.

Argumentative essays can take two main forms: inductive argument and deductive argument. In inductive argument, you begin with a general statement and then produce facts to prove it. In deductive argument, you infer one statement from another, beginning with a general idea and arriving at a particular one. Whichever way you choose to argue, you must ensure that your essay is balanced and that you deal with both sides of the argument. This will enable you to present your viewpoint more effectively.

How about having an example here?

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#### **Education: For employment or enlightenment**

Education in the largest sense can be defined as any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. In common usage, however, education is defined as the delivery of knowledge, skills and information from teachers to students. The logic of 'accountability' in this instance is taken to be a literal 'accounting' of units of knowledge and information through highly orchestrated student performance of test taking skills. In the present socio-economic scenario, the grades or scores accumulated thus are taken as stepping stones towards getting employed. In the rat-race for a secured job and future, man seems to have forgotten the deeper meaning of being educated.

Today, education is becoming more and more job-oriented or career-oriented. In the system of schooling based education, a

person with a consistently good academic record can easily acquire a good job; which promises a handsome salary packages and hence a secured life. But in this very system, some of the so called 'educated' who have poor academic grades are left unemployed. And what is usually observed is that such unemployed youths suffer from depression. They spoil themselves and their society by taking refuge to bad habits and unfair activities, like drugs, theft, smuggling, etc. So, is employment the sole motto of education; the non-attainment of which spoils a person? Can this be called education in the true sense? Perhaps, not.

The true meaning of being educated is in being enlightened. What really makes a person educated is that they are able to perceive accurately, think clearly, and act effectively according to self-defined goals and aspirations. An educated person is also respectful of others regardless of their power and status, responsible for the results of their actions, and resourceful at getting what they need, both, personally and for their family, organization, and for society. The key quality of an educated person is to move from negative states of mind to positive states of mind and assist others to do the same. This can be in all situations, be it in problems like poverty, conflict, and pollution, or even problems like, depression, ignorance, or ambition.

It cannot be denied that employment is one of the requirements of progressive life. Nonetheless, it is enlightenment through education which can promise the most enjoyable and the most productive states of mind.

### Check Your Progress :

Q. Write essays of 400-500 words on each of the subjects given below: *(Use the space at the end of the block for your answer)*

- i. The uses and abuses of strikes
- ii. Is the cinema harmful to boys and girls?
- iii. Smoking should be banned on campus
- iv. Newspapers ought to contain more news and fewer advertisements
- v. Do we ever really learn from our mistakes?

### 2.4 Let us sum up

In this unit you have learnt the characteristics of a good essay by analyzing an example essay. This analysis must have given you ample scope to understand how ideas are developed and structured to give them the form of an essay. By this time you should be in a position to identify different essay types and the kind of treatment they call for in the writing process. Though the different types of essay are not mutually exclusive, an understanding of their slight differences would make your writing process much easier. Your regular practice at writing and reading profusely diverse articles and books, and a good up-to-date general knowledge would make essay writing not just an easy task, but something you would enjoy! You would be revealing your personal ideas and opinions in good to read words!

### Activity:

Q. Draft an essay on the following topics:

1. The Final Match of World Cup Cricket 2011
2. My biggest dream

3. India in 2030
4. United Nations Organization
5. The Mobile Phone
6. Swine Flu Pandemic
7. 'Advertising is one of the most unpleasant features of modern life'
8. Computer Games
9. A Seaside Holiday
10. 'Charity begins at home'

**Suggested Reading:**

- Singh, Vandana R. (2010) *The Written Word*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press
- Wren and Martin(2010) *High School English Grammar & Composition*, New Delhi: S Chand & Company Ltd.
- Alexander, L G (2001) *Essays and Letter Writing*, Patna: Orient Longman Ltd.
- Shaffer, Lawrence (2007) *Skills in Writing*, Delhi: Ivy Publishing House

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