SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

ENGLISH

COURSE : ENG - 104

(1st Semester)

NON FICTIONAL PROSE

BLOCK - I, II & III

DIRECTORATE OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING
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ENGLISH

COURSE : ENG - 104

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BLOCK - I

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Unit 1 : Joseph Addison's The Spectator Papers: 'The Uses of Spectator'

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will take you to general introduction of essay writing tradition of the 18th century England with special reference to Joseph Addison, one of the great prose writers of the 18th century. The primary concern of this Unit, however, will be about the Joseph Addison's periodical essay '**The Uses of Spectator**'. Along with this, we shall also discuss life and works of the essayist. After reading this Unit, you will be able –

- to have clear idea about life and works of Joseph Addison

- to understand the beginning of the periodical essays,
- to underline the role of coffee houses ,and
- to get acquainted with socio political condition of the period.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The eighteenth century was a great period for English prose, though not for English poetry. Matthew Arnold called it an "age of prose and reason," implying thereby that no good poetry was written in this century, and that, prose dominated the literary realm. Much of the poetry of the age is prosaic, if not altogether prose-rhymed prose. Verse was used by many poets of the age for purposes which could be realized, or realized better, through prose. The general view is that the eighteenth century was not altogether barren of real poetry. Even then, it is better known for the galaxy of brilliant prose writers that it threw up. In this century there was a remarkable proliferation of practical interests which could best be expressed in a new kind of prose-pliant and kind of a work of a day capable of rising to every occasion. This prose was simple and modern, having nothing of the baroque or Ciceronian colour of the prose of the seventeenth-century writers like Milton and Sir Thomas Browne. Practicality and reason ruled supreme in prose and determined its style. It is really strange that in this period the language of prose was becoming simpler and more easily comprehensible, but, on the other hand, the language of poetry was being conventionalized into that artificial "poetic diction" which at the end of the century was so severely condemned by Wordsworth as "gaudy and inane phraseology." And during this age, Joseph Addison with Richard Steele made valuable contribution to English essays, especially Periodical essays.

1.2 ABOUT THE WRITER: JOSEPH ADDISON (1672–1719)

1.2.1 Life Sketch

Addison was born in Milston, Wiltshire, but soon after his birth his father, Lancelot Addison, was appointed Dean of Lichfield and the Addison family moved into the cathedral close. He was educated at Charterhouse School, where he first met Richard Steele, and at The Queen's College, Oxford. He excelled in classics, being specially noted for his Latin verse, and became a Fellow of Magdalen College. In 1693, he addressed a poem to John Dryden, and his first major work, a book of the lives of English poets, was published in 1694. His

translation of Virgil's Georgics was published the same year. Dryden, Lord Somers and Charles Montagu, 1st Earl of Halifax, took an interest in Addison's work and obtained for him a pension of £300 to enable him to travel to Europe with a view to diplomatic employment, all the time writing and studying politics. While in Switzerland in 1702, he heard of the death of William III, an event which lost him his pension, as his influential contacts, Halifax and Somers, had lost their employment with the Crown.

Together with his friend Richard Steele, Joseph Addison helped usher in a new age of journalism with the influential periodical The Spectator, which helped shape middle-class taste, manners, and morality during the 18th century.

1.2.2. From Poetry to Politics

Addison attended Oxford University, where he distinguished himself as a master of Latin verse. In1695, he wrote A Poem to his Majesty in praise of King William III. It will be noteworthy to mention that by dedicating the poem to John Somers, a prominent Whig politician, Addison won Somers's patronage and was given a grant to travel abroad in Europe on diplomatic missions. In 1705, he again used poetry to further his political career, penning The Campaign, which glorified John Churchill, the duke of Marlborough, for his role in the British conquest of the French during the War of the Spanish Succession. The poem helped secure his position in Whig political circles. He later served as a member of the British and Irish parliaments and eventually obtained several important government posts, including that of secretary of state.

1.2.3. A Friendship Rekindled

When the Whigs lost power in 1710, Addison found himself without steady income. He reconnected with his old college friend Richard Steele, who had recently launched The Tatler, a journal that offered humorous pieces and political commentary with a decidedly Whig bias. Soon Addison began regularly contributing essays anonymously to The Tatler. They were so well received that the poet John Gay wondered why the author refused to sign "pieces which the greatest pens in England would be proud to own."

1.2.4. Manners, Morals, and the Middle Class

The Tatler folded in January 1711, but two months later Steele and Addison inaugurated The Spectator, which, unlike their earlier venture, was non partisan. A masterful prose stylist, Addison was responsible for a considerable amount of

the journal's content. Addison and Steele were successful in their attempt to bring philosophy "out of closets and libraries . . . and in [to] coffeehouses," partly because the light, humorous style of The Spectator made its moral content acceptable to its 18th-century audience. By praising marriage and honesty while ridiculing hypocrisy and pride, Addison sought to improve the morals and manners of the readers. His scenes of everyday life continue to provide readers valuable insights into how the emerging middle class of early18th-century England lived.

1.3. THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PERIODICAL ESSAY

Now let us have a brief idea about the English periodical essays. In the eighteenth century, British periodical literature underwent significant developments in terms of form, content, and audience. Several factors contributed to these changes. Prior to 1700 the English popular press was in its infancy. The first British newspaper, The Oxford Gazette, was introduced in 1645. Two years later the Licensing Act of 1647 established government control of the press by granting the Gazette a strictly enforced monopoly on printed news. As a result, other late seventeenth-century periodicals, including The Observer (1681) and The Athenian Gazette (1691), either supplemented the news with varied content, such as political commentary, reviews, and literary works, or provided specialized material targeting a specific readership. During this time, printing press technology was improving. Newer presses were so simple to use that individuals could produce printed material themselves. British society was in transition as well. The burgeoning commercial class created an audience with the means, education, and leisure time to engage in reading. When the Licensing Act expired in 1694, publications sprang up, not just in London, but all across England and its colonies.

Joseph Addison and Richard Steele are generally regarded as the most significant figures in the development of the eighteenth-century periodical. Together they produced three publications: The Tatler (1709-11), The Spectator (1711-12), and The Guardian (1713). In addition, Addison published The Free-Holder (1715-16), and Steele, who had been the editor of The London Gazette (the former Oxford Gazette) from 1707 to 1710, produced a number of other periodicals, including The Englishman (1713-14), Town-Talk (1715-16), and The Plebeian (1719). The three periodicals Addison and Steele produced together were great successes; none ceased publication because of poor sales or other financial reasons, but by the choice of their editors. Beginning in the eighteenth century and continuing to the present day, there has been debate among critics and scholars over the contributions of Addison and Steele to their joint enterprises. Addison has been generally seen as the more eloquent writer, while Steele has been regarded as the better editor and organizer.

Periodicals in the eighteenth century included social and moral commentary, and literary and dramatic criticism, as well as short literary works. They also saw the advent of serialized stories, which Charles Dickens, among others, would later perfect. One of the most important outgrowths of the eighteenth-century periodical, however, was the topical, or periodical, essay. Although novelist Daniel Defoe made some contributions to its evolution with his Review of the Affairs of France (1704-13), Addison and Steele are credited with bringing the periodical essay to maturity. Appealing to an educated audience, the periodical essay as developed by Addison and Steele was not scholarly, but casual in tone, concise, and adaptable to a number of subjects, including daily life, ethics, religion, science, economics, and social and political issues.

Another innovation brought about by the periodical was the publication of letters to the editor, which permitted an unprecedented degree of interaction between author and audience. Initially, correspondence to periodicals was presented in a limited, question-and-answer form of exchange. As used by Steele, letters to the editor brought new points of view into the periodical and created a sense of intimacy with the reader. The feature evolved into a forum for readers to express themselves, engage in a discussion on an important event or question, conduct a political debate, or ask advice on a personal situation. Steele even introduced an advice to the lovelorn column to The Tatler and The Spectator.

Addison and Steele and other editors of the eighteenth century saw their publications as performing an important social function and viewed themselves as moral instructors and arbiters of taste. In part these moralizing and didactic purposes were accomplished through the creation of an editorial voice or persona, such as Isaac Bickerstaff in The Tatler, Nestor Ironside in The Guardian, and, most importantly, Mr. Spectator in The Spectator. Through witty, sometimes satirical observations of the contemporary scene, these fictional stand-ins for the editors attempted to castigate vice and promote virtue. They taught lessons to encourage certain behaviours in their readers, especially self-discipline. Morals were a primary concern, especially for men in business. Women, too, formed a part of the readership of periodicals, and they were instructed in what was expected of them, what kind of ideals they should aspire to, and what limits should be on their concerns and interests.

The impact of periodicals was both immediate and ongoing. Throughout the eighteenth century and beyond there were many imitators of Addison and Steele's publications. These successors, which arose not just in England, but in countries throughout Europe and in the United States as well, modelled their style, content, and editorial policies on those of The Tatler, The Spectator, and The Guardian. Some imitators, such as The Female Spectator (1744), were

targeted specifically at women. Addison and Steele's periodicals achieved a broader influence when they were translated and reprinted in collected editions for use throughout the century. The epistolary exchanges, short fiction, and serialized stories included in the periodicals had an important influence on the development of the novel. In addition, celebrated figures from Benjamin Franklin and Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Mark Twain have acknowledged the impact of the eighteenth-century periodical, particularly The Spectator, on their development as writers and thinkers.

1.3.1. The Beginnings of the Periodical Essay

The periodical essay was a new literary form that emerged during the early part of the eighteenth century. Periodical essays typically appeared in affordable publications that came out regularly, usually two or three times a week, and were only one or two pages in length. Unlike other publications of the time that consisted of a medley of information and news, essay periodicals were comprised of a single essay on a specific topic or theme, usually having to do with the conduct or manners. They were often narrated by a persona or a group of personas, commonly referred to as a "club." (DeMaria 529) For the most part, readers of the periodical essay were the educated middle class individuals who held learning in high esteem but were not scholars or intellectuals. Women were a growing part of this audience and periodical editors often tried to appeal to them in their publications. (Shevelow 27-29)

The Tatler (1709-1711) and The Spectator (1711-1712) were the most successful and influential single-essay periodicals of the eighteenth century but there are other periodicals that helped shape this literary genre. While the periodical essay emerged during the eighteenth century and reached its peak in publications like The Tatler and The Spectator, its roots can be traced back to the late seventeenth century. An important forerunner to the Spectator is John Dunton's Athenian Mercury, which played a key role in the development of the periodical essay.

The Athenian Mercury began publication in 1691 with the purpose of 'resolving weekly all the most nice and curious questions propos'd by the ingenious.' It did not publish essays. Instead it followed a question and answer or "advice column" format and is one of the first periodicals to solicit questions from its audience. Readers submitted questions anonymously and their candid inquiries were answered by a collection of "experts" known as the Athenian Society or simply the "Athenians." Dunton hinted that the Athenian Society was made up of a group of learned individuals, but in reality the society only consisted of three

people who were not necessarily "authorities." Their identities remained a secret, however, and this is one of the first instances of a periodical using a fictional social group or club to answer questions or narrate

Each issue of the Athenian Mercury would answer anywhere from eight to fifteen questions on topics ranging from love, marriage and relationships to medicine, superstitions and the paranormal. Dunton received so many questions from female readers that he decided to devote the first Tuesday of every month to questions from women. (Berry 18-19) Examples of the questions submitted to the Athenians include:

Why the Sea is salt? (Athenian Gazette vol. 1 no.2),Whence proceeds weeping and laughing from the same cause? (Athenian Gazette vol.1 no.3) Whether most Persons do not marry too young? (Athenian Gazette vol. 1, no. 13) and whether it be proper for Women to be Learned? (Athenian Gazette vol. 1, no. 18)

As these sample questions demonstrate, the Athenian Mercury was focused on the social and cultural concerns of individuals. These subjects tapped into the reading public's desire for knowledge, instructive information, and for something new and as a result, the Athenian Mercury was a huge success. (Hunter 14-15) Several features of the Athenian Mercury, such as its epistolary format and its creation of a fictional club, would be continued by another influential periodical published during the eighteenth century, Daniel Defoe's The Review. (DeMaria 529-531)

Originally known as A Weekly Review of the Affairs of France; Purg'd from the Errors and Partiality of News writers and Petty Statesmen of All sides, the Review began publication in 1704 as an eight page weekly. The title, length and frequency of the periodical changed in subsequent issues until it eventually became a triweekly periodical entitled The Review. (Defoe, Secord xvii-xviii)

Most issues of The Review consisted of a single essay, usually covering a political topic, which was followed by questions-and-answers section called the Mercure Scandal: or Advice from the Scandal Club, translated out of French. Defoe eventually replaced the translated out of French with A Weekly History of Nonsense, Impertinency, Vice and Debauchery. (DeMaria 531) In this section, a fictional group known as the "Scandal Club" answered readers' questions on a variety of subjects including drinking, gambling, love and the treatment of women. The advice column component of The Review was so popular among readers that Defoe began publishing a twenty-eight page monthly supplement devoted entirely to readers' questions. By May 1705 Defoe dropped the Advice from the Scandal Club from The Review and began publishing the questions-and-answers separately in a publication entitled The Little Review. (Graham 48-49)

With their advice column elements, the Advice from the Scandal Club and The Little Review were obvious imitators of the Athenian Mercury. However, the questions and answers in Defoe's periodicals were longer and mostly written as letters and this type of prose writing would eventually evolve into the single essay format of The Tatler and The Spectator. (Graham 50) Like other periodicals of the time, the Advice from the Scandal Club and The Little Review addressed questions of behaviour and conduct but Defoe's tone was more satirical and he would often mock the stuffiness of the Athenian Mercury in his essays. Defoe's periodicals were also less mannerly and he often placed ads for products like remedies for venereal disease within their pages. (DeMaria 532)

The single-essay made its first appearance in The Tatler, which began publication in 1709. Created by Richard Steele, the purpose of The Tatler was to "offer something, whereby such worth members of the public may be instructed, after their reading, what to think.." and to "have something of which may be of entertainment to the fair sex.." (Tatler, April 12, 1709) Steele was the creator but other significant writers of the time, including Joseph Addison and Jonathan Swift, were also contributors.

The Tatler was a single-sheet paper that came out three times a week and in the beginning, consisted of short paragraphs on topics related to domestic, foreign and financial events, literature, theatre and gossip. Each topic fell under the heading of a specific place, such as a coffee house, where that discussion was most likely to take place. (Mackie 15) Isaac Bickerstaff, the sixty-something fictional editor, narrated The **Tatler** and his thoughts on miscellaneous subjects were included under the heading "From my own Apartment." As The Tatler progressed, these popular entries began taking up more and more space until the first issue consisting of a single, "From my own Apartment" essay appeared on July 30, 1709. (DeMaria 534) In an attempt to appeal to his female audience, Steele introduced the character Jenny Distaff, Isaac Bickerstaff's half sister, and she narrated some of the essays later in the periodical's run. (Italia 37)

The last issue of The Tatler appeared in January 1711 and by the following March, Steele launched a new periodical, The Spectator, with Joseph Addison. The Spectator was published daily and consisted of a single essay on a topic usually having to do with conduct or public behaviour and contained no political news. The Spectator was narrated by the fictional persona, Mr. Spectator, with some help from the six members Spectator Club. While The Tatler introduced the form of the periodical essay, "The Spectator perfected it" and firmly established it as a literary genre. The Spectator remained influential even after it ceased publication in 1712. Other eighteenth century periodicals, including Samuel Johnson's The Idler and The Rambler, copied the periodical essay format. Issues

of The Tatler and The Spectator were published in book form and continued to sell for the rest of the century. The popularity of the periodical essay eventually started to wane, however, and essays began appearing more often in periodicals that included other material. By the mid-eighteenth century, periodicals comprised of a single essay eventually disappeared altogether from the market. (Graham 68-69)

Check Your Progress

1. How were Addison and Steel instrumental in the development of English periodical essays?(100 to 120 words)

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2. Give a brief note on the rise and development of the Periodical essays. (90 to 100 words)

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1.3.2. The Form and Content of the Periodical Essay

The periodical essay of the eighteenth century invited men of the Age of Reason to pour into it their talent and thought; it was a form in which they could make their points briefly and effectively; it was flexible, and was eventually familiar enough to be well-received. The form itself reflected the common-sense practicality, restraint and moderation that the periodical writers were advocating. In one balanced, comparatively short piece of writing, a thought was developed—in an easy, quiet and painless manner—that could be driven home in later essays over a long period of time. If a writer had a pet idea or philosophy, he was given a medium for fixing it firmly in his reader's mind by repeating his thought at irregular intervals. The moral issues with which periodical writers dealt had a "cumulative" impact in being stressed in a number of papers; the periodical essay differed from a newspaper in that the newspaper was concerned with matters of the moment brought as soon as possible before the public, and the essay could proceed on a more leisurely course. Both media used the same format and had essentially the same audience—the middle and upper middle classes. The periodical essay dealt with matters that were contemporary but not immediate-with manners and morals, with tendencies of the time rather than actual events.

The periodical essay took the long view, it dealt with the needs of men to improve themselves gradually; it may have seemed to centre on trivial matters in comparison with the great import of current events, but its end, and therefore its method, was entirely different from that of the newspaper. The aim of the literary periodical of the eighteenth century was admittedly the analysis and criticism of the contemporary life—for a reformatory purpose; men needed to have an instruction and an example in order to know how to act, and that example was provided by the periodicals. In his first Tatler, Steele states blandly that his paper will serve those who are public-spirited enough to "neglect their own affairs and look into the actions of state," men who are "persons of strong zeal and weak intellect," and will instruct those politic persons "what to think." Addison, in his statement of purpose in The Spectator, No. 10, is even more explicit: "to the end that their virtue and discretion may not be short, transient intermittent starts of thought, I have resolved to refresh their memories from day to day, till I have recovered them out of that desperate state of vice and folly into which the age is fallen."

Addison was echoing the thoughts of a number of thinkers of his age; the beginnings of the eighteenth century saw a desire for reform in many areas of living, "for a purer and simpler morality, for gentler manners, for...dignified self-respect," a new civilization, in effect. The periodical writers were following a powerful tendency of the eighteenth century, "the reaction against the moral license

of Restoration society which came with the rise of the middle class to prominence and affluence." The tendency toward moralization and satire may have been influenced too by disgust with its opposite force, the immense self-satisfaction of men of the time.

Englishmen in the early years of the century had ample reasons for being satisfied with their lot; England had emerged in these years as a victorious power, commerce was expanding, the middle class was wealthy and growing—the mainstay of an apparently stable society. When men of the Age of Reason looked back on the conflicts and controversies of the seventeenth century, their reliance on "good sense" and moderation seemed to be justified. Lord Shaftesbury, in his Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, published in 1711, expressed the prevailing concept of "order" as the basis and end of human action:

> The sum of philosophy is to learn, what is just in society and beautiful in nature and the order of the world…. The taste of beauty and the relish of what is decent, just, and amiable, perfect the character of the gentleman and the philosopher.

This glib and rather vague ideal- - self-perfection by the improvement of taste—was rooted in the belief that the world was not becoming a better place for intelligent human beings; men had only to raise themselves by conscious efforts toward self-improvement. The periodical writers echoed, to some extent, the complacency of the times, the sense of security and calm, but also tried to correct the faults that were products of this complacency. Of their readers, they demanded sane, level-headed actions backed by the dictates of reason and common sense.

Eighteenth- century writers, and particularly the periodical essayists, showed the same concern for order, reason, and good sense in their writing. Reacting against the passion and complexity of the seventeenth- century metaphysical school, they strove for clearness, for correctness, and for a balanced style that would underline their rational persuasions. Their principal aim was to be understood-, and the lucidity and symmetry which their prose attained is a result of the conscious effort to fix a standard of clarity.

One chief contribution that the periodical writers made to English literature was the colloquial manner they adopted in order to appeal to a wider public; they required that a piece of prose or poetry be "interesting, agreeable, and above all comprehensible." The periodical essay was designed to reach the always expanding and powerful middle classes, and to interest them in the forming of manners and morals, that would fit them for the new age.

The belief in the perfectibility of man and the clear, reasoned prose in which this belief was proclaimed were inspired by the effect of scientific discovery

and research on the period. Newtonian science had induced men to accept the fact that the natural order was explainable, that man and nature operated under fixed laws, and that all human endeavour was equally ordered and subject to rules that, if they were not understood at the present time, would be grasped eventually. Thus, the best writing was that which strove for mathematical clearness and precision. Of course, writers could not succumb completely to such an idea, but the 'scientific spirit' did influence a literary genre that in its best examples is justifiably famous for its clear, balanced, familiar, and very reasonable prose.

Check Your Progress

1. Write in your words how the beginning of the periodical essay was crucial in the essay writing tradition of the 18th century. (80 to 100 words)

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2. Write a short note on the form and content of the periodical essays. (within 50 words)

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1.3.3. The Periodical Essay and the Eighteenth Century Social life

Life in and around eighteenth century London provided much material for criticism and satirisation; one great value of the literary periodicals is the full picture of the times that they give. The essayists concentrated on social conditions and customs in the city, which had a population at the time of about 600,000, and on the (usually) petty vices and idiosyncrasies of urban individuals.

In the eighteenth century, there was still considerable difficulty in travel and communication for those who lived in the country, so the periodicals had for most of their "material" and audience the ladies and gentlemen of the metropolis. The daily life of these people was "sedentary and artificial to a degree hardly credible to modern readers." They seemed to have little to do besides dressing themselves and attending various amusements of the city; their interest in fashion and fashionable manners was excessive. The fascination of the upper classes with ornament—in speech, manners, and dress—was subject to increasing ridicule by the advocates of sense and moderation, and with good reason. Both men and women used a great amount of cosmetics, and were perfumed and powdered to the hilt. Dress of both sexes was characterized by frills and bright colours. The elaborate headpieces and enormous hats of the women paralleled the excesses in men's dress. This extravagance in style carried through all the dress of both sexes; the cost of clothing and accessories was high, and many of the gallants owed their tailors more than they could pay.

Other favourite objects for satire and ridicule were the amusements, often in doubtful taste that Londoners were fond of, such as animal-baiting, cock-fights—"the eighteenth century loved such shows and cared very little for the cruelty involved"—boxing and wrestling matches and various 'rough sports' at fairs. Gambling, on cards, horses, lotteries, cock fights, etc., was a vice to which all classes were partial. Card playing in particular was universally popular and was indulged in by many ladies and gentlemen almost to the exclusion of other interests (like work). The more serious vices—duelling, sexual immorality, and drinking—were not ignored by the periodical writers; the aim of the essayists was to correct these vices and to raise moral standards.

1.3.4. The Coffee House Culture

The chief outlets for the periodicals and the soil in which the ideas introduced in the essays took root were the coffee houses, the intellectual and social centres of the eighteenth century. Coffee had been brought into England about the middle of the preceding century and by the early 1700's had become an institution. Coffee houses were the chief gathering places for men of letters

and were the natural centres for the dissemination of ideas and information. Each coffee house had its own clientele, and discussion was on topics of interest and import to the particular trade or social group that "belonged" there.

In the coffee houses circles were formed to mull over the matters of the day; the opinions of the coffee houses became the criteria for pronouncing judgment on ideas and events of the times. The give and take of conversation was an important feature of London life and influenced it in many ways. Men's ideas were moulded and refined through contact with others' thoughts, and conversation became clearer and more polished.

The coffee houses had a direct effect on the literary style of the periodicals; because the papers were circulated and discussed in these centres, the writing needed to be as clear and colloquial as conversation. The coffee houses were an admirable part of eighteenth century life, but other facets of the times were less pleasant. The unpleasant aspects of the century—the prevalence of violence and crime in the poorly lighted London streets, the cruel punishments of criminals, the quackery of "medical" men, the extreme poverty of the lower classes—were not reflected to as great a degree as upper class morals and manners, but it was in this atmosphere that the periodical essay developed and did more, perhaps, than any other institution toward improving social conditions.

As the age cried out to be educated, to be instructed in sane living, the periodicals answered with their sage and reasoned advice. The best, most readable of these "advisors of the age" were Richard Steele's The Tatler, Joseph Addison's The Spectator, Samuel Johnson's The Rambler, and Oliver Goldsmith's collection of essays, The Citizen of the World.

He returned to England at the end of 1703. For more than a year he remained without employment, but the Battle of Blenheim in 1704 gave him a fresh opportunity of distinguishing himself. The government, more specifically Lord Treasurer Godolphin, commissioned Addison to write a commemorative poem, and he produced The Campaign, which gave such satisfaction that he was forthwith appointed a Commissioner of Appeals in Halifax's government. His next literary venture was an account of his travels in Italy, which was followed by an opera libretto titled Rosamund. In 1705, with the Whigs in political power, Addison was made Under-Secretary of State and accompanied Halifax on a mission to Hanover. Addison's biographer states: "In the field of his foreign responsibilities Addison's views were those of a good Whig. He had always believed that England's power depended upon her wealth, her wealth upon her commerce, and her commerce upon the freedom of the seas and the checking of the power of France and Spain."

From 1708 to 1709 he was MP for the rotten borough of Lostwithiel. Addison was shortly afterwards appointed secretary to the new Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Wharton, and Keeper of the Records of that country. Under the influence of Wharton, he was Member of Parliament in the Irish House of Commons for Cavan Borough from 1709 until 1713. From 1710, he represented Malmesbury, in his home county of Wiltshire, holding the seat until his death.

He encountered Jonathan Swift in Ireland and remained there for a year. Subsequently, he helped found the Kitcat Club and renewed his association with Richard Steele. In 1709 Steele began to bring out The Tatler, to which Addison became almost immediately a contributor: thereafter he (with Steele) started The Spectator, the first number of which appeared on 1 March 1711. This paper, which at first appeared daily, was kept up (with a break of about a year and a half when The Guardian took its place) until 20 December 1714. His last undertaking was The Freeholder, a political paper, 1715–16.

Steele's ceasing work on The Tatler may have been influenced in part by his recognition that another writer was bringing to perfection the form which he (Steele) had brought to popularity. Joseph Addison, although he did not originate the form and method of his medium, explored to the fullest the possibilities which Steele had suggested.

When Addison contributed to The Tatler, the two friends found that their veins of humour ran parallel. A month after the paper ceased publication, "Addison and Steele met at a club and laid the keel for a fresh paper: non-political, that it might live, daily, that it might pay." The paper was to concentrate on reforming the morals and manners of society, "to enliven morality with wit," to keep, if possible from becoming embroiled in government controversies. The new paper must "look on, but must be neutral and discreet, merely a spectator—and so it was called."

The character of the Spectator, as outlined in the first number, was designed to attract the readers of the now defunct Tatler; he was faintly reminiscent of the sage Mr. Bickerstaff, but was even more mysterious, a man who never spoke, but who poked his head into all the talkative parts of the town.

Although Steele wrote only slightly fewer papers for the new periodical than his friend (240 to Addison's 274), the "spirit of the spectator" is Addison's; it is Addison's character that the Spectator assumes—that of a scholar, well-versed in classical literature, a curious though timid student of human nature, a sensitive observer of all that goes on around him. He describes himself and the Spectator:

'I had not been long at the university, before I distinguished myself by a most profound silence; for during the space of eight years…I scarce uttered the quantity of an hundred words; and indeed do not remember that I ever spoke three sentences together in my whole life…Thus I live in the world rather as a Spectator of mankind than as one of the species; by which means I have made myself a speculative statesman, soldier, merchant, and artisan, without ever meddling with any practical part in life'

Steele must assume this character when he writes, and it is harder to distinguish between their works in The Spectator than in The Tatler, except for the careful phrasing of Addison which marks all of his essays.

Steele and Addison provide a natural contrast to one another, both in their personalities and in their work. Both men were interested in reforming the manners and morals of the eighteenth century, but Steele wrote more from "outer" experience of the faults, foibles, and weaknesses he was satirizing in human beings, while Addison wrote from "inner" experience, drawing on his habit of thought and introspection. His tone is calmer than Steele's, though he is less warm and sympathetic. His prose is more balanced and symmetrical, easier to follow, though perhaps less "natural". His essays attempt a conscious perfection of style that Steele may not have had time for.

Check Your Progress

1. Write a brief note on the eighteenth century English life. (50 to 60 words)

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2. How do you link the periodical essay with the eighteen century English life? (50 to 60 words)

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1.4. THE SPECTATOR IN GENERAL

A fresh literary fiction was put forth that the new paper would be the pronouncement of a club of representative men, corresponding roughly to the special clubs from which the Tatler was supposed to draw his information and ideas. But still less than in the case of The Tatler was this scheme carried out, even in name. The scheme supplied themes for two opening papers, and then The Spectator's editorial committee was practically forgotten. In actual reality, Steele and Addison were responsible for the supply of the daily essay, and no others provided any of the first fifty numbers.

The Spectator, laid upon the London breakfast tables at a penny, was single folio sheet, double-columned on either side, four columns in all, not unlike in size to a single sheet of any one of the existing weeklies like The Athenaeum or Nature. As indicating the public which the original Spectators had in view, we may note that the Latin motto at the head of each number is left untranslated. Advertisements of eight books fill up the first number, the advertisements in later issues becoming more varied and embracing the theatres and other entertainments and sales of things in general. The famous publisher and bookseller, Jacob Tonson, advertises the ninth edition of Paradise Lost five times in the first fifty issues, "to be sold at Shakespeare's Head."

In the public eye the new enterprise was another of Steele's, and even Swift, who was likely to be more than ordinarily well informed, assigned to Addison only a subordinate part. We know that Steele's confession with regard to The Tatler was even more applicable to its successor. "Addison is 'The Spectator,'" says Macaulay. The number of papers contributed by each editor was not very different, viz., 274 by Addison as against 240 by Steele. Yet general consent goes with Macaulay's pronouncement. The outstanding papers are, as a rule, Addison's, the attractive literary grace is Addison's, Addison's special humour is regarded as distinctive of The Spectator, the whole change in form from The Tatler is a recognition of Addison's special strength.

The success of The Spectator was great, as many as fourteen thousand being the estimate of the sale of one number without any suggestion that the sale of that number was abnormal. Considering how few were readers at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Macaulay is of opinion that The Spectator had as great a popularity as "the most successful works of Walter Scott and Dickens in our own time." So great was its hold that in August, 1712, when Government imposed a halfpenny stamp on journals, and many "came down," The Spectator raised its price to two pence, and continued to flourish

1.5 THE USES OF 'THE SPECTATOR': TEXT (Spectator. No. 10, March 12, 1711)

Non aliter quam qui adverso vix flumine lembum
Remigiis subigit: si brachia forte remisit,
Atque ilium in praeceps prono rapit alveus amni. —VIRGIL.

So the boat's brawny crew the current stem,
And, slow advancing, struggle with the stream:
But if they slack their hands or cease to strive,
Then down the flood with headlong haste they drive— DRYDEN.

IT is with much satisfaction that I hear this great city inquiring day by day after these my papers, and receiving my morning lectures with a becoming seriousness and attention. My publisher tells me, that there are already three thousand of them distributed every day: so that if I allow twenty readers to every paper, which I look upon as a modest computation, I may reckon about threescore thousand disciples in London and Westminster, who I hope will take care to distinguish themselves from the thoughtless herd of their ignorant and unattentive brethren. Since I have raised to myself so great an audience, I shall spare no pains to make their instruction agreeable, and their diversion useful. For which reasons I shall endeavour to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality, that my readers may, if possible, both ways find their account in the speculation of the day. And to the end that their virtue and discretion may not be short, transient, intermitting starts of thought, I have resolved to refresh their memories from day to day, till I have recovered them out of that desperate state of vice and folly into which the age is fallen. The mind that lies fallow but a single day, sprouts up in follies that are only to be killed by a constant and assiduous culture. It was said of Socrates that he brought Philosophy down from heaven, to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses.

I would therefore in a very particular manner recommend these my speculations to all well-regulated families that set apart an hour in every morning for tea and bread and butter; and would earnestly advise them for their good to order this paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a part of the tea equipage.

Sir Francis Bacon observes that a well-written book, compared with its rivals and antagonists, is like Moses's serpent that immediately swallowed up and devoured those of the Egyptians. I shall not be so vain as to think that, where the SPECTATOR appears, the other public prints will vanish; but shall leave it to my readers' consideration, whether it is not much better to be let into the knowledge of one's self, than to hear what passes in Muscovy or Poland; and to amuse ourselves with such writings as tend to the wearing out of ignorance, passion, and prejudice, than such as naturally conduce to inflame hatreds, and make enmities irreconcilable.

In the next place, I would recommend this paper to the daily perusal of those gentlemen whom I cannot but consider as my good brothers and allies, I mean the fraternity of Spectators, who live in the world without having anything to do in it; and either by the affluence of their fortunes, or laziness of their dispositions, have no other business with the rest of mankind, but to look upon them. Under this class of men are comprehended all contemplative tradesmen, titular physicians, fellows of the Royal Society, Templars that are not given to be contentious, and statesmen that are out of business; in short, every one that considers the world as a theatre, and desires to form a right judgment of those who are the actors on it.

There is another set of men that I must likewise lay a claim to, whom I have lately called the blanks of society, as being altogether unfurnished with ideas, till the business and conversation of the day has supplied them. I have often considered these poor souls with an eye of great commiseration, when I have heard them asking the first man they have met with, whether there was any news stirring? and by that means gathering together materials for thinking. These needy persons do not know what to talk of, till about twelve a clock in the morning ; for by that time they are pretty good judges of the weather, know which way the wind sits, and whether the Dutch mail be come in. As they lie at the mercy of the first man they meet, and are grave or impertinent all the day long, according to the notions which they have imbibed in the morning, I would earnestly entreat them not to stir out of their chambers till they have read this paper, and do promise them that I will daily instil into them such sound and wholesome sentiments, as shall have a good effect on their conversation for the ensuing twelve hours.

But there are none to whom this paper will be more useful than to the female world. I have often thought there has not been a sufficient pain taken in finding out proper employments and diversions for the fair ones. Their amusements seemed contrived for them, rather as they are women, than as they are reasonable creatures; and are more adapted to the sex than to the species. The toilet is their great scene of business, and the right adjusting of their hair the principal

employment of their lives. The sorting of a suit of ribbons is reckoned a very good morning's work; and if they make an excursion to a mercer's or a toy-shop, so great a fatigue makes them unfit for anything else all the day after. Their more serious occupations are sewing and embroidery, and their greatest drudgery, the preparation of jellies and sweet-meats. This, I say, is the state of ordinary women; though I know there are multitudes of those of a more elevated life and conversation, that move in an exalted sphere of knowledge and virtue, that join all the beauties of the mind to the ornaments of dress, and inspire a kind of awe and respect, as well as love, into their male beholders. I hope to increase the number of these by publishing this daily paper, which I shall always endeavour to make an innocent if not an improving entertainment, and by that means at least divert the minds of my female readers from greater trifles. At the same time, as I would fain give some finishing touches to those which are already the most beautiful pieces in human nature, I shall endeavour to point out all those imperfections that are the blemishes, as well as those virtues which are the embellishments, of the sex. In the meanwhile I hope these my gentle readers, who have so much time on their hands, will not grudge throwing away a quarter of an hour in a day on this paper, since they may do it without any hindrance to business.

I know several of my friends and well-wishers are in great pain for me lest I should not be able to keep up the spirit of a paper which I oblige myself to furnish every day: but to make them easy in this particular, I will promise them faithfully to give it over as soon as I grow dull. This I know will be matter of great raillery to the small wits ; who will frequently put me in mind of my promise, desire me to keep my word, assure me that it is high time to give over, with many other pleasantries of the like nature, which men of a little smart genius cannot forbear throwing out against their best friends, when they have such a handle given them of being witty. But let them remember that I do hereby enter my caveat against this piece of raillery.

1.6 SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Addison is glad to note that the spectator has achieved a great amount of success and three thousand readers are enjoying it. This huge following increases their responsibility of the editor who has to see that he instructs as well as amuses. He would take all the trouble to make the paper useful for the large number of readers. He would enliven morality with wit and temper wit with morality, so that his readers may gain in both ways from the paper and get their money's worth. He wants that the effect of the moral instruction given in his paper be lasting and to this effect, he would continuously drill instruction into the minds of his readers. His purpose was to reform the age out of the follies and vices and to provide

serious thoughts for barren minds which would otherwise breed folly. Therefore, his ambition is to make this paper a part of the tea- equipage.

The Spectator, according to the writer, is not a political paper m because its purpose is not to cater to any political party. The editor himself feels that it is of greater use than political papers. This paper would help the reader to know himself, though it would not let them know what is happening in Moscow. Addison discloses the demerits of the political papers in as much as they incite anger and create enmity.

According to the writer, The spectator is specially recommended top certain types of people. The editor is of the opinion that the paper will be useful for those who are the spectators of himself. These spectators of the life are not involved in it much but they observe it from a distance. He also recommends it to theatrical tradesmen, titular physician, fellows of the Royal society, theoretical templars and statesmen out of business.

Later on, he intends to recommend the paper to those 'blamers of society' who are forever at the mercy of others to gather subjects for conversation because they have nothing of sense in their own heads. They are advised not to move out of their houses till they have read 'The Spectator'. The editor promises to provide them with matter for conversation for ensuing twelve hours.

According to the editor, the paper is of the greatest use to the female world. He feels that sufficient trouble has not been taken to devise entertainments for the women as rational beings. They are not treated as intellectuals. They think that the work of toilet is their main business. They consider sorting a suit of ribbons or visit to the fabric dealer or some shop dealing with trifles a good morning's work, and are tired after this to do anything else. Their serious occupations are embroidery and their greatest drudgery is preparation of jam and jelly making. There are some ladies who can combine learning with their flair for dressing well and they get success in commanding the respect and love of the beholders. The writer hopes that this will do his best in pointing out the blemishes as well as the virtues of the women who are the most beautiful of all human beings.

1.7 Summing up

Joseph Addison was definitely one of the great essayists of the 18th century England. His contribution is most commonly remembered with Richard Steele, another worthy essayist, for the periodical essays, 'The Tatler' and 'The Spectator'. His papers and periodicals are the most part essays in the art of living. They illustrate the practical nature of his own culture, his easy and skilled mastery of life.

We have come to know how certain factors were responsible for the growth of the periodical essays in the 18th century. In the essay, Joseph Addison openly discloses his intention his intension of writing the papers and essays. As the title of the essay is very much indicative, the essay 'The Uses of the Spectators' beautifully exhibits the aims i.e. the uses of the essay. The author informs us that his essays will be no-political and entertain certain section of the society. The editor is of the opinion that the paper will be useful for those who are the spectators of themselves. These spectators of the life are not involved in it much but they observe it from a distance. He also recommends it to theatrical tradesmen, titular physician, fellows of the Royal society, theoretical templars and statesmen out of business. Besides this, he is also of the opinion that the paper is of the greatest use to the female world. He feels that sufficient trouble has not been taken to devise entertainments for the women as rational beings. They are not treated as intellectuals. The writer hopes that this will do his best in pointing out the blemishes as well as the virtues of the women who are the most beautiful of all human beings.

The other two essays will be discussed in the 2nd Unit.

1.8 KEY WORDS

Periodical Essay: The periodical essay was a new literary form that emerged during the early part of the eighteenth century. Periodical essays typically appeared in affordable publications that came out regularly, usually two or three times a week, and were only one or two pages in length. Unlike other publications of the time that consisted of a medley of information and news, essay periodicals were comprised of a single essay on a specific topic or theme, usually having to do with the conduct or manners. They were often narrated by a persona or a group of personas, commonly referred to as a "club."For the most part, readers of the periodical essay were the educated middle class individuals who held learning in high esteem but were not scholars or intellectuals. Women were a growing part of this audience and periodical editors often tried to appeal to them in their publications. Great examples of Periodical essays contributed by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele are **The Tatler**, and **The Spectator**

The Coffee House: The chief outlets for the periodicals and the soil in which the ideas introduced in the essays took root were the coffee houses, the intellectual and social centres of the eighteenth century. Coffee had been brought into England about the middle of the preceding century and by the early 1700's had become an institution. Coffee houses were the chief gathering places for men of letters and were the natural centres for the dissemination of ideas and information. In the coffee houses circles were formed to mull over the matters of the day; the

opinions of the coffee houses became the criteria for pronouncing judgment on ideas and events of the times. The give and take of conversation was an important feature of London life and influenced it in many ways. Men's ideas were moulded and refined through contact with others' thoughts, and conversation became clearer and more polished.

The coffee houses had a direct effect on the literary style of the periodicals; because the papers were circulated and discussed in these centres, the writing needed to be as clear and colloquial as conversation. The coffee houses were an admirable part of eighteenth century life, but other facets of the times were less pleasant. The unpleasant aspects of the century—the prevalence of violence and crime in the poorly lighted London streets, the cruel punishments of criminals, the quackery of "medical" men, the extreme poverty of the lower classes—were not reflected to as great a degree as upper class morals and manners, but it was in this atmosphere that the periodical essay developed and did more, perhaps, than any other institution toward improving social conditions.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

1. History of English Literature by Legouis and Cazamian
2. The Spectator Essays: Introduction and Notes by John Morrison https://archive.org/stream/spectatoressaysi00addiuoft#page/n7/mode/2up
3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Addison
4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Spectator_(1711)
5. Coverley Papers from The Spectator by T. Singh

MODAL QUESTIONS

1. Give an account of the beginnings of the periodical essays in the eighteenth century.
2. ".....this paper will be more useful than to the female world'- Explain.
3. Write a note on the role of Coffee Houses in the growth of the periodical essays.
4. Write a critical appreciation of the essay "The Uses of the Spectator'.

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Unit 2 : The Spectator's Account of Himself, 'Of the Spectator'

Contents:

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 The Contribution of the Age to Prose

2.3 Addison's Prose Style

2.4 Mr. Spectator- the Fictional Narrator

2.5 The Texts

- 2.5.1 The Spectator's Account of Himself
- 2.5.2 Summary
- 2.5.3 'Of the Spectator'
- 2.5.4 Summary

2.6 Critical Note

2.7 Summing up

2.8 Key Words

2.9 Sources and Suggested Readings

Modal Questions

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will cover the two remaining prescribed essays of Joseph Addison.

After studying this Unit, you will be able –

- to get acquainted with how the age was marked with prose writing
- to be familiar with Addison's Prose style
- to understand the two essays in detail

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In the first Unit, you have studied the socio political background of the essay writing tradition of the 18th century. We have discussed the essay and its form and how some factors were responsible for the development of the periodical essay. However, the unit also deals with the essay the "**Uses of The Spectator'**. You should keep in mind that this essay is included in the first Unit because it is like the prologue to what Addison's essays are going to be about. In Unit-II, we shall discuss the two remaining essays in detail and the general idea about Addison's prose style. The essays are: **The Spectator's Account of Himself, and 'Of the Spectator'.** Interestingly, the second essay titled as 'Of the Spectator' also known as 'Of the Club' belongs to Richard Steele.

2.2 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE AGE TO PROSE

Much of eighteenth-century prose is taken up by topical journalistic issues-as indeed is the prose of any other age. However, in the eighteenth century we come across, for the first-time in the history of English literature, a really huge mass of pamphlets, journals, booklets, and magazines. The whole activity of life of the eighteenth century is embodied in the works of literary critics, economists, "letter-writers," essayists, politicians, public speakers, divines, philosophers, historians, scientists, biographers, and public projectors. Moreover, a thing of particular importance is the introduction of two new prose genres in this century. The novel and the periodical paper are the two gifts of the century to English literature, and some of the best prose of the age is to be found in its novels and periodical essays. Summing up the importance of the century are these words of a critic: "The eighteenth century by itself had created the novel and practically created the literary history; it had put the essay into general circulation; it had hit off various forms and abundant supply of lighter verse; it had added largely to philosophy and literature. Above all, it had shaped the form of English prose-of-all-work, the one thing that remained to be done at its opening. When an age has done so much, it seems somewhat illiberal to reproach it with not doing more." Even Matthew Arnold had to call the eighteenth century "our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century."

The essay, satire, and dialogue (in philosophy and religion) thrived in the age, and the English novel was truly begun as a serious art form. Literacy in the early 18th century passed into the working classes, as well as the middle and upper classes. Furthermore, literacy was not confined to men, though rates of female literacy are very difficult to establish. For those who were literate, circulating libraries in England began in the Augustan period. Libraries were open to all, but they were mainly associated with female patronage and novel reading.

2.3 ADDISON'S PROSE STYLE

It is easy to perceive that the prose style of Addison is an extension of that of Dryden, in so far as it embodies the thought of an author directly addressing an audience. But we see also, from the mode and method of Addison's writing, how vast a change in the composition of the audience has taken place since the closing years of the seventeenth century. Those turns of traditional courtliness, which so constantly, in Dryden's writings, indicate the personal influence of the sovereign, have disappeared from the style of his successor. A very large proportion of Dryden's prose consists of epistles dedicatory, addressed to great noblemen and courtiers, and full of adulation, but in the few dedications written by Addison the old exuberance of flattery is much subdued. On the other hand, the appeal to that great middle class, to which Dryden discoursed in his Prefaces, is in Addison, so conscious and direct, that even if all records of the Revolution had perished, we should be able to infer, from the Spectator alone, that the English nation, in the early years of the eighteenth century, was beginning to exercise a public opinion in matters relating to religion, politics, manners, and taste.

The spirit of this Revolution, as far as relates to taste and manners, may best be divined by contrasting the English society of the period with the contemporary society of France. In France, authority had prevailed over liberty, and a well-defined standard of order had been for some time established in all the forms and ceremonies of life. French manners and conversation had been formed by the joint operation of two social forces, the court and the drawing-room. I have spoken in another preface of the uniformity of taste produced by monarchical centralisation, in the various departments of public culture over which the king's authority naturally extended. An influence more subtle, but still intimately connected with the progress of absolutism, moulded the art of conversation. The French nobility, though they had been deprived by the Crown of so many of the powers and privileges of feudalism, had strictly preserved the social customs of their order. Nor had they forgotten the literary tradition, embracing the whole casuistry of love and the deification of women, in which the troubadours had embodied the poetical elements of the feudal system. Condemned to idleness during their attendance at court, the nobility now converted this tradition into a code of manners, and, in numerous societies modelled on that of the Hotel Rambouillet, under the presidency of the most accomplished women in the capital, a constant war of raillery was carried on between the two sexes, almost as scientific in its extravagance as the old love poetry of Provence. The art of conversation, developed by feminine genius, was thus carried in France to the height of perfection, and French prose became a matchless instrument for the purposes of criticism, analysis of character, and letter-writing. On the other hand, as the masculine spirit nourished by political liberty decayed, the refinement of the French language

and manners served as a veil to disguise the progress of social corruption. That exquisite irony of style, which could convey at one time thoughts full of feminine sentiment and delicacy, was used at another to recommend the morals of Petronius and Aretino. External order, however, was preserved in both spheres of art. The course of French conversational prose, flowing on in a broadening stream from Voiture to La Bruyère and Madame de Sévigné, descended to the amazing performances of M. de Crébillon fils, and never was its surface more smooth and limpid than on the brink of the cataract of Revolution.

In England this condition of things was exactly reversed. Nearly two centuries of religious and political dissension, while they had taught Englishmen how to live in obedience to law, had proved a rough school for manners, and every centre of social authority, qualified to exercise a refining influence, had been weakened in the long struggle. The court, which had hitherto given a direction to all movements of taste, after being first demoralised by its rapid changes of fortune, was at the close of the seventeenth century in almost complete eclipse. The energies of the nobility, now the real rulers of the country, were absorbed in politics and warped by party: they had no longer a common rallying-place at court; so that, though many of them had a genuine love of art and literature, they could not make their corporate influence on them felt, as in the brilliant days that followed the Restoration. Whatever religious and moral control over the manners of society would naturally have been exercised by the Established Church was weakened by sectarian feeling. As regards the influence of women, the tragic history of England since the Reformation had developed what was heroic in female character: but such spirits as Lady Fairfax, Lady Russell, and Lady Clancarty were not formed in the drawing-room; and a comparison of the average English lady of the period, as her portrait is painted in the tenth number of the Spectator, with her French contemporary, as seen in the letters of Madame de Sévigné, gives us an accurate measure of the respective degrees of refinement in the two nations after the Revolution of 1688. If Englishmen were a hundred years in advance of their neighbours in the art of self-government, they were nearly as far behind them in the art of conversation.

It is the supreme distinction of Addison, as the chief founder of English essay-writing, to have created in England a school of literary taste which, without sacrificing any of the advantages derived from liberty, has raised our language almost to a level with the French in elegance and precision. The rule of order in the department of manners, imposed on French society at court by kingly authority, grew up, thanks to Addison and his fellow-workers, in the coffee-houses of England, by means of reason and free discussion. All that delicacy of thought and expression, which, in France, was inspired by women, and was so much the freemasonry of a few select drawing-rooms that it became a literary dialect, was

circulated by Addison, wherever the English language was spoken in educated society, through the channel of the press. He had lived for more than a year in France, and must have felt the full charm of the French style of conversation. A weaker man would have endeavoured to imitate it. But Addison knew that such a frail exotic must perish in the open air, and that it would be an almost hopeless task to graft any branch of culture springing out of absolutism on the wild stock of English freedom. Whatever influence the example of French elegance may insensibly have exercised on his mind, the standard of expression he adopted was as entirely the reflection of his own nature, as the Tatlers and Spectators were the product of the peculiar conditions of English life. And it was just because the essay in his hands held up so clear a mirror to the different opposing elements in the life of the nation; because, without identifying itself with any party, it reflected whatever was vital in the spirit of chivalry and the spirit of Puritanism, in the interests of town and country, of art and literature, in a word, of men and women; that it became in England so powerful an instrument for the improvement of taste and manners. The Spectator did not attempt to lecture his audience, but rather to bring them over to his ideas by reason, raillery, and gentle insinuation; and his hearers, on their side, insensibly won by the charm of his familiar discourse, began to detach themselves from the particular sects in which they had been educated, and gradually to form round him a solid body of public opinion.

In estimating the merits of Addison as a writer of English prose, it is necessary to make allowance for the moral purpose of his essays, and the social conditions under which they were produced. We cannot analyse our tastes; but if any reader is inclined to undervalue the speculative portions of Addison's writings, as superficial and commonplace, he should remember that many imaginative truths, which we now accept instinctively, were not established without painful efforts of thought in earlier generations. Those short sermons, for example, like the essays on cheerfulness, in the Spectator, which in this day seem little more than collections of elegant platitudes, had a different meaning for readers who had been nourished from youth on the prison fare of Puritanism. Homilies on the various duties of life are not now very enlivening literature, but they exercised a powerful influence on an age which, educated in the school of manners formed by the Restoration, was in some doubt whether either religious principle or conjugal fidelity was quite in keeping with the character of a gentleman. As to the critical papers in the Spectator there were some, even in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, who held them cheap; but Johnson thought otherwise of them; and we who recollect that they were written when the minds of men were as yet scarcely weaned from admiration of rhymed tragedies and metaphysical "wit," and who observe in our own time a certain revival of similar tastes, may even now be of Johnson's opinion.

It is, however, no doubt, as a humourist, and a painter of manners, rather than as a critic; as a master of that familiar conversational style, midway between the personal discourse of Dryden's prefaces and the anonymous expression of opinion in a modern newspaper, that Addison has secured imperishable fame. This side of his genius is marked, in respect of thought, by three prevailing characteristics. One is irony; in other words, an inimitable air of gravity which sets before the reader some folly or absurdity, as if it were entirely consistent with nature and reason. Good examples of this kind of writing may be found in Spectators, Nos. 13, 28, 34, 44, 72. A not less remarkable feature in Addison's style is the richness and delicacy of his fancy. This sometimes clothes itself in allegory, one of the few literary traditions of the Middle Ages which he appears to have been anxious to preserve. But a far finer and more subtle expression of his fancy is found in those essays, where he surrounds with the rainbow hues of language and the brilliancy of literary allusion the manners of the men, and, more particularly the women of his time. The follies of the fan, the patch, the hoop, the headdress, and all those mysteries of the toilet, which Pope at the same period immortalised in the Rape of the Lock, are embalmed in Addison's essays with unrivalled sweetness and delicacy. Finally, the fullest scope was given to the exercise of these qualities by the dramatic fiction of the Club, which furnished a framework for the Spectator, and enabled Addison, in an assumed character, to describe, without any appearance of egotism, the various scenes of life as they came under his observation.

These characteristics of Addison's thought are reproduced in his style, which reflects in the most refined and beautiful form the conversational idiom of his period. He is, indeed, far from attaining that faultless accuracy which has been sometimes ascribed to him. It was his aim to make philosophy popular and always to discourse with his readers in familiar language; but it is observable that, when writing on abstract subjects, he frequently becomes involved and obscure. "Since the circulation of the blood," he says in one essay, "has been found out, and many other great discoveries have been made by our modern anatomists, we see new wonders in the human frame, and discern several important uses for those parts, which uses the ancients knew nothing of." 1 Here, in the first place, he must intend the words "those parts" to refer to "the human frame," which he has just spoken of in the singular number, and as a whole; in the next place he leads us to expect that the relative pronoun, "which," refers to "those parts"; and lastly, as this is not his meaning, he is reduced to the awkward shift of repeating after this relative the antecedent word which actually belongs to it. The difficulty he found in expressing abstract thought is illustrated by his frequent but faulty use of the conjunction "as"; for example: "We should sufficiently weigh the objects of our hope, whether they be such as we may reasonably expect from them what

we propose in their fruition;" 2 where it is plain that he ought either to have written "such, that," or "such as may give us reason to expect from them, etc." The following sentence is even more awkward and incorrect: "But there will be such a mixture of delight in the very disgust it gives us, as any of these qualifications are most conspicuous and prevailing:" 3 where he means to say: "There will be a mixture of delight in the very disgust it gives us, in proportion as any of these qualifications are conspicuous and prevailing."

Many similar inaccuracies of expression may be detected by the careful reader even in those compositions of Addison in which he has been most happily inspired. They may be classed under various heads:

(1) Elliptical sentences, especially in the use of relative pronouns as: "This was a reflection upon the pope's sister, who before the promotion of her brother was in those mean circumstances that Pasquin represented her" [to be in]. "But in the temper of mind he was then" [in which he then was] "he termed them mercies."

(2) Occasionally we meet with one of those false concords, caused by attraction, into which the most careful of writers is always liable to fall: e.g., "And it is plain that each of those poems has lost this great advantage."

(3) The following is of course a mere vulgarism: "The last are indeed more preferable."

(4) One word or phrase is sometimes wrongly substituted for another, as: "He was dictated [prompted] by his natural affection as well as by the rules of prudence, to make himself esteemed and beloved by Florio."

"The survey of the whole creation and of everything that is transacted in it, is a prospect [state] worthy of omniscience, and as much above that in which Virgil has drawn his Jupiter, etc."

"The best room in it had the reputation of being haunted, and by that means [on that account] was locked up."

(5) He sometimes falls into "pleonasm" by mixing his constructions; e.g., "I have heard one of the greatest geniuses this age has produced … assure me."

It is instructive to take note of these small blemishes, not only because they show how far the most finished writers come short of complete accuracy, but also because many of them seem to spring naturally out of Addison's conversational manner of writing. They are but specks in the midst of the ease, beauty, and simplicity of his familiar style. The prose of Addison marks the disappearance of that long tradition of Euphuism, which had left distinct traces of its influence even on so idiomatic a writer as Dryden, in whose style, as I have

already shown, two prominent features are metaphor,—used for the expression of ideas not associated with each other by nature,—and verbal antithesis. Addison's style on the other hand is mainly distinguished by a crystal clearness of expression, a beautiful propriety in the choice of words, and such a balance in the distribution of them as, without the aid of antithesis, leaves the ear at the close of each period with a sense of satisfaction. Instead of those unnatural or far-fetched resemblances, in the discovery of which the Euphuist showed his "wit," Addison sought to bring out by fancy paradoxes really hidden in nature. Here for example is a series of thoughts on the manufacture of paper: "It is pleasant enough to consider the change that a linen fragment undergoes by passing through the several hands above mentioned. The finest pieces of Holland, when torn to pieces, assume a new whiteness more beautiful than their first, and often return in the shape of letters to their native country. A lady's shift may be metamorphosed into billet-doux, and come into her possession a second time. A beau may peruse his cravat after it is worn out, with greater pleasure and advantage than ever he did in a glass. In a word, a piece of cloth, after having officiated for some years as a towel or a napkin, may by this means be raised from a dunghill, and become the most valuable piece of furniture in a prince's cabinet."

Again, in place of the tricks of verbal antithesis practised by the Euphuists, Addison sought rather to charm mind and ear simultaneously by displaying the varied aspects of a single thought in a rising climax of rhythmical sentences. A good example of this style is furnished in the conclusion of his essay on the tombs in Westminster Abbey: "When I look upon the tombs of the great, every emotion of envy dies in me: when I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out: when I meet with the grief of parents upon a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion: when I see the tombs of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow: when I see kings lying by those who deposed them, when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind."

In a word, it may be said that the essay in the hands of Addison acquired that perfection of well-bred ease which arises from a complete understanding between an author and his audience. Writing in an age when opinion on all questions of art and manners was greatly divided, while at the same time there was a general desire for intellectual agreement, he treated of a variety of matters, which he was able, through the happiness of his genius, to present in a form pleasing to the imagination of the people. In later essayists we observe that, as their materials are less abundant, and their own personality becomes in consequence more prominent, their style begins to show less of the genius of conversation. When

Johnson, for instance, moralises in the Rambler he discourses with the reader, as he himself allows, in the spirit of a dictator. On the other hand, in the Essays of Charles Lamb, everything depends on the writer's own point of view; his fancy has to be followed, like the rays of the sun from the face of a mirror, into whatever odd nooks and crannies its whimsical caprice may happen to flash at the moment. In Addison the moral has not yet been pushed into the lecture, nor has humour yet departed from the work-a-day world: thought in him instinctively clothes itself in the common language of refined society, and fancy, grace, and beauty seem to spring out of the nature of things.

Check Your Progress

1. Give a brief note on Addison's prose style.

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2. How is Addison's writing an extension of Dryden?

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3. Give a short account of Addison's contribution to prose writing.

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2.4 MR. SPECTATOR- THE FICTIONAL NARRATOR

By the middle of the 18th century, the periodical and newspaper had definitely become a new reading genre. By the second half of the 18th century, the printed newspaper had grown into a four page issue, each page with four columns. It was the prototype of today's newspaper. It featured (contained) advertisements, employment announcements, reviews and information on concerts, books, fashion. There were also letters to the editor, gossip and long reports of overseas news. A very important function of the paper was the reporting of debates from the Houses of Parliament ("the Journals") conceded in 1771. And ***The Spectator*** was among the most popular and influential literary periodicals in England in the eighteenth century. Reading *The Spectator* yields a vivid portrait of London life in the first decades of the eighteenth century. *The Spectator*, like its equally famous predecessor, *The Tatler* (1709 to 1712), was the creation of Sir Richard Steele, who combined a life of politics with a writing career as a poet, a playwright, and a literary journalist. Using the pseudonym of Isaac Bickerstaff, Steele provided lively stories and reports on London society through *The Tatler*, which attracted male and female readers. Addison, already popular as poet, was also a playwright and a writer on miscellaneous topic, contributed material to *The Tatler* and then formed a collaborative relationship with Steele to write for *The Spectator*. While *The Tatler* featured both news and short essays on topical matters, *The Spectator*, with the established readers of *The Tatler* as its primary buyers, was composed of one long essay on the social scene or a group of fictive letters to the editor that gave Addison and Steele a forum for moral or intellectual commentary. This was presented in the periodical by the specially created, fictional social observer, "Mr. Spectator."

The Spectator was narrated by the voice of a character calling himself "Mr. Spectator", a man who describes himself as taciturn, a poor conversationalist who would rather observe and report than get involved in the scenes that he relates. And the Paper consisted of observations made by this fictional narrator, the ever-observant Mr. Spectator who was a member of the fictional Spectator club. Mr. Spectator portrayed himself as not belonging to any one class or occupation ('I have made myself a Speculative Statesman, Soldier, Merchant, and Artizan, without ever meddling with any Practical Part in Life'3), although he did admit to inheriting a small hereditary estate. Mr. Spectator compensated for his own class ambiguity by defining members of this club by their economic and social functions. As Mr. Spectator himself explains, "I have often been told by my Friends that it is Pity so many useful Discoveries which I have made, should be in the Possession of a Silent Man. For this Reason therefore, I shall publish a Sheet-full of Thoughts every Morning, for the benefit of my Contemporaries." Through him we are introduced to his small circle of friends,

each of whom is a kind of social-type writ small. Among these are Sir Roger de Coverley, the country squire and Tory foxhunter; Will Honeycomb, the gallant man-about-town; Sir Andrew Freeport, merchant and man of affairs; and finally there is Captain Sentry, the retired soldier.

Most importantly, the first number of *The Spectator* begins with Addison's general introduction of Mr. Spectator to his readers. As Mr. Spectator explains, readers want to know something about an author, even if the information is general: Thus I live in the World, rather as a Spectator of Mankind, than as one of the Species . . . as a Looker-on, which is the Character I intend to preserve in this Paper. As for keeping some personal details to himself, Mr. Spectator notes that knowing his real name, his age, and his place of residence would spoil his ability to act as a nonpartisan observer. By issue 10 (written by Addison), Mr. Spectator reports to his readers that the periodical has a daily circulation of three thousand papers, and, by its height in 1712, nine thousand issues of it are sold daily in London. In addition to essays on a single theme, some issues used letters from readers (written by friends of Addison and Steele), which created the impression of a widespread circulation while offering a means for Mr. Spectator to address specific social problems. Issue 20, for example, written by Steele, is based on a young lady's note about men who stare at women in church. Mr. Spectator gives a detailed and courteous reply that contrasts "male impudence," as he labels it, among the English, the Irish, and the Scots. Several subsequent issues, such as 48 and 53, are composed entirely of these sorts of letters, which become a typical way for the authors to discuss male and female social behaviour and, usually, female fashion. The importance of conversation in society is profiled in issue 49, also by Steele, on the role of the coffeehouse as "the Place of Rendezvous to all that live near it, who are thus turned to relish calm and ordinary..

Additionally, Mr. Spectator speaks of Great Britain's fragile state with nature because the climate and soil are not conducive to production of many natural products. The persona states that nature furnishes just the "bare necessities"(2336) in Great Britain and that most commodities of "richness" are supplied through the commerce created by the Exchange. This is a powerful statement that has great influence on the readers. The merchants and common man's desires include financial success and consumption of all the wonderful products that abound throughout the world, and should be enjoyed through the fruition of the Exchange.

During the eighteenth century the periodical joined its readership into a union of collective thoughts with the ability to influence the political, social and financial world around them. In the periodical Spectator No. 69, Joseph Addison's persona Mr. Spectator reveals a new diverse society of merchants who created

the Royal Exchange and who rivalled the powers of Parliament and past Monarchies over the British domains. "Mr. Spectator" declares that he is being completely captivated by the "mixing of several ministers of commerce"(2334), with the ability to communicate and create incredible financial transactions in the multi-national melting pot throughout Great Britain. Mr. Addison's persona relates how vast the wealth of merchants is that influenced the livelihood of Britain. The persona further implies that these powerful merchants create more financial wealth than the Royal Treasury controlled by "old kings"(2337).

Thus Mr. Spectator is the backbone of The Spectator Paper and it is through him that Joseph Addison expressed his opinions. Mr Spectator signed all his essays. He was an objective observer of the customs and morals, of the virtues and vices of the English society. He also introduced other fictional characters who represented different points of view and social classes and discussed different topics in the paper (from the Tory country gentleman, to the Whig London merchant, from the student of Law to the soldier and to the fashionable society man. However, no women were among them.

2.5 The Text

2.5.1 The Spectator's Account of Himself: (Spectator. Thursday, March 1, 1711)

Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem
Cogitat, ut speciosa dehinc miracula promat.. — Horace. A. P. 143

He does not lavish at a blaze his fire, Sudden to glare, and in a smoke expire; But rises from a cloud of smoke to light, And pours his specious miracles to sight — FRANCIS.

Or,

One with a flash begins, and ends in smoke;
Another out of smoke brings glorious light,
And (without raising expectations high)
Surprises us with dazzling miracles." (Earl of Roscommon)

I have observed, that a reader seldom peruses a book with pleasure, till he knows whether the writer of it be a black [dark] or a fair man, of a mild or choleric disposition, married or a bachelor, with other particulars of the like nature, that conduce very much to the right understanding of an author. To gratify this curiosity, which is so natural to a reader, I design this paper and my next as prefatory discourses to my following writings, and shall give some account in them of the several persons that are engaged in this work. As the chief trouble of compiling, digesting, and correcting will fall to my share, I must do myself the justice to open the work with my own history.

I was born to a small hereditary estate, which, according to the tradition of the village where it lies, was bounded by the same hedges and ditches in William the Conqueror's time that it is at present, and has been delivered down from father to son whole and entire, without the loss or acquisition of a single field or meadow, during the space of six hundred years. There runs a story in the family, that when my mother was gone with child of me about. three months she dreamt that she was brought to bed of a judge whether this might proceed from a law-suit which was then depending in the family, or my father's being a justice of the peace, I cannot determine; for I am not so vain as to think it presaged any dignity that I should arrive at in my future life, though that was the interpretation which the neighbourhood put upon it. The gravity of my behaviour at my very first appearance in the world, and all the time that I sucked, seemed to favour my mother's dream: for, as she has often told me, I threw away my rattle before I was two months old, and would not make use of my coral till they had taken away the bells from it.

As for the rest of my infancy, there being nothing in it remarkable, I shall pass it over in silence. I find, that during my non-age, I had the reputation of a very sullen youth, but was always a favourite of my school-master, who used to say, that my parts were solid, and would wear well. I had not been long at the university, before I distinguished myself by a most profound silence; for during the space of eight years, excepting in the public exercises of the college, I scarce uttered the quantity of an hundred words; and indeed do not remember that I ever spoke three sentences together in my whole life. Whilst I was in this learned body, I applied myself with so much diligence to my studies, that there are very few celebrated books, either in the learned or modern tongues, which I am not acquainted with.

Upon the death of my father, I was resolved to travel into foreign countries, and therefore left the university with the character of an odd, unaccountable fellow, that had a great deal of learning, if I would but show it. An insatiable thirst after knowledge carried me into all the countries of Europe in which there was

anything new or strange to be seen: nay, to such a degree was my curiosity raised, that having read the controversies of some great men concerning the antiquities of Egypt, I made a voyage to Grand Cairo, on purpose to take the measure of a pyramid; and as soon as I had set myself right in that particular, returned to my native country with great satisfaction.

I have passed my latter years in this city, where I am frequently seen in most public places, though there are not above half a dozen of my select friends that know me; of whom my next paper shall give a more particular account. There is no place of general resort, wherein I do not often make my appearance; sometimes I am seen thrusting my head into a round of politicians at Will's, and listening with great attention to the narratives that are made in those little circular audiences. Sometimes I smoke a pipe at Child's, and whilst I seem attentive to nothing but the Postman [a newspaper], overhear the conversation of every table in the room. I appear on Sunday nights at St. James's Coffee-house, and sometimes join the little committee of politics in the inner room, as one who comes there to hear and improve. My face is likewise very well known at the Grecian, the Cocoa-Tree, and in the theatres both of Drury Lane and the haymarket. I have been taken for a merchant upon the Exchange for above these ten years, and sometimes pass for a Jew in the assembly of stock-jobbers at Jonathan's: in short, wherever I see a cluster of people, I always mix with them, though I never open my lips but in my own club.

Thus I live in the world rather as a Spectator of mankind than as one of the species; by which means I have made myself a speculative statesman, soldier, merchant, and artisan, without ever meddling with any practical part in life. I am very well versed in the theory of a husband or a father, and can discern the errors in the economy, business, and diversion of others, better than those who are engaged in them; as standers-by discover plots, which are apt to escape those who are in the game. I never espoused any part with violence, and am resolved to observe exact neutrality between the Whigs and Tories, unless I shall be forced to declare myself by the hostilities of either side. In short I have acted in all the parts of my life as a looker-on, which is the character I intend to preserve in this paper.

I have given the reader just so much of my history and character, as to let him see I am not altogether unqualified for the business I have undertaken. As for other particulars in my life and adventures, I shall insert them in following papers, as I shall see occasion. In the mean time, when I consider how much I have seen, read, and heard, I begin to blame my own taciturnity; and since I have neither time nor inclination to communicate the fullness of my heart in speech, I am resolved to do it in writing, and to print myself out, if possible, before I die. I have

been often told by my friends, that it is pity so many useful discoveries which I have made should be in the possession of a silent man. For this reason, therefore, I shall publish a sheet-full of thoughts every morning, for the benefit of my contemporaries; and if I can any way contribute to the diversion or improvement of the country in which I live, I shall leave it, when I am summoned out of it, with the secret satisfaction of thinking that I have not lived in vain.

There are three very material points which I have not spoken to in this paper; and which, for several important reasons, I must keep to myself, at least for some time: I mean an account of my name, my age, and my lodgings. I must confess, I would gratify my reader in anything that is reasonable; but as for these three particulars, though I am sensible they might tend very much to the embellishment of my paper, I cannot yet come to a resolution of communicating them to the public. They would indeed draw me out of that obscurity which I have enjoyed for many years, and expose me in public places to several salutes and civilities, which have been always very disagreeable to me; for the greatest pain I can suffer is the being talked to, and being stared at. It is for this reason likewise, that I keep my complexion and dress as very great secrets; though it is not impossible, but I may make discoveries of both in the progress of the work I have undertaken.

After having been thus particular upon myself, I shall in to-morrow's paper give an account of those gentlemen who are concerned with me in this work ; for, as I have before intimated, a plan of it is laid and concerted (as all other natters of importance are) in a club. However, as my friends have engaged me to stand in the front, those who have a mind to correspond with me, may direct their letters to the SPECTATOR, at Mr. Buckley's, in Little Britain. For I must further acquaint the reader, that though our club meets only on Tuesdays and Thursdays, we have appointed a Committee to sit every night, for the inspection of all such papers as may contribute to the advancement of the public weal.

2.5.2 SUMMARY

In the above paper Addison gives a brief character sketch of Mr. Spectator (the name assumed by himself and his fellow writers like Steele, Budgell and Tickell who also contributed to The Spectator. The following are the traits of Mr. Spectator's personality on which he throws light:

a. He was born to a small family estate which dates back to the very ancient times.

b. He is a very widely travelled gentleman.

c. True to his name, he is a 'spectator' of humanity and is curious to study the manners and conditions of all its sections. This curiosity impels him to visit public resorts like coffee-houses, exchanges, even foreign countries.

d. He is very reticent and reserved. Even while he was a child, he was tremendously sober and sedate. He hates "being talked to, and being stared at."

e. His persistent observation of humanity has paid him rich dividends in so far as it has made him an adept at all trades. But he is just an arm-chair philosopher, not a man of action.

f. He is the chief organizer of the "Spectator club" which meets twice a week. He will bring out a "sheet-full of thoughts" every morning for the pleasure and profit of his countrymen.

Addison begins the first paper of The Spectator with a subtle ironical remark. He says that a reader is justly curious about the character of the writer whose work he is studying. It is essential to satisfy this curiosity of the reader about particulars such as the marital status, the temperament and the complexion of the writer, because such knowledge is of great value for the right understanding of an author. Keeping this point in view, Mr. Spectator will throw some light on his own character.

Mr. Spectator was born to a small estate which among his ancestors had changed hands from father to son without the least change in its area. Six months before his birth his mother dreamt that her child would become a judge. After his birth, as an infant, Mr. Spectator behaved in such a dignified and sober manner that his mother became certain of the truth of her dream. Unlike other children he hated noise-producing toys such as rattles and corals.

Then Mr. Spectator comes to his educational career at the school and the university. As a student he was a hard and intelligent worker and his school teacher had a high opinion of his talents. However, he remained reticent and reserved. Then he talks about his travels. After his father's death he left the university and embarked on a long spell of travelling. He visited all the countries of Europe and went as far as Egypt. There he took the exact measurement of a pyramid, which had been a very controversial issue.

After recapitulating his past biography, Mr. Spectator comes to the present and tells us something about his personal activities and aptitudes. We are told that he is very fond of mixing with all sorts of people so as to increase his knowledge about humanity. He is particularly happy to be at public places like markets, exchanges and coffee-houses because they provide him with ample opportunity to see and meet people belonging to all walks of life. His passion is to see, but not to talk to people.

Through his minute and painstaking observation of all kinds of people Mr. Spectator has become qualified in all the theoretical aspects of most professions and pursuits of life. However, he is not a man of action. Further, Mr. Spectator assures us of his political impartiality.

Thus Mr. Spectator builds up an impression of his being a well-read, well-travelled, widely aware and keenly observant man of speculation well-equipped for the job he has taken in hand. He has much to communicate, but he dislikes talking. Therefore, everyday from this day onwards Mr. Spectator would be publishing a sheet-full containing his thoughts which he is averse to communicating in speech. He will aim at the entertainment and edification of his countrymen, and the achievement of this aim will give him much satisfaction that he has done his duty.

Though Mr. Spectator has revealed much of himself in this paper hither to, yet he does not want to reveal three important points concerning himself. They are:

a. His name,

b. Age, and

c. Lodgings.

The disclosure of these particulars would have made for much embarrassment to him; because people would have greeted him everywhere and liked to have talked with him. Mr. Spectator wishes to remain obscure to avoid being talked to or stared at.

In the end, Mr. Spectator points out that he will give an account of the members of the "Spectator Club in the next paper. He invites the readers to write him letters if they like. The Club will examine all such papers as may tend to public welfare.

Check Your Progress

1. Draw the character sketch of Mr. Spectator on the basis of the essay prescribed.

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2. 'An insatiable thirst after knowledge carried me into all the countries of Europe'—Explain.

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2.5.3 Of The Spectator: (March 2, 1711)(Also known as 'Of the Club')

— Ast Alli sex

Et plures uno conclamant ore.—Juvenal, "Satires," vii. 167

[Six more at least join their consenting voice.]

THE first of our Society is a Gentleman of Worcestershire, of ancient Descent, a Baronet, his Name Sir ROGER DE COVERLY. His great Grandfather was Inventor of that famous Country-Dance which is called after him. All who know that Shire are very well acquainted with the Parts and Merits of Sir ROGER. He is a Gentleman that is very singular in his Behaviour but his Singularities proceed from his good Sense, and are Contradictions to the Manners of the World, only as he thinks the World is in the wrong. However, this Humour creates him no Enemies, for he does nothing with Sourness or Obstinacy; and his being unconfined to Modes and Forms, makes him but the readier and more capable to please and oblige all who know him. When he is in town he lives in Soho Square. It is said, he keeps himself a Batchelour by reason he was crossed in Love by a perverse beautiful Widow of the next County to him. Before this Disappointment, Sir ROGER was what you call a fine Gentleman, had often supped with my Lord Rochester and Sir George Etherege fought a duel upon his first coming to Town, and kick'd Bully Dawson in a publick Coffee-house for calling him Youngster. But being ill used by the above-mentioned Widow, he was very serious for a year and a half; and tho his Temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself and never dressed afterwards; he continues to wear a Coat and Doublet of the same Cut that were in Fashion at the Time of his Repulse, which, in his merry Humours, he tells us, has been in and out twelve times since he first wore it. Tis said Sir ROGER grew humble in his Desires after he had

forgot this cruel Beauty, insomuch that it is reported he has frequently offended in Point of Chastity with Beggars and Gypsies: but this is look d upon by his Friends rather as Matter of Raillery than Truth. He is now in his Fifty-sixth Year, cheerful, gay, and hearty, keeps a good House in both Town and Country ; a great Lover of Mankind ; but there is such a mirthful Cast in his Behaviour, that he is rather beloved than esteemed. His Tenants grow rich, his Servants look satisfied, all the young Women profess Love to him, and the young Men are glad of his Company: When he comes into a House he calls the Servants by their Names, and talks all the way Up Stairs to a Visit. I must not omit that Sir ROGER is a Justice of the Quorum; that he fills the chair at a Quarter-Session with great Abilities, and three Months ago, gained universal Applause by explaining a Passage in the Game-Act.

The Gentleman next in Esteem and Authority among us, is another Batchelour, who is a Member of the Inner Temple: a Man of great Probity, Wit, and Understanding; but he has chosen his Place of Residence rather to obey the Direction of an old humour some Father, than in pursuit of his own Inclinations. He was placed there to study the Laws of the Land, and is the most learned of any of the House in those of the Stage. Aristotle and Longinus are much better understood by him than Littleton or Cooke. The Father sends up every Post Questions relating to Marriage-Articles, Leases, and Tenures, in the Neighbourhood ; all which Questions he agrees with an Attorney to answer and take care of in the Lump. He is studying the Passions themselves, when he should be inquiring into the Debates among Men which arise from them. He knows the Argument of each of the Orations of Demosthenes and Tully, but not one Case in the Reports of our own Courts. No one ever took him for a Fool, but none, except his intimate Friends, know he has a great deal of Wit. This Turn makes him at once both disinterested and agreeable : As few of his Thoughts are drawn from Business, they are most of them fit for Conversation. His Taste of Books is a little too just for the Age he lives in ; he has read all, but approves of very few. His Familiarity with the Customs, Manners, Actions, and Writings of the Ancients, makes him a very delicate Observer of what occurs to him in the present World. lie is an excellent Critick, and the Time of the Play is his Hour of Business exactly at five he passes through New Inn., crosses through Russel Court; and takes a turn at Will s till the play begins ; he has his shoes rub d and his Perriwig power'd at the Barber's as you go into the Rose. It is for the Good of the Audience when he is at a Play, for the Actors have an Ambition to please him.

The Person of next Consideration is Sir ANDREW FREEPORT, a Merchant of great Eminence in the City of London: A Person of indefatigable industry, strong Reason, and great Experience. His Notions of Trade are noble and generous, and (as every rich Man has usually some sly Way of Jesting, which

would make no great Figure were he not a rich Man) he calls the Sea the British Common. He is acquainted with Commerce in all its Parts, and will tell you that it is a stupid and barbarous Way to extend Dominion by Arms; for true Power is to be got by Arts and industry. He will often argue, that if this Part of our Trade were well cultivated, we should gain from one Nation ; and if another, from another. I have heard him prove that Diligence makes more lasting Acquisition than Valour, and that Sloth has ruin d more Nations than the Sword. He abounds in several frugal Maxims, amongst which the greatest Favourite is, A Penny saved is a Penny got. A General Trader of good Sense is pleasanter Company than a general Scholar ; and Sir ANDREW having a natural unaffected Eloquence, the Perspicuity of his Discourse gives the same Pleasure that Wit would in another Man. He has made his Fortunes himself; and says that England may be richer than other Kingdoms, by as plain Methods as he himself is richer than other Men; though at the same Time I can say this of him, that there is not a Point in the Compass, but blows home a Ship in which he is an Owner.

Next to Sir ANDREW in the Club-room sits Captain SENTRY, a Gentleman of great Courage, good Understanding, hut Invincible Modesty. He is one of those that deserve very well, but are very awkward at putting their Talents within the Observation of such as should take notice of them. He was some Years a Captain, and behaved himself with great Gallantry in several Engagements, and at several Sieges; but having a small Estate of his own, and being next Heir to Sir ROGER, he has quitted a Way of Life in which no Man can rise suitably to his Merit, who is not something of a Courtier, as well as a Soldier. I have heard him often lament, that in a Profession where Merit is placed in so conspicuous a View, Impudence should get the better of Modesty. When he has talked to this Purpose, I never heard him make a sour Expression, but frankly confess that he left the World, because he was not fit for it. A strict Honesty and an even regular Behaviour, are in themselves Obstacles to him that must press through Crowds who endeavour at the same End with himself; the Favour of a Commander. He will, however, in this Way of Talk, excuse Generals, for not disposing according to Men's Dessert, or enquiring into it : For, says he, that great Man who has a mind to help me, has as many to break through to come at me, as I have to come at him : Therefore he will conclude, that the man who would make a Figure, especially in a military Way, must get over all false Modesty, and assist his Patron against the Importunity of other Pretenders, by a proper Assurance in his own Vindication. He says it is a civil Cowardice to be backward in asserting what you ought to expect, as it is a military Fear to be slow in attacking when it is your Duty. With this Candour does the Gentleman speak of himself and others. The same Frankness runs through all his Conversation. The military Part of his Life has furnished him with many Adventures, in the Relation

of which he is very agreeable to the Company; for he is never over-bearing, though accustomed to command Men in the utmost Degree below him ; nor ever too obsequious, from an Habit of obeying Men highly above him.

But that our Society may not appear a Set of Humourists unacquainted with the Gallantries and Pleasures of the Age, we have among us the gallant Will.. HONEYCOMB, a Gentleman who, according to his Years, should be in the Decline of his Life, but having ever been very careful of his Person, and always had a very easy Fortune, Time has made but very little Impression, either by Wrinkles on his Forehead, or Traces in his Brain. His Person is well turned, and of a good Height. He is very ready at that sort of Discourse with which Men usually entertain Women. He has all his Life dressed very well, and remembers Habits as others do Men. He can smile when one speaks to him, and laughs easily. He knows the History of every Mode, and can inform you from which of the French King s Wenches our Wives and Daughters had this Manner of curling their hair, that Way of placing their Hoods ; whose Frailty was covered by such a Sort of Petticoat, and whose Vanity to show her Foot made that Part of the Dress so short in such a Year. In a Word, all his Conversation and Knowledge has been in the female World: As other Men of his Age will take Notice to you what such a Minister said upon such and such an Occasion, he will tell you when the Duke of Monmouth danced at Court such a Woman was then smitten, another was taken with him at the Head of his Troop in the Park. In all these important Relations, he has ever about the same Time received a kind Glance, or a Blow of a Fan, from some celebrated Beauty, Mother of the present Lord such-a-one. If you speak of a young Commoner that said a lively thing in the House, he starts up, He has good Blood in his Veins, Tom Mirabell begot him, the Rogue cheated me in that Affair; that young Fellow's Mother used me more like a Dog than any Woman I ever made Advances to. This Way of Talking of his, very much enlivens the Conversation among us of a more sedate Turn ; and I find there is not one of the Company but myself, who rarely speak at all, but speaks of him as of that Sort of Man, who is usually called a well-bred fine Gentleman. To conclude his Character, where Women are not concerned, lie is an honest worthy Man.

I cannot tell whether I am to account him whom I am next to Speak of, as one of our Company; for lie visits us but seldom, but when he does, it adds to every Man else a new Enjoyment of himself. He is a Clergyman, a very philosophic Man, of general Learning, great Sanctity of Life, and the most exact good Breeding. He has the Misfortune to be of a very weak Constitution, and consequently cannot accept of such Cares and Business as Preferments in his Function would oblige him to: He is therefore among Divines what a Chamber-Counsellor is among Lawyers. The Probity of his Mind, and the Integrity of his Life, creates him Followers, as being eloquent or loud advances others. He seldom introduces

the Subject he speaks upon; but we are so far gone in Years, that he observes when he is among us, an Earnestness to have him fall on some divine Topick, which lie always treats with much Authority, as one who has no Interests in this World, as one who is hastening to the Object of all his Wishes, and conceives Hope from his Decays and Infirmities. These are my ordinary Companions.

2.5.4 Summary

As promised in the last paper, the Spectator here gives an account of all his companions. Thus it is an account of the six gentlemen who, along with Mr. Spectator, are members of the Spectator Club. These gentlemen are:

i. Sir Roger de Coverley: He is a good natured, jolly country baronet who was once very particular about elegant dress and sophisticated manners. However, after his unsuccessful love-affair with a widow, he has given up attending to his dress and polite pursuits.

ii. A member of the Inner Temple: His name is not mentioned. Though his profession is law, he does not much attend to legal studies. Rather, he gives full attention to theatre and literature.

iii. Sir Andrew Freeport: He is a prosperous merchant and is a champion of free trade and commerce.

iv. Captain Sentry: He is an ex-serviceman. He is modest and self-critical.

v. Will Honeycomb: He is an old man-about-town and a lady-killer. He is also a recognized authority on fashions and fads of the town.

vi. An unnamed clergyman: He enjoys but poor health. He is a great authority on divinity.

The Spectator (Steele) in this paper gives thumbnail sketches of the six members of the Club. The first of them is a well-known country baronet. He has some oddities and does not follow the rest of the world in some particulars. He is fifty six but still a bachelor. It is said that as a young man he fell in love with an obstinate widow who broke his heart. From then onwards he gave up his fashionable pursuits and elegant manner of dressing up and is sticking ever since to very old fashioned clothes. He is loved by everyone and is very free with his servants. Sometimes he acts as a justice of the quorum. He is naturally jovial and a lover of all mankind.

The next member of the Club is also a bachelor. He is a member of the Inner Temple. His profession is law, but his interests lie elsewhere. He is fond of literature and drama. He is honest, intelligent and industrious. His father wants to

see him as a lawyer. In literature he is a very discriminating critic and allows merit to only a few writers. He is perfectly conversant with ancient life and manners and assesses modern life and manners by comparing them with old. He is a regular play-goer, so much so that it seems as if seeing plays were his real "business". All the actors do their best to please him and cannot give slipshod performance when he is around because they know that no flaw will go unnoticed by him.

The third is Sir Andrew Freeport—an eminent merchant of London. He is very well-experienced, industrious and has strong common sense about him. He goes on repeating incessantly what he calls a "joke". According to him England can dominate other countries by trade, not by war. He is all support for expansion of trade and industry. He is very prosperous and the trade-ships owned by him (singly or in partnership with others) ply in all directions of the world.

The fourth is Captain Sentry who is very courageous but very modest. Indeed it is on account of his modesty that he was obliged to renounce his career in the army. In the army a man cannot make headway unless he tries to catch the attention of his superiors by exhibition of his merits. But being very modest, Captain Sentry could not do so and he saw less deserving men being promoted in preference to him. Hence he resigned captainship. However, he is not bitter at his misfortune and gives all the blame to himself for his modesty. Financially, he is not ill disposed. He has a small estate of his own and is the next heir to Sir Roger.

The fifth is an old swashbuckler, an authority on women and sartorial fashions. In spite of his age he looks young and healthy. He remembers the history and genesis of every new and old fashion. He has many love affairs to his credit. His jolly and unreserved conversation enlivens the atmosphere of the Club. Towards the end Will Honeycomb, in a Spectator Paper, is shown as a married to a country belle and thereafter leading a subdued and reformed life.

Lastly, there is an unnamed clergyman who is but a casual visitor to the Club. He is very religious, learned and philosophic. But because his health is very poor, he does not act in professional capacity. However, he does advise other clergymen regarding matters connected with their work. Whenever he observes that the other members of the Club are in a mood to listen to him talk about divine matters, he obliges them duly.

Steele in his brief portrayal of the six characters in this paper may also have been indebted to the seventeenth century character writers—notably Hall, Stephen, Earle and Over bury. These writers chose some real characters from life and word-painted them briefly. Mostly they concentrated on representative rather than individual traits of their "modes". On the whole, their performance falls below excellence. Their characters are generally wooden and lack flexibility

and liveliness. It is so probably because they modelled their performance rather too slavishly on the precedent set by Theophrastus, the first Greek character-writer. On the other hand, on account of his disregard of slavish imitation and his observation, experience, insight, humanity and uncanny mastery of detail, Steele's characters are very life-like. They are not gowns or walking sticks, but men, alive and kicking. Thus, in spite of his indebtedness to some predecessors, Steele's achievement is in a good measure his own.

2.6. CRITICAL NOTE

This particular essay, giving us an account of the different types of characters supposed to be the members of the Spectator's Club takes its distinction from Steele's prevailing tenderness of heart and wide acquaintance with human life. He loved company and the quickness of his sympathies made him constantly alive to differences in the personalities of his companions. The characters of Sir Roger, Sir Andrew Freeport, Captain Sentry Will Honeycomb are really artistic creations and belong to poetry and fiction. Of the other qualities of Steele's style as reflected in this essay, we remark cursorily. In command of words he is not equal to Addison, his choice is much less felicitous..We came across Sir Roger in this first essay of Steele. He represents Sir Roger as a jolly country gentlemen 'keeping a good house both in town and country' a lover of mankind, with such a mirthful cast in his behaviour that he is beloved rather than esteemed; unconfined to modes and forms, disregarding the manners of the world when he thinks them in the wrong. Thus we find that all that is amiable in the conception of Sir Roger belongs to Steele.

It is interesting to note that Steele had said that Sir Roger was rather beloved than esteemed. But this was estimating the Knight by the standard of his town friends. Addison places him entirely in the country, and represents him as an object of great admiration and respect to the simple of the country or Tory party.

Check Your Progress

1. How are the characters of the Six gentlemen portrayed in the essay? (60 to 80 words)

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2. Draw the character sketch of Sir Roger De Coverely. (60 to 80 words)

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2.7. SUMMING UP

Addison was a great critic and social reformer who wished to bring about a change in the life of the contemporary people through his contribution to The Spectator. In his periodical essays, he appears as a judicious critic of the manners and morals of the society. The main aim was to reform the society and it was Addison's task "to enliven morality with wit; and to temper wit with morality." He satirises the vanity of the society but he is very careful and mild in his satire and, unlike Pope or Dryden, he is never personal in his attack, his mission being to correct the manners of the people and to improve their moral standards.

Like the *Tatler*, the *Spectator* reached a very large audience, making it one of the most influential works of the period. Not only was the *Spectator* praised for its prose style and seen as a model of elegant writing, but it was also valued for its "learning." In addition to treating topics that made its predecessor a hit – manners, trends, fashion – the *Spectator* addressed weightier matters. Addison engaged his readers in discussions of philosophical and scientific concepts, literary criticism, religious beliefs, and moral issues. He also introduced readers to the best classical authors (Horace, Virgil, Juvenal) and modern thinkers (Locke, Newton, Pascal).

Although Addison conceived the *Spectator* as a didactic undertaking, it is a mistake to see the work merely as a dispenser of moral precepts and information. The *Spectator*'s deeper achievement is that it involved readers (a large portion of whom were women) in a thoughtful revaluation of the key cultural, social, and economic terms – such as "gentleman," "taste," "politeness," "credit"

– by which they collectively understood themselves, conducted their lives, and functioned as a society. In this respect, the *Spectator* provided crucial guidance as England made its way out of the political turmoil of the seventeenth century and developed into an advanced commercial society that was founded on new financial institutions, emerging institutions of sociability, and a revised set of cultural principles.

By engaging readers in broad, on-going discussions about themselves and their world, **the Spectator**, **the Tatler**, and other journals inspired by them, helped create the bourgeois public sphere. Seen as a major development of the Enlightenment, the public sphere enabled private people from different walks of life to come together to use their reason publicly to reflect on issues of general concern. This public, which was primarily a reading public, evolved as an entity that would contest the authority of the state and the traditional institutions that regulated society, the court and the church. As much any other writer, Addison played a critical role in moulding the public sphere in England and in shaping the views of its members.

2.7. KEY WORDS

Mr. Spectator: The Spectator was narrated by the voice of a character calling himself "Mr. Spectator", a man who describes himself as taciturn, a poor conversationalist who would rather observe and report than get involved in the scenes that he relates. And the Paper consisted of observations made by this fictional narrator, the ever-observant Mr. Spectator who was a member of the fictional Spectator club. Mr. Spectator portrayed himself as not belonging to any one class or occupation although he did admit to inheriting a small hereditary estate. Through him we are introduced to his small circle of friends, each of whom is a kind of social-type writ small. Among these are Sir Roger de Coverley, the country squire and Tory foxhunter; Will Honeycomb, the gallant man-about-town; Sir Andrew Freeport, merchant and man of affairs; and finally there is Captain Sentry, the retired soldier. Most importantly, the first number of *The Spectator* begins with Addison's general introduction of Mr. Spectator to his readers. Thus Mr. Spectator is the backbone of The Spectator Paper and it is through him that Joseph Addison expressed his opinions. Mr Spectator signed all his essays. He was an objective observer of the customs and morals, of the virtues and vices of the English society. He also introduced other fictional characters who represented different points of view and social classes and discussed different topics in the paper.

The Spectator Club: The Spectator club was a club or a society through which Steele and Addison adopted a fictional method of presentation of their own ideas about the society with the help of imaginary members who formed the Club. The club was known after its primary spokesman Mr. Spectator who was an "observer" of the manners and morals of Eighteenth century London life.

2.8. SOURCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

1. The Spectator Essays: Introduction and Notes by John Morrison https://archive.org/stream/spectatoressaysi00addiuoft#page/n7/mode/2up
2. Coverley Papers from The Spectator by T. Singh
3. http://www.bartleby.com/209/665.html
4. http://www.bartleby.com/219/0216.html
5. http://www.history-magazine.com/spectator.html

MODAL QUESTIONS

1. Account for the popularity of the Essay in the 18th Century.
2. Give a critical appreciation of the essay 'The Spectator's Account of Himself'
3. Consider the Spectator papers as a record of English social life in the eighteenth century.
4. What qualities of the typical Englishman are found in Sir Roger De Coverley?
5. How can you say that the character of Spectator reflects the personality of Addison?

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COURSE 104 (NON-FICTIONAL PROSE)

1. Life of Milton

2. Life of Cowley

—Samuel Johnson

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2.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through the unit, you will be able to-

- Write the basic about the life of John Milton and Abraham Cowley.
- Discuss the nature of their poetry.
- Identify their chief works and discuss them.
- List the point on which Dr. Johnson approves or disapproves of their work.
- List the characteristics of Metaphysical poetry.
- Repeat the points on which Dr. Johnson disapproved the Metaphysical school of poetry.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

'Life of Milton'and 'Life of Cowley' constitutes the firstand third entry in Dr. Johnson's work *The Lives of Poets*.Johnson's note on each poet is typically composed of three components: a biography gleaned primarily from secondary sources, a brief characterization of the poet, followed by Johnson's substantive critical perspective on the poet's work as a whole. The lives range in length from a few pages to a full volume. The collection had initially been planned as a slim volume, but upon completion the collection spanned 66 volumes: ten volumes of Johnson's notes, and another 56 of the poets' work. While Johnson wrote additional literary criticism, this is considered the central collection of his critical work. Johnson died in 1784, three years after the collection's completion.

He acknowledges the fact that much have already been written on the life of Milton. However, to maintain the uniformity of the edition, he had to rework a biography of the poet. Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets, which is commonly known as the Lives of the Poets, appeared in 1781 as the preface to a selection of work by the approximately fifty poets featured. None of the all-male poets featured were still alive at the book's publication; all wrote between the 1660s and the 1770s. While Johnson selected a few of the poets in the collection (Isaac Watts, Sir Richard Blackmore, John Pomfret, Thomas Yalden, and James Thomson), most were chosen by the booksellers who suggested and organized the collection.

Apart from writing about Abraham Cowley's life in 'Life of Cowley', Dr. Johnson focuses his attention more on the discussion of the genre of work that the poet wrote, i.e, Metaphysical Poetry. Dr. Johnson is highly critical of the

Metaphysical School of Poetry mainly because of their exaggerated style and lack of spontaneity.

2.3 LIFE OF JOHN MILTON

John Milton was born on December 9, 1908 near Thames in Oxfordshire. Dr. Johnson mentions him as a gentleman by birth. His father took the profession of a scribe after being disinherited for forsaking Catholicism and turning a protestant. However, he grew prosperous though this profession. He was also an eminent musical composer. Milton's father's prosperity provided him with a private tutor, Thomas Young, a Scottish Presbyterian with an M.A from the University of St. Andrews. After Young's tutorship, Milton attended St. Paul's School in London. There he began the study of Latin and Greek, and the classical languages left an imprint on his poetry in English. Later he attended Christ college in Cambridge in 1625.

After leaving Cambridge, Milton returned to his father who was residing in Buckinghamshire at that time. He lived the next five years there. During this time he studied Greek and Latin works extensively. This was also a productive time for him as he wrote down works like *Comus*, *Lycidas*, *Arcades*, etc. He was gradually becoming weary of the country life there and around that time his mother also died. This lightened his household responsibilities and he began travelling extensively around France and Italy. After travelling much of Italy, he returned to England having heard about fermenting of the civil war at home. After some months of stay in Italy and much consideration of the ongoing situation in England, he finally returned home. However, he did not engage in polemics or in the political cause immediately after his return to England. He became a school master who instructed his students on theology, georgics, astronomy,etc. apart from the prescribed curriculum of the school.

2.4 CHARACTERIZATION OF MILTON

Milton aimed to become a clergyman after entering Cambridge. However, his changed his mind after becoming disillusioned with the process. He found it difficult to comply with the institutional authority. As Dr. Johnson says, "…the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation." Dr. Johnson points out that it could be understood from his early writings that at that time he was greatly confident of himself. Despite developing a reputation for poetic skill and general erudition, Milton experienced alienation from his peers and university life as a whole. He also insinuates Milton of having some amount of contempt for others because he scarcely praised others at that time. He was

disdainful of the university curriculum, which consisted of stilted formal debates conducted in Latin on abstruse topics.

Dr. Johnson in his sometimes ironical and sometimes straightforwardly scathing language charges Milton of being malicious and arrogant. He disapproves of the republican government under Oliver Cromwell that overthrew monarchy. According to him, Cromwell was a tyrant and Milton submitted himself and his liberty to such a tyrant after having justified the murder of the King.

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1. Check Your Progress (Choose the correct answer)

- Which Christian sect did Milton follow?

  (a) Protestantism

  (b) Catholicism

  (c) Methodism

2.5 DR. JOHNSON'S CRITIQUE OF MILTON'S WORKS

2.5.1 Dr. Johnson on Milton's Political and Religious Pamphlets

Starting from the early forties, Milton was actively writing pamphlets, both on political and religious issues. Dr. Johnson writes about Milton's Pamphlet "Reformation" that was published in two books in 1641. This treatise targeted the evils of the established Catholic Church.He does this by emphasizing Milton's puritan rebelliousness in his replies to James Usher's defense of episcopacy, terming it as "puritanical savageness". This shows Dr. Johnson's disapproval of Milton democratic principles.He satirizes Milton as having high opinions of his own powers. He charges Milton of not knowing what noble actions to undertake for the wellbeing and honour of his country, despite his promises to do so.

Milton did not believe in mere prayers, but considers it essential to supplement it with 'industrious and select reading, steady observation and insights into all seemly and generous arts and affairs." (The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy, by Mr. John Milton", 1642)

Milton's divorce pamphlets were published in 1644 and 1645 under the title "The Judgement of Martin Bucer, Concerning Divorce" and "Expositions upon the four chief Places of Scriptures which treat of Marriage." Milton's troubled marriage with Mary Powel, who left him due to incompatibility issues, led him to

write down these pamphlets. His ideas on divorce were new and offensive at many points to the clergy. A certain amount of controversy was stirred and Milton was summoned to an assembly of the Lords in Westminster. Dr. Johnson does justice to Milton by remarking that despite differences with his wife and in political principles with his wife's family, he received them in his own house later on. This was done when the monarchy was gradually coming under threat of the republican movement under Cromwell.

Subsequently, Milton published his "Aeropagitica". This was written in the form of a speech advocating the freedom of unlicensed printing. Dr. Johnson finds fault with Milton's views objecting that such unbridled liberty has its dangers on the smooth functioning of the government. He renders Milton's demands insignificant and dismisses them through generalizations. He even proposes that the remedy of such dissentions is to punish the authors that express their dissent.

Dr. Johnson is highly critical of Milton's political pamphlets. The proof is this could further be found in the demeaning status that he gives to Milton's attempts at appealing the loyalists of the Republican cause even after the death of Cromwell. He calls works like, "A Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth" 'fantastical' and 'ludicrous'. He looks down upon Milton's attempts at political pamphleteering even at the immediately preceding time of the Restoration as pathetic and foolish. He does not give any serious consideration to the pamphlets that Milton simultaneously wrote down with Paradise Lost. He calls pamphlets like, "*Cabinet Council*", "*A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Cases*", etc. amusements among serious works for the writer.

Activity 1

Q. Make a list of the names of pamphlets written by Milton.

Ans:

2.5.2 Dr. Johnson on Milton's Paradise Lost

Johnson writes about poetry. He says that poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth by calling imagination to the help of reason. In this definition he combines both the nature of the poetic art (that it imitates truth or life) and its function (that it affords pleasure). In the imitation of truth it is guided by reason

and in affording pleasure by imagination. Johnson says in "The Preface to Shakespeare" that the end of writing is to instruct and the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. The truth of poetry is universal truth and it has a universal appeal.

Milton was already blinded by the time he was appointed secretary to the Lord Protector Cromwell. After spending some amount of time in this position and finding enough spare time, Milton is said to have considering working on the three plans in letters that he had planned earlier in his life. Dr. Johnson analyses the circumstances of his choice in settling with the plan to work on his long-deliberated masterpiece. According to him, Milton's first plan was to collect a dictionary but abandoned the project. His second aim was to compile a history from various authors. Both these projects required a keen sight but owing to his blindness they had to be abandoned. However, his plan of an epic poem was possible to be executed with success, which materialized into *Paradise Lost*. Dr. Johnson discusses in detail Milton's original design which was simple enough to have sufficed only in the production of an allegory or mystery play. But, Dr. John acknowledges the gradual maturity and complexity of the work's plan.

Unlike his disapproval of Milton the man, Dr. Johnson gives due credit to Milton's literary and intellectual capacities. He also acknowledges Milton's poetical excellence, skill in multiple languages and the very fact that he had accomplished such a vast work like *Paradise Lost* in his blindness. Dr. Johnson also credits Milton for composed his verses with great fluency without any prior thoughts. He credits Milton's free verse as the result of habitual excellence in composition.

2.5.3 Dr. Johnson's assessment of various aspects of *Paradise Lost*

Dr. Johnson starts his assessment of Paradise Lost by defining the concept of epic poetry.He says that Epic poetry "undertakes to teach the most important truths by the most pleasing precepts, and therefore relates some great event in the most affecting manner." The writer therefore, has to know the basics of the narrative art, should know the moral bounds, the nuances of vice and virtue, understand different characters, have the imagination to illustrate them effectively, etc. The poet must also have sufficient amount of skills in metrical composition. Having a moral is also a prerequisite to writing an epic poem. The poet would implement this moral into his narration. Dr. Johnson calls this narration 'fable'. The fable ought to be constructed enough artfully so that it excites the curiosity and surprises the reader. The subject of an epic ought to be one of great importance to humanity. He appreciates Milton's subject for his Paradise Lost, which is the

'fall of man', 'the fate of the world', 'rebellion against God', 'overthrow of Lucifer', 'the creation of a new race of reasonable creatures',etc.

The next important aspect that Dr. Johnson examines in *ParadiseLost* is its characters. The characters in the poem are different classes of angels and man. According to him the most difficult undertaking in Milton's writing was to maintain Satan's wicked character without adding any offensive expression or speech and thereby to maintain the dignity of the work. The characters of Adam and Eve are portrayed differently to suit two different circumstances- before and after the fall. Before the fall, Adam and Eve are depicted as innocent and purely benevolent and mutualin their love, admiring and gratuitous towards God, and unafraid of anything. After their fall, they have been depicted as guilty, suspicious, accusing and defensive. Gradually, they surrender themselves to the will of their creator.

The next aspect that Dr. Johnson assesses is the use of 'supernatural machinery'. Since, the subject deals with heaven and earth, he appreciates the use of supernatural powers.

Another aspect is that of the Episodes. According to Dr. Johnson there are only two episodes. The first one contained in Raphael's relation of the war in heaven and the second one Michael's account of the changes to happen in the world.

The next aspect is 'integrity' of the design. Dr. Johnson says that the design follows the Aristotelian model of a beginning, middle and an end. The short digressions that are found in the third, seventh and the ninth books, instead of tending to disintegrate the work lends to the poetic interest.

Dr. Johnson moves on to consider the 'sentiments' of *Paradise Lost.* Heconsiders the sentiments as expressive of the manners and related to characters as just. He is impressed with the lessons of morality and formation of the poem.

Considering the epic similies of Milton, Dr. Johnson says that they are "less numerous and more various, than that of his predecessors." Milton does not only use thorough comparisons but have them in ample amounts beyond the immediate. An example of this could be found in his comparison of the shield of Satan to the orb of the Moon.

He moves forward to examine Milton's 'diction'. According to Dr. Johnson Milton has a peculiar diction running in all of his works. This is the result of his hard labour on words and their suitable association to his grand ideas. He calls Milton's formation of his style under "a perverse and pedantic principle." Milton is said to have used the English words with a foreign idiom. Whatever be the subject Milton is said to have been consistent with his style. Despite a few faults in his diction, Dr. Johnson acknowledges Milton's mastery over his language.

The final aspect of Milton's poetry that Dr. Johnson examines is his 'versification'. He recognizes Milton's poetic measure as the Blank verse. Milton did not consider rhyme as an essential aspect of poetry. Dr. Johnson comments that although what Milton says might be true, music in poetry in almost all languages owes a lot to the rhyme schemes. While in some languages poetry might retain its music without rhyme and only with the arrangement of its syllables, in English poetry, the absence of rhyme reduces the pleasant aspect of the poems.

Activity 2

Q. Prepare a short paragraph stating biographical facts of Milton's life.

Ans.

2.5.4 Dr. Johnson on Milton's other poems

"Lycidas" is one of Milton's most famous single poems that received much critical acclamation. It has been written in the form of a pastoral poem. Dr. Johnson considers the diction of the poem harsh, and the rhyme irregular. Therefore, he says that the beauty of the poem must be sought in its imagery and sentiments. He considers the poem impassionate too, because according to him if there were passion involved the allusions in the poem would not be so remote or the opinions so obscure. Moreover, the poem has no truth and novelty in it. Dr. Johnson calls the form of the poem, "…a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting."

The representation of deities from Greek mythology in an idyllic country setting, the activities of the shepherd, the enquiries of the deities about Lycidas, etc. in the poem are considered "trifles" by Dr. Johnson. He finds fault with the admixture of such "trifling fictions" to the truths of human beings. The subsequent transition of the shepherd from a feeder of sheep to an ecclesiastical pastor in the poem is misleading and therefore unskillful for Dr. Johnson.

Dr. Johnson praises Milton's masque "Comus". It is noteworthy that he praises Milton for the power of description and the vigour of sentiments employed in the praise and defense of virtue in the work. You can note the fact that Dr. Johnson finds this work truly poetical with embellishments such as allusions, images, and descriptive epithets.

Another work that Dr. Johnson discusses is Milton's "Sonnets". The sonnets were written at different time of his life on different occasions. Dr. Johnson does not criticize the sonnets and considers them good.

2.6 LIFE OF ABRAHAM COWLEY

Abraham Cowley was born in London in the year 1618. He was the posthumous son of a wealthy London grocer. He was brought up by his mother who saw him grow famous and successful as a poet. Even as a young child Cowley took interest in poetry. As a child he read and re-read Edmund Spencer's *Fairy Queen*. These early experiences influenced him a great a deal in becoming a poet. In early record in another biography written by Dr. Sprat, Cowley has been described as an intelligent but stubborn student who chose to learn only those things that interested him.

He was educated at Westminster School and at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took his BA in 1639, was made fellow in 1640, and became MA in 1643. Cowley published his first volume of verse, *Poetical Blossoms* (1633), when he was 15. The collection consisted of five poems, one of which Cowley had written at age 10. He wrote a pastoral drama and a Latin comedy, *Naufragium Ioculare* (1638), when he was but 20.

After attaining his masters in arts in 1643, he came into favour of the kings attendants, especially Lord Falkland. Around this time Cowley joined St. John's College in Oxford. However, due to the political upheaval in England as a result of the civil war between the parliamentarians and the monarchy, Oxford was handed over to the parliament. The loyalists of the emperor had to flee. Cowley followed the Queen and many courtiers to Paris where they took exile. Due to his recognition as a man of letters, he was valuable to serve the Queen. He was appointed as a secretary for Lord Jermin and was highly trusted by the king and his courtiers. Cowley was sent back to England in the year 1656 as there was no need of him there. He was to maintain secrecy and under the pretence of retirement report back to the Queen the ongoing situations in England. However, he was suspected as a loyalist of the monarch leading to his arrest soon after landing in England by the usurping power. He was kept in confinement until he was bailed out after paying a fine of a thousand pounds by one Dr. Scarborough.

After his release, he assumed a new identity that of a physician. This was in order to hide the main purpose of his return and gain the trust of the ruling power. He was made a doctor at Oxford in the year 1657 with the commencement of the Royal Society. After the death of the parliamentarian ruler Oliver Cromwell, Cowley returned to France to continue on his former position as a secretary. He stayed there until the Restoration of monarchy in England. However, after the Restoration of monarchy in England, he was dissatisfied with the king and the queen as he was not duly rewarded for his services. His works produced during that time was also discredited. This turned him bitter and led him to retire from courtly life. But later on he came into attention of the Earl of St. Albans and the

duke of Buckingham who rewarded him with the lease of the Queen's land. This ensured plenty of income for his later life.

2.7 HIS WORKS

Cowley's earliest volume, *Poetical Blossoms* (1633), published when he was only 15, comprises a schoolboy's imitations of Edmund Spenser and other Elizabethans. At Cambridge he wrote some plays, including *The Guardian* (1642), which was produced after the Restoration as *The Cutter of Coleman Street*. In 1647 he published *The Mistress*, a collection of poems, included with revisions in the Poems of 1656, which contained other poems as well, including his odes and the unfinished *Davideis*, a biblical epic. His odes made this form the vehicle for grandiose invention and influenced poetry for the next century. More verses appeared in 1663, and in 1668 his posthumous Works made additional poetry and his essays available.

The lyrics of *The Mistress* were influenced by metaphysical and cavalier traditions. They lack the virtues of the poetry they imitate, however, and thus served Dr. Johnson well in the next century when he chose them to illustrate the shortcomings of the metaphysical school. Cowley's religious epic, however, is the work of a man of common sense and rationality. He was among the first to use the Pindaric ode form in English poetry. He contributed importantly to the development of the familiar essay in English.

2.8 METAPHYSICAL POETRY

2.3.1 Definition:The term 'metaphysical' means 'beyond the physical realm' or abstract. The term 'Metaphysical poetry' was first applied by Dr. Samuel Johnson to suggest the body of poems written by a group of poets in the 17th century. Those poets were John Donne, Herbert Crashaw, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, Abraham Cowley, John Cleaveland, etc.

2.8.1Characteristics:

Concentration:A metaphysical poem is essentially a verse of shorter length and adopts a form consisting of a line of eight syllables. The stanzas never bring a feather touch to the reader, thereby making the whole reading process intense and demanding. Unlike Spenser and poets of simple authoring, Metaphysical writing connects every aspect of life philosophically and reflects a sense of logic in tight compression. Until now, such poems cannot be understood with ease.

Metaphysical conceit: Conceit in Metaphysical poetry is largely used to make a comparison of cleverness and justice. This element of conceit floods Elizabethan poetry. Unlike the latter, Metaphysical verses use clever comparisons to justify a fact and never is Conceit made predominant. Conceit is used to convince, argue and reflect a statement which finally reveals a fondness in hatred, i.e. Positivity in negativity. We can also consider this a paradox or an extended epigram that finally brings a definite statement of conclusion such that no one denies.

Learnedness: Most of the metaphysical poems are loaded with scholastic entities making it a little difficult to journey a smoother reading. As always, the verses are stuffed with witty, novel and aspiring and in a notion of presenting advanced educative and technical aspects prudently. This learnedness never was a drawback as these poets ransacked everything they wanted to write about. Anything they wrote was an absolute, brand new form of what had been seen in various works of previous eras.

Cynicism: The aspect of cynicism always surged through Elizabethan poetry. The angle of viewing cynicism in such poems usually made the heroine the pinnacle of perfection and uniqueness.

Mechanism of Sensibility: The charge of sensibility is indeed a positive feature. Frequently, we see petrarchan poets incorporating a fair amount of irregular, disconnected events in the poems. Cutting entirely down on this feature, metaphysical poets harmonized thoughts, reasoning, feeling and images. Being successful at merging diverse fields, unlike elements and finally juxtaposing them is an excellent advantage.

Obscurity in Metaphysical Poetry: Metaphysical poetry is considered highly ambiguous and obscure due to high intellect and knowledge of the metaphysical poets. Their poetry is greatly challenging to understand at first reading. It needs deep concentration and full attention to get to the roots of the matter. John Donne's many poems are best examples in this regard. Ben Jonson was of the view about the future of John Donne that his popularity would not live longer because of his inability to reveal himself to the reader openly.

Brevity in Metaphysical Poetry: Metaphysical poetry is considered to be highly terse and concise in the history of poetry. These poems are very brief and short in length. Every line conveys a lot of meaning in very few words. There is no waste of words. Every word is adjusted in every line like a brick in a wall. Nothing is superfluous and spare. Every word has its own function and conveys the message of the author. Metaphysical poetry is like the essays of Bacon in brevity and conciseness in the history of English literature. Have a look at the following lines from John Donne's poetry:

I am two fools, I know,
For loving, and for saying
In whining poetry.
(*The Triple Fool*, By John Donne)

Just such disparity
As if 'twixt air and angels' purity,
'Twixt women's love, and men's will ever be.
(*Air and Angels*, By John Donne)

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2. Check Your Progress(Fill up the blank space by choosing the correct option.)

Q. While staying as an exile in Paris, Abraham Cowley was appointed as the secretary to the –

(a) Queen

(b) Lord Jermin

(c) King

(c) Cromwell

2.9 JOHNSON'S ON COWLEY AS A METAPHYSICAL POET

Johnson calls Cowley "the last of that race, and undoubtedly the best" among the metaphysical poets. The first poet to be immortalized in Johnson's collection, Cowley is considered too irregular and "specific" a poet to be ranked among the greatest practitioners of the genre. Johnson found Cowley's penchant for irregular versification and his tendency to reach for extraordinary and unusual comparisons disturbing. Johnson described the approach taken by Cowley and his contemporaries John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Richard Crashaw, and George Herbert in the term that became a touchstone for classifying many poets of the early seventeenth century: metaphysical. To Johnson, and too many readers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Cowley's verse displayed more virtuoso learning than it did deep appreciation for that which is important to all humankind.

2.10 DR. JOHNSON'S CRITICISM OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY.

Johnson's description of metaphysical wit begins with the introduction of Metaphysical poets. He accuses them of being a bunch of showing off versifiers rather than true poets whose verses are mere celebration of their extreme knowledge of the world and scientific studies. In fact, Johnson and his contemporaries did not use the term "metaphysical" equal to "spiritual" or in opposition to "physical". Rather, it connotes the philosophical and scientific aspect of the poetry rich with strange conceits such as compasses, ether, etc. only at hand for a scholar, not a poet. Johnson condemns these poets of being too much concerned with rhyme. Poetry, he believes, is what engages men's hearts and opens up their eyes to the "softness of love" as in the poetry of Shakespeare and Milton.

Johnson then attacks the poetry from two different angles:- mimetic and pragmatic. The first failure of these poets, according to Johnson, could be found out through Aristotle's criteria for true poetry – as imitative art: Metaphysical poetry is far from truth by copying neither "nature" nor "life". He then approaches the poetry from another angle and that is its failure to affect the reader the way true poetry does. In other words, Johnson attempts to prove that Metaphysical poetry, though admirable, is not able to please the reader as a harmonious, unified, and beautiful piece of poetry, soothing the minds of the readers. In order to prove so, he questions the central anchor of Metaphysical poetry, namely "wit".

He first confirms that the true value of their poetry only lies in the merit and extent of their wit. Even Dryden admitted that he and his contemporaries "fall below Donne in wit, but surpass in poetry". But in order to attack this anchor, he wittily provides two different definitions of wit. According to Pope, wit is what "has been often thought, but was never before so well expressed". Based on this definition, Metaphysical poets have failed to such wit, since they "just tried to get singular thought, and were careless of diction", and language. Here Johnson wittily and boldly questions even Pope's definition, and provides a new concept of 'wit', as being "at once natural and new". Thus Metaphysical thoughts "are often new, but seldom natural". In fact the unnaturalness of their poetry is what makes them unpleasing to the mind of the reader.

Having put the two previous definitions of 'wit' aside as not working in the case of metaphysical poets, Johnson then takes a step further to define their wit as an example of 'discordia concors'; "a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike". He decries their roughness and violation of decorum, the deliberate mixture of different styles, this kind of wit they have "more than enough".

Johnson may seem to condemn the pragmatic failure of metaphysical poetry as "not successful in representing or moving the affections", but is actually leaving the ground for the values of their poetry but providing subjective definitions for pragmatic and mimetic values of true poetry:

> "If by a more noble and more adequate conception, that be considered as wit which is at once natural and new, that which, though not obvious, is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; if it be that which he that never found it, wonders how he missed; to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen."

Johnson here knowingly emphasizes the significance of the reader in producing the final poem, and if by any chance Metaphysical conceits fail to prove "natural", "just" or "obvious", they may turn to be so in another time and place, as it really happened in the 20th century and the strange conceits and fragmentation of images seemed so natural to the shattered subjects (readers) of the post-war time. As Goethe remarks, "the unnatural, that too is natural," and the metaphysical poets continue to be studied and revered for their intricacy and originality because of the very naturalness of images found in their once supposed far-fetched conceits. Such evaluations totally depend on the context, the understanding of the reader, and the time it is being read.

Johnson's other criteria for wit was being "new" to the reader, but how could a conceit prove new if over-used? In fact, if a conceit or thought become a dead metaphor, it will lose all its magic and wit; and this factor is also dependant on the time and era in which it is read.

His ending, however, is that of a fair judgment and sometimes admiration rather than condemnation: "if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truth; if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage". Apart from finding a kind of 'truth' in their poetry, he also confirms a number of valuable features in their poetry such as "acuteness", "powers of reflection and comparison", "genuine wit", "useful knowledge", and finally "more propriety though less copiousness of sentiment".

Johnson's view of Metaphysical poets, though not totally confirming, proved to be fair and influenced by his own era's literary canon – which valued imitativeness and unity over fragmentation and metaphysical expressions. We should keep in mind that metaphysical poetry was a reaction against the deliberately smooth and sweet tones of much 16th-century verse, a courageous act even against the literary canon of their own time. And that is why the metaphysical poets adopted a style that seems so energetic, uneven, and rigorous and much appealing to the fed up 20th century reader.

3. **Check Your Progress (**Answer whether True or False)

- Dr. Johnson attacks metaphysical poetry but not the works of Cowley.

  (a) True

  (b) False

  (c) None of the above

2.11 DR. JOHNSON'S CRITICISM OF COWLEY

Dr. Johnson moves on from his criticism of the Metaphysical poets as a whole to consider certain flaws in the various aspects of Cowley's poetry. As with the rest of the metaphysical poets, Dr. Johnson finds the same faults with Cowley's works too.

- Firstly, he says that Cowley goes on pursuing his thoughts to their last ramifications instead presenting a general truth. He is criticized for extending metaphors to the point when they lose their generality. Thus, the attributes of metaphors become very personalized and thus, vague or incongruous for the reader.
- Secondly, Cowley has been criticized is 'uncertainty and looseness' of his measures. This means he wrote his verses in irregular lengths and with different number of syllables. This irregularity in the number of syllables prevents smooth transition and continuity of thought in the verse. Dr. Johnson believes that the reader could draw pleasure from verses when the reader knows the measure of the lines and when the structure of the stanzas is uniform.
- Thirdly, Dr. Johnson points out that after considering all of Cowley's works it could be seen that the reader can not withdraw his attention at all while reading his poems. This is because they are packed with dense information and associations. His works are accused of being unable to move the affections of the reader. According to him, Cowley has abundant wit, learning and ingenuity of thoughts, but lacks skillful selection, imagery and sublimity.
- Fourthly, Dr. Johnson identifies Cowley's style of writing as borrowed and not original. In the words of Dr. Johnson, "he unhappily adopted that which was predominant." However, this adoption of the predominant trend of writing of his contemporary times failed to stand the test of time.

His works were highly appreciated and read during his life time but lost fervor in the later ages.

- Fifthly, Dr. Johnson also draws attention to the Cowley's diction. He says that even during his lifetime his diction was criticized as negligent. Cowley is charged of using obscure words that expression. The use of such personalized association of meaning to words could only be understood by philosophers, Johnson says. He says that the diction should strike the reader immediately, otherwise if the reader has to spend much time trying to perceiving the meaning of a verse, it will never provide an unexpected and sudden pleasure which impresses the reader with more. Apart from this, in the words of Dr. Johnson:

  "…Cowley appears to have been without knowledge, or without care. He makes no selection of words, nor seeks any neatness of phrase; he has no elegance wither lucky or elaborate; as his endeavours were rather to impress sentences upon the understanding than images on the fancy, he has few epithets, and those scattered without peculiar propriety or nice adaptation."

Activity 3.

Q. Find out in a glossary of literary term what is a metaphysical conceit.

Ans:

2.12 LET US SUM UP

- Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets (1779-81) was a work by Samuel Johnson, consists of 52 poets biographies, most of them lived during the 18th century, it is arranged by date of birth.
- The lives can be divided into three sections: a biography, a brief character and a critical section.
- Johnson hated Milton's democratic principles and despised his impracticable philosophy.
- His criticism on 'Lycidas' "easy, vulgar and therefore disgusting".
- Johnson dismisses of the early poems of Milton.
- He praises 'Comus' for its defence of virtue.

- He fails to appreciate the blank verse of Milton fully because he could not see the beauty of blank verse as such he was for rhyme.
- Cowley was born in the 1608.
- Dr. Johnson was highly critical of Metaphysical poets.
- Dr. Johnson considered Cowley to be the best among all the metaphysical poets of his times.
- Dr. Johnson considered that the true value of metaphysical poetry only lies in the merit and extent of their wit.
- Cowley has been criticized is 'uncertainty and looseness' of his measures.
- Dr. Johnson identifies Cowley's style of writing as borrowed and not original.
- Cowley is charged of using obscure words that expression.

2.13 GLOSSARY

Metaphysical: Transcending physical matter or the laws of nature.

Metaphysical conceit: A *metaphysical conceit* is a complex, and often lofty literary device that makes a far-stretched comparison between a spiritual aspect of a person and a physical thing in the world.

Restoration: The Restoration of the English monarchy that happened in 1660 when after the puritan interregnum, Charles II was made the king.

Juxtapose: Place or deal with close together for contrasting effect.

Literary canon: A body of books, narratives and other texts considered to be the most important and influential of a particular time period or place.

Poetic measure: Metre.

Pamphlet: A small booklet or leaflet containing information or arguments about a single subject.

Diction: The choice and use of words and phrases in speech or writing.

Pragmatic: Dealing with things sensibly and realistically in a way that is based on practical rather than theoretical considerations.

Sublime: Of very great excellence or beauty.

Wit: The capacity for inventive thought and quick understanding; keen intelligence.

Keywords: Dr. Johnson, Biographical Criticism, Metaphysical Poetry, Restoration, Aspects of poetry.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO CYP

1(a), 2(b), 3(b)

MODEL QUESTIONS

Essay type questions

1. Critically examine the characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry.
2. Explain how Dr. Johnson criticizes the Metaphysical school of poets.
3. Discuss the points on which Dr. Johnson finds fault with Cowley's works.
4. "The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked together by violence". What is Dr. Johnson talking about? Critically explain as to why Dr. Johnson is led to make this statement.
5. Although Dr. Johnson disapproves of the Metaphysical school of poetry, he immortalizes Abraham Cowley in his "The Lives of Poets". Critically examine the reasons for this.
6. Write a note on the early life of Milton.
7. Discuss the points on which Dr. Johnson praises Milton's *Paradise Lost*.
8. What is Dr. Johnson's attitude towards Milton's political and religious writings? Name any two political pamphlets of Milton.
9. What are the divorce pamphlets of Milton? What are the factors that prompted Milton to write them down?
10. What was Milton's plan for his masterpiece before writing *Paradise Lost*?

Short Questions

1. When was John Milton born?
2. Which government did Milton support during the civil war in England?
3. What does Dr. Johnson have to say about Milton's 'Comus'?
4. When was Abraham Cowley born?
5. Where was Abraham Cowley born?

6. What was Cowley's position while staying in France?
7. What does Dr. Johnson think about Cowley's language?

SUGGESTED READINGS

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BLOCK - II

Block-II

UNIT 1 : CHARLES LAMB'S 'MY RELATIONS'

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1.8. Let Us sum up

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Sources and Suggested Readings

Modal Questions

1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall discuss one of the famous essays written by Charles Lamb. The name of the essay is 'My **Relations'**. After studying this Unit, you should be able to –

- know about Charles Lamb's Life and work
- understand essay and its development as a form and,
- evaluate Chares Lamb as an essayist with special reference to the essay prescribed

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit deals with the essay '**My Relations'** by Charles Lamb who was at the centre of a major literary circle in England. He has been referred to by E. V. Lucas, his principal biographer, as "the most lovable figure in English literature". Lamb was an engaging and thoughtful writer who captured the Romantic period completely. We will be looking at this man's life, career, and essay in this Unit. However, the central focus of the Unit shall be on the discussion of the essay '**My Relations'.** It will also discuss Charles Lamb as an essayist, his contribution in the field of essay and the features of his essay with special reference to the essay in question. Thus the Unit will help you discover the multifaceted qualities of Lamb as an essayist, a poet, and a dramatist, and more specially the content of the prescribed essay.

1.2. Life and Works of Charles Lamb

Charles Lamb was an important English poet and literary critic of Welsh origin. He was born in London on February 10th 1775. As an expert of the Shakespearean period as well as an author of talent, Lamb would come to be considered one of the most significant literary critics of his time. Moreover, Lamb would be celebrated for his simple, yet not simplistic, personal reflections on daily life, which would always be supplemented with a distinctive sense of both humour and tragedy. Lamb's two most famous works were *Essays of Elia*, and, *Tales from Shakespeare*, in fact a children's book. He would actually write the latter in collaboration with his sister, Mary Lamb (1764 - 1847). Charles Lamb also had an older brother, John, named after their father, as well as four other brothers and sisters who would not survive their infancy. Lamb would come to be described by his main biographer, E.V. Lucas, as the most touching character in English literature.

Lamb's parents were Elizabeth Field and John Lamb. Charles would be their last child after Mary, who was born 11 years earlier while John, the brother, would be born even earlier than his sister. The father was a clerk for a lawyer. Years later Charles would write a kind of biographical portrait of him in a piece entitled "Elia on the Old Benchers" and would refer to him by the name of "Lovel'

Charles Lamb who would become a close friend of the famous British philosopher, literary critic and poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 - 1834). In fact Lamb's first published work would be four sonnets which would be included in the 1796 *Poems on Various Subjects* by Coleridge. As Lamb had a stutter, he was disqualified at boarding school for a clerical career, while Coleridge and others would be able to go on to university. Lamb had to stop his schooling at the age of 14. Notwithstanding this would not prevent Lamb to become an important member, and indeed to play an important part in a circle of famous authors. This included important literary figures such as poet William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850), essayist and poet Leigh Hunt (1784 - 1859), writer and literary critic William Hazlitt (1778 - 1830) as well as poet Robert Southey (1774 - 1843).

In 1819 at the age of 44, Lamb who had never married mostly because of his commitment to his troubled family would fall in love with Fanny Kelly, an actress from Covent Garden. He would eventually propose to her but she would refuse and he would in the end die single. Unmarried, Lamb would live with his sister, Mary Lamb, who too would stay single as she almost perpetually would suffer from serious mental disorders. In fact, in 1796, in a fit of insanity, she would stab their mother, Elizabeth, killing her with a kitchen knife. After that, in spite of the difficult turn of events Charles did all he could to stay close to his sister and would even in fact end up becoming Mary's official guardian, thus making it possible for her to be released from the mental hospital. It is noteworthy to keep in mind that when she felt at home and well enough, Mary could be one of the most creative, lively women. Together with his sister Charles would write the famous *Tales from Shakespeare*, a collection of 20 tales inspired by the eminent playwright. Published in 1807 this book remains to this day a classic of British literature for youth. The first publisher of the work was the British journalist, political philosopher and novelist William Godwin (1756 - 1836), husband of the English philosopher and one of the first advocate of women's right Mary Wollstonecraft (1759 - 1797), and also father of British writer Mary Shelley (1797 - 1851). The book was to be constantly reprinted to this day and was even finally illustrated for the first time in 1899 by Arthur Rackham (1867 - 1939). The work would also be translated into several languages and thus made available across the globe.

In the *Essays of Elia*, Lamb's intimate and informal tone of voice would captivate many readers, old and young. The name of "Elia" had actually been the alias he had used whenever he would contribute to the renowned *London Magazine*. The essays describe the strange world of the author's fictional alter ego that is embodied in the melancholic character Elia. It is as a true painter of modern life that Lamb reinvents here the tradition of essay writing. He does so, for instance, by mixing subjective bias, sensuality and critical thinking. In those

essays Lamb makes good use of irony, nostalgia, and shares with us his vivid fascination for the details of things, including the very minutes of everyday life. In sum, *Essays of Elia* constitutes a singular text in which the author is clearly fascinated by the diversity of things, the unreality of the past, the absolute uniqueness of experience as well as a keen awareness of the limitation of writing

Lamb's writings also include poetry with *Blank Verse* (1798), and with *Pride's Cure* (1802). Novels, such as *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1808) which was written with children in mind as the audience, it is thus reminiscent of *The Tales from Shakespeare*. But also *Specimens of English Dramatic poets who lived about the time of Shakespeare* (1808), which is essentially a kind of anthology of sections from Elizabethan dramas together with commentaries. This work has been said to have had a significant impact on the way nineteenth century English verses would come to be written

Literary works such as *Witches and Other Night Fears* (1821) and *The Last Essays of Elia* (1833), which is the second volume of the famous *Essays of Elia* (1823) are also worth mentioning. This last volume would in fact be published shortly before Lamb's death. It includes essay titles such as *A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People; The Two Races of Men; My First Play; Confessions of a Drunkard; Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist* as well as others. In a very real sense, while in his lifetime Lamb was encouraged by many for his hard work in literature, he actually enjoyed very little appreciation for his unique talent while he was alive. Not surprisingly perhaps, he would thus go through difficult moments of doubt with regards to his work and seriously seems to have wondered about his ability to write anything worth mentioning. In fact, in similar ways to his sister, Mary, he too would suffer episodes of psychological illness. Be that as it may, Charles Lamb left us with a very rich legacy of work ranging from short stories, essays, poetry, even plays, as well as letters filled with his exceptional intimate style and humour.

Lamb would succumb of an infection he would unfortunately contract from a minor cut on his face after having fallen in the street, in fact only several months after Coleridge. Charles Lamb died at Edmonton, a suburb of London on December 27th 1834 at the age of 59. He was buried at All Saint's Churchyard, also in Edmonton. Mary, his sister survived him by more than a decade and would be buried next to him. It is interesting to note that in 1849, 15 years after Lamb's death, the French author Eugène Forcade (1820 - 1869) would describe Lamb as **having been of an eminently friendly nature, an original writer, a kind of hero constantly caring for his poor sister.**

1.3. EXTRAORDINARY PERSONALITY OF CHARLES LAMB

The question of Lamb's personality comes here for discussion for the fact that he possessed tremendous patience and courage in fighting with adversity reflected in his contentment and also in his cheerful spirit and sweet temper. It was widely believed and known in the literary circle that Lamb was really one of the most sweet-tempered persons who could pass on his sweetness of temper even to his readers through his writings. It is surprising how a person, who was so poor and who had so many worries and calamities in his life, could retain such a sweet temper. His sister, being deranged in brain and when particularly his sister killed her mother in fits of insanity, Lamb decided to remain a bachelor all his life. It is not true that his poverty prevented him from getting married; but it is his anxiety and care about his sister that deprived him forever of the blessings of married life. We do not know if he could retain the same temper, the same brotherly love, the same sense of responsibility if he had married Anna Simons with whom he had fallen in love, but unfortunately, whom he could not marry. Lamb's hankering for marriage is reflected in his love of children, which he unconsciously depicts in his essay on Dream Children. Some of Lamb's biographers believe that Lamb took to drinking only to forget the pinches of poverty, the disappointment in love, and also the insanity of his sister, but then Lamb never got addicted to drinking.

Lamb was extremely fond of London life because he was born and educated in London and also he worked all his life in London. All his writings are full of the atmosphere of the city of London, particularly the intellectual atmosphere of it. Lamb has reflected in his *Essays* as well as in other writings the concentrated life of London, the bookish culture, and other such intellectual facilities, which are available in London only. Both Oliver and Hazlitt have pointed out how Lamb was enamoured of London, how he had depicted London life, and how he had breathed into that congested city a picture of dreams and fancies that generally come to the poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Byron, and other Romantic poets of the nineteenth century. Lamb's love for antiquity was inspired by his close association with the old buildings of the Inner Temple and Christ's Hospital but Lamb was never an antiquarian. In this connection, H.C. Hill says, "Lamb loved old books but disliked new readings, he loved old writers, but when a friend brought him leaves from the tree that grew by the tomb of Virgil, he threw them carelessly into the street. It would almost seem that the dead were in a sense alive to him, and that he resented anything that interfered with this fancy to one chief feature of city life, Lamb was indifferent. He took no interest in politics. Not only in his Essays, begun only five years after the close of the great Napoleonic wars, but even in his Letters there are hardly any references to politics. Politics were excluded from the subjects at his Wednesday evening assemblies.

Procter supposes that his abstention from subjects connected with the great world was due to modesty, but it was so complete that one can hardly ascribe it to anything but indifference. It was, however, this avoidance of the ephemeral that has given him his continued popularity, for there are but few readers who take much interest in even the best political writers of a by-gone age. Still it is interesting to note that he owes his existence, as it were, to an ephemeral form of literature, the periodical magazine, which owes its origin so largely to politics. Hazlitt points out that Lamb, "from the peculiarity of his exterior and address as an author, would probably have never made his way by detached and independent efforts," but that, once brought before the public, beauty of his writing and the nature of his subjects attracted and compelled admiration.

It is curious that at the very moment when Wordsworth was originating a new nature-worship, one of his earliest and warmest admirers should be, so decidedly as Lamb was, a worshipper of the town. Wordsworth called him "a scorner of the fields," and his words do much to justify the accusation. In a letter to Wordsworth (January 30th, 1801), he writes: "Separate from the pleasure of your company, I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life. I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments as any of your mountaineers can have done with dead nature"; and, again (January 22nd, 1830), "O, let no native Londoner imagine that health and rest and innocent occupation, interchange of sweet and procreative study, make the country anything better than odious and detestable! A garden was the primitive prison till man, with Promethean felicity and boldness, luckily sinned himself out of it. Thence followed Babylon, Nineveh, Venice, London, haberdashers, goldsmiths, taverns, play-houses, satires, epigrams, puns—these all came into town part of the thither side of innocence." While such passages as these contain much and evident exaggeration, they mark very decidedly the direction in which Lamb's preferences lay? On the other hand this preference did not prevent his showing a keen and loving appreciation of the beauties of the country. He could enjoy a holiday there, and could truly and sympathetically describe the scenery around him as we see in Mackery End, Blackesmoor, and Dream Children, for, as regards the places mentioned in these Essays, they had for him the local attachment which is necessary to stimulate genius into expression.

Lamb was a great observer and also a great thinker; otherwise he could not have given such realistic details of many things nor could he have scattered such pearls of wisdom throughout his writing. Wordsworth rightly says that "Lamb poured out truth in works by thoughtful love, inspired works potent over smiles and tears." Lamb felt deeply for the lower animals and the poor people probably because he was himself poor and found his own helplessness reflected in the lives of the lower animals, who could not fight against the laws of nature as he could not fight against the laws of mankind.

This all embracing love of Lamb's was due to no sense of duty, but was in his nature, and showed itself in a gentleness and sweetness of look and manner, which, as Le Grice has told us, caused him even as a child to be distinguished by his Christian name. "So Christians should call one another," Lamb writes in *Mackery End*. In later life it drew from Wordsworth the title of "gentle-hearted," which, in spite of Lamb's objection to the epithet, has clung, and must ever cling to his name. It is unfortunate that we have, in English, no word that will express gentleness without weakness. Lamb was right in objecting, for his was no weak character. He could not refuse money to a begging impostor. "Reader, be not frightened," he writes in *The Decay of Beggars*, "at the harsh words imposition, imposture—give and ask no questions. Cast thy bread upon the waters"—he could not refuse that fatal "last glass" with a friend, he could not hate any man whom he knew, and Jeremy Taylor tells us that to be good we must hate bad men; but he could devote his whole life to a sister who killed her mother, and might at any time kill him. This he did for the sake of love; but surely it was the love of a strong man. It was a burden of forty years' endurance—an undertaking as truly heroic as any of the great deeds of the Elizabethan age.

Even in the underlying melancholy of his character Lamb resembles many of the Elizabethans, for melancholy is a common accompaniment of habits of deep thought, but in Lamb's case his melancholy was due to a hereditary taint. His father's dotage and his sister's madness has been recorded to his brother John, we find Lamb writing on one occasion that he has fears of his mind. Lamb suffered only once from an attack of madness sufficiently serious to necessitate his confinement, but the gloominess noticeable in New Year;s Eve, in Witches and Other Night Fears, and in the Confessions of a Drunkard, as well as in many scattered passages, is strong proof of the disease latent in his nature. He can seldom write gaily for any length of time, the darker side of his life forces itself upon his attention.

He tells us somewhere that he had read large quantities of "dry divinity" to prevent his mind from dwelling on his misfortunes, but fortunately he found in the old strong writers who most interested him not merely a relief from sad thoughts, but the occasion of healthy thought also. He was no scholar in the modern sense of the word, his classical allusions, his references to the Bible, his quotations are hardly ever correct; but he had a full intelligent, and loving acquaintance with all the great writers from the time of Spenser to his own; he knew Wordsworth as well as any of his modern worshippers; and, as shown by his quotations, he read nearly all that was of any interest in the light literature and drama of his day. This appreciation of all kinds of books seems to be due partly to the accident of his having had in his childhood free access to the large library of Samuel Salt, partly, possibly, to the accident of town life, which tends to excite

in the mind a vivid interest in all classes of our fellow-creatures, and in what we can learn of them.

Besides books, Lamb loved pictures and prints. He constantly refers to them in his Essays. It is evident that he was a good judge of them, and that the taste for them was a family one is shown by his reference in his *My Relations* to his brother John's collection. Lamb also wrote many poems and a few dramatic works, but neither in Poetry nor in the Drama did he rise above the ordinary level. On the other hand the practice of versification gave him a wonderful command of prose, and the undeveloped dramatic instinct accounts for the vividness of characterization which distinguishes the personages whose acts and sayings form the ground-work of most of the Essays.

Lamb's essays and other writings are full of wisdom, truth, penetrating insight, sympathy, gentleness, and love for all things and persons, which he happens to observe and comment upon. He possesses an extraordinary commonsense, and that is why, whatever he says is not very far from truth or reality or fairness. We can find his wisdom and wit scattered in many of his essays, such as *Old China, Recollections of Christ's Hospital, Modern Gallantry, The Tombs in the Abbey*, and in many other essays. One thing, however, is very striking that in spite of Lamb's shrewd criticism of men and things, Lamb never became unpopular. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt and others all have certified that it is due to Lamb's kindliness that people loved him.

It has been pointed out that spirituality played an important role in Lamb's personal life, and that, although he was not a churchman, and disliked organized religion, he yet "sought consolation in religion," as shown by letters to Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Bernard Barton, in which he described the New Testament as his "best guide" for life, and where he talked about how he used to read the Psalms for one or two hours without getting tired. Other papers have also dealt with his Christian beliefs. As his friend Samuel Coleridge, Lamb was sympathetic to Priestleyan Unitarianism[18] and was a dissenter, yet, he was described by Coleridge himself as one whose "faith in Jesus had been preserved" even after the family tragedy. Wordsworth also described him as a firm Christian in the poem *Written After the Death of Charles Lamb*. Alfred Ainger, in his work *Charles Lamb*, writes that Lamb's religion had become "an habit".

The poems "*On The Lord's Prayer*", "*A Vision Of Repentance*", "*The Young Catechist*", "*Composed at Midnight*", "*Suffer Little Children, And Forbid Them Not, To Come Unto Me*", "*Written a twelvemonth after the Events*", "*Charity*", "*Sonnet To A Friend*" and "*David*" reflect much about Lamb's faith, whereas the poem "*Living Without God In The World*" has been called a "poetic attack" to unbelief, in which Lamb expresses his disgust for atheism attributing its nature to pride.

Check Your Progress

1. What are the important literary works of Charles Lamb? (50 to 60 words)

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2. How is Lamb's personality different from his contemporary writers?

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1.4. THE ESSAY: ITS DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

1.4.1. The Essay

Henry Morley has stated that the history of essay-writing in modern literature begins with Montaigne and then passes to Bacon. Each used the word Essay in its true sense, as an assay or analysis of some subject of thought. Bacon's essay was of life, generally in many forms, with full attention to its outward circumstances. Montaigne's essay was of the inner life of man as it was to be found in the one man's life that he knew." The Essay Proper, or Literary Essay, is not merely a short analysis of a subject, not a mere epitome, but rather a picture of the writer's mind as affected for the moment by the subject with which he is dealing. Its most distinctive feature is the egotistical element.

1.4.2. Personal Element of the Essay

Montaigne once said that he chose himself for his subject because he was the only person whom he knew thoroughly, and therefore the only person he could truly describe to the world. This is an egotism devoid of self-assertion, except in so far as it claims that the character of the writer is worth knowing, a claim quite consistent with modesty. Bacon's egotism shows itself at times, as in his treatment of *Friendship*, in a curious incapacity to take any view not based on his own experience. In Sir Thomas Brown egotism becomes as it were impersonal, he is to himself the type of the human race. It is egotism of this kind which we find in Lamb, though mixed with sweetness all his own. As Cowper thinks every trifling incident in his life will be interesting to his friend Unwin because of Unwin's love for him, so Lamb assumes the friendship of his reader, takes him into his confidence on all his private affairs, jokes with him, and mystifies him, exactly in the same way as he treated his actual friends.

Lamb's essays can therefore, be read as a kind of autobiography; in one he describes his childhood in the Temple, in another his school-days at Christ's Hospital, in others Blakesware in Hertfordshire where he spent his boyish holidays, in others his early poverty, his first literary beginnings, his Bohemian life in connection with the Press, his holiday trips to the sea-side with his sister Mary, his recovery from a serious illness, the drudgery of his office work, and his relief when he finally retires from his official duties; and everywhere we come across numberless details about his friends. They all appear in his *Essays*, and he jokes and takes liberties with them there as he did in real life; but even when laughing at them, as in the case of Dyer, he has a curious art which makes us doubt the realities of the stories he tells us, and when he says anything that might appear to be unkind, he immediately adds some pleasant trait of character to prevent our forming a wrong opinion.

Of his relations he gives us full and living pictures –his brother John is the James Elia of *My Relations*; his sister Mary, never absent from his mind in life, is present throughout the Essays as Bridget Elia, and is most lovingly described in *Mackery End*; his father is the Lovel of the *Old Benchers*; his aunt is referred to in My Relations; his grandmother in *Dream Children*. Then coming to matters more personal he describes in various places his want of skill in figuring his dread of novelty, his dislike of death, his imperfection of speech, his incapacity for music, his want of personal beauty, his short stature and unmilitary appearance, his ignorance of things generally known, his love of good cheer, his weakness for wine and tobacco. There is only one subject he is silent upon, and that is insanity. In *New Year's Eve* he has occasion to refer to melancholy madness, and to do so inserts a long question form Burton.

1.4.3. Subject of the Essay

Montaigne had very little but himself to write about, few books and hardly any society. Bacon was occupied with serious matters: he lived in a time when life was serious as well as vigorous. Steele and Addison in a purely literary age wrote for polite society: their satire was conventional, their subjects generally trifling. Lamb, Hazlitt, and Hunt had a wider range of subjects—the one essential being that the subject must be one of public interest—and they wrote for a large, educated, and thoughtful reading public. In Lamb's writings, as in Montaigne's, the subject is the writer himself—not, however, the mere individual Lamb, but Lamb as he was connected with his numerous friends, and as his sympathy identified him with his inhabitants of the great city in which he lived.

1.4.4. The Essay as a form

When we study the Essay, that is the Literary Essay, we notice a number of peculiarities which differentiate it from other branches of literature:

a) The Essay is a short composition, one which can be easily read though in any interval of leisure, and retained easily in the mind as a whole.

b) It should be rather an assemblage of details carefully grouped than a system or theory worked out; it should suggest rather than prove, for in so short a work there must necessarily be much left undealt with. It is a picture, not a narrative or a thesis.

c) It must be an artistic whole that is the development of a single idea, and not an aimless or casual wandering of the mind from one subject to another. Here some think that Lamb is defective. For instance, in the Essay on *Oxford in the Vacation* the greater part is concerned with Lamb's friend Dyer, and in *Old China* with a description of the early poverty of Lamb and his sister. In the former it would appear that the title of the Essay misleads us, the real subject being the influence of University life upon the characters of men studiously inclined, which he illustrates by a description of its effect upon himself in his short visits, and upon his friend Dyer, who has had the advantages which he himself had missed. In *Old China*, on the other hand, the fantastic reasoning with which, Mary maintains the advantages of comparative poverty shows the same absence of perspective as the pictures of the Chinese artist. In all cases it is the human interest that appeals to Lamb; he describes not so much things as their effect upon, or illustration in, human character. The artistic completeness of his treatment is perhaps best seen in *The Old and New*

Schoolmaster, where every detail bears upon the subject suggested by the title.

d) The subject must be lightly handled; not frivolously, but without any appearance of wishing to force the writer's opinion upon the reader. It must appeal like a poem, to the emotions and the heart rather than to the intellect. There need be no-lack of wisdom in it, but this must be impacted by persuasion and not by argument; and here the egotism of the Essay justifies itself, for the writer's personal experience is always a ready example and illustration. Bacon affects this by his constant use of poetic imagery and simile; for the simile is not a statement of fact, but a picture of the impression made by a fact upon the mind of the writer. Still the simile is not so effective for this purpose as the direct "I" of Lamb. This is well seen in the opening paragraphs of *Witches and Other Night Fears*, where Lamb defends the wisdom of his ancestors, presenting his arguments as his personal feelings on the subject: "I have sometimes thought that I could not have existed in the days of received witchcraft; that I could not have slept in a village where one of those reputed hags dwelt. Our ancestors were bolder or more obtuse."

e) Lastly, the Essays must appear to be written, not without thought, but freely and openly without any after-consideration. This is what Montaigne means when he says, "I speak unto paper as unto the first man I meet." The same quality gives their charm to Addison's Essays; and Lamb, talking if the Essays of Elia, says: "Crude they are, I grant you—a sort of unlicked, incondite things." It is not every man who can enjoy good company if he be poor, or sensible company if he be rich; and the attractiveness of the Essay is largely due to the fact that it provides company both good and sensible for the reader in his moments of leisure, at times when he thinks rather of relaxing his mind than on its improvement. When we remember how often many of Lamb's Essays were re-written, or, if not re-written, at least altered in many parts, we are surprised to observe the constant freshness which they retain. This is greatly due to his truthfulness. He might rewrite or modify a passage for reasons of taste, but the opinions he expressed were always really his, at any rate at the time of writing, and hence there is less alteration than one would expect to find. Again, the nature of his subjects—his constant reference to things never known by or forgotten by his readers, and yet connected with the town they lived in, or the nation they belonged to—produces the same effect as novelty. Then again he tells an old story, but with some slight modifications that quite change its effect. At other times an old idea running in his mind serves as the groundwork of a joke or pun; and lastly, in literary point,

allusions, quotations, references, there is an amount of inaccuracy which we can hardly imagine to be possible in a carefully revised piece of writing.

Check Your Progress

1. What is your understanding about essay? (about 50-60 words)

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2. What are the important elements of essay? (60-70 words)

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1.5. LAMB AS AN ESSAYIST

We have now to consider certain peculiarities which characterize Lamb's writing, as illustrated in the Essays. These may be dealt with under the following headings: (1) *Style*, (2) *Dramatic characterization*, (3) *Extensive use of quotation*, (4) *Humour*, (5) *Pathos*.

1.5.1 Style

There are many points in which Lamb imitates the Elizabethan writers: e.g., in his love for word-coining, his fondness for alliteration, his use of compound words, his formation of adjectives from proper names, his frequent use of Latinisms.

Then again he introduces many words now obsolete, and only to be found in Elizabethan writers, the result being a language which, like that of Spenser, could never have been spoken at any time; but, besides this, he is so well acquainted with the Elizabethan writers that when he follows their veins of thought he seems insensibly to adopt their style and the very cadence of their writing.

When reflective, as in *New Year's Eve* and the *Popular Fallacies*, his style resembles that of Sir Thomas Browne; when fantastic, as in the *Chapter on Ears*, that of Burton; when witty, as in *Poor Relations*, that of Fuller. The result of this is a kind of mannerism, which is not so much an affectation, though he calls it "a self-pleasing quaintness," as the natural effect of his preference for the ancient authors.

His mind was so saturated with what he read that he could not avoid the use of their phraseology any more than a child brought up amongst his elders can avoid using what we call old-fashioned expressions. On rare occasions he used this antique style where the subject was not capable of that deep thought and fine observation with which we are accustomed to associate it. On these occasions even his powerful fancy is unable to make it pleasing. But, generally speaking, he shows great skill in adapting his style to his subject.

In dealing with matters purely modern, as in *Newspapers Thirty-five Years Ago*, his style is purely modern also; in his rural descriptions his tone is almost Wordsworthian. But whatever his style may be, his thoughts are his own, fresh and original, and his honest admiration of what was great in the past has done much, at least in literary circles, to check that conceit of the present, which is so common in a rapidly-advancing civilization.

1.5.2. Dramatic Characterization

Proctor writes: "Some of his phantasms—the people of the Old South-Sea House, Mrs. Battle, the Benchers of the Middle Temple,…might be grouped into Comedies. His sketches are always (to quote his own eulogy of Marvell) 'full of a witty delicacy,' and if properly brought out and marshalled would do honour to the stage." This remark is true of almost all the characters in the Essays; and it is somewhat surprising that, with this power of characterization, his two direct attempts at the drama, *John Woodvil* and *Mr. H—,* should have been such failures. It seems that he could harmonize a scene, but not arrange or work out a plot. But besides this power of characterization, a certain dramatic effect is produced by the flexibility of his descriptive style, as may be seen in its rapid changes as he describes the different clerks in the South-Sea House.

1.5.3. Use of Quotation

As a rule, Landor rightly remarks, the use of quotation only marks the weakness of the writer, and in fact it is only justifiable when the quotation adapts itself to the context, and does not strike the reader with any sense of incongruity. There is no reason why a writer should avoid using an idea, or the form in which a previous writer expressed that idea, if he can make its setting correspond to it. This is the justification of Milton in his adaptation of passages from the Greek and Latin writers, and it is the justification of Lamb, who makes perhaps a more free use of quotation than does any other the modern prose writers. Further, a careful perusal of his works will show that the quotations which he uses occur so repeatedly that they must have been constantly in his mind, and not raked up for the occasion. Amongst others the student should note the following kinds of quotations: pretended quotations, quotations from his own works, random quotations, or half recollections, transformed quotations, condensed quotations, combined quotations, adapted quotations, parodies, and single-word quotations.

1.5.4. Humour

The terms Wit, Humour, and Fun are often confused, but they are really different in meaning. The first is based on intellect, the second on insight and sympathy, the third on vigour and freshness of mind and body. Lamb's writings show all the three qualities, but what most distinguishes him is Humour, for his sympathy is ever strong and active. In *Poor Relations* the opening is sheer Wit, but we are more inclined to cry than to laugh when we read the story of Favel's flight from the University. "I do not know how," says Lamb, "upon a subject which I began with treating half seriously, I should have fallen upon a recital so eminently painful"; but this is Lamb's way, he cannot even laugh at people without presently putting himself in their place and taking their view of the matter.

Humour might be defined as extreme sensitiveness to the true proportion of things. We are so accustomed to exaggerate one or other side of a fact that the true proportion, when seen, strikes us with a sense of incongruity, and so excites laughter; but the laughter is really at our own previous misconceptions, and therefore borders on the painful. Wit, on the other hand, is an intellectual triumph, bringing things into connection that before appeared totally different. The laughter it causes is that of self-satisfaction, and may even be accompanied by cruel feelings towards others. Fun is, as Ollier says, "the creation of animal spirits and health"; it depends on the possession of sufficient vigour to forget ourselves for the moment and to look upon everything around us as formed for our amusement. We see this Fun in *All Fool's Day*, which is largely composed of mere pleasant nonsense

like the idle talk when the wine is going round after dinner; and in *Roast Pig*, which is full of sheer absurdities.

a) **Punning**: this same love of Fun is seen in Lamb's fondness for punning, which he indulged more freely in his conversation than in his writing. It may be remembered that punning was a characteristic of the Elizabethan writers.

b) **Absurd Details**: So, also, he frequently inserts absurd details. He has been long striving to learn "God save the King," but without much success, "Yet hath the loyalty of Elia never been impeached." He has borrowed from everyone he knows, "It has been calculated that he laid a tithe part of the inhabitants (of England) under contribution."

c) **Inventions**: sometimes his details are mere inventions, as the discussion at St. Omer's, when he was a student there, of the lawfulness of beating pigs to death, and the story of the little chimney-sweep found sleeping on the state bed in Arundel Castle. So also, the thoroughly paced liar in *The Old Margate Hoy* can hardly have been any one but Lamb himself.

d) **Improving upon Facts**: then, again, he takes the liberty of improving upon fact. In *Amicus Redivivus* he tells us that he drew his friend Dyer from the New River, whereas he was away from home at the time and arrived only after Dyer had been rescued and put to bed.

e) **Perverse Interpretations**: sometimes he indulges in perverse interpretations. When his friend hears someone playing upon the piano and knows it cannot be the maid (because, of course, she would not dare to take such a liberty), he pretends it was because of some subtle superiority in his own strumming, due to the fact that he is an educated man.

f) **Mystification**: another form taken by his Fun is the constant mystification to which he treats his readers. After speaking of real persons in the *South-Sea House* he pretends they have no existence, "I have fooled the reader to the top of his bent." In *Christ's Hospital* he begins in the character of Coleridge, but towards the end he speaks as himself. His *Memoir of Liston*, as has been mentioned before, was an absolute fiction, and he prides himself on the success of his imposition.

g) **Startling Metaphors**: there is a mixture of Fun and Wit in his metaphors and comparisons. The clerks of the South-Sea House remind him of the animals in Noah's Ark; the sage who invented a less expensive way of roasting pigs than that which necessitated the burning down of a house he compares to "our Locke". The cook in *The Old Margate Hoy* reminds him of Ariel.

h) **Irony**: his Fun passes into Humour when there is an ad-mixture of reflection. He is fond of a kind of reversed irony. He makes a statement or uses a

phrase which at first is unpleasing, but becomes pleasing when we consider it more carefully. For instance, he writes of "the rational antipathies of the great English and French nations." He says of himself and his sister, "We are generally in harmony, with occasional bickering, as it should be among near relations," and describes the coast-guard men as carrying on "a legitimated civil war in the deplorable absence of a foreign one."

i) **Little Hits**: the Essays are full of little hits at himself and others. He tells us that when at Oxford he is often mistaken for one of the Dons, but the mistake is made only by the dim-eyed vergers. Coleridge claims that the title of property in a book is in "exact ratio to the claimant's power of understanding and appreciating the same. Should he go on acting upon this theory, which of our shelves is safe?" he tells us he must touch gently upon the foibles of his sister, "Bridget does not like to be told of her faults." He wishes his friend's wife, a Frenchwoman, had carried away from his library not the works of Margaret of Newcastle but "*Zimmerman on Solitude*!"

j) **Humorous Touches**: everywhere in the Essays we find scattered little humorous touches. Mrs. Battle loses her rubber because she cannot bring herself to utter the common phrase, "Two for his heels." When Bobo is discovered eating the roast pigs by his father, and finds time to attend to his remonstrance and blows, he seizes a fresh pig and tears it into two parts, but it is the "lesser half" which he thrusts into the "fists" of his father.

k) **Paradox and Oxymoron**: all most all the reflective writers have been fond of paradox and Lamb not less than others, so we observe many passages, such as, "Awoke into sleep and found the vision true," "Whom single blessedness had soured to the world," "The sophisticating medium of moral uses." Now and then we notice instances of oxymoron, "Fortunate piece of ill-fortune."

1.5.5. Pathos

Humour is very nearly allied to Pathos. Our smiles and our tears are alike limited by our powers of insight and sympathy. Lamb's humour was largely the effect of a sane and healthy protest against the over-whelming melancholy induced by the morbid taint in his mind. He laughed to save himself from weeping, but as has been mentioned above, he could not prevent his mind from passing at times to the sadder aspects of life. In *Rosamond Gray*, the description of his dead brother in *Dream Children*, the flight of Favel from the University in *Poor Relations*, the story of the sick boy who "had no friends," in *The Old Margate Hoy*, and in many other instances we have examples of true pathos. In *New*

Year's Eve, in *Witches and Other Night Fears*, and the *Confessions of a Drunkard*, the feeling is so intense as to inspire rather terror than pity.

1.6. MY RELATIONS: THE TEXT

My Relations

I am arrived at that point of life, at which a man may account it a blessing, as it is a singularity, if he has either of his parents surviving. I have not that felicity — and sometimes think feelingly of a passage in Browne's Christian Morals, where he speaks of a man that hath lived sixty or seventy years in the world. "In such a compass of time," he says, "a man may have a close apprehension what it is to be forgotten, when he hath lived to find none who could remember his father, or scarcely the friends of his youth, and may sensibly see with what a face in no long time OBLIVION will look upon himself."

I had an aunt, a dear and good one. She was one whom single blessedness had soured to the world. She often used to say, that I was the only thing in it which she loved; and, when she thought I was quitting it, she grieved over me with mother's tears. A partiality quite so exclusive my reason cannot altogether approve. She was from morning till night poring over good books, and devotional exercises. Her favourite volumes were Thomas à Kempis, in Stanhope's Translation; and a Roman Catholic Prayer Book, with the *matins* and *complines* regularly set down — terms which I was at that time too young to understand. She persisted in reading them, although admonished daily concerning their Papistical tendency; and went to church every Sabbath, as a good Protestant should do. These were the only books she studied; though, I think, at one period of her life, she told me, she had read with great satisfaction the Adventures of an Unfortunate Young Nobleman. Finding the door of the chapel in Essex-street open one day — it was in the infancy of that heresy — she went in, liked the sermon, and the manner of worship, and frequented it at intervals for some time after. She came not for doctrinal points, and never missed them. With some little asperities in her constitution, which I have above hinted at, she was a steadfast, friendly being, and a fine *old Christian*. She was a woman of strong sense, and a shrewd mind — extraordinary at a *repartee;* one of the few occasions of her breaking silence — else she did not much value wit. The only secular employment I remember to have seen her engaged in, was, the splitting of French beans, and dropping them into a China basin of fair water. The odour of those tender vegetables to this day comes back upon my sense, redolent of soothing recollections. Certainly it is the most delicate of culinary operations.

Male aunts, as somebody calls them, I had none — to remember. By the uncle's side I may be said to have been born an orphan. Brother, or sister, I never had any — to know them. A sister, I think, that should have been Elizabeth, died in both our infancies. What a comfort, or what a care, may I not have missed in her! — But I have cousins, sprinkled about in Hertfordshire — besides *two*, with whom I have been all my life in habits of the closest intimacy, and whom I may term cousins *par excellence*. These are James and Bridget Elia. They are older than myself by twelve, and ten, years; and neither of them seems disposed, in matters of advice and guidance, to waive any of the prerogatives which primogeniture confers. May they continue still in the same mind; and when they shall be seventy-five, and seventy-three, years old (I cannot spare them sooner), persist in treating me in my grand climacteric precisely as a stripling, or younger brother!

James is an inexplicable cousin. Nature hath her unities, which not every critic can penetrate; or, if we feel, we cannot explain them. The pen of Yorick, and of none since his, could have drawn J.E. entire — those fine Shandean lights and shades, which make up his story. I must limp after in my poor antithetical manner, as the fates have given me grace and talent. J.E. then — to the eye of a common observer at least — seemeth made up of contradictory principles. — The genuine child of impulse, the frigid philosopher of prudence — the phlegm of my cousin's doctrine is invariably at war with his temperament, which is high sanguine. With always some fire-new project in his brain, J.E. is the systematic opponent of innovation, and crier down of everything that has not stood the test of age and experiment. With a hundred fine notions chasing one another hourly in his fancy, he is startled at the least approach to the romantic in others; and, determined by his own sense in everything, commends *you* to the guidance of common sense on all occasions. — With a touch of the eccentric in all which he does, or says, he is only anxious that *you* should not commit yourself by doing any thing absurd or singular. On my once letting slip at table, that I was not fond of a certain popular dish, he begged me at any rate not to *say* so — for the world would think me mad. He disguises a passionate fondness for works of high art (whereof he hath amassed a choice collection), under the pretext of buying only to sell again — that his enthusiasm may give no encouragement to yours. Yet, if it were so, why does that piece of tender, pastoral Dominichino hang still by his wall? — is the ball of his sight much more dear to him? — or what picture-dealer can talk like him? Whereas mankind in general are observed to warp their speculative conclusions to the bent of their individual humours, *his* theories are sure to be in diametrical opposition to his constitution. He is courageous as Charles of Sweden, upon instinct; chary of his person, upon principle, as a travelling Quaker. — He has been preaching up to me, all my life, the doctrine of bowing

to the great — the necessity of forms, and manner, to a man's getting on in the world. He himself never aims at either, that I can discover — and has a spirit that would stand upright in the presence of the Cham of Tartary. It is pleasant to hear him discourse of patience — extolling it as the truest wisdom — and to see him during the last seven minutes that his dinner is getting ready. Nature never ran up in her haste a more restless piece of workmanship than when she moulded this impetuous cousin — and Art never turned out a more elaborate orator than he can display himself to be, upon his favourite topic of the advantages of quiet, and contentedness in the state, whatever it may be, that we are placed in. He is triumphant on this theme, when he has you safe in one of those short stages that ply for the western road, in a very obstructing manner, at the foot of John Murray's street — where you get in when it is empty, and are expected to wait till the vehicle hath completed her just freight — a trying three quarters of an hour to some people. He wonders at your fidgetiness — "where could we be better than we are, *thus silting, thus consulting*?"—"prefers, for his part, a state of rest to locomotion,"— with an eye all the while upon the coachman — till at length, waxing out of all patience, at *your want of it*, he breaks out into a pathetic remonstrance at the fellow for detaining us so long over the time which he had professed, and declares peremptorily, that "the gentleman in the coach is determined to get out, if he does not drive on that instant."

Very quick at inventing an argument, or detecting a sophistry, he is incapable of attending *you* in any chain of arguing. Indeed he makes wild work with logic; and seems to jump at most admirable conclusions by some process, not at all akin to it. Consonantly enough to this, he hath been heard to deny, upon certain occasions, that there exists such a faculty at all in man as *reason*; and wondereth how man came first to have a conceit of it — enforcing his negation with all the might of *reasoning* he is master of. He has some speculative notions against laughter, and will maintain that laughing is not natural to *him*— when peradventure the next moment his lungs shall crow like Chanticleer. He says some of the best things in the world — and declareth that wit is his aversion. It was he who said, upon seeing the Eton boys at play in their grounds —*What a pity to think, that these fine ingenuous lads in a few years will all be changed into frivolous Members of Parliament!*

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

for much of his enviable leisure is consumed at Christie's, and Phillips's — or where not, to pick up pictures, and such gauds. On these occasions he mostly stoppeth me, to read a short lecture on the advantage a person like me possesses above himself, in having his time occupied with business which he *must do*— assureth me that he often feels it hang heavy on his hands — wishes he had fewer holidays — and goes off — Westward Ho! — chanting a tune, to Pall Mall — perfectly convinced that he has convinced me — while I proceed in my opposite direction tuneless.

It is pleasant again to see this Professor of Indifference doing the honours of his new purchase, when he has fairly housed it. You must view it in every light, till *he* has found the best — placing it at this distance, and at that, but always suiting the focus of your sight to his own. You must spy at it through your fingers, to catch the aërial perspective — though you assure him that to you the landscape shows much more agreeable without that artifice. Woe be to the luckless wight, who does not only not respond to his rapture, but who should drop an unseasonable intimation of preferring one of his anterior bargains to the present! — The last is always his best hit — his "Cynthia of the minute."— Alas! how many a mild Madonna have I known to *come in*— a Raphael! — keep its ascendancy for a few brief moons — then, after certain intermedial degradations, from the front drawing-room to the back gallery, thence to the dark parlour — adopted in turn by each of the Carracci, under successive lowering ascriptions of filiation, mildly breaking its fall — consigned to the oblivious lumber-room, *go out* at last a Lucca Giordano, or plain Carlo Maratti! — which things when I beheld — musing upon the chances and mutabilities of fate below, hath made me to reflect upon the altered condition of great personages, or that woeful Queen of Richard the Second —

— set forth in pomp,

She came adorned hither like sweet May.

Sent back like Hollowmass or shortest day.

With great love for *you*, J.E. hath but a limited sympathy with what you feel or do. He lives in a world of his own, and makes slender guesses at what passes in your mind. He never pierces the marrow of your habits. He will tell an old established play-goer, that Mr. Such-a-one, of So-and-so (naming one of the theatres), is a very lively comedian — as a piece of news! He advertised me but the other day of some pleasant green lanes which he had found out for me, *knowing me to be a great walker*, in my own immediate vicinity — who have haunted the identical spot any time these twenty years! He has not much respect for that class of feelings which goes by the name of sentimental. He applies the definition of real evil to bodily sufferings exclusively — and rejecteth

all others as imaginary. He is affected by the sight, or the bare supposition, of a creature in pain, to a degree which I have never witnessed out of womankind. A constitutional acuteness to this class of sufferings may in part account for this. The animal tribe in particular he taketh under his especial protection. A broken-winded or spur-galled horse is sure to find an advocate in him. An over-loaded ass is his client forever. He is the apostle to the brute kind — the never-failing friend of those who have none to care for them. The contemplation of a lobster boiled, or eels skinned *alive*, will wring him so, that "all for pity he could die." It will take the savour from his palate, and the rest from his pillow, for days and nights. With the intense feeling of Thomas Clarkson, he wanted only the steadiness of pursuit, and unity of purpose, of that "true yolk-fellow with Time," to have effected as much for the *Animal*, as *he* hath done for the *Negro Creation*. But my uncontrollable cousin is but imperfectly formed for purposes which demand cooperation. He cannot wait. His amelioration-plans must be ripened in a day. For this reason he has cut but an equivocal figure in benevolent societies, and combinations for the alleviation of human sufferings. His zeal constantly makes him to outrun, and put out, his coadjutors. He thinks of relieving — while they think of debating. He was black-balled out of a society for the Relief of **********, because the fervor of his humanity toiled beyond the formal apprehension, and creeping processes, of his associates. I shall always consider this distinction as a patent of nobility in the Elia family! Do I mention these seeming inconsistencies to smile at, or upbraid, my unique cousin? Marry, heaven, and all good manners, and the understanding that should be between kinsfolk, forbid! — With all the strangenesses of this *strangest of the Elias*— I would not have him in one jot or little other than he is; neither would I barter or exchange my wild kinsman for the most exact, regular, and everyway consistent kinsman breathing.

In my next, reader, I may perhaps give you some account of my cousin Bridget — if you are not already surfeited with cousins — and take you by the hand, if you are willing to go with us, on an excursion which we made a summer or two since, in search of *more cousins*—

Through the green plains of pleasant Hertfordshire

1.7. SUMMARY OF THE ESSAY

Reminiscences of persons and scenes of earlier years form the principal subject-matter of Lamb's essays. Lamb's delicate and sympathetic power of interpreting the spirit of a locality, a house, or a person was best exercised when the object was surrounded by the golden haze of happy recollection. The persons chosen for description are his friends, acquaintances, or relatives and the places are those that he has often frequented. As a thin veil for these autobiographic

elements he adopts as a pseudonym the name of an Italian fellow-clerk, Elia, whom he knew slightly; but Elia's ways and thoughts are Lamb's own; and his brother and sister, James and Bridget Elia, are James and Mary Lamb.

Most of the essays of Lamb are deeply personal and autobiographical. Lamb uses the essay as a vehicle of Self-revelation. He takes the reader into confidence and speaks about himself without reserve. These essays, acquaint us with Lamb's likes and dislikes, his preferences and aversions, his tastes and temperaments, his nature and disposition, his meditations and reflections, his observations and comments, his reactions to persons, events, and things and so on without openly taking himself as a subject. Lamb is forever speaking of himself. This constant pre-occupation with himself and his use of the personal pronoun "I" is by some described as his egotism. It is just that Lamb relates what he knows best. The past, like the present, offers him an inexhaustible store house from which he freely draws for his material. From the personal and autobiographical portions of the essays, it is possible to reconstruct the inner life and no little of the outer life of Lamb. Among the essays in which Lamb reveals himself more conspicuously

The title of this essay is indicative of what the essay is about. "**My Relations"** is purely a personal essay in which Lamb speaks of some of his relations. The essay begins with a statement that blessed is the man either of whose parents continues to live even when he has himself grown old. Then comes the philosophical observation that a man is forgotten soon after death. Let a man reflect upon the oblivion which will descend him soon after he is dead. Lamb then introduces us to an aunt of his. He gives us a vivid and interesting portrait of the woman. In the following lines:

"I had an aunt, a dear and good one. She was one whom single blessedness had soured to the world she often used to say, that I was the only thing in it which she loved; and, when she thought I was quitting it, she grieved over me with mother's tears. A partiality quite so exclusive my reason cannot altogether approve. She was from morning till night poring over good books and devotional exercises. Her favourite volumes were "Thomas a Kempis", in Stan hope's translation, and a Roman catholic prayer. Book, with the matins and complines regularly set down terms which I was at that time too young to understand. She persisted in reading them, although admonished daily concerning their papistical tendency; and went to church every sabbath, as a good protestant should do. These were the only books she studied; Though, I think at one period of her life, she told me, she had read with great satisfaction the "Adventures of an unfortunate young, Noble man".

In these lines Lamb says, among his relations, he had an aunt, a dear and good one. This aunt had never got married and, for that reason, she felt bitterness towards people in general. However, she was very fond of her nephew, Charles Lamb. From morning till night, she used to pour over religious books. She was especially fond of reading. Imitation of Christ (by Thomas a Kemp's) and a Roman Catholic prayer book. The latter book she read, even though she was a good protestant. She went to church every Sunday. In spite of her bitterness towards people in general, she was a fine old Christian. She had a shrewd mind and was very good at witty retorts. The only non-religious task that she performed was the splitting of French Beans and dropping them into china basin of water.

What we have seen in the essay is Lamb gives full and living pictures of his relations—his brother John (James Elia) and his sister Mary (Bridget Elia). His father is the Lovel of the Old Benchers, his grandmother in Dream Children. In the words of H. G. Hill, "Apart from these biographical details revealed in his essays, the man himself is more than reflected in his work." Lamb's sweet and charming personality reflected in his essays is the secret of the popularity of Essays of Elia. Interestingly, Lamb draws the portrait of his "aunt" and his "cousin," James Elia, in the humorous manner and loving spirit of the Sir Roger de Coverley paper in this essay. Here he speaks of his brother and sister in terms that conveys the sacredness of family relations even when the object of love is not the most worthy; for in "James Elia " we certainly see much that we cannot admire.

His sentences are sometimes short and sometimes very lengthy as illustrated in the essay. There is one sentence as short as, 'He cannot wait' and a long sentence, 'In my next, reader, I may perhaps give you some account of my cousin Bridget — if you are not already surfeited with cousins-and take you by the hand, if you are willing to go with us, on an excursion which we made a summer or two since, in search of more cousins- through the green plains of pleasant Hertfordshire.' At times his sentences are antithetical which Lamb himself is aware of this and in 'My Relations' writes 'I must limp about in my poor antithetical manner, as the fates have given me grace and talent.' He expresses one opinion only to replace it with another often within one essay. He never seems to take a single stand. This is perhaps the charm of Elia through whom Lamb writes. Interaction with Elia, entertains the reader and he remains unaware of the writer's intent, he is embroiled in the charm of Elia's conversation and the sense of intimacy he is able to create. This helps in making Elia elusive. For Lamb, the essay is not a vehicle of ideas rather it is his instrument on which he plays different tunes.

1.8. SUMMING UP

'...the most delightful, the most provoking,

the most witty and sensible of men.....'

-Hazlitt.

In this Unit, We have learned that Charles Lamb was an English essayist, poet, fiction writer and critic from the Romantic period who continues to be one of the most lovable and read English essayists of all times. He was one of the significant members of the Lake Poets among whom William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were his close friends. Although he could not attain enduring popularity for his poetry as his friends Wordsworth and Coleridge did, he later channelised his energies into writing prose and in this pursuit emerged as one of the best essayists of his times. Two of his collections, 'Essays of Elia' and 'Tales from Shakespeare' are considered his best works as an essayist. 'Essays of Elia', which contained a string of autobiographical record of experiences and essays of Elia, a fictitious character of the writer, is counted among the most excellent illustrations of the English style of essays and compositions.

1.9. KEY WORDS

Essay:

Generally an essay is a piece of writing on a particular subject greater than a paragraph. The word essay also gets another meaning which is 'an attempt'. *Essays* are non-fictional but often subjective.Thus each used the word Essay as an assay or analysis of some subject of thought. Bacon's essay was of life, generally in many forms, with full attention to its outward circumstances. Montaigne's essay was of the inner life of man as it was to be found in the one man's life that he knew." The Essay Proper, or Literary Essay, is not merely a short analysis of a subject, not a mere epitome, but rather a picture of the writer's mind as affected for the moment by the subject with which he is dealing. Its most distinctive feature is the egotistical element.

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MODAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Charles Lamb as an essayist.
2. Write a note on the personal element of Lamb reflected in his essays.
3. Give a critical appreciation of the essay 'My Relations'.
4. How are Lamb's essays different from those of his contemporary? Write a note.

——xxx——

Block-II

Unit 2 : Non-Fictional Prose

Letters of John Keats: a – To Benjamin Bailey, 22nd Nov, 1817
b – To John Hamilton Reynolds, 3rd May 1818.

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2.4 The Significance of Keats's Letters

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Check Your Progress 2

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2.1 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are as follows-

1. Through this unit, we will able to acquaint the students with one of the leading poets of Romantic Age.
2. The students will be able to understand John Keats as a man of letters of the Romantic Age.
3. The third objective is an attempt to make the students acquaint with Keats's letters prescribed in the course, namely
   a) To Benjamin Bailey, 22nd Nov, 1818
   b) To John Hamilton Reynolds, 3rd May 1818.

2.2. INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, the students have come to know about one of the famous essayists of Romantic period, i.e. Charles Lamb. Charles Lamb was mainly known for his *Essays of Elia* and his essay My Relations is also included in it. Through this unit, the students will be introduced to John Keats and his letters.

John Keats was one of the most promising figures of nineteenth century English literature.It is said that Keats was 'the most perfect of the Romanticists'.Though Keats earned his popularity as a poet, he also wrote a significant amount of essays and letters. Keats died at a very young age of 25.Keats was different from the other romanticists in his aesthetic preoccupations. He was a worshipper of beauty and poetry. However, Keats' lettersare a key to understanding his philosophy and his personality as a Romantic man of letters. Therefore, in this unit will attempt toenlighten the reader about Keats through a detailed discussion of his two selected letters.

2.2.1 John Keats as a Poet:

John Keats is not only a name in English literature; he is a personality that has made the world astonished with his creations within a very short span of time. He is a poet admired by all. His essays are also crucial to his identity as a writer as they bear philosophical depth of his knowledge and his intellectuality. This course is given as recourse to the students so that they will be able to understand Keats not only as a poet, but also a philosopher, thinker and intellectual of his time.

Shelley was the first poet who has sincerely tried to give recognition to this literary genius. In this respect, we can mention his 'Adonais' that brilliantly portrays and offers appreciation and honor to this greatest literary figure. It is a tribute to his poetic genius and merit. The posthumous popularity that the poet achieved has proved his intellect and placed him among our greatest poets.

John Keats belongs to the younger generation of the Romantic poets. He belongs to the group of Shelley and Byron. Keats focused on the romantic themes like, beauty, love, nature and the superiority of art. Keats's poetry is also based on the idea of beauty. The famous opening line of the poem *Endymion* – "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever"- explores the overwhelming presence of the idea of beauty in his poems.

Keats's fame basically lies on the corpus of his poetry. It should be marked that his letters were initially thought of as distractions from his poetry. However, His letters were first published in installments. In the twentieth century, these documents became much more highly regarded. Keats used letter-writing as a way of documenting and giving life to his thoughts and philosophy, especially in the abundant letters he wrote to his brother George and his sister-in-law Georgina, who had moved to the United States.

2.2.2 His Life History and Major Works:

Keats was born in London, on 31st October, 1795 and the first of Thomas and Frances Keats's five children. He belonged to a very humble background. His father was a stable keeper. He lost his parents at a very early age.His father died in 1804, and mother in 1810, leaving Keats, his two brothers and a sister in the care of their grandmother. In March 1805, John's grandfather died, leaving the children without a male protector. The mother seems to have dropped out of their lives, and so their grandmother, Mrs. Jennings, took them into her house. The children grew up under the care of the grandmother. Their mother reappeared in 1808, but died of tuberculosis in 1810.After the death of his parents, Keats took up the job of apprentice. At first, he was an apprentice to a surgeon at Edmonton. He served as an apprentice for many years but did not like his work and he left his profession of apprentice in 1817. Then he matriculated at Guy's Hospital for one term (six months). In the beginning, Keats was an industrious student, but in the spring of 1816, he seems to have begun to lose his interest in medicine in favor of poetry.However, he passed his examinations in July 1816, and was qualified to practice as an apothecary and a surgeon.

Early in 1817, Keats gave up medicine for poetry. His career at Guy's Hospital had been a successful one, but his fascination with poetry was stronger, and he had proved, at least to his own satisfaction, that he could write poetry.

The year 1817 was important as Keats published his first two volumes of poetry, they are: *the Poems* of 1817 and *Endymion: A Poetic Romance* of 1818, a four-thousand line poem based on the Greek myth of the same name. Around this time, Keats met Leigh Hunt, an influential editor of the *Examiner*, who published his sonnets "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" and "O Solitude." At this time Keats renewed his friendship with Clarke, met another young poet, John Hamilton Reynolds.Leigh Hunt had influenced his life to a great extent. He appreciated Keats's works and his appreciation helped him creating poetry. Hunt also introduced Keats to a circle of literary men, including the poets Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Wordsworth. The group's influence enabled Keats to publish his *Poems*.

Keats turned the story of *Endymion*, a mythical shepherd, into an allegory(a narrative in which abstract ideas are represented by people) of the romantic longing to overcome the boundaries of ordinary human experience.For his works such as *the Poems* and *Endymion* Keats had also faced brutal attacks by the critics of *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Quarterly*. He belonged to what was derisively called the cockney school of poetry of which Leigh Hunt was the chief. It is often rumored that these attacks by the critics had effected Keats to a great extent and was the reason of his deteriorated heath, but he was man of high spirit and devoted himself to the production of higher kind of poetry that will live forever.

He was a brilliant poet with rich sensuous quality. Keats was also highly influenced by Spenser and his verses. Because of this influence he started writing verses in imitating Spenser in his favorite Spenserian stanza of nine lines. His life was never smooth and stable. His illness began with a severe cold and though he was engaged to Fannie Brawne, he was unable to marry her because of his growing illness and poverty.

An important change in Keats' life was a walking tour that he took through the Lake Country, up into Scotland, and a short trip to Ireland, with one of his friends, Charles Brown, in the summer of 1818. The trip lasted from June to August and reached its terminus in Cromarty, Scotland. The walking tour broadened Keats' acquaintance with his environment and with varieties of people. The hardships, which Keats and Brown had to endure, often spending the night on the mud floor of a shepherd's hut, may have weakened Keats' constitution and shortened his life. In Inverness, he developed a sore throat and decided to return to London by boat. The trip itself produced very little poetry.

In early 1818, Keats turned to straightforward narrative in *Isabella,* which is based on a story by Boccaccio (1313–1375). Its theme was connected with Keats's more philosophical (pertaining to inquiry concerning the source and nature of human knowledge) preoccupations—the beauty and greatness of tragic love.

Keats started working on *Hyperion* in September 1818 and he never finished this work. The blank verse of *Hyperion* revealed that Keats had become a first-class poet. His firm control of language in *Hyperion* is truly astonishing. *Endymion* and *Hyperion* could have been the work of two different poets. An essential part of its purpose was to describe the growth of the Greek god Apollo into a true poet through ever deeper acceptance and understanding of change and sorrow. However, Keats was unable to get ahead with it for a number of reasons, including impaired health, negative reception of *Endymion* by an influential critic, and the death of his brother, Tom. During 1819, he also tried writing *the Fall of Hyperion*, but like the previous Hyperion it was never completed.

Keats's Lamia, Isabella, the Eve of St Agnes, and other Poems were published in July 1820. These collections of poetry present Keats not only as a poetic genius but also as a man of determination and indomitable spirit. He was also a popular writer of Odes. His collection of five odes such as "Ode to Psyche," "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and "Ode to a Nightingale." These, together with the later "Ode on Insolence" and "Ode on Melancholy," was published in 1820. 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' was one of his famous ballads that tells of the mysterious seduction of a medieval knight by another of Keats's elusive, enigmatic (mysterious), half-divine ladies.

His reputation as a poet grew steadily within a few decades of his death. Keats is well known to his readers for his short poems. Among these to name a few are: "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "To a Nightingale", "To Autumn", and "To Psyche". Though Keats's work was bitterly condemned by the critics, Keats is, like Spenser, a poet's poet; his work highly influenced Tennyson and, indeed, most of the poets of the present era.

Check your Progress 1

1. When was John Keats born?
2. Which poem of Keats opens with "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever'?
3. Mention three famous odes written by Keats.
4. At what age Keats died.
5. What was the name of the beloved of Keats? Did he marry her?

2.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ROMANTIC PERIOD:

Romanticism, as an artistic, literary, musical movement began in Europe in the late 18th century. It is a comprehensive term for a large number of tendencies

towards change. The essence of romanticism lies in the idea that, literature must reflect all that is spontaneous and unaffected in nature and in man, and be free to follow its own fancy in its own way.

The most notable feature of the poetry of the time is the new role of individual thought and personal feeling. The literature, produced in that period marked a contrast with that of the literature of 18th century. Reason no longer became the primary concern in this period; its place was taken by imagination, emotion, and individual sensibility. The interest has been shifted from urban life to nature. Their works always manifested a 'return to nature'. The Romantic writers were also highly influenced by the French Revolution and their idea of 'liberty, equality and fraternity'. Wordsworth, the great champion of the spiritual and moral values of physical nature, tried to show the natural dignity, goodness, and the worth of the common man. The Romantic poets are also concerned with the idea of beauty. Keats, in most of his poems, has also dealt with the idea of beauty.

2.4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KEATS'S LETTERS:

His letters are significant for the fact that in these letters he has introduced some most important philosophical concepts, for instance- 'the chameleon poet', '*negative capability'*, and 'the Mansion of Many Apartments' — took form in his letters. The letters also appear to have influenced Keats's poetry; for example, in an 1817 letter to Benjamin Bailey, he wrote, "I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination – What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth,". Thus, the manifestation of this idea is found in one of Keats's most famous poems "Ode on a Grecian Urn " through his most quoted expression,

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty-that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.' (Lines 49-50)

He also composed perhaps his most well-regarded poem, "To Autumn", after noting the beauty of the season in a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds.

One of the prominent doctrines of Keats was 'negative capability'. Keats, in most of the letters has dealt with this idea of 'negative capability'. According to him, 'negative capability' is the idea 'When a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after any fact and reason'. In his letter to Benjamin Bailey Keats has mentioned about this. This idea is related to the objectivity and impersonality of the poet.

Keats's letters are the store house of his philosophical and critical views. These letters are instrumental in revealing different aspects of Keats. That is why his letters play a very crucial role in understanding the poet and his ideas fully. These letters are medium of presenting his views on poetry and writing process. If one wants to understand his poetry, he should try to read his letters. These letters are mirror to his poetic creativity.

Section 1.5: Letter I: Letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22nd November, 1817.

Subsection 1.5.1: About Benjamin Bailey:

Benjamin Bailey (1791-1853) was a student at Oxford when he and Keats became friends. The friendship ended when Bailey, after passionately courting Marianne Reynolds, married Hamilton Gleig instead. In his letter to Benjamin Bailey that he wrote 22nd November, 1817, he questions the reasons behind world's quarrel and according to him this is only because clashes of thoughts from both sides. Keats was acting as a man of philosophy in presenting his views. From this aspect also it is evident. He has also dealt with the ideas regarding the Genius and the Heart. Both are two different entities of human being. In his letter to Bailey, he also expresses his gratitude towards his friend for his valuable friendship. He expresses in his letter that as his friend knows him very closely, he is still holding him as his close friend. Benjamin was on of Keats's close friends, that is why most of Keats's letters were addressed to his friend and brother Benjamin Bailey.In the letter Keats's major concern was imagination and religion.

2.5.2 An Overview of the Letter:

Keats has begun the letter with the crucial topic of authenticity and superiority of imagination. According to Keats, reality can be achieved through imagination. Imagination is the authentic medium with the help of which one can understand the reality. He puts more emphasis on imagination and emotion, rather than reason. For him imagination is the most important aspect in the quest of reality. One should always try to quest for beauty of truth in imagination. Therefore, it can be said that this letter perfectly explores Keats's association with the romantic period, as imagination is the most crucial feature of that period too.

He has criticized the man of Genius and has made a clear distinction between man of Heart and man of Genius. In this respect, emotion holds a greater position over intellect. Emotions are true to life. For him 'they (the man of Genius) have not any individuality, any determined character.' He despises the man of genius and put more emphasis on the heart, rather than brain.

He has also talked about the power of imagination. In fact, for him imagination is truthful than anything else. He said, 'I am certain of nothing, but of the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of imagination.' He was also of the view that, "What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth.' Our passions are sublime, 'creative of essential beauty.' Therefore, Keats is of the view that imagination is the creative power that produces 'essential beauty'. For Keats, the highest truth, therefore, is a matter of *sensation* not thought, hence. That is why Many of Keats's poems do explore the power of the imagination to create a transcendent vision of immortal beauty,is valuable for its own sake: Imagination (dream) seizes upon Beauty (physical embodiment) yielding an intense and impassioned moment that it just as "real" as any scientifically-observed phenomena.

While talking about imagination he has compared it to 'Adam's dream'. According to Keats truth cannot be known for reasoning only. Simple imaginative minds compare great things to small. Keats holds imagination to higher kinds. Keats meant that the imagination is a higher type of perception giving us access to a hidden spiritual reality, or the "unseen order of things." Later views have argued that Keats meant that moments of heightened imagination are more intensely "real" than ordinary moments, that imagination offers its own experience, and that this experience emotions, passions and love fire the imagination into the creation of beauty.

He has also talked about 'complex mind'. According to him, it is both imaginative and conscious. It is both rational and emotional. A man with a complex mind would exist partly on sensation and partly on thought. For him it is necessary to bring out the philosophic mind. Therefore, he has said that his friend has that kind of a mind.

Keats does not believe in worldly happiness. He puts emphasis on present hour and present moment. He does not bother about the uncertainties of future. He makes it clear to Bailey that if he finds anything cold in him, it is not his heartlessness, but abstraction. His abstraction is the result of his indifference.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Who was Benjamin Bailey?
2. When dis Keats write his letter to Benjamin Bailey?

2.6: Letter II: To John Hamilton Raynolds, 3rd May, 1818

2.6.1 About John Hamilton Raynolds (1794-1852):

He was an English poet, satirist, critic, and playwright. Reynolds is best remembered as a close friend and correspondent of the Romantic poet John Keats, whose letters to Reynolds constitute a significant body of his poetic thought. At the time of their friendship, however, Reynolds was regarded as a poet with as much promise and talent as Keats himself. He published widely in literary periodicals, and his critical writings reveal a discriminating appreciation of poetry, particularly in his admiration for William Wordsworth at a time when the elder poet was not widely respected.

2.6.2 An Overview of the Letter:

John Hamilton Reynolds met Keats at Leigh Hunt's home in October 1816. In his letter to Hamilton Raynolds, he talks about the strength of the mind and the acquisition of knowledge. According to him, When the mind gets matured enough bias becomes no bias. Maturity of the mind comes only then when the mind is able to avoid biasness. He has said high sensations with knowledge is without fear. Sensations alone may be dangerous, but it is creative when it adds knowledge in it. He suspects, 'how far knowledge will console us for the death of a friend.' Knowledge cannot always define human existence, along with knowledge our emotions are equally important as they make us humane. He then notes that knowledge balances one during experiences of "high Sensations" — i.e. emotional upheaval. Therefore, both knowledge and emotion are interrelated. One is incomplete without the other.

He also mentioned an ode in his letter TO Raynolds. In this letter, he marks a consideration of Wordsworth's genius and makes a distinction between Wordsworth and Milton.

He has also talked about the truthfulness of the writer and the process of writing. What the author says is true as long as we experience the same. So, in a way he prescribes and approves of writings that includes practical knowledge in it.

This letter is important for the fact that it depicts Keats's views on human life. He has 'compared human life to a large mansion of many apartment.' Here Keats mentions about two of them. This idea of 'compartment' is one of the most important views of Keats on human life. The first chamber is infant or thoughtless chamber. This chamber is compared to infancy, as here we do not

think. The second chamber is the chamber of maiden thought. In this chamber, we find delight and wonder and gradually the maiden thoughts become dark. We are in a world of mist and and we carry 'burden of mystery'. This world offers some secrets to be revealed. Only a genius can explore those darkness.

Keats is of the view that 'Wordsworth is deeper than Milton'. Keats suggests that it may not be Wordsworth's individual genius that allows him to be "deeper" than Milton; it may be a function of the different eras in which they were writing. Wordsworth's philosophy is more human centred, whereas Milton possesses "less anxiety for humanity." So, Keats also thinks that a writer's genius or intellect is always influenced by the age he belongs to. Milton did not bother about human, but Wordsworth did. However, Milton as a philosopher is equal to Wordsworth. So, Keats said "Milton, as a Philosopher, had sure as great powers of Wordsworth," Keats thinks that there is something real in the world. The third chamber of life contains love and friendship. It is a gentle one.

Keats believed that Wordsworth had certainly reached the second chamber and been led beyond by his curiosity. He had been able to reveal those secrets and lighten up those dark parts. He points out that Wordsworth's poem "Tintern Abbey" retraces this intellectual journey.

Keats concludes that "a mighty providence subdues the mightiest minds to the service of the time being, whether it be in human knowledge or Religion." In other words, a writer's mode of thought is undoubtedly shaped, and in some cases repressed, by his or her environment. That is why along with the writer's individual genius, his environment is also equally important.

Check Your Progress 3

3. When did Keats write his first letter? To whom it was addressed?
4. What do you mean by 'negative capability' as mentioned in the letters of Keats.
5. What is the significance of Keats's letters? Discuss.

2.7 LET US SUM UP:

Keats's poems are enough to put this personality into higher grounds, but his letters to his family members, friends, beloved manifest another dimension of Keats. His letters are mirror of his true self. These are repository of his poetic and philosophical ideas. These letters reveal him as an affectionate brother, a faithful friend, a passionate lover, and a powerful literary critic. These letters therefore deserve our attention.

His development as a poet was rapid, particular and individual and it was articulated in the bursts of energetic self-critical analysis in his letters.These letters also establish Keats as a literary genius. His letters to his friend Benjamin Bailey are written from a critical point of view.The letters bears the spontaneous and frank observations of a young man: his insecurities,doubts, fears, enthusiasms, prejudices, ambitions, opinions, and ideas. Ifhis greatest poems are characterized by their stillness and poise, his lettersare masterpieces of motion. "They read like mountain rivers: ragged, rough,full of raw energy, dangerous. They are alive with improvisational wit andverbal gusto, revealing an agile mind happily willing to dwell in contradiction or, as he says, "remain content with half knowledge" (Scott xxii).

2.8 KEY WORDS:

Romanticism, imagination, beauty, philosophy, negative capability, poetry, mansion of many apartments, maturity, sensations, creative, truth

2.9. MODEL ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

1. What were the most important ideas that Keats mentioned in his letter to John Hamilton Raynolds, 3rd May, 1818?

Answer: Keats's letters are the store house of his philosophical and critical views. These letters are instrumental in revealing different aspects of Keats. That is why his letters play a very crucial role in understanding the poet and his ideas fully. His letters are medium of understanding his views on poetry.

Keats has started the letter by talking about the strength of the mind and the acquisition of knowledge. Moreover, the most prominent idea in this letter is his idea of 'mansion of many apartments'. Keats used this metaphor for human life. Keats used this term to identify different levels of human understanding and thought. The first chamber is infant or thoughtless chamber. This chamber is compared to infancy, as here we don't think. The second chamber is the chamber of maiden thought. In this chamber, we find delight and wonder and gradually the maiden thoughts become dark.

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Unit-3

Matthew Arnold : *Preface to Poems* (1853)

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will be acquainted with the condition of literary non-fictional prose in England of the Victorian Era through a detailed analysis of Matthew Arnold's 'Preface to Poems' (1853) as a representative text. After the end of this unit, you will be able to –

- Identify Matthew Arnold as a non-fictional prose writer of Victorian literature.

- Explain Arnold's 'Preface to Poems' (1853) as an important document representing Arnold's spirit of literary classicism.
- Analyse 'Preface' in terms of its explication of a theory of poetry that addresses philosophical and moral concerns.
- Evaluate 'Preface' as a typical specimen of Arnoldian Classical criticism.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we have observed the development of the genre of non-fictional prose in the Romantic period with a detailed study of Keats' letters. The purpose of the present unit is to demonstrate you how non-fictional prose writings occupied an important place in the literary tradition of the Victorian Era. Distinctively apart from scientific and political writings of the period, literary non-fiction of this period are comprised of essays and treatises that brought about new sensibilities in the field of literary criticism.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) is a major Victorian critic who, along with his contemporaries like J.H. Newman, John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle and Water Pater, could offer original views on poetry that would constitute his theory of poetry through his prose writings. 'The Study of Poetry' and 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' are two of his celebrated essays that established him in the critical scene of the Victorian Era.

This unit will introduce you to Matthew Arnold's first attempt at criticism viz. 'Preface to Poems' (1853) as one of the representative texts of the period. The unit will also underline the significance of Victorian prose non-fiction through the analysis of Arnold's 'Preface'.

3.2 BACKGROUND

The Preface to Matthew Arnold's 1853 Poems, his third volume of poetry to get published, is both an important landmark in the prose writing of the period and, as Sidney Coulling maintains, is a polemic piece of influential critical acumen, anticipating a number of ideas which he would later develop. It was his initial attempt at a prose work to have garnered a considerable amount of debate among his contemporaries.

3.2.1 Arnold's Purpose behind *Preface*

Arnold's principal aim of writing the preface was to deal aggressively with the prevalent critical views of his day and vigorously to defend his own

poetical practice. It was an outright condemnation of romantic excesses in poetry, and in the words of Coulling, a reply to the reviews of the 1849 and 1852 volumes of poetry, and specifically to the objections made to those volumes by Arnold's friends at Oxford University. In a nutshell, Preface can be understood as a defense of his own poetry as has been stated already; a defense of his choice of classical subjects and, as Coulling observes, a defense of "his refusal to be a mere spokesman for his age."

Check Your Progress 1

1. How many volumes of poems did Arnold publish before that of 1853?

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   .....

2. What is the main purpose of Arnold to write *Preface to Poems* (1853)?

   .....

   .....

3.3 THE SUBJECT OF POETRY

Arnold begins 'Preface' by acknowledging the omission of a poem in the volume of poems he puts forward to the readers, most of which were published in the previous two volumes he compiled anonymously. The omitted poem, 'Empedocles on Etna' is an important one because the title of the previous volume was taken from it. The poem, according to Arnold, is deliberately excluded from the present volume due to the fact that it did not correspond to the demands of the poetic principle Arnold believed in.

3.3.1 Influence of Aristotle's Theory

The principle in question is the principle of Classicism as reflected in the poetic theory of Aristotle. Aristotle, in his celebrated treatise *Poetics* defined poetry to be the imitation (*mimesis*) of an action that pleases the senses of the reader. Following Aristotle, Arnold states that the basis of all poetry is human actions, proper representation of which gives us 'knowledge' and also 'pleasure'. He cites the reason of exclusion of the poem 'Empedocles on Etna' to be its detachment from action and its poetic representation or imitation in such terms. The poem is rather loosely based on the emotional upsurge that Empedocles was undergoing which has no equivalence in action.

3.3.2 Philosophical and Moral Bases

There are philosophical and moral bases of Arnold's theory of poetry so much so that he puts extra emphasis on the didactic function of poetry and equally with its role in giving delight to its perceiver. The philosophisation and moralising can be attributed to the Victorian dilemma which gets manifested at various times in Arnold. In 'The Study of Poetry', he criticises the general tendency of the Victorian society to run after some kind of materialised forms of reason or 'facts'—thanks to the advancements of science and new technologies. To counteract upon such tendencies, Arnold feels the need to philosophise and moralise poetry viz-a-viz principles of Classicism which is a sustaining and nourishing force to him.

3.3.3 Difference with the Romantics

Arnold's preoccupation with human actions as the subject of poetry is suggestive of his classical pragmatism which stands directly opposed to Romantic ideals which tend to establish imagination as the basis of poetry. It is in fact one of the ways in which Romantic poetry foregrounds the situations under which poetry is detached from action and is centered around emotion, sentiments or feelings of the individual mind. Discarding the claims and influences of Romanticism, Arnold declares that the basis of our indulgence with poetry is that—(a) all knowledge is naturally agreeable to what a poem has to say; and (b) we take pleasure in getting such knowledge. In other words, the voice of poetry is not personal or subjective, but universal or objective.

However, such an objective stand on poetry is not new in the English critical tradition. Following Aristotle, Renaissance critics like Sidney emphasized on the contention that the object of poetry is both 'to instruct' and 'to delight.' But, Arnold goes beyond what Sidney seems to understand by poetic pleasure and maintains that pleasure can be found even in the most tragic of the situations provided the poet is able to handle the situation as per the required deft of artistry. But, the pertinent question in such a juncture is to find means to choose an appropriate subject of poetry.

3.3.4 Significance of the Classical Past

The choice of the subject of poetry is a difficult matter. The need according to Arnold is to select the 'excellent action' that would "most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections." To find such actions from the contemporary times would be misleading mainly because one cannot have a clear or complete

picture of the contemporary. Rather it would be worthwhile to look back into the glorious past to find inspiration from it in its entirety. He maintains difference of opinion with those who ignore the 'exhausted past' and "draw [their] subjects from matters of present import" in their search of novelty and so called modernity. In Arnolds view, "a great human action of a thousand years ago is more interesting to it than a smaller human action of today." To illustrate this point, Arnold compares and contrasts works like Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Lamartine's *Jocelyn,* Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea* and Wordsworth's *The Excursion* with Homer's *Illiad* and Virgil's episode of Dido in the fourth book of *Aeneid*. Arnold believes that the latter works overshadow the formers as for classicists like Homer and Virgil, "action is greater, the personages nobler and the situations more intense"; whereas the works of the former poets are full of subjective and thereby partial representation of humanity. Thus, he is inclined towards great human deeds that appear interesting in poetic representation which should be the subject matter of poetry. The past, in that regard, can give us a holistic picture of any marvelous human action that could very well gratify our senses.

Check your Progress 2

1. How does Aristotle define poetry?

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   .....

2. Why did Arnold exclude Empedocles on Etna from his 1853 volume of Poems?

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   .....

3. What, according to Arnold, are the true bases of our indulgence with poetry?

   .....

   .....

3.4 THE CHOICE OF SUBJECT: ARNOLD'S CLASSICISM EXPLAINED

The classical past is of immense importance to Matthew Arnold as he tries to explain his poetic principle in 'Preface'. He exemplifies his indebtedness to Greek writers of classical antiquity in direct terms when it comes to the proper selection of the subject of poetry.

3.4.1 Classics as the Touchstone

Arnold believes that poetic actions should have the classical grandeur as well as equally effective means to transmit them to readers. Regarding this, he seems to profess one of his own formulations in his essay 'Study of Poetry' by the name of 'touchstone method', which is nothing but judgment of literary works on the basis of their comparison with those the classical writers of antiquity. Arnold opines that great poetry is 'eternally interesting' and that greatness belongs to classical antiquity. Therefore, it is of utmost necessity for a modern day poet to that—

> "…his attention should be fixed on excellent models; that he may reproduce at any rate, something of their excellence, by penetrating himself with their works and by catching their spirit, if he cannot be taught to produce what is excellent independently."

The comparative method or the touchstone method is the way by which one 'catches the spirit' of the classicists who are ordained with the epithet 'excellent'.

3.4.2 Preference of Action over Expression

The poets of the classical past and their works have already created a paradigm or tradition that can serve as a standard (touchstone) to evaluate the grandeur of poetry of the contemporary times. But how did this paradigm took shape? One needs to be content that the classical poets and specifically ancient Greek poets gave more prominence to action rather than to the expression that was regarded subordinate to it. To find the contrast between his contemporary poets and those of the ancient Greece, Arnold demonstrates this way—

> "They regarded the whole; we regard the parts. With them, the action predominated over the expression of it; with us, the expression predominates over the action!"

Thus, for Arnold, classical Greek poetry can serve as a model for the present generation of poets since they regard human action in its entirety to be the true subject of poetry which can be interpreted as a holistic approach towards poetic composition.

3.4.3 Past Writers as Models

Among the past writers who can be regarded role models for the new ones, Shakespeare stands high in the English tradition. Arnold feels that there can

be no question against the genius of Shakespeare and his pervasive influence upon the generation of writers. Shakespeare was an immensely gifted poet who could display his mastery over handling of the poetic action through what Arnold calls 'happy, abundant and ingenious expression, eminent and unrivalled.' But, there lies a problem in following or imitating Shakespeare as a role model by budding poets. Shakespeare's artistry is so inseparably infused in his individuality that a young writer may be absorbed by his qualities and as a consequence the new writer may just end up reproducing the subordinate attributes like 'richness of imagery' and 'abundance of illustration' in instead of dealing with the poetic action.

Having declared Shakespeare as an unsafe model to follow, Arnold goes on to justify the need to follow the classicists through an illustration where he contrasts the treatment of poetic action of Keats's *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil* with that of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and argues that although both the works contain the same story but in Boccaccio, in the words of Arnold, the action which in itself is an excellent one, has become pregnant and interesting in the hands of the great artist. On the other hand, in Keats' treatment of the same shows feebleness of conception and looseness of its construction.

However, Arnold offers a disclaimer that he does not urge anyone to follow the classicists indiscriminately. That which is can be termed as narrowness in classicists, he confirms, must be avoided. But, it is by the three conditions which classicist fulfill better than anybody else, that the classicists deserve to be there as models for present writers— firstly and most importantly, the proper choice of a subject; secondly, accurate construction and lastly, pushing poetic expression to a subordinate position.

3.5 PRESCRIPTION FOR THE FUTURE OF POETRY

'Preface' is undoubtedly an Arnoldian defense of poetry in all respects. Through the prose piece, he intends to imbibe the young writers to shoulder the responsibility to preserve the essence of poetry in particular and literature in general, in an age that had been suffering from, as put by Arnold, from a spiritual and moral decay. Acting as a guide to his younger contemporary poets, Arnold encourages them to foster that spirit of the ancients which made them immortal and thereby to achieve poetic distinction. The younger generation owes its service not only to age but also to the field of poetry. It is expected that the new poets pass on the legacy of the poetic perseverance to the posterity.

3.6 LET US SUM UP:

Let us summarise what we came to know so far in this unit——

Matthew Arnold's is a major Victorian prose writer who earned reputation as a literary critic through various works. He started writing prose and his career as a critic through 'Preface to Poems' (1853). 'Preface' can be considered a polemic piece of literary criticism, introducing a number of ideas which Arnold would later develop. Arnold's chief aim of writing 'Preface' was to put forward a defense of his own poetic acumen and also the defense of classicism in poetry. For Arnold, the basis of all poetry is human actions. A proper treatment of action gives us knowledge and also delights; whereas poetic expression is secondary or subordinate to poetic action in importance. The classical poets could represent human actions in their entirety as the true subject of poetry unlike the modern ones and that is why one should look back at them for inspiration. It is out of the same reason; the past writers of classical times should serve as models for new generation of writers for proper evaluation of their works. Arnold believes that it is one of the duties of the new poets or writers to inculcate the values preserved by the classics and the classicists to pass on the same to the posterity in order to save the fate of poetry in difficult modern times.

3.7 GLOSSARY

Aristotle: Greek philosopher (384-322 BC) and disciple of Plato. His *Poetics* is still an indispensable work of literary criticism.

Boccaccio: Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-75) is an Italian poet and humanist of the Renaissance period. His most famous work is *Decameron.*

Byron: George Gordon Lord Byron (1788-1824) is a poet and an important figure of the English Romantic movement.

Classicism: As per Oxford English Dictionary (OED), Classicism is the following of ancient Greek and Roman principles and style in art and literature, generally associated with harmony, restraint and adherence to recognised standards of form and craftsmanship.

Empedocles: A Greek philosopher (c. 493-c.433 BC) born in Sicily. According to a legend he leapt into the crater of Mt Etna out of severe feelings of desolation. Arnold delineated his state of mind out of other things, in his poem, 'Empedocles on Etna.'

Goethe: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) is one of the most revered writers of Germany. He is a poet, a dramatist and a scholar. *Faust* and Wilhelm Meister' novels are his notable works among others.

Homer: A classical Greek poet (8th Cen. BC). He is traditionally attributed the authorship of the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey,* the two major classical epics.

Keats: John Keats (1795-1821) is an English Romantic poet and a major proponent of the Romantic movement in England. Although lived for a short span of time he secured a prominent place among the poets of England.

Lamartine: Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869) is a French poet, statesman and historian. *Méditations poétiques* (1820) is his most notable work.

***Mimesis* (Imitation):** Imitation became part of literary judgment through Greek philosopher Plato (429-347 BC) in his most famous work *Republic*. For Plato, any successful attempt at imitating the ideal world outside marks the birth of poetry (literature). Aristotle, his disciple, took up the term and made extensive use of the term *Poetics*.

Poetics: An ancient Greek treatise on the art of poetry written by Aristotle.

Romanticism: An artistic and literary movement which originated in late 18th century. It emphasized on subjectivity and primacy of the individual. Romanticism was basically a reaction against the order and restraint of classicism and neo-classicism.

Sidney: Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86) is an English poet and critic. His *An Apology for Poetry* is an important work of literary criticism written of the Elizabethan period.

Virgil: A classical Roman poet (70-19 BC) who is known for composing the epic poem *Aeneid.* His Latin name is Publius Vergilius Maro.

3.8 Suggested Readings

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Arnold, Matthew. (2002) "Preface to Poems-1853" in *A Miscellany of English Prose* ed. Bibhash Choudhury, Kitab Bhawan, Guwahati.

Arnold, Matthew. (2009). "The Study of Poetry" in *English Critical Texts* ed. D.J. Enright and Ernst De Chickera, OUP, New Delhi.

Coulling, Sidney M.B. (1964) "Matthew Arnold's 1853 Preface: Its Origin and Aftermath" in *Victorian Studies*, Vol-3 No.-3, Indiana University Press, pp. 233-263, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3825282> accessed on 30-07-2017.

MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Matthew Arnold's classical theory of poetry from your reading of 'Preface to Poems' (1853).
2. How does Matthew Arnold put forward a systematic defense of poetry in 'Preface to Poems' (1853)? Discuss.
3. Enumerate after Arnold, the issues pertinent to choice of subject in poetry.
4. How does Arnold criticize the Romantic ideals of poetry in 'Preface to Poems' (1853)? Discuss.

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BLOCK - III

BLOCK-III

Unit 1: The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell

Contents:

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introducing Bertrand Russell

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1.9 References

1.10 Essay Type Questions

1.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the characteristics of an autobiography
- Critically analyze the Chapter 1 of Bertrand Russell's Autobiography
- Critically examine the Chapter 2 of Bertrand Russell's Autobiography
- Write a character sketch of Bertrand Russell and his philosophy
- Assess the writing style of Bertrand Russell

1.1 INTRODUCING BERTRAND RUSSELL

Bertrand Arthur William Russell, the third Earl Russell (1872-1970) was one of the remarkable names in the list of great philosophers, logicians, mathematicians, historian and social critics from Great Britain. He was born into a British aristocratic family. Russell was believed to be the founder of analytic

philosophy along with his ancestors Gottlob Frege and his student Ludwig Wittgenstein. He ushered the British "revolt against idealism". His famous essay "On Denoting" has been regarded as the "paradigm of philosophy". In 1903, Russell published *The Principles of Mathematics* which is regarded as a work on the foundation of Mathematics and are interrelated and the same. Russell was a remarkable anti-war activist and vehemently opposed the using of nuclear weapons. During the World War I, Russell was one of the few intellectuals who engaged in pacifist projects for which he even had to go to the prison. The works of Bertrand Russell had a noticeable impact on logic and philosophy, mathematics, linguistics, set theory and especially on the philosophy of language, epistemology and metaphysics. In the two chapters discussed in this unit from his autobiography shows process of becoming the man we admire as one of the greatest philosopher of twentieth century. In his autobiography, Russell in a very vivid and outspoken way describes the truths of his life. His language is witty, humorous yet simple and straightforward. He never hesitated to tell the truth, his passions, natural instincts, his views on religion and established tradition and his vision about life. His greatest literary achievement was *History of Western Philosophy* (1946). He was the recipient of prestigious Nobel Prize in literature in year 1950. Bertrand Russell is still evergreen for his humanitarian ideals, philosophy across the world.

1.2 PROLOGUE TO THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Russell said that three passions, simple but enormously strong had governed his entire life were: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like the great winds blown him towards the very verge of despair. First of all, he sought love as it is associated with joy and ecstasy – for which he had sacrificed all the rest of his life for a few moment of joy. Another reason he sought it is to relieve loneliness – the terrible loneliness which leads human consciousness to the cold mysterious lifeless abyss (pit). With equal passion, he sought knowledge. He wished to understand the hearts of men, the mystery of the stars' shining, the Pythagorean power by which numbers holds sway above the flux and so on. He succeeded in his endeavor a little although not the full.

The power of love and knowledge uplifted men towards the heaven. It was pity that engraved in his heart brought him back to the earth. Cries of pain of helpless reverberated in his heart: children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people turned a hated burden of their sons, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty, and pain make a mockery of what human life should be. He long to reduce the evil of suffering of mankind, but without any fruit, he suffers too. This struggle in life made his life meaningful and worth living and he wanted to live the life again and again if the chance was offered to him.

1.3 AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS A GENRE

Autobiography is the most risky and arduous of all the writer's arts, although the claim may be questioned, judging by the numbers who have not been deterred from the attempt. To tell the whole truth about oneself without inflicting gratuitous injury on the people we love or the causes we espouse looks an impossible task, and yet constantly these objections are set aside in this venture. All the greatest autobiographers have been egotists – Montaigne, Rousseau, Benvenuto Cellini, Russell, etc. For his taste, Montaigne was too placid, Rousseau too hysterical, Cellini a hopeless egoistical case. Russell's own model was Voltaire. Russell studies with a special insight, one other figure sometimes damned for his habitual egotism, and he may be offered the essential spur for Russell to proceed with his own work. His *History of Western Philosophy*, published in 1945, Russell devoted a whole chapter to someone who was never considered to be a philosopher at all. His chapter on Byron explains the matter with admirable, indisputable assurance. In glaring contrast with the cool eighteenth-century temper which Russell had drunk in with his mother's milk, Byron's expression took the form, in Russell's own words, 'of Titanic cosmic self-assertion or, in those who retain some superstition, of Satanism'. Russell himself of course had taken special precautions to forswear all forms of superstition, Satanic or otherwise, but this made his understanding of Byron's titanic qualities all the more remarkable. Byron's *Don Juan* indeed was no self-indulgent essay in egotism; it was the revolutionary epic which the whole age cried out for. It has the same spacious qualities which Russell himself sought and found.

Two considerable writers of the twentieth century – George Orwell and H. G. Wells faced the same dilemma in their writing careers and seemingly reached a different conclusion. Orwell indeed embraced biographers of all breeds along with autobiographers in his sweeping anathema. He was constantly on guard to subdue his own egotism and indeed to remove all traces of it from his style of writing. No one could doubt that he was completely honest in these professions. Yet, some of his best writings were autobiographical – *Homage to Catalonia*, for example, - and he wanted to make sure that no blundering biographical hand would be allowed to appear later to wreck his design. H. G. Wells once wrote a polemical essay attacking both biographers and autobiographers in a manner no less comprehensive than Orwell's. His primary aim was to eulogize the novel as the vehicle for truth-telling: 'All biography has something of that post-mortem coldness and respect, and, as for autobiography, a man may show his soul in a thousand, half-conscious ways, but to turn on oneself to explain oneself is given to no one. It is natural resort of liars and braggarts. Your Cellinis and Casanovas, men with the habit of regarding themselves with a kind of objective autobiography.' Thus he argued in his 1911 essay that the task was almost impossible. Yet, twenty

odd years later, he changed his mind after much heart-searching or head-searching and wrote the volume called *Experiment in Autobiography*. Andre Manrois comented that 'Well's *Experiment in Autobiography* was so frank that Rousseau's *Confessions* looks cautious or maidenly by comparison' – and that was the *Experiment* without the much more explicit sequel. There were three great matters on which they fought together – the fight for women's rights, the fight for democratic socialism, and the fight to forbid world-wide nuclear destruction.

In the *Days of the Comet* was one of the first trumpet blasts which prepared the way for the sexual revolution of the century and in which, from first to last, Russell played such an honorable role. He had been taught by the best masters and mistresses, with his own family in the lead and with John Stuart Mill's *Subjection of Women* as his bible. He was amazed at observing the world's indifference in recognizing women's rights, still he never lost a chance to help those who were best serving them. In this context, his ancestors were the pioneer for him as they showed him how to fight this fight. His ancestors were nobles and Russell was often referred as "Lord John's grandson" wherever he went. Rather than irritated by that kind of epithet, Russell was proud of his family, most especially of his ancestors which was causes irritation to most of his biographers like Mr. Monk.

1.4 CHAPTER 1: CHILDHOOD

The first volume of Russell's *Autobiography* was published in 1967 and the third in1970, just before he died at the age of 98 in 1970. It is considered as the one of the truly great autobiographies in English language with epic standard, an epic written with all the combined passion and clarity of which he was the master. It is all the more important to see how Russell shaped his own purpose before writing. He did never believe upon God and he brought up in the tradition of intellectual integrity. These could be the possible reasons to which owed to the creation of his unique style of writing. The plainer the style, the less possibility in telling lies as it evident in the writings of Russell. He was even ready to stake everything to tell the truth.

Bertrand Russell's Autobiography begins with the description of his Childhood. The first vivid recollection mentioned by Bertrand Russell in the chapter "Childhood" was his arrival to Pembroke Lodge where his grandparents lived in February, 1876. As he was only three years old at that time, so his recollections are faint about the time of his arrival at Pembroke. Still he remembers the beauty and grandeur of Pembroke Lodge. There his first introduction was with the

servants who held him in high at the centre of the servants' hall with curiosity. His description of the servants, house-keepers, cooks, lady's maids and butlers who followed a strict decorum indicates the dignity and aristocratic culture of Pembroke household:

> Until I was grown-up that I learned to know of the strange events which had preceded my coming to Pembroke Lodge. (Russell 5)

The Pembroke Lodge carried historical significance as it was given by Lady Pembroke (to whom George III was devoted in the days of his lunacy) as a gift to the grandparents of Russell. The famous cabinet meeting described in Kinglake's *Invasion of the Crimea* took place at Pembroke Lodge. But gradually as he grown up, he noticed that the Pembroke had lost its vigour and grandeur. His ancestors belonged to the class of the aristocracy and nobles. Russell heard stories happened long time ago; how his grandfather had visited Nepoleon at Elba, how his grandmother's great-uncle had defended Gibraltar during the American War of Independence, and how her grandfather had been cut by the Country for saying that the world must have been created before 4004 BC, etc. etc. The legendary house had a garden of eleven acres.

Bertrand Russell was born on 18th May, 1872 at Ravenscroft into a family of aristocratic background. His father John Russell, the Viscount of Amberley was well-known for his nonconformist views. He actively supported birth control and women's suffrage which was, at that time an act of desecration and he even lost his seat in Parliament. He was an atheist and wished his sons to be brought up as agnostic. His mother Viscountess Katherine Louisa Amberley was also proponent of women's suffrage and women's rights. By the year 1876, young Bertrand Russell had lost his father and about a year after his mother and elder sister Rachel died of diphtheria. Thereafter, Bertrand and his elder brother Frank were placed at the guardianship of their grandparents. As a result of that, Russell came to live with his grandparents at Pembroke Lodge, Richmond Park. The atmosphere of Pembroke Lodge was very gloomy with frequent prayer, formality and emotional repression to which Russell was bored and could never rebel as his brother Frank reacted. He could well hide his feelings. Russell was taught a by a series of home tutors at Pembroke in his childhood unlike Frank who was sent to boarding school. As consequence of that, Russell spent his teenage and adolescence years devoid of the company of other children. His grandfather John Russell served as a prime minister of England twice whom he remembered after his death as a kindly old man in a wheelchair. On the other hand, his grandmother was a dominant family figure throughout his childhood and adolescence.

Russell's father was a friend and a disciple of John Stuart Mill from whom his parents learned to know the practice of birth-control and votes for the women. Both his parents were reformer and they tried to follow and practice the theory they believed in. His father was such a radical reformer that he even lost his seat in parliament for the advocacy of birth-control Not only his father lost his position in Parliament for the advocacy of birth-control, his mother too, sometimes, got into hot water for her radical opinions. She often advocated in favour of votes for women in public gathering and meetings. About his parents, Russell writes in his Autobiography as follows:

> My mother, as I come to know her later from her diary and her letters, was vigorous, lively, witty, serious, original and fearless. Judging by her pictures she must also have been beautiful. My father was philosophical, studious, unworldly, morose, and piggish. Both were ardent theorists of reform and prepared to put into practice whatever theory they believed in. (Russell 5)

His father wrote a book called *An Analysis of Religious Belief* which was published posthumously which reflects his ideologies of liberal or free thinking. He had a large library containing the works on Buddhism, Confucianism and so on. He spent a great deal of time at the countryside when he was writing his large volume book, although in the early years of their parents' marriage, they stayed mostly in London. In 1867, his parents toured to America and made friends all the radicals of Boston. His parents were only twenty two when they got married in 1864. His elder brother was born just after the nine months of their wedding and before Bertrand's birth; they shifted to a lonely house at Ravenscroft (now called Ceiddon Hall) in a wood just above the steep banks of the Wyre. Russell states in his *Autobiography* the description of him given by his mother at the time of his birth as follows:

'The baby weighed 83 ¾ Ib. is 21 inches long and very fat and very ugly like Frank everyone thinks, blue eyes far apart and not much chin. He just like Frank was about nursing. I have lots of milk now, but if he does not get it at once or has wind or anything he gets into such a rage and screams and kicks and trembles till he is soothes off . . .He lifts his head up and looks about in a very energetic way.' (Russell 7)

After their parents' decease, Russsell and his brother were kept on the surveillance of the home tutors who were atheist. So their grandparents got terrified and took necessary steps to protect their grandchildren from the clutches of intriguing infidels. He did not remember anything about his parents as Russell was too old to memorize things when they were alive. The information given in his *Autobiography* about his parents are all derived from his reading of letters,

diaries and other works written by them. The only thing he remembered about his father was that he gave Russell a page of red print which delighted him so much. His parents were buried at the garden of Ravenscroft, but later they were shifted to the family vault at Chenies. Russell quotes about a letter written by his father to his mother at his deathbed due to the nasty attack of Bronchitis where he apologizes for his mistakes if done any in his lifetime to his parents.

The story comes back again to Russell's days at Pembroke Lodge. The rich natural beauty of Pembroke Lodge soothed his lonely heart and gave him a healthy atmosphere to grow intellectually. He witnessed the decadence of once preserved splendor of Pembroke Lodge in his growing years. His grandfather, as Russell remembered him was a man of discipline and well past eighty in a wheel chair or sitting in his room reading Hansard. Russell's grandmother was twenty three years younger than her husband and her role throughout Russell's childhood was undeniably important. She was a Scotch Presbyterian, liberal in politics and religion but extremely strict in the matters of morality. Russell's grandparents were the ardent followers of Victorian sentiment and morality. Everything she viewed through the mist of Victorian sentiment. She was cultivated according to the standard of her time. She could speak French, German and Italian faultlessly, without the slightest trace of accent. She knew Shakespeare, Milton and the eighteenth century poets intimately. She disliked wine, abhorred tobacoo, and was always on the verge of becoming a vegetarian. Her life was austere. She ate only the plainest food, breakfast at eight, and until she reached the age of eighty never sat in a comfortable chair until after tea. She was completely unworldly, and despised those who thought anything of worldly honours. As Russell grew older, he could retrospect the importance of his grandmother in moulding his outlook on life:

> Her fearlessness, her public spirit, her contempt for convention, and her indifference to the opinion of the majority have always seemed good to him and these qualities impressed him a lot. She gave me a Bible with her favourite texts written on the fly-leaf. Among these was 'Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil'. Her emphasis upon this text led me in later life to be not afraid of belonging to small minorities. (Russell 12)

Russell praises his grandmother as the most faithful and devoted wife as well as mother. Following the Victoiran sentiment, she because led a rigid life-style till her eighty. Until his fourteen, her Victorian ideals were bearable to him as he loved to be cared by her but afterwards he felt it difficult to follow those ideals. He mentions several incidents of his childhood which amused him; such as the promised cake for being photographed, Mr. Lyon coming to the drawing room, etc. Uncle Rollo and aunt Agatha, both unmarried had played significant

roles in his overall development during childhood. He acknowledges their contribution in the following way:

> My uncle Rollo had some importance in my early development, as he frequently talked to me about scientific matters, of which he had considerable knowledge . . . He used to talked to me about the evidence that Krakatoa had caused the sunsets, and I listened to him with profound attention. His conversation did a great deal to stimulate my scientific interests. . . My aunt Agatha . . . made various attempts to educate me, but without much success. . . When I was six or seven she took me in hand again and taught English Constitutional history. This interested me very much indeed, and I remember to this day much of what she taught me. (Russell 13-14)

Russell's brother, seven years older than him, came to spend his vacations with him. He was very overpowering and the moment Russell was with him, he felt as if he could not breathe. So, the attitude he retained throughout his life towards his brother was consisting with affection mixed with fear:

> The Russells never understood him at all, and regarded him from the first as a limb of Satan. Attempts were made to keep him away from me. . . He passionately longed to be loved, but was such a bully that he never could keep love of anyone. (Russell 16)

During the early days at Pembroke Lodge, Russell was surrounded by a large number of servants and many of them were his favourites like Mrs. Cox, MacAlpine, Michaud, Mr.&Mrs. Singleton, Mina, etc. The servants played a larger part in his life than the family members did. It was only because of nature and books and later mathematics he could survive and evolve. When he tried to recall his childhood at Pembroke Lodge, the first thing that came to his mind was walking at the melting snow. Secondly, he recollected his fourth birthday on which he was gifted a trumpet which he blew all day long. Throughout his childhood, the best part of the day was the hours he spent lonely in the garden of Pembroke and he confesses that solitariness was the most vivid part of his existence. He seldom expressed his serious thoughts to others and if he did so, he regretted afterwards. He liked to spend time with the nature; listening to the wind, exulted in the lighting etc. Throughout his childhood he had an increasing sense of loneliness and despair of ever meeting someone with whom he could share his feelings.

He also gives a description of his maternal grandmother; Lady Stanley of Alderley lived at Dover Street whom he often visited. When he was seven years old, he started going to his maternal grandmother Lady Stanley. His grandmother was an eighteenth century type, rationalistic and unimaginative, keen on enlightenment, and contemptuous of Victorian piousness. She was one of the

founding members of Griton College. She had considerable contempt for everything that she regarded as silly. Many eminent writers of her time came to her home for evening tea. Russell's brother Frank, who possesses the Stanley temperament, loved Stanleys and hated the Russells whereas Bertrand Russell loved Russells and fears the Stanleys. When he grew older his feeling had changed and he owe to the Russells' shyness, sensitiveness, and metaphysics and to Stanley's vigour, good health, and good spirits. Afterall, the Stanley's seemed better inheritance than the Russells..

Russell was a brilliant student of Mathematics and Philosophy. At the beginning, he found Algebra far more difficult. It was his brother who injected the seed of love for mathematics in him. At the age of eleven he began reading Euclid and found it as dazzling as first love:

> Mathematics was my chief interest, and my chief source of happiness. From the age of eleven, he began to read Euclid where he found his first love. When he finished *Principia Mathematica*, he was thirty-eight, and then mathematics already become his chief interest and the chief source of happiness. (Russell 25)

Thus Bertrand Russell describes his Childhood days in a vivid and straightforward language yet humorous and interesting way.

Check Your Progress Questions-I

1. Consider the following statement –

   Bertrand Russell was an atheist.

   A) True

   B) False

2. Consider the following statement –

   Russell was born at Pembroke Lodge.

   A) True

   B) False

3. Russell's grandparents were the ardent followers of Victorian sentiment and morality.

   A) True

   B) False

4. Russell was extremely extrovert in his childhood days

   A) True

   B) False

5. Choose the correct answerRussell's father died of –

   A) Diphtheria

   B) Bronchitis

   C) Malaria

   D) Tuberculosis

1.5 CHAPTER 2: ADOLESCENCE

Russell developed some practices instinctually as soon as he reached, in modern psychology called, "latency period" which he frankly states as follows:

> At this age, I began to enjoy using slang, pretending to have no feelings, and being generally 'manly'. So many things were forbidden me that I acquired the habit of deceit, in which I persisted up to the age of twenty-one. (Russell 27)

The years of adolescence for Russell were not a pleasant one as he was lonely and unhappy. And he was trapped between emotion and intellect and his interests were divided between sex, religion and mathematics for which he had to preserve an impenetrable secrecy towards his own people. It was unpleasant for him to recollect the sexual preoccupation in adolescence. The facts of sex become known to him for the first time at the age of twelve through one of his friends named Ernest Logan. Like every adolescent, Russell also curious about sex at that time and preoccupied with sexual thought as he frankly describes:

> At fifteen, I began to have sexual passions, of almost intolerable intensity. While I was sitting at work, endeavouring to concentrate, I would be continually distracted by erections, and I fell into the practice of masturbating, in which, however, Ialways remained moderate. I was much ashamed of this practice, and endeavoured to discontinue it. I persisted in it, nevertheless, until the age of twenty, when I dropped it suddenly because I was in love. (Russell 28)

When his tutor describing the natural changes took place in the human body in the approach of puberty, Russell desired intensely to observe female body when led him to voyeur maids during their dressing He even tried to get hold one of the housemaid of Pembroke Lodge who refused to go further than

kissing and hugging. Knowing deep about sex, he got dishearten introspecting himself to be a sinner because of this wrongdoing. In the subsequent years, he overcame this mental dilemma by developing interest in idealistic feeling. He supported free love instead of the institution of marriage that marriage was bound up with Christian superstition. There was a simultaneous growth of idealistic feeling along with physical preoccupation with sex at that time. He became intensely interested in the beauty of nature; beauty of sunsets and clouds, trees in spring and autumn. Beginning with Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, he widely read poetry and within his teenage, he finished almost all the great poets like Milton, Byron, Shelley, Shakespeare, etc. Alongside with poetry, he found great interest in religion and philosophy.

In Pembroke household, a strict religious convention was maintained. His grandfather was Anglican and his grandmother was Scotch Presbyterian but she gradually became a Unitarian and he was taken to the Church every alternate Sundays. As he grew, Russell began systematic investigation of the supposed rational arguments in favour of fundamental Christian beliefs. At his teenage (age of 15), Russell spent a considerable time enquiring after the Christian religious dogma, which he found very unconvincing and unrealistic. He started to disbelieve the Christian dogma of afterlife. After reading Mill's *Autobiography*, at the age of eighteenth, Russell abandoned the 'First Cause' argument and became an atheist. But he never revealed his views to anybody lest they might be hurt:

> At this age I began a systematic investigation of the supposed rational arguments in favour of fundamental Christian beliefs. I spent endless hours in meditation upon this subject; I could not speak to anybody about it for fear of giving pain. I suffered acutely both from gradual loss of faith and from the need of silence. I thought that if I ceased to believe in God, freedom and immortality, I should be very unhappy. (Russell 29)

Russell was disposed towards the natural passion again when he was sent to an Army crammer at Old Southgate to the preparation for the scholarship examination at Trinity College, Cambridge. Other students there preparing for the army frequently discussed dirtily about sexual interests which made Russell feel bad about the thing. He began to think that sex which comes as a forced phenomenon can never be acceptable as he argues:

> In spite of my previous silent preoccupation with sex, contact with it in this brutal form deeply shocked me. I became very Puritanical in my views, and decided that sex without deep love is beastly. (Russell 31)

Other students made fun of him signing song as he often withdrew himself from their company. This bad company and agonizing treatment made him lonelier than ever. Russell's loneliness led him to the extent that he contemplated to suicide.

It was his passion and love for Mathematics and religion that kept him away from committing suicide. However, he had enough humiliation to shake his mental peace. So, he was called home to get prepared privately the examination. In 1890, he won a scholarship to study Maths at Trinity College Cambridge. He quickly distinguished himself as an outstanding mathematician and became a fellow of Trinity College after graduating which marked the end of his isolation and a new beginning of his life. At this stage, Russell's family showed utmost sympathy towards him as he continued to agree with them in political matters. Yet he thoroughly differed from his grandmother's views on religion, science, metaphysics, ethical theories, etc. His grandmother's hostility against metaphysics continued till her death well-expressed in the following verse:

O Science metaphysical

And very very quizzical,

You only make this maze of life the mazier;

For boasting to illuminate

Such riddles dark as Will and Fate

You muddle them to hazier and Hazier.

The cause of every action,

You expound with satisfaction;

Through the mind in all its corners and recesses

You say that you have travelled,

And all problems unraveled

And axioms you call your learned guesses. (Russell 33-34)

Russell's grandmother wished him to become a Unitarian minister to which he had no interest. Russell, as he grew up, was determined to do something in the field of mathematics and the outcome that zeal was *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903) which is regarded a work on the foundation of Mathematics. Despite having a keen scientific mind, he also developed a love of literature, in particular, the poetry of Percy B. Shelley, who he adored. He also gained a lifelong interest in politics, primarily from a liberal, socialist perspective.

Check Your Progress Questions-II

1. Select the true option from the points given below:

   Lady Stanley of Alderley was the name of –

A) Bertrand Russell's sister

B) Bertrand Russell's mother

C) Bertrand Russell's maternal grandmother

D) Bertrand Russell's fraternal grandmother

2. Russell was lonely and unhappy in his adolescence.

A) True

B) False

3. Select the true option from the points given below:

Russell studied at –

A) Griton College

B) King's College

C) Trinity College

D) Corpus Christi College

4. Who wrote *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903)?

A) Euclid

B) Bertrand Russell

C) John Stuart Mill

D) Ludwig Wittgenstein

1.6 APPENDIX: 'GREEK EXERCISE'

He used to write down his reflections and thoughts in Greek script although written in English language which he named as "Greek Exercise". He did this lest someone would find out what he was thinking. This reflects the inner character of Russell as these exercises were something which he could not reveal with anyone but himself. He recorded "Greek Exercise" in a systematic way with mentioning the date in the following way:

1888. March 3: First of all, Russell discusses about the very foundation of religion. Although he was quite certain regarding his view, yet he did not have courage to tell the people that he seldom believed in the concept of immortality.

March 19th: To find the scientific grounds for belief in God, Russell says, one must go back to the beginning of all things.

March 22nd: Russell says that if universe has been formed merely by chance, would an atom behave similarly in the given conditions like another atom? If they are lifeless, they would not do anything without a controlling authority; if they are given the power of free will, they will be automatically the part of the universal commonwealth in the treaty with each other.

April 2nd: Russell states that immortality has two perspectives: 'first by evolution and comparing men to animals; second, by comparing men with God.' The first is scientific because no one has seen God; according to the principle of free will, similar should be applicable to a protozoan. He believes that protoplasm came only together naturally without any divine making. Thus, human beings like trees or other living objects keep moving like chemical objects.

Monday, April 6th: He wishes to call himself a creation of God because it would be too painful an experience to be called merely machines having none to fall back upon. But science has not been able to prove to prove the existence of God in any of its potential theories.

April, 14th: According to a doctrine, man neither has free will nor soul, nor immortality, but only consciousness. By free will, he means something which does not obey the law of motion:

> Moreover it seems impossible to imagine that man, the Great Man, with his reason, his knowledge of universe, and his ideas of right and wrong, Man with his emotion, his love and hate and his religion, that this Man should be a mere perishable chemical compound whose character and his influence for good or for evil depend solely and entirely on the particular motions of the molecules of his brain and that all the greatest men have been great by reason of some one molecule hitting up against some other a little oftener than in other men. (Russell 38)

July 20th: Owing to the previous arguments, he establishes:

> There are about three different, though conversing ways of looking at this question of free will, first from the omnipotence of God, second from the reign of law, and third, from the fact that all our actions, if looked into, show themselves as caused by motives. (Russell 44)

Thus he tries to justify that man is independent of God.

1.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed the "Childhood" and "Adolescence" parts of Bertrand Russell's *Autobiography*. In the chapter called "Childhood", we come across various factors in moulding the great philosopher and scientist

Bertrand Russell. After losing his parents, Russell was held under the guardianship of his grandparents who were ardent followers of Victorian morality and strict puritanical rules either in religious and intellectual matters. Russell spent his entire childhood and adolescence at Pembroke Logde which provided him an atmosphere suitable for developing intellectual cognition. In the chapter called "Adolescenec", Russell frankly delineates his instinctual desires and passion in the age of "latency period". He experienced mental dilemma between sexual passion and his moral life which led him to depression and even suicidal attempt. During such mental crisis, Russell was relieved through his love and passion of mathematics and poetry. Throughout his life, Russell was rationalist, extremely outspoken and moralist in the tradition of Locke and Hume. The seed of rational thinking Russell inherited hereditarily as his parents were well-known social reformers and non-conformist. The writing style of Russell appeals readers from any age which may be the reason of his great popularity. Many of his works were written in a terse, vivid and provocative style.

1.8 Possible Answers to Check Your Progress Questions-I and II

CYP-I

1. A) True
2. B) False
3. A) True
4. B) False
5. B) Bronchitis

CYP-II

1. C) Bertrand Russell's maternal grandmother
2. A) True
3. C) Trinity College
4. B) Bertrand Russell

1.9 REFERENCES:

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1.10 ESSAY TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Discuss about the writing style of Bertrand Russell.
2. Discuss the difference regarding the views of religion between Russell's parents and grandparents.
3. How does Bertrand Russell describe his mother?
4. How does Bertrand Russell describe his father?
5. What is Russell's opinion about his grandmother?
6. Were diseases like Diphtheria and Bronchitis epidemic at the nineteenth century?
7. How Bertrand Russell describes his adolescence?
8. Discuss the mental as well physical dilemmas Russell experienced in his adolescence.
9. Discuss the views of Bertrand Russell regarding religion.
10. Name the writers and philosophers who had influenced in the intellectual growth of Russell.

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BLOCK-III

Unit -2 : How it Strikes a Contemporary

Virginia Woolf

Contents:

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Virginia Woolf: Her Life and Context

2.3 Her Works

2.4 Modernism in Literature

2.5 How it Strikes a Contemporary: Paragraph-wise Critical Analysis

2.6 Let us sum up

2.7 References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- to read the essay in its temporal and social context
- to form an idea about Virginia Woolf's life and works
- to intensively analyse the essay

2.1 INTRODUCTION:

One of the oft-quoted sentences from the essay "How it Strikes a Contemporary" runs: "We are sharply cut off from our predecessors. A shift in the scale –the war, the sudden slip of masses held in position for ages—has shaken the fabric from top to bottom, alienated us from the past." This sentence not only gives us an insight into the kind of human experience that marked the modern moment but also serves as an introduction to one of the major thematic concerns of the essay. In this essay by Virginia Woolf, there is an examination of the various kinds of 'contrasts between' the modern age and the previous ages in terms of social changes, literary output, literary criticism and life in general. In literature, there was a reflection of the new realities in innovative forms which were striking in terms of newness but fragmented and lacking the wholeness of the literature of the earlier ages. Moreover, criticism during the modern age i.e.,

the 20th century developed into various schools like psychoanalysis, new criticism, vorticism, futurism and so on. In contrast to the 19th century scenario in criticism which could boast of stalwarts like Coleridge, Keats or Matthew Arnold, criticism in the 20th century had no such eminent critics according to Virginia Woolf. Thus Woolf highlights many important concerns in modern literature and makes an attempt to evaluate her contemporary writers at the same time.

2.2 VIRGINIA WOOLF: HER LIFE AND CONTEXT

Virginia Woolf was born on 25 January 1882 in London to the eminent Victorian critic, Sir Leslie Stephen and his wife, Julia Jackson Duckworth. Born in the 1880s which coincided with the last decades of the Victorian Age, she lived throughout many social changes in her life as the era give way to the Modern Age. She witnessed the technological and scientific revolution with its numerous inventions like the telephone, the wireless, the telegraph, the cinema and other such inventions and discoveries. She also witnessed the destruction of the First World War and the resultant alienation faced by the modern writer. During the Modern period, the publication of books and magazines also increased and this gave rise to 'popular literature' which became accessible to the masses at cheap costs. The cinema, the radio and the popular literature- all catered to the commercial interests and thus art and literature became quite degenerate in quality. On the whole, it is this socio-cultural milieu along with Woolf's autobiographical elements that provide the context in which her fiction and non-fiction can be placed.

On the personal front, Woolf's formative influences in writing came from her father, Leslie Stephen under whose guidance, the children used to read books at home. She also read the works of her father in which she found a predominance of sense over sentiment and a very 'conventional' mind rather than an 'imaginative' one (which she rather disliked, yet he was able to cast a strong influence on the intellectually blooming Woolf). However, her father acted as a domestic tyrant after the death of her mother, Julia and half-sister, Clara (deaths which deeply shattered Woolf). Woolf mentions in her memoirs that her father used to have a devastating temper and had made an atmosphere of gloom and ugliness prevail in the house.

After Leslie Stephen's death in 1904, Woolf and her siblings switched to various places like Wales and Italy and after a suicidal breakdown of Virginia in their hometown, London, Vanessa Woolf shifted them to Bloomsbury. There Thoby, her brother (whose death followed in 1906) began organizing the 'Thursday Evenings' and Vanessa started the 'Friday Club', a society for female artists to meet and exhibit their work. Gradually the Bloomsbury group expanded and its

members included Lytton Strachey, Roger Fry, Clive Bell, John Maynard Keynes, E.M. Forster, Leonard Woolf and others. It is in this group that the members could talk not only about literature and arts but also about anything without reserve like sexuality. Some of the members of the group were also known for their homosexual affiliations (like Lytton Strachey and Duncan Grant). Even Woolf was known to have been susceptible to female charms. Her sister Vanessa once remarked of her that Woolf might verily give a written proposal of marriage to a lady some day.

In 1910, Woolf became associated with the Suffragist movement that was gaining ground. However, her practical involvement with the women's movement has been criticized as short-lived. Woolf's writings, especially *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938) show her concern with the material conditions necessary for women writers to develop, importance of women's education and also the necessity of a female literary tradition.

In the meantime, her mental health declined in the summer of 1910 due to which she had to continually be treated till 1913 by her family physician Dr George Savage. In 1912, Woolf accepted Leonard Woolf's proposal and married him but they were advised not to have children due to her recurring bouts of depression.

In 1917, Leonard and Virginia Woolf started the Hogarth Press and had their first publication *Two Stories* in the same year. Another noteworthy publication of the Press was Katherine Mansfield's *Prelude* (1918). It also published some major works by Freud, *The Wasteland* by T.S. Eliot in 1924 (the first book edition in the UK) and even Woolf's own novels (like *Jacob's Room* in 1922 and *Orlando* in 1928) and her non-fiction like the essays in *The Common Reader* (1925).

Woolf's writings set her apart as a distinguished avant- garde writer and a publisher of note. She was also a critic of repute. She was awarded the Prix Femina Award in 1927-28 for her novel *To the Lighthouse* after which she enjoyed a period of commercial success. Woolf owed a lot to her husband and sister, Vanessa for being the first reader and the primary audience respectively of her work. She acknowledged their support in many of her writings.

She spent the later years of her life writing, travelling and frequently suffering from mental breakdowns. In 1939, when the Second World War broke out, she wrote a few essays and a few entries in her unfinished memoir named "A Sketch of the Past". She was also giving final touches to her novel *Between the Acts.*

On March 28 1941, Virginia Woolf mysteriously committed suicide by drowning herself in the River Ouse. She left two notes behind, one to her sister

Vanessa and the other to her husband Leonard Woolf, confiding in them that she would commit suicide due to her fear of being gripped by insanity again.

2.3 HER WORKS

Woolf produced a sizeable literary output consisting of novels, essays, diaries, letters memoirs and short stories. In all, she wrote ten novels starting with *The Voyage Out* (1915) which was originally titled *Melymbrosia.* After the success of this novel, she produced one after another like *Night and Day* (1919), *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse (*1927), *Orlando* (1928) and so on. Her essays were published in the collections *The Common Reader* (1925), *The Common Reader: Second Series* (1932), *The Moment and Other Essays* (1947), *Moments of Being* (1985) and several others. Woolf's short stories, diaries, letters and journals also form an impressive body of literary work.

Apart from this, Woolf also wrote non-fiction like- *A Room of One's Own* (1929), *Three Guineas* (1938*)* and *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940) and a drama named *Freshwater: A Comedy* (1976).

The present essay has been extracted from *The Common Reader*, First Series 1925. This is the last essay in the first volume of *The Common Reader.* It deals with the dearth of professional critics of sound judgment in the modern era. Since the essay also highlights some important characteristics of the modern age and literature, it is necessary to briefly discuss some of the features of the new age and literature.

Check your progress-1

1. Write a note on the Bloomsbury Group.
2. What were the feminist treatises of Virginia Woolf?
3. Name the only drama written by Virginia Woolf.

2.4 MODERNISM IN LITERATURE

Modernism, in arts and literature, as generally known was a sharp break from the traditional models of expression. The term is derived from the Latin word 'modo', meaning current. Unlike the nineteenth century writers, the moderns had a strong disbelief towards unshakable foundations of the accepted values, creeds or institutions. They began to frown upon the idea of fixity and authority in

literature as the urge to probe and question became more prominent with the intellectual world being enriched by the radical theories of Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.

The earlier institution of colonialism was being challenged at different places and the British supremacy which was beyond doubt earlier in the nineteenth century was now challenged. Moreover, in the post-war world of the twentieth century, men began to feel that they were living in a society without meaning as there was now a destruction of all human endeavour in the war. With faith thus shaken, the modern writers began to depict the ruined civilization of the twentieth century in their writings. For instance, T. S. Eliot's magnum opus *The Wasteland* and other poetry dealt with the utter destruction, chaos and anxiety of the modern world. It is this pessimistic tendency resulting from an overall destruction of earlier institutions and lack of faith in the individual that Woolf seems to deal with in the essay "How It Strikes a Contemporary".

In many respects the literary tendencies were being revolutionized in the modern age. The writings were now inspired by various movements like imagism, vorticism, surrealism, impressionism and expressionism. Thus, modern poetry, drama or fiction saw many experiments and innovations that were not to be found earlier. Moreover, modern literature is marked by a pre-occupation with exploring the subjective consciousness as against the earlier objective and external description of events. So, formal techniques like interior monologue, stream of consciousness and free indirect speech are seen to be deployed by fiction writers. In a way, the writers were influenced by the theories and philosophies of the mind, especially the theories of Freud and Jung. Moreover, scientific and technological advancements also had their imprint in modern fiction. This is evident from the emergence of science fiction and fantasy as novelistic genres.

In short, modern literature was on the whole avant-garde because it depicted in experimental forms and language an entirely different sort of experience inspired by the changing attitudes of the people. Virginia Woolf herself was one of the pioneers of the modern novel who experimented with techniques like the impressionistic stream of consciousness in her novels in order to unravel the inner consciousness of the characters, rather than mere external things. She also used rich metaphorical language as a way of presenting her ideas.

In terms of content, on one hand, modern literature expresses the dissatisfaction and unrest after the First World War and on the other, it is also concerned with the depiction of material progress and other technological and cultural changes that accompanied the new era.

Check your progress-2

1. What were the factors responsible for the loss of faith n the modern age?
2. What were the formal experiments in the field of modern fiction?

2.5 HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY: PARAGRAPH-WISE CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Para 1- Virginia Woolf begins the essay by pointing out the fact that two critics are very likely to differ in their pronouncements about a contemporary work. Whereas one of them might interpret it as "a masterpiece of English prose", the other might react disdainfully towards it as if it were a mere waste. This kind of polar opposite views regarding a work of art is not the case when the work in question is a classic, like those of Milton or Keats. The difference in perceptions in the intellectual circle is acute when the work is by a contemporary who is yet to attain the finesse and the fame that define great writers. In short, critics of the Modern era, tend to be reverent towards the past writers but skeptical of new talents.

Para 2- The next paragraph introduces the problem that Woolf wishes to deal with in the essay which is the scarcity of a critic of sound judgment on whom the contemporary reader and writer can rely for guidance. Not only do the writers remain in perpetual doubt regarding the fate of their painstaking efforts but also the readers remain clueless as to which contemporary writer to explore among the many for which there is no proper guidance by a specialist. The critics disagree twice a year about the new while agreeing about the old (twice a year relates to spring and autumn when new books were usually published in London). Examples of such a work by a contemporary writer as cited in the text is *Robert Elsmere* (1888) by Mrs. Humphry Ward which faced criticism when it first appeared, and following its publication, many other upcoming works faced similar hostility from the critics. However, the poetry of Stephen Philips, somehow managed to garner favourable responses when it first appeared but eventually the poet faded into oblivion. It would have been highly improbable if two critics were to agree regarding a particular work but in that scenario it would depend on the reader whether to buy that book depending on the opinions of the critics. This again highlights the dearth of an efficient critic as the readers would have to use their own discretion even if the opinions of the critics revealed a common ground.

Para 3- Woolf ascribes the cause of such hostility towards contemporary talents to "some innate criticism", a sort of preconceived distrust towards them due to which the readers too feel discouraged to part with their money in buying their

works. Thus the question arises as to whether there is no such critic to guide the new lot of readers, who being quite modern in their outlook, do not simply revere 'the dead' or the tradition , and who on the other hand, are sensitive to the demands made on tradition or history to serve the living. It is on the answer to this question that two critics completely agree, and it is that there is no such person who can guide the readers or can comprehend their changing needs. This is because critics would never dare to find faults with established authors, for fear of losing their jobs. This same fear keeps them from writing a positive word when new books are concerned. That is why, modern critics, whose minds have been fed by great works of the past, engage in ruthless criticism of contemporary works. The only advice offered by them to the present writers to follow their instincts and to polish their writing skills by always taking recourse to "the masterpieces of the past".

Para 4- Woolf now assesses past times when unlike the modern era, marked by a deficiency of reputed critics, there were many commanding ones who could set the rule or the standard of criticism. Critics like Mathew Arnold, Dr. Samuel Johnson and Samuel Taylor Coleridge had a centralizing influence on readers. Their reviews on a literary work were held in great authority by the reading circle as they were considered as never deviating from "the main principles of literature" as well as giving a balanced interpretation of the work in the midst of generous praise and outright blame. Woolf distinguishes between a critic and a reviewer and says that the modern age has many reviewers but no critics. A reviewer is compared with a policeman and a critic with a judge. In a way, a reviewer is endowed with a policing function which is restrictive in the sense that like a policeman, a reviewer is bound by the law or the established sense of right and wrong. In contrast, a judge is someone who is able to make amends to the law by dint of his heightened sensibilities. Critics, like judges, should always be more receptive towards the changes in taste and style of the writers and be able to revise the canon. Men of taste and learning in the modern age, as observed by Woolf are only engaged in "lecturing the young and celebrating the dead". They lack the vigour, insight and general understanding of Dryden, Keats, Flaubert or Coleridge and thus they can only desiccate a work of literature or interpret it part by part until its greater beauty and value completely disappear.

Para 5- In this paragraph, Woolf explores the underlying cause of the absence of an efficient critic in the modern age. She finds that the tradition of criticism continues when the field of literature is ripe with much variety of works. There has to be "some great man to be vindicated, some school to be founded or destroyed." In short, the vast field of literature itself should be present before the critic to explore and enrich his/her knowledge. But, there are no great writers who can inspire the young, or from whom they can learn to hone their skills. Moreover, the modern

age is devoid of any full-length literary work. Woolf calls it an age of fragments, characterized by the production of a few stanzas, a few pages, a few beginnings or endings of novel and so on. With such state of affairs in the modern age, she is apprehensive of the kind of legacy the modern writers will leave for posterity. She is concerned that the coming generations would be faced with the task of sifting enormous heaps of waste in order to find 'tiny pearls' of any valuable literary work from the modern age.

Para 6- Woolf evaluates some of the works of her contemporaries in this section. As regards the general production of her age she finds that in contrast to the preceding nineteenth century, the twentieth century has very little to boast of in terms of good works. The great works of the previous century such as *Waverley, The Excursion, Kubla Khan, Pride and Prejudice* among others have attained quite a stature and when compared to the works of her century, Woolf finds none to be of equal stature. She remarks that the twentieth century does not lack industry but since it has succeeded an age of genius, it must direct its efforts towards "cleanliness and hard work" perhaps in order to match the standard of the earlier works. As against the overall lean production of the age, she finds that only a few of her contemporaries have the ability to reach down to the next century. She feels that only a few poems by W.B. Yeats, Walter De la Mare and William Henry Davis may be appreciated well in the future and in terms of prose output, Woolf anticipates a bright future for Max Beerbohm's works and W.H. Auden's autobiographical work, *Far Away and Long Ago* (1918). However, James Joyce's *Ulysses,* she considers "a memorable catastrophe- immense in daring, terrific in disaster". It is a grand but disastrous work in her view. Thus, she infers from her consideration of a body of literary work of the modern age that there is no sustained effort in modern literature. Only glimpses of momentary greatness are littered here and there which in no way, can be compared with the works of the preceding age.

Para 7- In this paragraph, Woolf views life in the modern age as containing a kind of newness not found in the earlier times. Though it lacks the previous greatness in terms of literature, "is barren and exhausted", yet it has a certain flavor of its own. The introduction of telephone cuts short many serious conversations yet there is an excitement in the new kind of wire-based conversations. Similarly, the day-to-day talks of the commoners who have no chance to attain immortality now have a new kind of urban setting with "lights, streets, houses, human beings" (as differentiated from the natural setting of the Romantic writers) which gives life in the modern age its distinguished character.

Para 8- In this section, Woolf with a certain optimism, talks about the positive characteristics of modern literature. She finds that the present age has something

unique to offer (perhaps referring to the many changes in the modern age, like innovations in technology or the more subtle societal changes like rise of democracy, stress on individualism, experimentation in literature and so on). Thus, life in modern age becomes preferable to all other ages preceding it. Modern literature too with all its imperfections has a uniqueness of its own since it relentlessly tries to make something new. There have been many efforts to think, do or say things that were unthinkable in the past. It is due to this quality of novelty that contemporary literature and writers should be cherished. As Woolf believes, they are sharply cut off from their predecessors and the new-age writers are very determined to give expression to the differences that separate them from their predecessors. Thus, modern literature stands out as highly original in terms of content but again, Woolf comes back to the original deficiency that she talked about in the preceding paragraphs. It is the lack of any full-length literary piece written with persistent effort. When any book is taken up for reading, only flashes of originality and brilliance are found, as though such passages were taken down in shorthand, not to be fully developed later. As a result, the reader is left with an intense feeling of dissatisfaction which equates the initial pleasure accompanying the prospect of finding originality and novelty of thought.

Para 9- Since it cannot be properly ascertained whether to be enthusiastic or pessimistic when considering contemporary literature in the light of the literature of the previous century, the task of a critic in helping us come to any conclusion regarding the contemporaries assumes much importance. Woolf shares the perspective of the readers when they feel a lack of stability in their judgment of the contemporaries, which needs to be anchored in the security of the critics, which again is something the critics of the age fail to offer. She now proceeds to state the profound difference that lies at the roots of experience of the nineteenth century writers and the contemporary ones. She finds that the great books of the past like those of Jane Austen or Walter Scott have a certain tranquility in the pages after pages of description. This results in a kind of dullness in them, a mere description of events without probing into the subjective experience of the individual's mind. The senses of sight, sound and touch that are explored by the moderns in their writings are not found in the works of the previous century. The modern writers explore the human psyche in all its subtleties like a character's "perceptions, his complexity, his confusion, his self, in short". This inward gaze into the human self is something that occurred at the turn of the century with the transition of Romantic and Victorian ideals to Modernist tendencies. In this way, the twentieth century writers differ a lot from their predecessors. But the question arises as to wherefrom the sense of security in the earlier authors originate that is lacking in modern writers. The answer lies in the fact that they have a kind of belief or conviction in a certain quality of life and an orderly structure of society.

This conviction is found in the philosophic poet Wordsworth or the prolific writer Walter Scott who wrote novel after novel to earn money. In both these authors and also in Jane Austen, Woolf finds that there is a natural conviction about the quality of life and a sense of community as depicted in "the relations of human beings towards each other and towards the universe". In other words, it can be said that the sense of alienation from the surroundings as well as other human beings that modern writers experience (in the aftermath of the World War) or the lack of faith in religion and other familiar social institutions characterize the modern writers. They lack the sense of belief in the normal relations that govern human life. Woolf cites the example of Jane Austen's unfinished novel *The Watsons* in which the writer shows complete conviction in the fact that a nice girl will naturally try to soothe the feelings of a boy who has been humiliated at a dance (barring all other possible reactions of the girl). According to Woolf, this same belief will be shared by the readers when they read the novel a hundred years hence. The earlier writers used to believe that their experiences would be equally valued by others and that led to the universalizing tone in their works and a freedom from the labour of expressing one's personality (perhaps referring to the inward, subjective trend in modern literature). Woolf finds that writers like Jane Austen excel in the process of investing a grain of experience with conviction and working on it until it reveals itself in the form of literature.

Para 10- In this paragraph, Woolf contrasts the moderns with their predecessors. The reason behind the lack of any complete piece of literature in the modern era is that they no longer believe that what they say will hold good for the readers too. They simply put down their own isolated subjective experiences without the capacity of generalizing them. This aggravates the distance between the writer and the readers, since the writer reflects his self-consciousness only in his works rather than talking about any shared or universal level of experience. They are more guided by their emotions than by cognition (perhaps because thinking in terms of universal human qualities became difficult for them in the wake of the First World War which depicted the overall baseness of human conduct and an utter destruction of earlier society, thereby creating alienated human subjects). Thus, they produce works with little excellence and with only 'transitory splendours' to be found here and there.

Para 11- The task of the critics, therefore, becomes more serious when they evaluate the contemporaries. In the opinion of Woolf, they should be sympathetic enough when they assess the work of a modern writer. At the same time, they should not excessively flatter any writer which in six months' time would seem undeserved and ridiculous. They should give up discussion over trifle things like the unnecessary details of a writer's personal life (like whether Byron married his sister or not). They should be distanced from ordinary readers who chatter about

insignificant topics at the table and must come up with profound insights on literature itself. The essay ends with an allusion to Lady Hester Stanhope (the niece of William Pitts, Prime Minister of England) who used to believe in the arrival of the Messiah to deliver mankind from sin, and expecting His arrival anytime soon she used to keep a white horse ready for Him to ride. She used to wait for the moment impatiently, never losing hope and "forever scanning the mountain tops". Woolf urges the critics to follow Stanhope's example, and to "scan the horizon", thus seeing both the past and the present on equal terms (as signified by the use of the metaphor 'horizon' where the sky and the land appear to meet which implies an all-encompassing perspective from which both the entities are seen at the level of equality). Moreover, like Stanhope, they should be constantly on the lookout for something, i.e., the coming masterpieces in modern literature.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

To conclude, it can be said that the essay "How it Strikes a Contemporary" is a quintessential document that depicts the cross-currents of modern literature. It opens on a pessimistic note lamenting the absence of a suitable critic and the dearth of good literature in modern age. However, it shows considerable praise for the modern writers for breaking the moulds and writing something new. The essay closes with an appeal to the critics to be more sympathetic in their evaluation of the moderns implying that they should try to see the relevance of their work without undue praises or unjust comparison with past writers.

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BLOCK-III

Unit-3: Rabindranath Tagore – 'Nationalism in the West'

CONTENTS:

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Rabindranath Tagore

- 3.2.1 Introducing the Author
- 3.2.2 An Overview of his Works
- 3.2.3 Tagore's views on Nationalism

Check Your Progress - 1

3.3 Understanding the text

Check Your Progress – 2

Short Answer Questions – 1

3.4 Critical Reception

Short Answer Questions – 2

Long Answer Questions—1

3.5 Lets Sum up

3.6 Keywords

3.7 References

3.8 Suggested Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

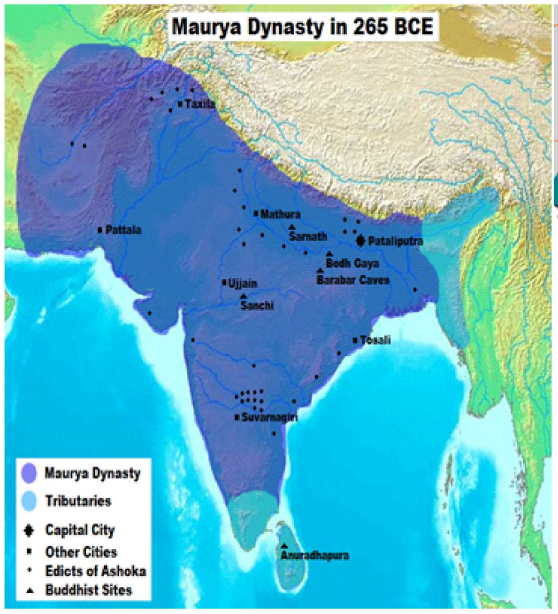
This unit has been designed to facilitate a critical and insightful reading of the first Indian Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, with special emphasis on his essay 'Nationalism in the West' It is expected that the unit will provide critical insights in regard to the essay as well as in regard to Tagore's radical and visionary ideas reflected in the ambit of his works which comprises of poems, essays, letters and his fiction as well. The unit will help you in:

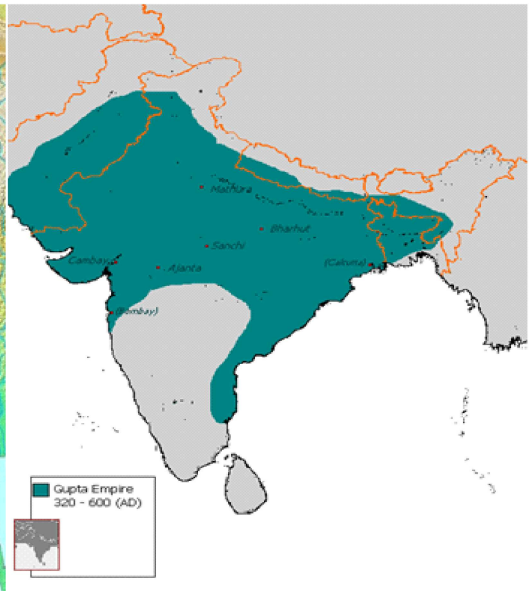
- Understanding Tagore's philosophy that characterizes his works
- Situate the essay within its socio-historical context

- Comprehending the concept of nationalism in a more radical light
- Understanding concepts such as that of freedom, independence, humanism from a critical and broader perspective.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Indian nationalism as a concept developed during the Indian Independence movement fought against the British rule in India. However it is believed by all, that the sense of national consciousness has always been present in India, even though it was not articulated in modern terms. A throw-back at history shows us that India had been unified under many emperors and governments in the past. In ancient texts, mention can be found of India as 'Akhand Bharat' under the rule of emperor Bharata.These regions are roughly what form the modern-day greater India today. The Mauryan Empire was the first empire that united all of India and South Asia (including much of Afghanistan). Later on attempts were made by several other empires too, to unify Indiaunder a unitary government such as the Gupta Empire, Pala Empire, Rashtrakuta Empire, Mughal Empire etc. Below has been given some earlier maps of India to help you understand how India looked like at different points of time under different rulers.





Pic.1—(The largest extent of the Mauryan Empire under Ashoka), Pic.2—(The largest extent of the Gupta Empire)

While studying about Indian nationalism one thing that you need to keep in mind, which even Tagore makes mention of,is that the history of India has never belonged to one particular race, '. . .but to a process of creation to which various races of

the world had contributed—the Dravidians and the Aryans, the ancient Greeks and the Persians, the Mohammedans of the West and those of central Asia'. This implies that India has never been a homogenous entity. It hasbeen under different rulers at different points of time. Thus while talking about Indian nationalism we need to understand that Indian nationalism is a diverse blend of nationalistic sentiments as its people are ethnically and religiously diverse. As such it is not a uniform idea across masses. It has diverse implications for different people.

3.2 RABINDRANATH TAGORE

3.2.1- Introducing the author

Rabindranath Tagore(1861-1941) is one of the great visionaries whose undaunted personality has been a source of inspiration not only to Indians but has been widely acclaimed throughout the globe. Tagore was the youngest son of Debendranath Tagore, a leader of the BrahmoSamaj, which was a new religious sect in nineteenth century Bengal. He was educated at home; and although at seventeen he was sent to England for formal schooling, he did not finish his studies there. In his mature years, in addition to his many-sided literary activities, he managed the family estates, a project which brought him into close touch with common humanity and increased his interest in social reforms. He also started an experimental school at Shantiniketan where he tried his Upanishadic ideals of education. He was also an active participant in the Indian nationalist movement, but he did it in his own non-sentimental and visionary way. Tagore was knighted by the ruling British Government in 1915, but within a few years he resigned the honour as a protest against British policies in India; specifically condemning the infamous incident of the JallianwalaBagh massacre and the inhuman treatment of the then British government of its Indian subjects.

Tagore had early success as a writer in his native place Bengal. With the translations of some of his poems he became rapidly known in the West. In fact his fame attained a luminous height, taking him across continents on lecture tours and tours of friendship. For the world he became the voice of India's spiritual heritage; and for India, especially for Bengal, he became a great living institution.

3.2.2- An overview of his works

Although Tagore wrote successfully in all literary genres, he was first of all a poet. Among his fifty and odd volumes of poetry are Manasi(1890), Sonar Tari(1894), Gitanjali(1910), Gitimalya(1914) and Balaka(1916). Among these

Gitanjali remains Tagore's best-known collection of poetry till date, which earned him the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913. Tagore is the first Asian to receive the Nobel Prize in any category. Tagore's poetic style is much influenced by the Vaishnava poets of the 15th and 16th century. His style ranges from classical formalism to the cosmic, visionary, and ecstatic. Apart from these Tagore also wrote plays. Tagore wrote his first drama-opera: Valmiki Pratibha (The Genius of Valmiki) at the age of twenty. His other major plays are Raja(1910), Dakghar(1912), Achalayatan(1912), Muktadhara(1922), and Raktakaravi(1926) among others. He is also the author of several volumes of short stories and a number of novels. Tagore began his first short story in 1877when he was only sixteen. His first short story was entitled 'Bhikharini' (The Beggar Woman). It was with this short story that Tagore invented the Bengali-language short story genre. More than half of Tagore's short stories are contained in the three-volume collection *Galpaguchha* (Bunch of Stories), which itself is a collection of eighty-four stories. Of Tagore's prose, his short stories are perhaps the most highly regarded. Among all of Tagore's works, his novels are among the least-acknowledged although he penned seven of them. These include *Noukadubi(*1906), *Gora*(1910), *Ghare-Baire(*1916) [The Homeand the World],*Chaturanga(1916), ShesherKobita* (1929), *Jogajog*(1929) and *Char Odhay*(1934). Among these *Ghare-Baire*(1916) is the most popular where Tagore mediates on the issue of nationalism in detail. In the novel Tagore explicitly displays his distrust of nationalism—especially when associated with a religious element. He deals with this issue in his 1910 *Gora* as well. Besides these he has to his credit several musical dramas, dance dramas, essays of all types, travel diaries, and two autobiographies, one in his middle years and the other shortly before his death in 1941.

3.2.3Tagore's views on Nationalism

Tagore's views on nationalism can be best described by the word ambivalence. The view that nationalism is a source of war and carnage, death, destruction and divisiveness, rather than international solidarity, that induces a larger and more expansive vision of the world—remains at the core of Tagore's imagination in most of his writings: his letters, essays, lectures, poems, plays and fiction.Yet, ironically, he is the composer of the national anthems for three nations: India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. This ambivalent response of Tagore towards nationalism as an ideology was apparent in the complicated set of responses he received from Indians and non-Indians alike. For the British, he was the quintessential representative of the mysterious Orient. His English writings, in certain political contexts, resonated deeply within the Anglophone world. Yet,

the British Intelligentsia felt uneasy with his 'exotic' persona. At home, Tagore developed the concept of 'syncretic' civilization as a basis of nationalist civilizational unity, where 'samaja' (society) was given centrality, unlike the European model of state-centric civilization. Tagore differed from Gandhi on the subject of Nationalism as well. Regarding nationalism, Tagore made two basic points. First, his view was that the state as a political institution has never been an important factor in the life of the nation i.e. India. The Indian civilization from the ancient times gave more importance to the society which is guided by spirituality or 'Dharma'. Second in India, according to Tagore, the state is external to the society, as it is not an integral part of it. These two propositions of Tagore make it clear that Tagore did not want to place the state above the society. Therefore, Tagore was skeptical of the National movement and he repeatedly stressed in his debates with Gandhi the need to extend the political battle into a battle for the mind. He pointed out that the soul-force of this country has to be liberated first of all and without such an effort the National movement for freedom will not be successful in the real sense. To Tagore, the struggle for freedom should not consist of the political strategy for capturing state-power. For him it is a philosophical struggle for the liberation of the soul.

Check Your Progress –1

1. Why did Rabindranath Tagore return his knighthood, that was conferred on him by the then British Government, in the year 1919 ? (20 words)
2. For which volume of poetry did Tagore earn the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913 ? (20 words)

3.3 UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Originally published in 1917, Rabindranath Tagore's 'Nationalism' remains an insightful critique of the concept of 'nation' and 'nationalism'. The prescribed essay 'Nationalism in the West' is originally part of three lectures delivered in Japan and the USA published for the first time, along with translations of five of Tagore's poems. The present essay is one of the essays published in this book; the other two are 'Nationalism in India', 'Nationalism in Japan'. The essay was published at the time of growing unrest in India against the British Raj and the heightened period of Indian nationalist movement. Like much of Tagore's ideas in all of his writings, he wishes to challenge the fundamental beliefs of the reader in the essay 'Nationalism in the West' too.Tagore begins from the position that nationalism is a Western construct. He suggests that the understanding of nationalism might not necessarily apply to India because its particular situation is

vastly different from the West, where nationalism had taken its hold. He states that:

Our real problem in India is not political. It is social. This is a condition not only prevailing in India, but among all nations. I do not believe in an exclusive political interest. Politics in the West have dominated Western ideals, and we in India are trying to imitate you.

He asserts that, "I am not against this nation or that nation, but against the idea of nation itself." Tagore was of the view that the western idea of nationalism will not serve any good to the Indians. This was chiefly because of two reasons: first, his view was that the state as a political institution has never been an important factor in the life of the nation. The Indian civilization from the ancient times gave more importance to the society than the state which is guided by spirituality or 'Dharma'. Secondly, in India, according to Tagore, the state is external to the society, as it is not an integral part of it.

Part of the reason as to why Tagore believed that nationalism, in the form being advocated at the time, is not going to be as successful was because of the presence of the caste system. This element is not present in the West. Tagore makes it clear that a failure to account for this is problematic for those who advocate for nationalism. For Tagore, the ability to remove the caste system is where any discussion of national identity must lie. He is opposed to the idea of nationalism that is founded on the basis of blind greed for power and hyper-nationalism that leads to perpetual brute force and end of conscience which equals free will. Radical nationalism that acted as opiate of the people, making them irrational and fanatical, blind to the senses of truth and justice, and willing to both kill and die for it, perpetuating a logic of "lunacy" and war, instead of a cycle of freedom and peace, was a oppressive institution to Tagore. He condemned it as "a cruel epidemic of evil. . .sweeping over the human world of the present age and eating into its moral fibre" ; a terrible absurdity that is seeking to engulf humanity in a suicidal act.

Check your progress-2

Q.1 When was the essay 'Nationalism in the West' published ? Briefly state the context of the essay ? (20 words)

Q.2 Which element of nationalism does Tagore condemns the most ? (20 words)

Tagore was a believer in an interactive, dialogic world, given to a deep sense of sympathy, generosity and mutuality, and in which nations would not be

parochial, xenophobic and centripetal, or guided by mere selfishness and self-aggrandisement, but poised towards a morally and politically enlightened community of nations through the espousal of a centrifugal outlook, multilateral imagination, principal of universality and reciprocal recognitions. In this sense Tagore stands a precursor to many of the modern critics and philosophers of post/trans-nationalism and globalism such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Noam Chomsky. Tagore imagined of a commonwealth of nations in which no nation would deprive another "of its rightful place in the world festival" and every nation would "keep alight its own lamp of mind as its part of the illumination of the world". Tagore sees one of the main menaces to humanity in the idea of the nation, as a mechanical construction to put up borders between human beings and build animosities, stimulated by the idea of belonging to a specific group rather than humanity as a whole, and measured in a competition on the scientific, political, social, economic and military stage.

So, the basic idea is that Tagore was not opposed to the nationalistic sentiments of people but the foundation on which it was built. What Tagore believed is that concepts like nation, humanism, cosmopolitanism or nationalism are not universal terms that can provide the same meaning across different space and time. He believed that such terms are the product of a specific culture and therefore its merits and demerits needs to assessed by assessing the aspects of those culture. The concept of nationalism as presently applied to India is a borrowed concept from the west and what Tagore wants us to realize is that there it has been conceived in its narrowest sense. It is exclusive rather than inclusive. Tagore warns India not to imitate the west blindly, for it does not fit in the context of India; for India's vision was always one of human unity which includes the entire world in it and rejects any kind of narrow nationalism. Tagore states that it is the overpowering influence of the West and its narrow conception of nationalism that has made us missed the character of India as one related to the world. According to Tagore, India has always sought to find the oneness of existence through the multifariousness of the universe. Since ancient times, society has been the core of India's civilization. Here he makes an important distinction between society and nation: he says that while society does not have an ulterior purpose and is a natural regulation of relationships and the spontaneous self-expression of man as a social being, nation is an organization of people with a mechanical purpose, founded on greed, jealousy, suspicion and desire for power. It replaces the living bonds of society with mere mechanical organization. And as a result of this even the natural balance of the society has been disturbed, for example the bond of man and woman has now transformed its nature from mutual cooperation to a competitive one. This in turn also gives impetus to another menace, that of patriarchy, for "…man now is driven to professionalism and turns the wheels of power for his own sake leaving woman to fight her battles alone."

It was Tagore's complete apathy towards violence that he was so much against nationalism based on the concept of a nation-state which does not hesitate to kill in the name of sovereignty of a nation. He rather advocates for universal humanism and cosmopolitanism with a difference.

Another thing we need to remember is that although Tagore was highly critical of many aspects of the western civilization and its idea of nation and nationalism however he never denounced them completely. He believed that the west was also necessary to the east for he wanted both of them to be complementary to each other and this was possible since both had 'different outlooks upon life..' which gave them different aspects of truth. What Tagore wanted was a 'reconciliation of these two great worlds..'

To sum it up Tagore delivers an immensely intelligent account of the problematic dichotomy between individual human beings and the nation-states they are part of in the essay and urges people to look at concepts of 'nation', 'nationalism', 'nationhood' from a broader and radical perspective.

Short Answer Questions –1

Q.1 Why does Tagore warn India from blindly imitating the West ? (60-80 words)

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Q.2 What is the difference between society and nation as pointed out by Tagore? (60-80 words)

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N.B. Refer to sections 1.3, 1.5

3.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION:

Mohammad A. Quayum writes that, "Tagore's indictment of nationalism elicited furious criticisms from many of his contemporaries, especially in the West, with the Marxist critic, Georg Lukacs, and the English writer, D.H. Lawrence, leading the pack, making the duo fellows in their Tagore hatred. Lukacs, who found both Gandhi and Tagore counter-revolutionary, criticized Tagore heavily

after the publication of his influential novel *The Home and the World.* Lukacs condemned Tagore as "a wholly insignificant figure. . .[who] survives by sticking scraps of the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita into his works amid the sluggish flow of his tediousness".

Lawrence on the other hand, felt outraged by what he called the "wretched worship-of-Tagore attitude' and admonished that Tagore was a "horribly decadent [figure] reverting to all forms of barbarism in all sorts of ugly ways."

Both Lawrence and Lukacs's arrogance and contempt in the above statement only ratified Tagore's claim that the chasm between the East and the West was created by the West's unwarranted contempt for the East, which in return generated hatred in the East against the West." Tagore gave a fitting reply to such response. He succintly stated, "The blindness of contempt is more hopeless than the blindness of ignorance; for contempt kills the light which ignorance merely leaves unignited."

3.5 LETS SUM UP:

Thus the reading of the essay 'Nationalism in the West' acquaints us with an clear idea of Tagore's view on nationalism. For Tagore nationalism is not a spontaneous self-expression of man as social being where human relationships are naturally regulated so that men can develop ideals of life in cooperation with one another but rather a political and commercial union of a group of people in which they congregrate to maximize their profit, progress and power.

Tagore deemed nationalism a recurrent threat to humanity because with its propensity for the material and the rational, it trampled over the human spirit and human emotion. It upsets man's moral balance obscuring his human side under the shadow of a soul less organization.

Ultimately Tagore provides us with a philosophical critique of nationalism which is based on his extensive critical reading of Indian traditions, and particularly drawn from the ideas of the Brahmo-Samaj and the ideas of the Vedas and the Upanishads.

Short Answer Questions: 2

Q.1 How was Tagore's ideas on nationalism received in the West ? (60-70 words)

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Q.2 What was Tagore's response to the criticism he faced ? (60-70 words)

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N.B. Refer to section 1.4

Long Answer Question: 1

Q.1 Discuss Rabindranath Tagore's ideas about and approach to nationalism? (400 words)

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Q.2 What alternative does Tagore proposes in contrast to the idea of narrow nationalism ? Discuss critically. (400 words)

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N.B. Refer to sections 1.2.3, 1.3, 1.5

3.6 KEYWORDS

Akhand Bharat— literally means " Undivided India"

Ecstatic—extremely happy

Carnage—death and destruction

Solidarity—a bond or unity between individuals around a common goal.

Quintessential—in all senses, ultimate

Anglophone—English-speaking

Syncretic—combining disparate elements in one system

Opiate – dulling the senses of (someone) with or as if with opium

Parochial—having a limited or narrow outlook or scope, narrow-minded, restricted.

Xenophobic—a fear or hatred of strangers or foreigners

Centripetal—directed or moving towards a centre

Self-aggrandisement—behaviour which increases one's own wealth or power, or which is intended to create an appearance of importance.

Centrifugal—tending or causing to recede from the center.

Multilateral—having many sides or points of view.

Multifariousness—multiplicity, having great diversity or variety.

Cosmopolitanism—the idea that all of humanity belongs to a single moral community.

Humanism—an ethical system that centers on humans and their values, dignity, freedom.

Ratified—to make officially valid, to give formal consent to.

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