



Department of Distance Education
Punjabi University, Patiala

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B.A. PART-III
SEMESTER-V

ENGLISH LITERATURE (Elective)

**POETRY AND THE HISTORY
OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

UNIT NO. 1

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS/TERMS PERTAINING TO POETRY

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Note:- The students can download syllabus from departmental website www.dccpbi.com

LESSON NO. 1.1

Important Concepts/Terms Pertaining to Poetry

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1.0 Objectives

- * to introduce students to the genre of poetry
- * to define and explain the term poetry
- * to define and explain Metre
- * to define and explain Rhyme
- * to define and explain Allusion
- * to define and explain Imagery
- * to define and explain Symbol
- * to define and explain Lyric
- * to define and explain Dramatic Monologue
- * to define and explain Elegy
- * to define and explain Sonnet
- * to define and explain Alliteration
- * to define and explain Epithet
- * to define and explain Conceit

1.1 Introduction:

Since you have opted for English Literature, you have already been initiated into the reading of Prose and Drama. Appreciation of any creative writing requires some special and skilled insights. A familiarity with some of the key concepts is essential to fully understand and appreciate a piece of creative writing. It is more so in the case of poetry because poetry is inherently suggestive and evocative and a poet normally takes strange liberties with language. Language as a medium in its essential form remains the same but a poet makes a special use of this medium. Hence, it becomes necessary that we first acquaint ourselves with some basic concepts and terminology used in poetry.

However, at the outset, it may be said that poetry is difficult because it is a highly organized and complex art, in which some of the great minds have tried to record for themselves and it is the only form possible to them to express their thoughts, their feelings, their flashes of revelation about the universe.

1.2 What is Poetry:

First question which comes to mind while initiating any discussion on poetry is, "What is poetry"?

The word "poetry" is quite often used as a substitute for all "imaginative

literature" i.e. something which is 'made up' by the teller or writer. But then the next question arises, what is the difference between prose and poetry. Here, it may be relevant to quote Shelley- the famous English poet : "The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error". The obvious inference is that there is no difference between poetry and prose. Prose is poetic to the extent that it uses such standard poetic devices as rhythmic sentence structures, alliteration, assonance, imagery and so on. But the difference between prose and poetry exists and is fiercely debated.

1.2.1 Definition of Poetry:

Etymologically, the term 'poetry' comes from a Greek root meaning "make", a poet thus seems to be a maker, and the poem, a thing, he makes. Literary theorists have argued at length about the central defining characteristic of poetry, yet there has not emerged any valid commonsense definition of the word. The often quoted definition, "the best words in the best order" even is vague and does not point to the precise and specific characteristic of poetry. Myers tried to define it as "A sort of crystallized deposit of human spirit". But this definition has also been rejected because the definition tends to point to "what poetry does" than "to what poetry is". Wordsworth's attempt to define poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity" aims to hint at the state in which poetry is created than an exact definition of the term. Each attempt to define poetry in terms of some single, necessary trait inevitably leaves out some other vital aspect. The attempts have varied from considering metre or rhythm as its distinguishing trait, to emphasizing the sensory quality of the language or to consider the quality and intensity of the poet's vision, or to argue that poetry is a very special kind of symbolic language. Even though it is difficult to make an attempt to define poetry precisely, the term is generally applied to the words of imaginative significance written in metrical pattern. Its chief characteristics are music, vision, imagery, emotion, refinement and harmony.

Even if theorists do not agree on one single definition yet they do recognize that poetry is a fabricated thing not found in nature and therefore contingent on a number of factors. "A poem is produced by a poet, takes its subject matter from the universe of men, things and events, and is addressed to or made available to an audience of hearers or readers." (*Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*)

Points to Remember:

From our discussion so far, the following important points have emerged and these need to be kept in mind before we proceed further:

- * Poetry is different from prose
- * it is difficult to define poetry

- * poetry is made
- * poet is a maker
- * poetry is addressed to hearers and readers
- * men, manners and nature are its subject-matter.

1.3 Metre: Derived from a Greek word *metron*, the term "metre" stands for the pattern of measured sound units recurring more or less regularly in a line of verse. Or we can put it like this, *Metre* is the generally regular repetition of a given pattern of accented and unaccented syllables, the metrical unit is *foot*. So we may say, composition written in metre is known as verse.

The discussion of metre becomes essential and inevitable. Here, it may be mentioned that prosodic structures differ from language to language. They differ in their selection and emphasis. Even in a single language, the requisites and characteristics of verse do not remain the same. More than one system of versification and various interpretations of verse and prose can exist in a language at the same time. One of the basic distinctions in English Prosody is between *metre* and *rhythm*. This point has to be borne in mind when we explain the classification of English metre.

1.3.1 Classification of Metre: The most important factor for the classification of metre is the *stress-syllable* relationship. The metre of a line of verse is determined by the pattern of stronger and weaker stresses in its component syllables. Now a *strong or accented syllable* is a syllable that receives emphasis in the pronunciation of a word or passage because of the normal pronunciation of the word. The strongest stress in a word (or stresses in a line) is called the *Primary Accent*. The *Secondary Accent* is slightly less stressed, the tertiary is still less stressed. An *unaccented syllable, unstressed syllable or weak syllable* is one which does not receive stress. For example, take the word *Mediterranean*. The word has six syllables *med. di.ter.ra.ne.an*. Here the fourth syllable *ra* receives the strongest stress or primary accent; the first syllable receives a slightly weaker stress, the second and third syllables still weaker, and the final syllable is the weakest. So the four stress levels will be like this:

2	3	3	1	3	4
med -	i -	ter.	ra -	ne -	an

To analyze and classify the standard English meter, one must learn to group the syllables into *metric* feet according to the patterning of these two stresses i.e. strong/accented/primary and weak/unaccented/secondary.

Foot: This is the smallest unit of stressed and unstressed syllables to appear in verse. An elementary knowledge includes four kinds of feet.

- 1) **Iamb :** One unstressed and one stressed syllable as in the word 'delight'.

Now take the example of this line.

How small /a part/of time/they share.

- 2) **Anapest:** Two unstressed and one stressed syllable, as in the word underneath.

The following line is chiefly composed of anapestic feet.

It was ma'n/y and ma'n/y a yea'r/ag'o

- 3) **Trochee:** One stressed followed by one unstressed syllable as it happens in tro'chee. The following line is composed of Trochaic feet: Sho'uld you/ ask' me/whe'nce these/sto'ries.

- 4) **Dactyl:** One stressed followed by two unstressed syllables, as in M'ichigan and elephant. This line is composed of dactylic feet:

Tak'e her up/tenderly

The Line: The line, called also a verse, determines the basic rhythmical pattern of the poem. It also provides a principle of order, which helps in making the sense of the line/poem. Lines are named according to the number of feet they possess. The lines are named as follows:

One foot	-	monometre
Two feet	-	dimetre
Three feet	-	trimetre
Four feet	-	tetrametre
Five feet	-	Pentametre
Six feet	-	hexametre
Seven feet	-	heptametre
Eight feet	-	octametre

So, when we describe the line, first we see what kind of a line it is. Is it an iambic kind or anapestic or trochaic or dactylic?

And then we determine the number of feet, it possesses. Take for example the following line :

How small/a part/of time/they share'

1 2 3 4

The line has four feet so it is set in tetrameter. It has one unstressed, one stressed syllable so it is iambic in kind. So we can say that the line is composed in iambic tetrameter.

Now take for example the following line:

Take her up /tenderly

1 2

The stress goes as one stressed, and two unstressed syllables, so it is Dactylic and it has two feet. So, it is composed in dimetre. So we can say the line is written in Dactylic dimetre.

Points to remember :

1. A poem is written in verse.
2. verse is made of measured sound units called metre
3. Rhythm depends on the beat of stress
4. There are basically two stresses - primary stress and secondary stress
5. Metric feet is classified according to the patterning of these two stresses
6. Lines of verse are named for the number of feet they contain and their dominant meter.

1.3.2 Activity for the student: CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

1. Is there any difference between poetry and prose ?
2. What is the basic constituent of poetry ?
3. What constitutes the subject matter of poetry ?
4. What is 'foot'?
5. How are the lines of verse named ?

Dear students,

We hope that you will be successful in answering these questions. See 1.5 Key to the Questions to check whether you have answered these questions correctly.

Now we want to acquaint you with some more terms pertaining to poetry. The understanding of these terms will help you to understand, interpret and analyze a poem more clearly.

We have already told you that in every poem there is a movement of sound and a movement of sense and generally some compromise between the two must be made if the total meaning of the poem is to be grasped. This statement is especially true of poems with rhyme and even more true of poems with internal rhyme. Now let us try to understand what Rhyme is.

1.4 Rhyme: Rhyme is another technical device in poetry. Like all other devices, it is used for a specific purpose in each poem. There are many kinds of rhymes, used to achieve different purposes. The principal rhymes are perfect

and imperfect.

For example:

Lie	-	die
resist	-	consist
make <i>prefect</i>		
rhyme and blood	-	good
strong-unstrong	-	make <i>imperfect</i> rhyme

Rhyme is found in two positions :

End-Rhyme is found at the end of the lines as in Blake's poem :

Tiger ! Tiger burning *bright*
In the forests of the *night*

Internal Rhyme is found within the line e.g. The splendor *falls* on castle *walls*.

Dear student,

We have told you earlier in this lesson that a systematic study of versification in poetry includes a study of the principles and practice of metre rhyme.

1.5 Allusion: Allusion makes a reference to some well-known place, event, or person. It is not in the sense of making a comparison, but it is a figure of speech in the sense that it implies more than its narrow meaning. For example: "No ! I am not prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be".

1.5 .1Key to the Questions given in 1.3.2

- Q.1 There is a difference between poetry and prose. Even though a poet as well as a prose-writer make use of language as a medium of creative expression, but a poet makes a special use of language. Poetry is characterized by music, vision , imagery, emotion, refinement and harmony.
- Q.2 The basic constituent of poetry is its suggestive and evocative appeal.
- Q.3 Men, manner and nature constitute the subject-matter of poetry.
- Q.4 Foot is the smallest unit of stressed and unstressed syllables to appear inverse.
- Q.5 The lines are named according to the number of feet they possess e.g., a line which has one foot is monometer. A line which has three feet will have trimetre.

1.6 Imagery: This term is one of the most common terms in modern criticism. It is also one of the most ambiguous. Its applications range all the way from the "mental pictures" which, it is claimed, are experienced by the reader of a poem, to the totality of the elements which make up a poem. C.D.Lewis in his, "Poetic Image" states that an image "is a picture made out

of words" and that "a poem may itself be an image composed from a multiplicity of images". Read the following example.

"George is an honest, just man with a good deal of integrity"-we have described George in abstract terms.

But if we say:

"As George was following the stranger, he saw the stranger's pocket book slip to the sidewalk, he picked it up, quickened his step, and returned it to him." We have described George in concrete terms.

Now, in the first statement we testify to his honesty, in the second statement the act testifies for him. We imagine George's act. We see it all happens because of the concrete details involved: stranger, pocket book, sidewalk and step. Such words are called imagery in a poem.

The second statement illustrates the basic methods of the creative writer, especially the poet. The poet never states directly. His statements are suggestive and concrete. The images used by the poet are not mere decorations—they are in a great part a poet's methods of thinking. With imagery, the poet allows life to present itself and we can hear, see, smell, feel and touch experience. This principle we must understand if we are to enter the inner life of a good poem and not to enter it to bypass the poem's higher level, the figurative level of meaning.

1.7 Symbol: Dear student, we have just now explained how images bring concrete life (sensuous experience) into a poem, how poets think naturally with them and how they make use of these images in special ways. Now, let us explain how *Symbols* help poets to explore the less known or the unknown through the known. Let us first define the term.

The word 'symbol' has a Greek ancestor *symbollein*, meaning to *compare or throw together*. A symbol, thus defined, most simple, is one thing used to stand for or represent another thing. For example:

a lion stands for strength and courage.

a lamb stands for gentleness and weakness.

a burning torch held aloft stands for liberty.

A symbol may be said to be a figure of speech. Here it becomes essential to point out the technical difference between *simile*, *metaphor* and *symbol*.

For example:

Life's like a walking shadow - it is a simile because here the comparison is stated.

Life's but a walking shadow - the poet is using a metaphor which implies the comparison without explicitly stating it. Note that both terms of the figure, life and shadow, are still present in the metaphor.

But had the poet dropped one term *life* and had only used *shadow* to stand for life, he would have used *symbol*.

A symbol is not related to metaphor. It can stand on its own feet by representing through continued use and common understanding a simple object or a complex pattern of associations or ideas. For example:

When we use the Cross to represent *Christianity*, we do not imply that the cross is like Christianity, we simply say it stands for it, and device works because the association is universally understood. Such symbols are known as conventional symbols but some poets depart from conventional symbols to invent their own for their special purpose. Such symbols are called arbitrary symbols or personal symbols. These have to be understood in the poem's complete context and not by any previous mutual understanding between the poet and the reader. A good deal of modern poetry relies heavily on textual symbolism, and it accounts for some of the obscurity found in the modern poetry.

1.8 Activity for the Student : Check your Progress:

- Q.1 "There is no frigate like a book".-Is this line a simile or a symbol or an image.State and elaborate by giving definition.
- Q.2 Define symbol. Give two examples.
- Q.3 How do we classify metre?

1.8.1. Key to the Questions given in 1.8

- Q.1 "There is no frigate like a book"- this is a simile because it makes a comparison between a book and a frigate. A frigate is an escort vessel. The idea conveyed is that books can steer us through the rough tides.
- Q.2 Symbol is one thing which is used to represent another thing. For example, Tiger symbolizes fierce energy and lamb symbolizes weakness and innocence.
- Q.3 We classify metre according to the stress-syllable relationship. The metre of a line of verse is determined by the pattern of stronger and weaker stresses in its component syllables. For example :

Iamb has one unstressed, one stressed syllable

Anapest has two unstressed, one stressed syllable

Trochee has one stressed, one unstressed syllable and

Dactyle has one stressed, two unstressed syllables

1.9 Lyric : Lyric originally was described as poetry intended to be sung. Now it more frequently refers to relatively short and emotional poems. The emotion is usually personal or seemingly so.

Lyric is a form (kind) of writing poetry. When we use the 'lyrical' it may mean musical or it may also mean that a poem can be called a lyric. Lyric consists of the utterance by a single speaker. It is uttered in the first person. Such lyrics are known as Personal Lyrics. John Milton's "When I consider how my light is spent" and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "Frost at Midnight" are personal lyrics. In Dramatic Lyrics, the lyric speaker is represented as addressing another person in a specific situation. John Donne's poem "The Canonization" and William Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" are *Dramatic Lyrics*. In other kinds of lyrics, the speaker manifests and justifies a particular disposition and set of values as in Milton's "L' Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" or expresses a sustained process of observation and meditation in the attempt to resolve an emotional problem. as in Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality".

Meditative poems are serious reflections on man's relation to God, nature, society or himself, e.g., Donne's "Good Friday 1613" and "Riding Westward".

1.9.1 In a *Dramatic Poem* the speaker or speakers are clearly fictitious or historical characters rather than the author, e.g., Browning's "My Last Duchess" or a person who may represent a projection of the author's personality e.g., Donne's "The Canonization".

1.9.2 A *Narrative Poem* is a poem that tells a story, e.g., Keats's "Eve of St. Agnes".

1.9.3 *Descriptive Poetry* consists chiefly of a description of natural or a man-made scene, e.g., Gray's "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College".

1.9.4 *Didactic Poems* are characterized by the explicitness of their themes; they may range from such semi-technical treatise as Pope's "Essay on Criticism" through the varieties of settings to mnemonic verses such as, 'Thirty days hath September'.

1.10 Ballad: Ballads are comparatively short narrative poems, often anonymous and often intended to be sung. However in the present times "Ballad" is used for any poem intended to be sung, including non-narrative composed song.

Folk Ballads are ballads handed down orally from generation to generation. The narrative line is usually simple and the action dramatic, involving love, death, the supernatural and often combinations of these, diction is sufficiently stylized. Descriptions, images and even incidents may be transferred from one kind of ballad to another (for example American ballad "John Henry"). In

such cases, incremental repetition, or the repetition of a line or group of lines with slight but significant changes is common, as is the ballad stanza, e.g., F.J. Child's *Collected Folk Ballads in the English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882). Child's classification of ballads and their variants is still almost universally followed.

A *Literary Ballad* is an attempt by a poet to imitate the diction, mood, and often the stanza form of the folk ballad; Literary ballads, unlike other ballads are seldom intended to be sung, e.g., Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner".

1.11 Dramatic Monologue: Dramatic monologue is a type of poem which contains the speech by a single fictional character that reveals an aspect of the narrator's personality usually a defect of character that the speaker himself is not aware of. A *Dramatic Monologue* has the following characteristics :

- (1) A single person, who is not the poet himself, utters the entire poem in a specific situation at a critical moment.
- (2) This person addresses and interacts with one or more than one people; but we know of their presence and what they say and do, only from clues in the discourse of the single speaker.
- (3) The monologue is so organized that its focus is on the temperament of the character that the dramatic speaker unintentionally reveals in the course of what he says.

We may discuss two other forms also. "A Tension" and "A Complaint" in the category of Dramatic Monologue. A Tension is a debate in verse, usually between two poets or between the poet and his rival. A Complaint, a lyric monologue in which the speaker, often, but not always, a lover, reveals the cause of his sorrow, suggests a remedy and asks the appropriate person for help, e.g. Chaucer's "Complaint into His Purse".

1.12 Elegy: In Classical Greek and Roman poetry an Elegy was any poem composed in the elegiac metre. The term now has been applied to any solemn meditative poem. Elegy now refers to a poetic meditation on the death of an individual, such as Tennyson's "In Memoriam on the death of Arthur Hallam", or W.H.Auden's "In Memory of W.B.Yeats". Sometimes the term is more broadly used for meditative poems, such as Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" or Donne's "Death, Be not Proud". Such poems deal generally with the passing of men and the things they value.

An important species of the Elegy is the Pastoral Elegy. The Pastoral Elegy, dating from Theocritus (3rd C. B.C.), is characterized by certain connections. The poet and the deceased are shown as shepherds living in the midst of nature, which is personified and which joins in the mourning. The poem begins with an invocation to the muse and contains numerous classical allusions, continues by questioning the guardians of the deceased (usually

natural being, the flora and the fauna of the pastoral scene) concerning their inability to protect the deceased effectively, moves to procession or catalogue of mourners and a section in which the poet challenges human or divine justice, and concludes with a reconciliation in which the poet realizes that death is a blessed reunion with God or Nature. The elaborate form of the *pastoral Elegy* is one of the most striking instances of the way poetry uses complex connections to control and transcend raw emotion by actualizing it, e.g., Milton's "Lycidas".

Dirge, Threnody, Monody and Lament : These poems are shorter and less elaborate versions of the elegy. *Dirges* are intended to be sung, e.g., Shakespeare's "Full Fathom Five Thy Father Lies" William Collins's "A Song From Shakespeare's Cymbeline".

Threnody is song like, but not necessarily intended for musical accompaniment. A *Monody* is spoken by a single person. Milton describes his "Lycidas" in the subtitle, as a "Monody" in which the author bewails a learned friend, and Matthew Arnold called his elegy on A.H. Clough, "Thyrsis, a Monody".

Lament may refer to any song expressing deep sorrow or more narrowly, to the old English version of the Elegy.

1.13 Sonnet: Sonnet derives from the old French word for "little song" , the one referred to in any short lyric, especially any lyrical love song. The sonnet proper, however, is usually a fourteen line poem rhyming in iambic pentameter, although some writers have experimented with different line lengths, metrical patterns or number of lines.

The *Petrarchan or Italian Sonnet* (after the Italian poet Petrarch, 1304-74), begins with an octave or eight-line section. It asks a question, poses a problem, states a difficulty, or conveys a mood and concludes with a sestet or six line section, answers the question, resolves the problem or difficulty, or concludes the mood. Wordsworth's "Lines Composed Upon Westminster Bridge" -is an example of the Petrarchan kind of Sonnet.

The English or Shakespearean Sonnet is composed of three quatrains-four-line units. It concludes with a couplet which summarizes or caps the quatrains, e.g. Shakespeare's "Sonnet 73".

Originally , concerned almost exclusively with love, the subject matter of the sonnet is now virtually unrestricted. A Sonnet-Sequence is a group of sonnets dealing with a central theme, subject, or narrative line.

1.14 Alliteration : Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds, usually at the beginning of words or of accented syllables e.g. "Five Miles Meandering in Mazy Motion" ("Kubla Khan")

See how the sound 'm' - a consonant-recurs at the beginning of each word.

1.15 Epithet: An epithet is a descriptive word or phrase, usually picturesque or striking, e.g.,

"Silver snarling trumpets"

"Homer's rosy fingered down"

Transferred Epithet: A transferred epithet occurs when an adjective modifies a noun that it logically cannot modify, e.g., "Milton's blind mouths".

1.16 Conceit: Conceit is a simile or a metaphor which shows ingenuity either in the elaboration of the comparison or in its unexpectedness.

Petrarchan Conceits are exaggerated comparisons showing the haughtiness and desirability of the beloved and the agony of the lover.

A Metaphysical Conceit is an especially elaborate conceit that compares quite dissimilar things, e.g., Donne in his poem "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning," compares the separation of lovers to the movement of the legs of a compass.

The two terms of comparison in a metaphor are called tenor and the vehicle. The tenor is the literal subject of the metaphor, the thing the poet is primarily interested in. The vehicle is the object used to focus attention on the subject. In Donne's "I am a little word made cunning"

"I" is the tenor of the thing Donne wants the reader to contemplate.

"A word" is the vehicle. It suggests the term under which tenor is to be considered.

1.17 Summing Up : Dear student, we have given you definitions of literary terms. Remaining literary terms will be discussed in the second lesson. But you may keep in mind that the definitions of terms in the poetry can be helpful in understanding a poem but the exact shade of meaning of each basic term depends more than usual on the complete, highly figurative context of the entire poem.

LESSON NO. 1.2

IMPORTANT TERMS PERTAINING TO POETRY

Structure :

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Terms
 - 2.2.1 Blank verse
 - 2.2.2 Concrete Poetry
 - 2.2.3 Confessional Poetry
 - 2.2.4 Doggerel
 - 2.2.5 Figurative language
 - 2.2.6 Free verse
 - 2.2.7 Haiku
 - 2.2.8 Heroic couplet
 - 2.2.9 Hymn
 - 2.2.10 Hyperbole and understatement
 - 2.2.11 Light verse
- 2.3 Activity for the student

2.0 Objectives

- to introduce the student to literary terms
- to define and explain Blank Verse
- to explain Concrete Poetry
- to explain Confessional Poetry
- to explain Doggerel
- to explain Figurative language
- to explain Free verse

- to explain Haiku
- to explain Heroic couplet
- to explain Hymn
- to explain Hyperbole and understatement
- to explain Light verse

2.1 Introduction :

Dear students, in the previous lesson we have introduced you to some literary terms. Acquaintance with more terms will help you in understanding and enjoying poetry. If you want to pursue an in-depth study of Literature, knowledge of these Literary terms will help you in critical analysis of poetry. We have given explanation of each term. We have tried to trace the history of the terms. We have mentioned the names of the poets and their works who have made elaborate use of these forms. We have also given ample examples of their use.

2.2.1 Blank Verse

Blank verse is poetry written in iambic pentameter without rhyme scheme. It is closest to natural rhymes of English speech. That is why it has been commonly used.

Blank verse is used in narrative and dramatic poetry. In **The Merchant of Venice** Shakespeare writes :

The quality of mercy is not strained

It droppeth as the gentle rain

Upon the place beneath from heaven it is twice blessed

It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

It was Christopher Marlowe who made full use of potential blank verse and also established it as the dominant verse form. Milton's **Paradise Lost** is also written in blank verse. Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats also used blank verse as a major form. Tennyson's 'Ulysses' is another famous example. In the twentieth century, Robert Frost used blank verse form in his narrative poems. T.S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' is another outstanding poem written in blank verse.

Blank verse has been used since three centuries. It has been called the most natural verse form for dramatic verse.

2.2.2 Concrete Poetry

Concrete poetry, as the title itself signifies, is a poetry which has solid shape or pattern. In this type of poetry arrangement of words is as important as words, rhythm or rhyme. The arrangement of the words also conveys the total effect of the poem. That is why concrete poetry is also known as visual poetry because words themselves form a picture.

The term concrete poetry was coined in 1950's. In 1956 international exhibition of concrete poetry was shown in Brazil and later on, a manifesto was published. Its basic principle is that using words as part of a specifically visual work allows for the words themselves to become part of the poetry, rather than just unseen vehicles for ideas.

The idea of using letter arrangements to enhance the meaning of a poem can be traced back to third and second centuries B.C. Examples of concrete poetry include 'The Temple' by George Herbert, "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" by Lewis Carroll. Other famous concrete poets are Ian Hamilton Finlay, Edwin Morgan. More recent among concrete poets is Jennifer Kathleen Philips.

Concrete poetry is the word as image. It is more like painting, audio or cinema. These poets believe that words are things in themselves and the words are like pictures or music in our mind. They are like smells and tastes. We may have vocabulary to express ideas and feelings too. But these poets put words to things we have not even understood.

Concrete poetry is supposed to be associated with poems whose authors depict a recognizable shape e.g. Hollander's "Type of Shape". Works of concrete poetry are like pieces of visual art – to be relished with eyes. Some artists adopted the term 'Poesia Visia' to describe fusion of word and image.

2.2.3. Confessional Poetry

Confessional poetry is a popular form of creative writing. It explores personal details about the author's life without any weakness or modesty. It gives information about the personal life of the poet. The poets use confessional poetry as an outlet for their repressed self. Writing and re-reading their own works provides catharsis.

The label confessional poetry was applied in 1950's and 1960's to the poetry of Allen Ginsberg, Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton etc. This form can be traced back to Shakespeare's Sonnets and Petrarch's Sonnets. It seemed to have become dominant approach in the late 20th century American Poetry. In reaction to confessional poetry, movements like New Formalism have come into being.

In a confessional poem, the writer speaks to the reader. In 'Daddy' Sylvia Plath speaks of her love and hatred for her father, "Daddy, I have had to kill you." Sexton's "All my Pretty Ones" is a direct treatment of the female body.

Confessional poetry is unique not only in subject but also in style. These poets also maintain a high level of craftsmanship through careful attention and through use of prosody. These poets pioneered a type of writing that changed the landscape of American poetry. Among the contemporary poets are names like Marie Perle and Sharan Olds whose writings largely draw on their personal experiences.

2.24 DOGGEREL

Doggerel is a light, low, trivial form of verse. It is humorous and comic. That is

why, it is often viewed with poor opinion. It is supposed to have little literary value. Its construction is loose and irregular. Its only effect lies in its simple mnemonic rhyme and loping metre. It is used in comedy, satire and nursery rhymes.

William Topaz McGonagall's 'Ode on the Death of Alfred, Lord' is a beautiful example:

*Alas ! England now mourns for poet that's gone
The late and the good Lord Tennyson.
I hope his soul has fled to heaven above,
Where there is everlasting joy and love.*

Some poets like Ogden Nash make a virtue of writing what appears to be doggerel. His poetry, despite its apparent technical defects, is clever and entertaining. Samuel Butler used doggerel for satiric purposes :

*For his Religion, it was fit
To match learning and his wit;*

Thus we see that doggerel form of poetry has little regard to rhythm or rhyme. Originally the term was applied to a genre of loose, irregular verses. It is used to refer to poetry that is badly written.

2.2.5. Figurative Language

Language is a tool for communication for everyone. Figurative language is a writer's tool. It helps the reader to visualize what the writer is thinking about. It puts a picture in the reader's mind. Figurative language is poetic language. It caters to imagination.

In literal language we mean what we say e.g. "Sit down", "I am tired". These statements have no other meaning. In Figurative Language we say something and imply something else e.g. "Let's go chill" doesn't mean to go in the cold. It means to do something for fun. Figurative language is not supposed to be interpreted literally. It appeals to imagination. It provides new ways of looking at the world. Figurative Language makes comparison between different things. Figurative language compares two different things in such a way that their similarities come out to be interesting and unique.

There are several techniques which are used in Figurative language. These include similes, metaphors, alliteration, onomatopoeia, personification, hyperbole, idiom, assonance.

Examples :

- | | | |
|----------|---|-----------------------------|
| Simile | – | I was as hungry as a horse. |
| Metaphor | – | John's mind is a computer. |

Alliteration	–	Water water everywhere and not a drop to drink.
Onomatopoeia	-	Bang, went the gun or buzzing of bees. (sounds remind you of their meaning)
Personification	–	The friendly gates welcomed us. (Human characteristics are given to non-human things).
Hyperbole	–	Drink to me only with thine eyes. (Hyperbole is high flown language).
Idiom	-	I am in hot soup. (Idioms are sentences that cannot be understood by the meaning of their separate words).
Assonance	-	Kitty will kiss Tinny's lips. (It is the repetition of internal vowel sounds; doesn't have to rhyme).

Thus, we see that figurative language contains images. The writer describes something through the use of unique comparisons. Figurative language helps in making things clearer and interesting.

Free Verse :

As the name suggests, free verse is poetry free from the constraints of recurrent beat and regular line. It does not have the continuity of prose. It is printed in short lines. It does not have regular stress pattern of traditional poetry. There is no rhyme or regular line length.

William Blake and Matthew Arnold wrote free verse. Walt Whitman's **Leaves of Grass** is another well-known example of free verse. In the nineteenth century, French Symbolist poets made free use of this form. In the 20th century, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound wrote in this style.

In Free Verse, the poets enjoy freedom from traditional metre and freedom to use visual and sound effects. Lines are shortened for speech or segmented into words or syllables to slow down the reading or comprehension.

In Free Verse poetry, the writer makes his own rules. He decides how the poem should look, feel and sound. The poetry is no doubt without proper form, rhyme or rhythm. Still it looks like poetry because there are complex patterns, metaphors, similes, assonance. Even a touch of rhyme is slipped into the poem.

A few lines from the poem 'winter' by Ni are worth quoting :

*once a snow flake fell
on my brow and i loved
it so much and i kissed*

it and it was happy.

2.2.7 Haiku

Haiku, the term derives its name from the phrase, 'haikai no ku' which means verse of haikai. Haiku is a major type of Japanese poetry. Earlier it was called 'hoku'. The current term Haiku was carried by Masoka Shiki at the end of 19th century.

In Japanese, Haikai is written as one line vertical line. In English, Haiku is generally written in three lines and with seventeen syllables. In Japanese haiku, kiraji words like 'ya' act as punctuation but in English they use punctuation marks. A traditional haiku contains a kigo – (season word) that represents the season in which the poem is set. Now new forms are being written without kigo. These are known as "free form" haiku.

Senryu is also similar form of poetry or haiku. These poems are about human follies. They are often cynical but they do not need to include Kigo, unlike most haiku.

One of the first advocates of English language Haiku was the Japanese poet Naguchi. In France, Haiku was introduced by Paul-Louis conchoud. Amy Lowell was influenced by Ezra Pound and she introduced Haiku in U.S.A.

Haiku poets said one thing and meant another. Japanese Haiku poets are experts in using the technique of puns. Their English counterparts may not be so well-versed. In Haiku there is liberal use of verb-noun exchange e.g. leaves, flowers, spring.

Haiku combines form, content and language in a meaningful compact form. Haiku poets write about everyday things. Their themes include nature, feelings or experiences. They use simple words and grammar. A Haiku 'paints' a mental image in the mind of the reader. The job of Haiku is really challenging to create an image only in 17 syllables in just three lines of poetry.

2.2.8 Heroic Couplet

Heroic Couplet is a traditional form of poetry commonly used for epic and narrative poetry. It refers to poems constructed from a sequence of rhyming pairs of iambic pentameter lines.

Heroic Couplet was first pioneered by Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales*. John Dryden and Alexander Pope were the great masters. Heroic couplet was extremely popular in 18th century. In the twentieth century authors have occasionally made use of heroic couplet, often as an illusion to the works of previous poets.

John Danham's 'Cooper Hill' is an example of closed couplet :

I could I flow like thee, and make thy stream.

My great example, as it is my theme !

Alexander Pope's couplets are written in elevated style :

*Fair to no purpose, artful to no end,
Young without lovers, old without a friend;*

Heroic Couplet dominated in the times of Dryden and Pope. It was a suitable medium of expression to the poetry at that time. With the passage of time, heroic couplet lost its utility. It was too narrow and inflexible and it also grew monotonous.

2.2.9 Hymn

Hymn is a type of song, usually religious. It is specifically written for the purpose of praise or prayer. Hymn is addressed to a deity or a prominent figure or personification. 'Hymn' derives from Greek 'Hymnos' which means 'a song of praise'.

Hymns are written in all languages and for all religions. Christian hymns are often written with special or seasonal themes and used on Christmas, Easter etc. A writer of Hymns is known as hymnist and collection of hymns is called hymnal. The subject matter and style is simple and is meant to appeal to ordinary people.

2.2.10 Hyperbole and Understatement

Hyperbole is a figure of speech which means extravagant exaggeration. Hyperbole is high-flown language, an overstatement and is literary rhetorical device. It derives from Greek word and means excess or overshooting. Hyperbole is a literary device that describes a situation or image that is at least possible even if not to be taken seriously.

e.g. *"I have been waiting for hours for the end of your 'short' coffee break."*

"Drink to me only with thine eyes."

Understatement is the opposite of Hyperbole. Understatement is derived from Greek word 'meiosis' which means lessening. It is a figure of speech in which the writer or speaker deliberately makes a situation seem less important or serious than it is. While Hyperbole distorts facts to make things bigger than they are, understatement is used to make things appear smaller or less important. It is used to entertain or to reduce the importance of truth.

2.2.11 Light Verse

Light verse is poetry that attempts to be humorous. These poems are usually brief. The subject matter is frivolous. There is liberal use of word play, puns, adventurous rhyme and heavy alliteration. Light verse has no serious purpose and solemnity of tone. Lord Byron, W.S. Gilbert, Ogden Nash and Alexander Pope used this form. Comedy or 'Limerick' are related to light verse.

2.3 Explain the following terms :

- (i) Blank verse.

- (ii) Figurative language.
- (iii) Heroic couplet
- (iv) Hyperbole and Understatement.

LESSON NO. 1.3

Romantic Period**Structure**

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Definition of Romanticism
 - 3.2.1 Romanticism and Literature
 - 3.2.2 Romantic Revival
 - 3.2.3 Main Points
- 3.3 Chief Characteristics of Romantic Poetry
 - 3.3.1 Treatment of Nature in Romantic Poetry
 - 3.3.2 Major Romantic Poets
- 3.4 Essay as a Literary Genre
 - 3.4.1 Growth and Development of English Essay in 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries
- 3.5 Major Essayists of the Romantic Period
- 3.6 "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*
- 3.7 "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"
- 3.8 William Hazlett's two Essays "On the Love of the Country" and "On Reading Old Books".

3.0 Objectives :

In this lesson we aim to discuss the Romantic Period in English literature – literature written and produced in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The limits of the Romantic Period in English literature are usually considered to begin with 1789 – the year when the French Revolution began or 1798 – the year Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* was published and continued till 1832, when Sir Walter Scott died. We shall deal in this lesson with the following aspects :

- * Romanticism.

- * Romantic Revival.
- * The chief characteristics of the literature of this period.
- * Chief characteristics of Romantic Poetry with an emphasis on “Return to Nature.”
- * Major Romantic Poets
- * Essay in the Romantic Period.
- * **“Preface” to Lyrical Ballads** written by Wordsworth. *Preface* contains the views of these two poets on poetic creation and imagination. It remains an important treatise so far as the Romantic theory of Poetry is concerned.
- * Coleridge’s *“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”* which is one of the most important poems of the Romantic age.
- * William Hazlitt’s Two Essays.

3.1 Introduction :

Reaction against Neo-Classicism had started long before the end of the Eighteenth Century and by the beginning of the nineteenth century there was practically a revolt against the Neo-classical attitudes.

The revolt was against

- * the eighteenth century attitudes which propagated reason, judgement and rationality.
- * the eighteenth century concentration upon the city and cultured society with an emphasis on artificiality, decorum and stylized sophistication.

This reaction brought in a revival of

- * emotion
- * passion
- * imagination, and
- * love for nature

3.2 Definition of Romanticism :

Romanticism is the expression of life as seen through the creative artist’s imagination.

So, Romanticism may be said to be an expression of heightened imaginative feelings.

Since imagination has no bounds, romanticism also denotes unfettered freedom – freedom from all bondages of rules and regulations.

- * It leaves its pursuers in free delights of their romantic fancy.
- * It paves the way for wonder and delight. It ushers in new attitudes and a new way of looking at life – a way of exuberance and emotional

enthusiasm.

Cazamian defines the romantic spirit in terms of pure psychology. According to him it is “the affirmation of an innovatory aesthetic creed as opposed to an orthodox art.” There are two instincts in humanity – the one is of accepting the prevailing literary values and standards and the other is of challenging them. We find Classicism when the instinct of acceptance dominates, and Romanticism when the instinct of wonder is supreme. Romanticism, to which Theodore Watts Dunton has given the name of ‘Renaissance of Wonder’, “merely indicates that there are great impulses governing man – the impulse of acceptance – the impulse to take unchallenged and for granted all the phenomena of the outer world as they are – and the impulse to confront these with the eyes of inquiry and wonder.”

Romanticism thrives on the impulse to confront life and nature, with the eyes of inquiry and wonder.

3.2.1 Romanticism and Literature :

In literature Romanticism stands for liberalism. Walter Pater considered the romantic character in art as consisting in “addition of strangeness to beauty”. “The desire for beauty”, says Pater, “being a fixed element in every artistic organization, it is the addition of curiosity to this desire of beauty that constitutes the romantic temper.” Thus, the two predominant elements of Romantic literature are :

- * *curiosity* and
- * *beauty*.

3.2.2 Romantic Revival :

The word ‘revival’ indicates a return to something which existed in some previous age, and in literature this return is to those romantic qualities which had characterized the literature of the Elizabethan age. The Elizabethan literature was itself stimulated by the Renaissance spirit. The characteristic features of the Elizabethan literature were unbridled imagination – the expression of the writer’s personal emotions and passions and the joy which they felt at the new-found freedom. These qualities are to be found in the poetry of Spenser, in the plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare, and in the prose of Bacon.

So we can say that the Romantic Revival was prompted by an intellectual and imaginative curiosity. It insisted on the power and autocracy of the imagination which alone could give a varied, subtle, intimate interpretation of the world of “external nature” and of that other world of wonder and romance which the familiar association of Nature generates in the mind of man. Romantic strain has been predominantly present in the creative works of those who celebrated and respected free play of imagination.

3.2.3 Main Points :

Let us briefly sum up the points we have discussed so far :

- * Romantic Period starts from 1798 and continues till 1832.
- * Romanticism is a reaction against Neo-classical attitudes to life and literature.
- * Romanticism emphasizes imagination, passion, curiosity and beauty.
- * It revives the medieval, Elizabethan and Hellenic spirit in literature – thus the term Romantic Revival.

3.3 Chief Characteristics of Romantic Poetry

The poetry of the Romantic Revival is in direct contrast to the poetry of the Neo-Classical poets of the eighteenth century.

In the eighteenth century, poetry was governed by set rules and regulations and form and style of poetry became more important than its matter and content. It was concerned with clubs and coffee-houses, drawing rooms and the social and political life of London. It was essentially the poetry of town life, and Nature had practically no place in it.

But in contrast to the Eighteenth Century Poetry, the Poetry of Romantic Revival

- * is emotional and imaginative
- * celebrates nature
- * takes interest in humanity
- * celebrates freedom
- * celebrates past
- * revokes past and presents the romance and enchantment of the Middle Ages
- * celebrates supernaturalism
- * has variety
- * is subjective and personal
- * is lyrical and simple
- * makes use of a variety of stanza forms
- * breaks loose of bondage to rules and regulations

The Romantics took a great interest in humanity, and described the lives of common men and women in their poetry. They were attracted by the essential character of man as man. They presented before us the lives of the shepherds and the cottagers and left the gallant lords and gay butterflies of fashion to the care of novelists. Thus, Romantic poetry was marked by humanitarianism, love, sympathy, and understanding of the human heart. They were all

(excluding Keats) filled with revolutionary ardour, and cried for liberty, equality, and fraternity. They were rebels against tyranny and brutality of the despots over human beings crushed by poverty and smashed by inhuman laws. Freedom was the breath of their lives.

Many of the Romantics did not like this life of sorrows, cares, and miseries and to avoid all these, they turned their minds to the past, because the past was remote from the present reality, and remoteness and distance lend enchantment to the panorama of life. In many ways Romantic poetry is a poetry of escape from the sorrows and sufferings of mundane life of that time. The Romantics went back especially to the Middle Ages. The enthusiasm for the Middle Ages satisfied the emotional sense of wonder on the one hand, and the intellectual sense of curiosity on the other. Among the Romantics, Coleridge, Scott, and Keats dealt with the past and the Middle Ages, and Byron presented the romance and enchantment of the East.

Supernaturalism is another outstanding quality of romantic poetry. A sense of wonder and mystery was imparted to poetry by poets like Coleridge and Scott. According to them, there are more things in heaven and earth than are ordinarily perceived in life by common people. This feeling arouses their curiosity in the unearthly and the supernatural beings. It is because of a love of mystery, uncanniness, and supernaturalism that the Romantic Revival has also been called 'The Renaissance of Wonder'.

Romantic poetry is characterized by endless variety. It is as varied as the characters and moods of different writers. As Long says : "When we read Pope, for instance, we have a general impression of sameness, but in the work of the best romanticists there is endless variety. To read them is like passing through a new village, meeting a score of different human types, and finding in each one something to love or to remember."

Subjectivity is an important feature of the romantic poetry. The poets of this age believed that poetry was the expression of their personal feelings and emotions. To Wordsworth poetry was the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. This led to the development of lyricism in poetry. The poets of the romantic age were not concerned so much with describing the external facts of life as with the interpretation and expression of their personal feelings and emotions. "The romantic movement", says Long, "was the expression of individual genius rather than of established rules."

There was a marked development and change in the poetic style in the romantic age. In the eighteenth century the Neo-Classical poets adopted the heroic couplet for the expression of all kinds of thoughts. But in the Romantic age many different varieties of stanza forms were tried and developed by the poets. Greater stress was laid on simplicity. Instead of the inflated and artificial mode of expression adopted by the classical poets, in romantic poetry

we have a more natural diction and spontaneous way of expressing thoughts. The variety of metrical forms created a new melody in English poetry.

We can sum up the main characteristics of the Romantic poetry in the words of Long that it was “the protest against the bondage of rules, the return to nature and the human heart, the interest in old sagas and medieval romances as suggestive of a heroic age, the sympathy with the toilers of the world, the emphasis upon individual genius, and the return to Milton and the Elizabethans, instead of Pope and Dryden for literary models.”

3.3.1 Treatment of Nature in Romantic Poetry :

In the poetry of the Romantic Revival the interest of poet was transferred from town to country life and from the artificial decorations of drawing rooms to the beauty and loveliness of Nature.

The romantics discovered a new beauty, charm, and wonder in the world of nature. They loved nature for her own sake and not as a background to the activities of human beings. They were all lovers of nature and minutely observed all her aspects and expressed them in their poetry in an extremely musical language. They also described in poetry their emotional reactions to her beauty, charm, and magic. Thus, in the poetry of the Romantic Revival, we have an added zest among poets to discard the glammers of an artificial life and turn to the elemental simplicities of a life lived in a closer touch with the beauties and charms of nature. Wordsworth was the first Romantic poet to discover a new wonder in nature. Nature was the source of his poetic inspiration. At one place he says :

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

For Keats the autumn season has the same beauty and music as the spring season :

“Where are the songs of Spring ? Aye, where are they ?
Think not of them, - thou hast thy music too.”

Shelley appeals to the West Wind to lift his injured body from the ground :

“Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !
I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed.”

3.3.2 Major Romantic Poets

William Wordsworth : As Pope is a great poet of the town and of artificial life, Wordsworth is a great poet of the country and of natural life. As an interpreter of nature he still holds the first place unchallenged. His love of nature was boundless, and his knowledge of nature was equal to his love. He wrote always (in his own words) with his eye steadily fixed upon his object; nothing was too small to escape his attention; and his controlling purpose

was to render with absolute fidelity what he had seen. He has been rightly called the keenest eyed of all modern poets for what is deep and essential in nature, and it has justly been said that in all his descriptions 'every touch is true, not the copying of a literary phrase, but the result of direct observation'. Yet love, knowledge, and fidelity are not, after all, the most specific and personal qualities in Wordsworth's nature poetry, but rather the profound religious feeling which pervades it. As he shows us again and again in many of his poems – in *The Lines written above Tintern Abbey*, for example, and in his *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* – that nature was for him the embodiment of the Divine Spirit; and when he insists (and this is a fundamental principle in his philosophy) that nature is the greatest of all teachers, he means that between the indwelling Soul of the Universe and the soul of man, which is akin to it, spiritual communion is possible through which we may gain constantly in power, peace, and happiness.

While Wordsworth is essentially a poet of nature, he is not a lesser poet of man, and in what he writes about human life, his greatness as a moralist is specially apparent. This greatness results largely from his firm hold upon the central facts of conduct and duty, and his abiding sense of the supremacy of the moral law. His emphasis is everywhere thrown upon those spiritual forces within us which give us power over ourselves and the ability, if we exercise them aright, to lift ourselves through conscious and patient effort, above the reach of circumstance and the flux of external things.

S.T. Coleridge

Wordsworth's friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) was a boy at Christ's Hospital when the Bastille fell. The Revolution instantly appealed to him, and he welcomed it in some youthful verses. He carried his enthusiasm with him to Cambridge, where, however, he suffered much from ill-health and anxiety about debts. In 1794 he met Robert Southey (afterwards his brother-in-law) and with a few other congenial spirits. The two young men entered into a scheme, which Coleridge christened Pantisocracy, for the establishment of an ideal society on the banks of the Susquehanna River in America. This utopian plan, a direct product, of course, of revolutionary zeal, came to nothing, but meanwhile Coleridge gave poetic expression to his political aspirations in *Religious Musings*, the *Destiny of Nations*, and *Ode to the Departing Year* (1796). But the change in thought which soon came is shown in his splendid *France, an Ode* (1798), which he himself called his 'recantation'. After this, like Wordsworth, he went through all the stages of reaction, and before long allied himself definitely with the conservative cause. The subsequent story of his life is a story of aimless wanderings, of plans made and abandoned and of the bitter sense of failure. A man of gigantic genius, he was absolutely wanting in will-power, and his slavery to opium, which lasted many years still further

paralysed his energies. So the divinely gifted Coleridge shambled through life, dreaming great dreams and projecting great books, but the dreams were never realized, and the books were never written. All his work is fragmentary; yet his was so original and seminal a mind that in theology, philosophy, and literary criticism (to which he gave much time in later years) he exercised an influence out of all proportion to the bulk and apparent importance of his writings.

What is best in Coleridge's poetry is very small in amounts, but that little is of rare excellence. His personal poems, like *Dejection : An Ode* and the poem, *Work Without Hope*, have a pathetic interest in connection with the tragedy of ineffectiveness which made up so much of his life. But his historical importance is due mainly to such poems as *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*, which represent the triumph of romanticism as fully as Wordsworth's narrative poems represent the triumph of naturalism. Coleridge took the supernatural as his particular province, and far beyond any writer before him he treated the supernatural in a purely poetic way. It will be remembered that Wordsworth saved naturalism from the hard liberalism to which it was tending by touching fact with imagination. Coleridge saved supernaturalism from the coarse sensationalism then in vogue by linking it with psychological truth.

iii) Walter Scott

Romanticism found a less subtle but far more popular and influential interpreter in Walter Scott, in whom may be said to have culminated the whole movement for the revival of the romantic past.

Scott's poetry is just the kind of poetry we should expect from a man of his character and training. He rejected altogether the classic epic as his model, and his 'romantic tales in verse', as he called them, represent a natural development of the old ballad and medieval romance. In style, he is vigorous, free and rapid, but often careless, diffused, and commonplace. He can tell a story admirably, and is particularly successful with scenes of stirring action and, above all, with his battle pieces. In the large, bold treatment of landscape he is also a master. But he wrote too fast, and his wonderful felicity was often fatal. He has nothing of the mystical quality and the spiritual power of Wordsworth and Coleridge; he rarely takes us beneath the surface of things; he carries no weight of thought; and, while his tone is eminently healthy his moralizing is of the tritest.

3.4 Essay as a Literary Genre : An 'essay' can be defined as a composition in prose on a single and focused topic. It is a scholarly piece of writing containing the personal point view of the writer. Providing guidance on the subject, Aldous Huxley, a leading essayist, notes that "the essay is a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything", and adds that "by tradition, almost by definition, the essay is a short piece".

3.4.1 Growth and Development of English Essay in 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries

The origin of the English essay can be traced back to Michel de Montaigne, the 16th century French writer who selected the name *essai* which means 'to try' or 'to attempt', for his writings. Montaigne used this form to express his inner thoughts and experiences, and as a means of self-discovery. The writings of Montaigne became an inspiration for Bacon, known as the father of English essay. After Bacon, Ben Jonson and Sir William Cornwallis contributed to the genre though in a much lesser way. In the first half of the 17th century, a form of essay known as the 'character' was introduced; the major exponents of which were Joseph Hall, Sir Thomas Overbury and John Earste. Sir Thomas Browne, Abraham Cowley, Halifax, Sir William Temple, and John Dryden wrote essays other than the 'character'. Among these, Cowley wrote some intimately personal essays and some essays with a didactic tone. He can be called a link between Bacon and the Romantic essayists. The 18th century saw the introduction and growth of the 'periodical' essay which was 'invented' by Steele in the beginning of the century with the publication of *The Teller* in 1709. His friend Joseph Addison started assisting him first, and then surpassed him. Addison contributed a number of essays for *The Spectator*. Steele and Addison can be called the 'moral censors' of the age with their remarkable writings full of satire and sense of comedy with an ultimate purpose of a serious nature. Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift also wrote some periodical essays, but the most significant contribution after Addison is that of Dr. Johnson who wrote for *The Rambler*. His style, unlike that of Steele and Addison, lacked humour and sense of comedy. Oliver Goldsmith was another writer who made contribution to many periodicals e.g. *The Bee* and *The Public Ledger*. After him, the early 19th century witnessed an emergence of romantic spirit in prose along with poetry.

3.5 Major Essayists of the Romantic Period: 19th century witnessed the growth of essay as a literary form. A number of literary and critical magazines and reviews were launched during this period and most of the upcoming writers started writing articles of both personal and impersonal nature for them. Thomas De Quincey, Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, and Leigh Hunt can be considered as the major essayists of the Romantic Period of English Literature. These essayists wrote about subjects such as politics, religion and philosophy and also gave expression to their personal reminiscences in their essays. Essays during the Romantic period were not objective like Bacon's essays; rather they were 'a subjective revelation of the authors' state of mind, their attitudes and idiosyncrasies'. These essayists interpreted facts in an emotional and imaginative manner. Charles Lamb was the most popular exponent of this type of writings. His *Essays of Elia* is a collection of beautifully written pieces which lay Lamb's personality, the

tenderness and sweetness of his heart, his wisdom and sympathetic disposition bare before the reader. His essays are spontaneous and natural. Leigh Hunt was another prominent essayist who wrote about politics, theatre and domestic economy. De Quincey wrote *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* in a poetic and ornamental style.

William Hazlitt (1778-1830) is one of the most notable essayists of the Romantic period. The chief characteristic of his essays is a combination of imagination and intellect. He writes on a wide range of subjects, as David Daiches observes that "he could write on painting as well as literature, on a prize fight, on natural landscape, on going on a journey, on 'coffee-house politicians', as well as on more formal topics such as Milton's sonnets, Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses, and the fear of death". His writings are marked by a strong sense of judgement and strong likes and dislikes besides an 'abundant zest for life'. Hazlitt himself once observed : "I endeavour to recollect all I have ever observed or thought upon a subject and to express it as nearly as I can."

Hazlitt's writings exhibit the traits of self-revelation, self-pity and bitterness. He tends to reveal his real self through his writings on diverse subjects. Hardships of life made him coarse, bitter and peevish. He had fights with all his good friends including Charles Lamb who is considered to be extremely tender and refined. In his essay 'Pleasures of Hating'; Hazlitt concedes that he has quarrelled with almost all his old friends.

Hazlitt is considered to be 'an admirable model' when it comes to discuss the style of writing. He writes in a way which is not sublime, but is also not commonplace. His writings are spontaneous, delightful and vivid. His style is said to be varied according to the need of the context and topic. One more feature of Hazlitt's writings is his excessive use of quotations which mar the flow of reading.

3.6 "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads Marks the beginning of the Romantic

Period It is an epoch-making little book and it is universally admitted that a new chapter in the history of English poetry opened with its publication. It marked the full development of both romanticism and naturalism. As Coleridge afterwards explained, the design of the collaborators was to include in it two different kinds of poetry, in the one, 'the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; in the other, 'subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life'. Romanticism was represented by Coleridge's single contribution, "*The Ancient Mariner*", naturalism by Wordsworth's *Goody Blake, The Thorn, The Idiot Boy*, and other similar poems.

In his "Preface" to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* which came out in 1800, Wordsworth further set forth his aims. "The principal object, then, proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout in a selection of the language

really used by men, and at the same time to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and he goes on to say that 'humble and rustic life was generally chosen because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language.'

In this declaration three points call for comment. In the first place, there is Wordsworth's choice of subject; in search of themes he goes straight to common life, and by preference, to humble rustic life. This was throughout his habit in his narrative and descriptive poems, of which "Michael" may be mentioned as a typical example. Secondly, in the treatment of such themes, he sets out to employ the appropriate language of actual life in place of the pompous and stilted circumlocutions of eighteenth century writers. This brings us to his famous attack upon the whole practice of the Augustan school and its 'gaudiness and inane phraseology'. In this connection, it should here be noted that in seeking to obliterate the difference between the language of poetry and that of good prose Wordsworth pushed his theories much too far, that, save in his early experiments, he did not himself adhere to his own principles; and that none the less his arguments were of immense service in helping to destroy the prestige of the long accepted hackneyed and conventional diction and to substitute a simple and natural style in poetry. Thirdly, Wordsworth specially guards himself against the accusation of absolute realism by emphasizing his use of imagination in the poetic transformation of his materials.

3.7 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

"*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*" is credited to be the only complete expression of S.T. Coleridge's Romanticism. The central idea of the poem is very old. It is found in Homer's *Odyssey* where Ulysses, the brave sailor and hero of the Trojan War, is visited with supernatural punishment and long wanderings over the seas by Neptune, the sea God for having killed a one-eyed giant.

Coleridge has himself given the description of the origin of the poem and the purpose of the *Lyrical Ballads* to which it is an important contribution. In chapter XIV of the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge tells us that in order to free English poetry from the eighteenth century artificiality and drabness, he and Wordsworth had agreed to write two different kinds of poems. Coleridge was to write about 'persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic', but he was to give them 'a semblance of truth sufficient to procure that 'willing suspension of disbelief ' for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith; Wordsworth was to give the charm of novelty to things of everyday, and excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of

the world before us. It was in accordance with this mutual decision that Coleridge wrote *The Ancient Mariner*.

The poem "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*" is a ballad in seven parts, yet all of them are related to one another on the basis of theme. It begins and ends in the world of ordinary values, a world of cheering and merriment and noisy din.

An ancient mariner meets three persons going to participate in a wedding feast and detains one of them to listen to his story. The Wedding Guest is spellbound by the old sailor and is forced to hear his story. The Mariner tells the Wedding Guest how his ship was drawn towards the South Pole by storm. When the ship was surrounded by ice, a great sea bird, called Albatross, came through the snow fog and was received with great joy and hospitality. The bird proved a good omen and followed the ship. But the ancient Mariner wantonly killed the bird. For this act of cruelty, a curse fell on the ship. The ship sailed northward while returning and was suddenly becalmed. The Albatross began to be avenged by the invisible spirits. The members of the crew who had justified the killing of the Albatross died. The ancient Mariner alone survived. He was all alone on the ship with his two hundred companions lying dead around him. He passed through bitter agonies. He could not even pray because he had a sinful heart. It was only after he had realized the truth of Oneness of Life that the spell began to be broken. The ship was mysteriously brought back to his native land. But the Mariner was condemned by way of penance to travel from land to land and to teach by his example love and reverence to all creatures.

3.8 William Hazlitt's Two Essays

Two of Hazlitt's essays, "On the Love of the Country" and "On Reading Old Books" have been prescribed in the syllabus. We will discuss them in brief.

(a) "On The Love of the Country" by Hazlitt was first published in *The Examiner* in 1814, and was republished in *Selected Essays* in 1930. In this essay, Hazlitt, in the spirit of a 'true romantic', describes the emotions he experienced in the company of 'nature'. He attributes the soothing feeling the company of nature makes one experience to a combination of factors such as the beauty of the natural objects themselves, the freedom from care which they symbolize and the peace and silence it infuses into the human mind etc. By nature, here, he does not mean only the beautiful and delicate objects; rather the common and insignificant looking objects of day-to-day life. Hazlitt explains how love for 'nature' is similar to love for 'man', and how the two are different from each other. He believes that it is our attachment and our association of ideas which makes us love or hate someone or something. He, however, also adds that we cannot be attached to all human beings as a result of our attachment to one man, but we can be attached to

natural objects and scenery anywhere on earth as a result of our attachment to them at one particular place. The reason is that our love for nature is not influenced by any selfish motives or hidden caprice. There appears to be a harmony and an undivided spirit prevailing in all objects of nature. Some man-made objects such as a cottage or a village church, however, kindle the same sensations in us as an object of nature. Both produce a pleasing effect on the mind.

(b) "On Reading Old Books"

In this essay, Hazlitt demonstrates his penchant for reading old books. Though he wrote during the times when the literary scene was abuzz with activities that would occupy a memorable place in the history of English literature, and he was a close associate of literary figures such as Wordsworth and Coleridge; yet he preferred the meditative reading of old books to exciting reading of new books. For him, an old book is like an old and trusted friend from whom one can always learn something new. Familiarity with old books transcends to a level where the book and its reader get to share history, as Hazlitt says, "It recalls the same feelings and associations which I had in first reading it, and which I can never have again in any other way." The history shared by the book and the reader includes the ideas and the thoughts of the reader along with the physical journey the reader undertook to get hold of that book. Hazlitt recounts his own experience of obtaining Cooke's pocket edition of *Tom Jones* and ends the essay on a romantic note: "To what nameless ideas did they give rise- with what airy delights I filled up the outlines, as I hung in silence over the page!"

Victorian Literature

Structure :

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4.0 Objectives :

- (a) to introduce the student to the Age.
- (b) to acquaint the student to the background of the Age.
- (c) to discuss the major influences on the literature of the Age.
- (d) to discuss the literary landmarks, trends and movements of the Age.
- (e) to highlight the major genres of the literature of the Age.
- (f) to discuss the major poets and novelists of the Age.
- (g) to discuss (i) the major works of the period
(ii) the prescribed works
- (h) to make a critical assessment of the Age
- (i) to evaluate the student's comprehension.

4.1 Background and History of the Age

Queen Victoria ascended the throne in the year 1837 and the literary age known as the Victorian Age, takes its name from Queen Victoria. The period lasted until the end of the century which may be said to coincide with the death of Queen Victoria in the year 1901. The period has been generally studied in two parts – the early Victorian period and the late Victorian period. On the whole, this has been a dynamic period with bewildering and restless forces struggling towards a synthesis.

4.1.1 The Early Victorian Period

The early Victorian period starts with the Reform Bill of 1832 (The year Sir Walter Scott died) and extends till 1868. The Reform Bill in 1832 had ushered in a new era—an era of democracy. The effect of the first Reform Bill was to enfranchise the upper middle classes. The second Reform Act (1867) included a million town labourers to the electorate and the third Reform Act (1884) extended the franchise to some two million agricultural labourers. Hence, democracy became firmly established. The House of Commons became the ruling power in England.

The establishment of democracy brought in its wake some social welfare measures

like spread of education, spread of religious tolerance and of growing brotherhood. Press emerged as a powerful political force. The congenial social and political environment gave sufficient impetus to art, science and intellectual activities. The awakened social conscience is the predominant theme in early Victorian Literature.

4.1.2 The Late Victorian Period

The second phase of the Victorian age starts with the ascendancy of Palmerston in 1855 and runs to the great economic depression, 1879. In the later Victorian period, questions of education, the debate about the content of English culture, which after 1870, was dependent on the effects of a system of minimal state education, and the inculcation of habits offer resistance to the standardizing effects of machines predominate over all other considerations. By this time a kind of split came to be seen in the temper of the age. This split was caused by some of the intellectual theories and scientific discoveries. Let us try to examine how these influences came to characterize the literature of the Age.

4.2 Some Major Influences

4.2.1 The Utilitarian Philosophy

The most prominent influence is that of the utilitarian philosophy. The philosophy invaded the whole field of morality and belief. (The student may note that the philosophy of Utilitarianism was advocated by Jeremy Bentham and his followers). The philosophy rests on the ethical principle that the state should be directed so as to secure the "Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number." At the same time the Utilitarians deplored interference with private rights. Hence, while supporting governmental action over problems of destitution or health, they opposed all controls of trade and commerce.

4.2.2 The Evangelical Movement and the Oxford Movement

The other two movements which need to be mentioned are the Evangelical Movement and The Oxford Movement. It is difficult to assess their influence on literature but they definitely had an impact on the public life and literature which in no way can be separated from the larger public issues. The Evangelicals believed in Christ as the center of religion. Their creed rested on the infallibility of the Bible. The Evangelical morality affected the majority of the middle class people as well as most of the leaders. The Oxford Movement or the Tractarian Movement was led by John Keble and was the most important center of intellectual ferment in the early Victorian age. The Movement was partly an attempt to clarify the religious confusion of the age and partly it

was a reaction against the new rationalism and to some extent it was a reaction against the growing power of the middle classes. It was also aimed at advocating assertion of authority, which was outside the authority of Parliament. As a religious movement it was of profound interest to the majority of people as they were sincere and earnest believers. However, the influence of the movement waned because of the Papist reaction arising out of their fear of the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England. Consequently, the movement gradually lost its religious impact. And finally the Public Worship Act of 1874 gave a set back to its political appeal also.

4.2.3 The Theory of Evolution by Charles Darwin

There were tremendous discoveries in the field of science of which the most important was the theory of evolution by Charles Darwin. The theory had a strong and disturbing influence on the outlook of almost all the Victorian writers. In fact, the implications of Darwin's ideas were so deep and far reaching that no Victorian could remain unaffected. These ideas confronted the Victorian poets with embarrassing questions. Darwin asserted that the evolution of life through centuries as indicated in the geological data did not correspond to the six days of Biblical creation and further it disproved the Biblical assertion of a separate creation of each species. These conclusions shook the very foundations of traditional society. If all the animals and men had evolved through ages in an ascendant manner as asserted by Darwin then there would have been no sin, there would have been no necessity for Christ, the Son of God, to have taken birth among men. Thus, the very divinity of Christ and the validity of Christian ethics began to be doubted and disbelieved. The Darwinian doctrines shocked the religious enthusiasts but on the other hand, the theories of science became comprehensible to the common mass of people and consequently theology stood to suffer though not without creating confusions. Emotionally, the people would have liked to belong to the Church but intellectually they could not. At the same time the consciousness of an average man is aware though simply, of the conflict in progress and intuitively also comes to recognize that there is a danger threatening the fundamental reasons to live. The echo of this alarm is heard in all Victorian literature, a little louder in late Victorian literature.

4.2.4 Faith and Doubt

We find in the works of all major Victorian writers an intense spiritual struggle between doubt and faith. Doubt and despair overtook them. So what comes to be seen is that even though Victorian temper is characterized by complacency, smugness, prudery and parochialism, it will perhaps be more accurate to

describe the temper of the age in terms of intellectual and physical expansion, social consciousness and philosophical conflict. It is also true as the Victorians wanted to live in peace, most of them approached the great problems and conflicts of the age from the gentler angle of compromise. They tried to reconcile science and religion, doubt and faith, democracy and aristocracy and progress and tradition.

4.3 The Chief Characteristics of the Age

It is difficult to make an assessment based on common principles of the literature of an age which was characterized and influenced by diverse theories. Making generalizations would tantamount to ignore one area or the other. However, on the basis of certain stylistic peculiarities, it may be possible to make an attempt to identify some traits which characterize the Victorian literature. The voluminous output is the most striking feature of this age.

4.3.1 Moral Purpose in the Literature of the Age

All Victorians wrote copiously and had little regard for eighteenth century ideals of terseness and epigrammatic style. Since the reading public was expanding, both prose writers and poets were aware of a taste for propaganda in its various forms. Consequently, one finds that the enormous output of Victorian writing is repetitive also. Though Victorian writers are still read and preserved, it becomes difficult to make an accurate assessment of their work. The literary historians are divided among themselves as to how much territory was won or lost by the Victorian writers. Consequently, two views clearly emerge while analyzing the quality of Victorian literature. Some literary historians considered the Victorian period as that of literary decline, derivativeness and disintegration. The literature produced during this time was heavily penalized for its sentimentality and sanctimoniousness, it seemed a period of cultural provinciality. But there are others who acclaim the Victorian period as a time of great achievement in literature, even as the greatest in English literary history. However, a thoughtful reader of Victorian literature must remember its weaknesses as well as its unusual achievements. What sets the literature of this period apart, is its departure from the purely artistic standard, of art for art's sake. One discerns a definite moral purpose in the works produced during this time. Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle, Ruskin, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, all imbue consciously their works with a moral purpose to uplift and instruct.

4.3.2 Emphasis on Realism

Another important characteristic of the literature of this age is its emphasis on realism – a realism which strives to tell the whole truth. The romantic

influence of Sir Walter Scott disappears. Whether we read the fun and sentiment of Dickens, the social miniatures of Thackeray or the psychological studies of George Eliot, we find in almost every case a definite purpose to sweep away error and to reveal the underlying truth of human life. The literature was committed to the social and moral issues to uplift humanity.

4.3.3 Faith in Humanity

As already pointed out, the Victorian age was torn between faith and doubt. And it has become customary to speak of this age as an age of doubt and pessimism, following the new conception of man and of universe clearly, because of Charles Darwin's studies of the origin of species. However, the view that most of the Victorian literature is pessimistic is erroneous. Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, Browning's robust poetry, the prose works of Macaulay, Carlyle and Ruskin, the novels of Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot, instil a deeper faith in humanity. So a balanced estimation would demand to take note of the burden and pressures which Victorians had to bear and to assess literature in that light alone. Any comparison with literature which came before or which came after, without keeping these pressures in mind, is bound to undermine the quality of the works produced.

4.4 Victorian Poetry

The number of competent poets who deserve to be called the Victorian poets is forbiddingly great. Tennyson stands at one end of the era and Hardy who lived up to 1928, at the other. But if one makes an effort to underline some common strand running consistently, one discerns the Victorian poetry as a continuation of Romantic poetry in its feeling for nature, its idealism, its subjectivity and its variety of nature. However, among the Victorians the Romantic synthesis of head and heart broke down. The new findings of science deprived the Victorians of the romantic creed of nature. Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Hardy, Houseman and others possess the Romantic sensibility without the Romantic belief. Two characteristics which mark the Victorian poetry are : great freedom in form and prosody, and the poet's conscious effort to utter a message, since these poets felt that they had an immediate mission. The Victorians worked in many genres and metrical forms. Browning's dramatic lyrics and monologues are highly characteristic of his age as well as being significant for the future. Hardy's dramatically significant ironic lyrics show Browning's influence as does Tennyson's "Ulysses".

4.4.1 Alfred Lord Tennyson

The Victorian giants are Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-92), Robert Browning (1812-89), Matthew Arnold (1822-88) and Thomas Hardy (1840-1928). Of these,

Tennyson's contribution remains most significant in technique, sensibility and concentrated moral power. For nearly half a century Tennyson was not only a man and a poet, he was the voice of whole people, expressing in exquisite melody their doubts and their faith, their griefs and their triumphs. It was in recognition of his work that he was appointed the Poet Laureate. Tennyson published his first signed work called *Poems Chiefly Lyrical* (1830), to be followed by *Poems* (1832). *In Memoriam* and *Idylls of the King* remain most enduring of his poems.

Tennyson's poetic career can be divided into distinct phases. The first period was the pre – 1830 period – the period of apprenticeship and immaturity. The second phase (1840-42) may be described as one of artistic luxuriance. Tennyson was now under Keats's influence. "The Lady of Shalott" and "Lotos-Eaters" are fine examples of artistic workmanship. The third phase (1843-1855) ended with the publication of *Maud* in 1855. "In Memoriam" was also written during this phase. The fourth period (1855-1872) is the period when the poet assumes the ethical role. "The Idylls of the King" is the most remarkable poem of this period. The fifth phase (1872-1880) may be called the dramatic period. The poem which Tennyson wrote during this period is "Crossing the Bar".

4.4.2 Robert Browning

Besides Tennyson, Browning (1812-89) remains one of the most remarkable Victorian poets. He has all the vitality of a great poet. His dramatic monologues have received much critical acclaim. Browning unlike Tennyson, made no real attempt to come to terms with his age. His optimism was very unlike Victorian temper.

4.4.3 The Pre-Raphaelite Movement

The Pre-Raphaelite Movement in poetry flourished in the Late Victorian period. It was originally a painter's movement founded in 1848 by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82). Rossetti turned to poetry from painting. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood formed in England in 1848, aimed to encourage in art and literature simplicity and naturalness and one of their chief objects, in the face of doubt and materialism, was to express the "Wonder, reverence and awe" which characterize medieval art. In its return to the mysticism and symbolism of the medieval age, the Pre-Raphaelitism suggests the Oxford or Tractarian Movement in religion.

4.4.4 Minor Victorian Poets and their Works

Elizabeth Barrett Browning *The Seraphim and other Poems, Sonnets from*

Rossetti

*the Portuguese, Las Guidi windows, Aurora
Leigh, Poems before Congress, Last Poems,*

William Morris

The Blessed Damozel, Ballads and Sonnets.

Swinburne

*The Earthly Paradise.**Atlanta in Calydon.*

Besides the poets mentioned above, the poets who have attracted critical attention are Matthew Arnold, Arthur Hugh Clough, Thomas Hardy and Hopkins. Hopkins's poems were not published until 1918, long after his death and whose influence on British and American Poetry of the 1920s and 1930s was an important part of the poetic revolution of that period.

To sum up, it may be said that even though Victorian Poetry appears static and repetitive after the break through of the first Romantics, we can see in its conventionality and anti-conventionality, its religiosity and irreligiosity, its responsibility and irresponsibility, its prudery and anti-prudery, the process of adaptation and intellectual suspense, of an important stage of English life.

4.5 Victorian Novel

Every age has its own genius. The genius of the Elizabethans expressed itself eloquently in drama, that of the Victorians in novel. The novel with its flexibility and adaptability suited most to a complex and critical civilization. Great poetry and drama requiring a simplification of life were not possible in an age bewildered by the multiplicity of detail. The novel alone admits of the picturesque production of changing phases and conditions of daily life. In Victorian era the middle classes rose in power and importance, the novel was bound to flourish because it suited the taste of the growing middle classes. The middle class reader wanted to read about the identifiable, known and recognizable experience of life, so the novel as an art-form was best equipped to present a picture of life lived in a given society against a stable background of social and moral values by people who were recognizably like the people encountered by readers. And the novel as it was written in the Victorian period had extended its boundaries. It aimed at giving a realistic picture of actual life. Various writers experimented with the problem of its form in various ways. Going back to the antecedents, we see that Defoe put his tales in the form of autobiography. Richardson exploited the epistolary model, Fielding turned to drama for help. But he and his followers took for granted that mere accurate chronicle to ordinary life would be intolerably dull to the reader. So he evolved a working compromise. The setting and characters of the earlier novels were carefully realistic but they were fitted into a framework

of non-realistic plot derived from the drama, consisting of intrigue, enlivened by all sorts of sensational events – conspiracies, children at birth, mistakes of identity – centring round a handsome ideal hero and heroine and a sinister villain are solved neatly in the last chapter. As in drama, the characters were revealed mainly through speech and action – there was not much analysis of them by the author – and the serious tension was relieved by a number of specifically comic characters drawn in a convention of slight caricature. Gradually, these artificial devices were discarded. Victorian novel presented the things with wonderful inwardness, different kinds of moral possibility and the actuality of choice. It formed an extension of consciousness and gave life its vitality. Major novelists like George Eliot, Dickens, Hardy, Meredith extended the boundaries of the novel.

4.5.1 George Eliot

George Eliot (1819-80) was revolutionary in her own sober way. In her books we are presented for the first time with a form of fiction freed from the last vestiges of the dramatic tradition – novels without romantic heroes and villains, with lengthy analysis of motive and character in which action is determined by no convention of plot, but solely by the logical demands of character and situation. An extremely intellectual novelist, she was uncompromisingly serious and employed her works to expound her most considered reflections imbued with spiritual meanings on human conduct. She is at her best in portraying characters. In her novels are found shallow insincere characters, mystics, men of the world, Florentine scholars, way-ward passionate natures, half witted rustics, cultured free-thinkers. There is variety and subtlety. Her wide range of observation, her generous sympathies and the power of detachment trained by scientific study, helped to give breadth and variety to her canvas. Beginning with comparatively slight descriptions of men and manners, such as are found in *Scenes of Clerical Life* George Eliot soon proceeded to more complex kinds of fiction. *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Romola*, *Felix Holt*, *Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda* are her remarkable achievements. It is not erroneous to say that George Eliot by her achievement has permanently enlarged the scope of the novel.

4.5.2 Charles Dickens

With Dickens's works journalism and melodrama are gathered into the novel to give it new life and a new and important place in middle class entertainment. He weaves stories set in his own day or the recent past in

which the vitality of the characters, the enthusiastic savoring of their physical environment, the movement from comedy to pathos and from compassion to horror and the sheer high spirits with which he rendered eccentrics, villains, unfortunates, hypocrites, social climbers, nouveaux riches, criminals, innocents, bureaucrats, exhibitionists, self-deceivers, roisterers and confident men, human oddities of all kinds each with his own physical and moral individuality and each involved in a rich pattern of interacting lives played out against social background, whose sights and sounds and smells were rendered with a vivid particularity – in which all this is presented with an almost reckless profusion. *Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit*, *Great Expectations*, *A Tale of Two Cities* have earned for him a permanent place in the English literary canon.

4.5.3 W.M. Thackeray

W.M. Thackeray (1811-63) came to the writing of novels in the same casual way which led Dickens to fiction. He came to literature through journalism. From the beginning he had a keen eye for social pretension, for the disparity between professed and actual motives, for all the hypocrisies with which social man learns to cover up his true intentions. He was against affectation and he looked at society as it really was. A moral realist, he brought to the surface the hypocrisies, vanities, snobberies and all pervading selfishness which lay behind the charming mask of the socially successful. *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*, *The Book of Snobs*, *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, *The Newcomes*, *The Virginians*, *The History of Henry Esmond*, are his well-known works.

Dickens took the teeming and confused life of his day and projected it in his fiction brilliantly. George Eliot took the intellectual currents of her time and found a way to rendering them in the imaginative life of her novels, but Thackeray somehow never found a way of coming to terms simultaneously with his age and with his art.

4.5.4 Charlotte Bronte

Charlotte Bronte (1816-55) in her *Jane Eyre* and Emile Bronte (1818-1848) in her *Wuthering Heights* present with great complexity the detail of the personal passions, education and dilemmas. It is usually said that Charlotte Bronte was an innovator in bringing English fiction into the domain of the writer's own emotional consciousness, and Emile Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is manifestation of the intensity and solidity of Emily's imagination and the interpretation of the earthly and divine plane of being. It is the masterpiece from Bronte's genius.

4.5.5 George Meredith

George Meredith (1828-1909) is the most difficult of all the Victorian novelists. In *The Shaving of Shagpat*, *The Egoist*, *Victoria*, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *Diana of the Crossways*, *One of Our Conquerors* Lord Ormant and his Aminta and *The Amazing Marriage*, Meredith investigates egotism in particular relation to male weakness and female strength. Meredith's vocabulary, which is characterized as odd continues to baffle his readers. His works delight and impress in parts, literary historians agree that his genius was never properly focused and his achievement remains less great than his talent.

4.5.6 Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) intellectually was a man of the future, aesthetically he was a man of the past. His broad conception of the novel form was much more like that of Fielding. His taste in story-telling was that of the simple rural society in which he had been brought up. According to him a story should be full of action and above all should be sufficiently unusual to arouse the interest of the readers.

In this way the area of novel as art form was enlarged. It excluded no life, no society, no profession. Instead of the sequence of trivial adventures we have now very elaborate studies of life, men, manners and society. The novel had made itself adequate to the needs of the age. It had gained much in vitality, variety and depth. It was richer in colouring, more subtle in observation and more artistic in form.

4.6 Major Landmarks

4.6.1 "Ulysses" by Tennyson

Tennyson's "Ulysses" is a dramatic monologue. First published in 1842, after Arthur Hallam's (Tennyson's friend) death, the poem expresses the poet's feeling about the need for going forward and facing life despite the loss he had suffered.

Ulysses was the legendary Greek hero and the king of Ithaca. He participated in the Trojan War and came back to his island state after twenty long years. Homer, the great Greek poet, in his poem *Odyssey* sings about the heroic deeds and adventures of Ulysses.

In Tennyson's poem "Ulysses", "Ulysses" is the speaker. Back home after twenty years of adventures, he is unable to adjust to the life of inactivity. He exhorts his fellowmen to follow him in quest of knowledge. He gives arguments in favour of travel and adventure. As far as the affairs of the state are concerned, his son Telemachus will look after all these. It is Ulysses' thirst

for knowledge that makes him decide in favour of a life of action and struggle. In the last lines of the poem, he tells his companions that they all will sail “to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield”. These words reflect the undampened spirit of the speaker.

The whole poem is, in fact, an embodiment of man’s passion for knowledge, for the exploration of its limitless fields, for the annexation of the new kingdom of science and philosophy.

4.6 David Copperfield by Charles Dickens

David Copperfield is one of Dickens’s most popular books. It is a work of art which can be read chiefly for the gallery of characters Dickens has immortalized. The story is narrated by David Copperfield who is the chief character of the novel. It is a first-person narration by David Copperfield after whose name the novel has been titled. It describes his personal experiences. David Copperfield was born six months after the death of his father. He spent his early years with his mother Clara Copperfield and a devoted servant Peggotty. Clara married Mr. Murdstone, who proved to be very cruel and unsympathetic towards David. David was packed off with Peggotty to visit her relatives at Yarmouth. There her brother lived with his niece Emily and nephew Ham. The visit to Yarmouth remained a happy memory of David’s lonely and unhappy childhood.

After Miss Murdstone came to take charge of the house of her brother, David and his mother never felt free in the gloomy atmosphere that prevailed in the house. One day in a fit of childish anger, he bit his step-father. He was immediately sent off to Salem House, a wretched school near London where Mr. Creakle is the headmaster. His school days ended suddenly with the death of his mother and her infant child. Meanwhile Peggotty married Mr. Barkis and left with him, leaving David lonely and friendless in the home of his cruel step-father. David was made to work in an export warehouse. As a ten-year old worker in the factory, David was overworked and half-starved. David was lodged with Mr. Micawber who was soon taken into prison for his debts.

David left the house of his step-father and set out for Dover, where Miss Betsy, his father’s aunt lived. She planned to allow the child to continue his education and sent him to school at Canterbury. During his stay at school, David was lodged with Mr. Wickfield, who had a daughter Agnes. At Wickfields he also met Uriah Heep whose hypocritical attitude disgusted David.

David wanted to study law and began to work for Spenlow and Jorkins. At Spenlow’s country home, he met Dora Spenlow, with whom he fell instantly

in love and soon they became secretly engaged. David learnt a startling news that his aunt had lost all her money and that Uriah Heep and Wickfield had become partners. Mr. Spenlow's objection to Dora's relationship with David, also pained David. Mr. Spenlow died and Dora's two aunts allowed David to meet her. At the age of 21, he married Dora. Finally at the exposure of Uriah Heep's villainy, Miss Betsy and Wickfield regained a part of their lost wealth. Mr. Micawber and Mr. Peggotty with their families left for Australia. David's wife Dora died and David in his sorrow turned to Agnes for comfort and understanding. Finally they got married and David settled down to begin his career as a successful novelist.

This novel is considered to be Dickens's veiled autobiography. Many of the experiences of David Copperfield are experiences of Dickens himself through all the trial and tribulations of his chequered-life. The sense of desolation in Dickens's early life is dramatized in the novel and becomes the sense of loss that is *David Copperfield's* central core.

The novel is also a scathing criticism of external menaces that torture the child. These menaces take the form of bad fathers who can extend into ogres, mothers who are ineffectual and teachers who enjoy caning and beating children. On the whole this novel by Dickens is a tale of the ups and downs, joys and sorrows but the prevailing tone is one of cheerfulness and confidence in the essential goodness of life.

4.6.3 Tess of the d'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy

Tess of the d'Urbervilles is one of the prominent works of fiction in English by Thomas Hardy. Published in 1891, this novel was listed at number 26 on BBC's survey, The Big Read in 2003. Like all of Hardy's novels, *Tess* is also set in the countryside. Tess is the chief character of the novel, who juggles through a series of personal experiences with two different classes of people – the rural poor and the rich gentry. She is a beautiful and bright girl, daughter of Jack and Joan Durbeyfield of Marlott. One day, her father discovers that they are descendants of a noble family of d'Urbervilles. In the hope of a bright future, the parents decide to send young Tess to work in a wealthy family known as the d'Urbervilles living near Trantbridge. Once, while going to the market along with her brother in Casterbridge, her wagon meets with an accident. Their only source of livelihood, their horse, Prince, dies in the accident. Feeling guilty for the loss, she agrees to move to the d'Urbervilles family and starts working as a Poultry keeper. There, one day, she is seduced and raped by their aggressive son – Alec. She returns to her parental home and lives in seclusion. She gives birth to a baby boy whom she names Sorrow,

but he dies soon after birth. After spending a miserable year at home, she decides to seek work and accepts the job of a milkmaid at the Talpothay's Dairy, a large fertile farm in the valley of the Great Dairies. There she befriends three other milkmaids – Izz, Retty and Marian, and enjoys a life of happiness and satisfaction. Here, she also meets a man named Angel Clare with whom she gradually falls in love and finally accepts his marriage proposal. Her past, however, still haunts her and she feels the urge to disclose it to Angel. Her mother warns her against doing any such foolishness. She writes a note of confession and slips it under his door, but Angel never gets to see it as it slides under the carpet. After their wedding, they both confess their past to each other. Tess forgives Angel for his earlier relationship with a girl, but he, in his turn, fails to forgive her for having a child with another man. They decide to part ways – Angel gives Tess some money and boards a Brazil bound ship himself, telling Tess that he'll try to come to terms with her past, but warns her against making any attempt to join him. She comes back to her home where her mother reproaches her and the father is terribly shocked.

Tess finds another summer job at a farm which is close to the place where Angel's family lives. The job demands most difficult type of physical labour. She decides to meet the family of Angel and make an appeal to them, but is dissuaded from doing so after over hearing a conversation between Angel's brothers about his poor wedding. She also happens to hear a preacher speak, who, she is stunned to discover is Alec. He has been converted to Christianity by Angel's father, the Reverend Clare. Both are shocked to see each other and Alec tries to tempt Tess again. Turning back on his religious inclinations, he proposes marriage to Tess again. Learning from her sister Liza-Lu that their mother is on death-bed, Tess returns home to take care of her. Her mother recovers, but her father dies unexpectedly. The family is forced to vacate the house and Tess finds it difficult to refuse Alec's offer of help. He assures Tess that Angel won't return from Brazil; she also has the same gut feeling. She accepts Alec's proposal and lives like a rich lady. In the meantime, Angel decides to forgive Tess and returns from Brazil. Searching for her family, he finds her mother who tells him that Tess has gone to a village called Sandbourne.

There he finds her in an expensive boarding house. He begs her to come back in marriage with him, but she says he is too late. Angel is heart-broken; Tess rebuffs Alec for misleading her about Angel, stabs him and runs away from the boarding house. On finding Alec's dead body, the landlady raises an alarm,

but Tess has run away to look for Angel who agrees to help her. They live in a state of bliss for a few days, but are finally discovered by a search party before they can execute their plan to flee the country. Tess is sent to jail, but she takes a promise from Angel that he will marry her sister Liza-Lu. Both Angel and Lisa watch a black flag being raised over the prison, signalling Tess's execution.

Tess of the D'Urberville is a tragic novel in which Fate plays an important role in shaping the destiny of the characters. Hardy interprets human life as a conflict between the deeds of man and omnipotent Fate which is indifferent and hostile, and controls the doings of man. Chance also plays an important role in Hardy's novels, e.g. Tess's meeting with the wrong man (Alec) at a raw age, her letter containing an account of her past life slipping under the carpet in Angel's house, her second encounter with Alec in completely unexpected circumstances etc. Some critics consider depiction of such coincidences as the greatest weakness of Hardy's novels. When we explore his art of characterization, we observe that for him, no one is so mean that he is unredeemable. Man is a strange mixture of virtue and animal tendencies, hopelessly pitted against the destructive forces of destiny.

Tess can also be interpreted as an appeal by Hardy to consider and implement the customs and conventions of a society with an intention of not displacing love and happiness. Hardy is often blamed for being a pessimist who always sees the darker side of the things and who rejects the presence of a benevolent God in face of the pain and suffering of humanity in this material world. He, however, counters this charge by saying that he does not portray the thing in a way as if the world is going to doom. His only concern is that whatever man inherently is, good or evil; he is only making himself worse than what it needs to be. But, at no point, he seems to portray man as degraded and contemptible.

Another significant feature of Hardy's novels is their regionalism which is true about *Tess* as well. The novel is set in the county of Wessex, and he seems to be well acquainted not only with the landscape, but also with the people and their professions. His regionalism, however, has universal appeal. We all can identify ourselves with his characters as well as with the landscape.

4.6.1 Summing Up

Dear student, when we read the works written during the Victorian Period, we feel that Victorians are not very remote from us. Dickens, George Eliot, Trollope and Hardy are still read by us. Some of Tennyson's lines and phrases are still a convenient short-hand for the attitudes like "honest doubt", "larger

hope” “parts of nature”, etc. The works of twentieth century writers such as Conrad, Yeats, Lawrence, Forster and T.S. Eliot have to be understood as attempts to go beyond Tennyson, or Browning or George Eliot.

4.7 Self-Check Exercise

- (a) How does the Victorian age take its name after Queen Victoria ?
- (b) How would you explain the complexity of the Victorian Age ?
- (c) Write a brief note on Tennyson as a representative poet of his Age ?
- (d) Briefly comment on the important women novelists of the Victorian era.

4.8 Answers to the Self-Check Exercise

(a) The literary age known as the Victorian Age takes its name from Queen Victoria, who ascended the English throne in the year 1837. The period lasted until the end of the century which may be said to coincide with the death of Queen Victoria in the year 1901.

(b) The Victorian Era was an age of rapid flux and baffling complexity. This was an age of sweeping changes at all levels : social, religious, intellectual, political and commercial. The literature of this age was influenced by more than one factor. Scientific inventions shattered man’s faith in religion. Industrial progress changed social values. Literacy and democracy brought in changes that only added to the complex situation. It was an age of faith and doubt, morality and hypocrisy, prosperity and poverty, and idealism and materialism.

(c) Tennyson is the most representative literary man of the Victorian era. His work is an epitome of all the significant features of the Victorian age. It is easy to draw inferences from his work as to the general, intellectual and political tendencies of the age. In his poetry lie all the dominant characteristics of this age of upheaval and transformation. His poetry looks for answers to the rising confrontations between opposing values.

(d) The Victorian literary era is significant for the women writers, who have contributed to the literary tradition. Many Victorian women authors broke the dominance of the male writers on the literary scene. The most prominent among these are the Bronte sisters, George Eliot and Mrs. Gaskell. Charlotte, Anne and Emily Bronte were shy and isolated girls, who took the English readership by a storm, through their writings. The books produced by them cannot be studied in any restricted backgrounds. Books like Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* and Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* belong as much to their own time as they belong to any part of the literary tradition. Similarly, George Eliot excels not only in the depiction of her contemporary life, but also portrays the tragedy of the female longings.

LESSON NO. 1.5

Modern Period

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Winds of Change and its Causes
- 5.3 Main Points
- 5.4 Aestheticism and Naturalism
 - 5.4.1 Aestheticism
 - 5.4.2 Naturalism
 - 5.4.3 Limitations of Naturalism
- 5.5 Symbolism
 - 5.5.1 Symbolism and Modern Literature
- 5.6 Main Points
- 5.7 Important Influences on Modern Literature
- 5.8 First World War and The Modern Literature
- 5.9 Bloomsbury Group and Literary Experimentation
- 5.10 Some Important Literary Movements
 - 5.10.1 Impressionism
 - 5.10.2 Imagism
 - 5.10.3 Surrealism
 - 5.10.4 Expressionism
- 5.11 Main Points
- 5.12 The Modern Novel
- 5.13 Activity for the Student
- 5.14 Modern Drama
 - 5.14.1 Poetic Drama
- 5.15 Main Points
- 5.16 Modern Poetry
 - 5.16.1 The Technique of Modern Poetry

- 5.16.2 Post-First War Poetry
- 5.17 Main Points
- 5.18 Solutions to Student's Activity
- 5.19 Important Landmarks
 - 5.19.1 *Murder in the Cathedral* by T.S. Eliot
 - 5.19.2 *Lord Jim* by Joseph Conrad
- 5.20 Summing Up
- 5.21 Short-Notes

5.0 Objectives :

In this lesson we shall discuss :

- * Major thematic and technical features of the literature of the modern period.
We shall first explain the term
- * modernism
- * forces which brought in the modernist revolution in literature
Then we shall acquaint you with various literary movements such as :
 - * Aestheticism
 - * Naturalism
 - * Symbolism
 - * Impressionism
 - * Surrealism
 - * Expressionism
 - * Imagism

Then we shall discuss the influence these movements brought in the field of :

- * Novel
- * Drama and
- * Poetry
We shall in the end discuss the literary importance of
 - * *Murder in the Cathedral* – a play written by T.S. Eliot
 - * *Lord Jim* – a novel written by Joseph Conrad.

5.1 Introduction :

In the earlier lesson we discussed the Victorian age and its literature. We brought to your notice that in the Victorian age :

There was a wide spread and willing submission to the rule of Empire.

The voice of authority was accepted in religion, politics, literature and family

life.

It was not the acceptance of any single body of doctrine that distinguished the Victorian temper but its insistent attitude of

- * acceptance
- * its persistent belief in (without any questioning or discrimination) the credentials of Authority
- * its innate desire to affirm and conform rather than to react or to question.

A further characteristic of Victorianism was a firm belief in the permanence of nineteenth century institutions, both temporal and spiritual. The Victorians themselves seemed to be living in a house built on unshakeable foundations established in perpetuity. The Home, the Constitution, the Empire, the Christian religion – each of these, in its own form and degree, was taken as a final revelation and it was not allowed even to hint that in the course of natural processes of change, these institutions might be changed or replaced. The literary works of the period became enormous footnotes to that social-order which all readers and writers alike could accept. The first concern of the Victorian artist was man in society, and society used to be presented in totality. The artist confined himself to the linear structure of society and focused attention on its linear progress. There existed a kind of understanding and shared belief between the audience and the artist regarding the significance of experience. The artist instead of coming out of the quagmire of imposed values, chose to remain within these limits. “Thus, Tennyson became society’s spokesman, Thackeray its wit, Dickens its social conscience, George Eliot its fast woman and Browning its intellectual.”

5.2 Winds of Change and its Causes

By the year 1870, 1880, the change in the air could be felt. According to Raymond Williams, “The temper which the adjective Victorian is useful to describe is virtually finished in the 1880’s; the new men who appeared in that decade and who have left their mark, are recognizably different in tone.” This change in tone was not sudden. Victorian bourgeoisie world and the ordinary life style started witnessing a change of direction.

It may be recalled that the first few decades of the nineteenth century had witnessed great change in social hierarchy with the rise of middle classes. But by the Edwardian period the confidence and complacency of the middle classes had dissipated. The old Victorian picture had been completely shattered. The middle class was criticizing itself furiously. Between 1860 to 1890, a sort of battle waged between science and religion or to put it more precisely, it was a battle between rationality and narrow-minded theology.

Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* proved that man belonged entirely in

the order of nature and did not have a soul or any other connection with a religious or spiritual world beyond nature, that man was, therefore, merely a high-order animal whose character and fortunes were determined by two kinds of natural forces, heredity and environment, corroded the religious faith and brought to surface the conflict between the fundamentalist acceptance of religious doctrine and the growing scientific technology of the world.

Then, the third Reform Act of 1884 and the County Councils Act of 1888 together with the development of universal education in 1870 and the rise of the grammar school after 1902 implied a change in political balance. The aristocracy, with the passing of the Parliament Act of 1911, suffered a great loss of direct influence. The altered social emphasis following on urbanization extended the encroachment of a changed pattern in social relations. Money assumed an important role in village economy. What emerged was a new ethic—familiar enough in towns but less known in the country – the ethic of competition. The effect of this had been to reduce man to the level of economic man, one whose community relationships were at the mercy of the cash-nexus and whose psychological motivations were thought of mostly in terms of self-interest. As a result man's private behaviour was profoundly affected. But the more critical spirit of 1880s and 1890s did not lead immediately to any radical literary transformation.

5.3 Main Points :

Let us recapitulate the main points :

- * The Victorian conformist temper started witnessing a change by the year 1889-1890.
- * The rise of middle classes altered the social hierarchy.
- * Darwin's *The Origin of Species* brought to focus the conflict between rationality and theology or science and religion.
- * The aristocracy suffered a set back with the passing of certain Reform Acts.
- * The bases of village economy changed.
- * The private behaviour of people was altered.
- * This social transformation did not bring in any radical literary transformation.

5.4 Aestheticism and Naturalism

Even though literature did not witness any radical transformation around this time but two important movements namely

- * Aestheticism and
- * Naturalism

did affect the literary climate.

5.4.1 Aestheticism

A movement known as “Aesthetic Movement” became fashionable in the universities and some intellectual circles. Its followers advocated art for art’s sake. Born in France this movement was based on the doctrine that art is a supreme value among the works of man because

- * it is self-sufficient and
- * has no aim beyond its own perfection
- * the end of a work of art is simply to exist and
- * to be beautiful.

The doctrines of French Aestheticism were introduced into England by Walter Pater, with his concept of the Supreme Value of beauty and of the love of art for its own sake. Oscar Wilde, the most ardent advocate of this movement, believed that the subject treated was of no importance and the artist wrote to please himself, and was not in any way concerned to communicate his vision to others. Truth or reality have no validity. Though the doctrines led to artistic anarchy, still these deserve the credit for reminding readers that literature is an art to be studied carefully.

5.4.2 Naturalism

Darwin’s theory dethroned man as the crown of creation. In literature, its impact could be seen in the movement known as Naturalism. Naturalism as extended form of realism is claimed to present an even more accurate picture of life. We can say it is a more deliberate kind of realism, usually involving a view of human beings as passive victims of natural forces and social environment. As a literary movement, it was initiated in France by Jules and Edmond Goncourt with their novel, *Germinie Lacerteux* (1865), but it came to be led by Emile Zola, who claimed a ‘scientific’ status for his studies of impoverished characters miserably subjected to hunger, sexual obsession and heredity defects in *Thorose Raquin* (1867), *Germinal* (1888) and many other novels. As a matter of fact, Zola did much to develop this theory in what he called *Le Roman Experimental* (that is, the novel organized in the mode of a scientific experiment). Zola and later naturalistic writers, try to present their subjects with an objective scientific attitude and with elaborate documentation, often including, an almost medical frankness about activities and bodily functions usually not mentioned in earlier literature.

They tend to choose characters who exhibit strong animal drives, such as greed and brutal sexual desire, and who are victims both of their glandular secretions within and of sociological pressures without. The end of the naturalistic novel is usually “tragic”, but not as in Classical and Elizabethan tragedy because of a heroic but losing struggle of the individual mind and will

against gods, enemies and circumstances. The protagonist of the naturalistic plot, a pawn to multiple compulsions, is usually wiped out. In British fiction, its impact is to be seen in the novels of George Moore and George Gissing.

George Moore (1852-1933) brought Naturalism to England with his novels *A Mummer's Wife* (1844), *Esther Waters* (1894), *Evelyn Innes* (1898), *Sister Teresa* (1901) and *The Lake* (1905).

5.4.3 Limitations of Naturalism :

The limitations of the Naturalist school became obvious because of its neglect of the principle of selection. Conrad criticized it because pure naturalism lacked the room and air in which its characters could move around and breathe. Even James Joyce who used naturalistic detail extensively in his novel, *Ulysses*, added other dimensions also to his work, to escape some of the glaring shortcomings of this technique. Later novelists who do show signs of influence of Naturalism combined some kind of eclectic art to give their work depth and breadth.

Just as George Gissing was bringing Naturalism to England, the French Naturalists were themselves undergoing attack by a new movement, i.e., the symbolist movement.

This movement proved to be a major literary movement of literature.

5.5 Symbolism :

Symbolism in literature, is a form of expression, in which unseen reality is apprehended by the consciousness. The symbol represents without reproducing through it the infinite, or some degree of it is revealed and embodied and the infinite is made to blend with the finite.

The chief inspiration for the Symbolist Movement was the work of the poet, Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). His theory of 'correspondence' between psychical and spiritual realms and between different senses suggested many of the ideas that later became symbolist dogma. The movement was a reaction against a type of language that says rather than suggests. As Mellarme, himself an important exponent of the movement, put it, "Poetry should not inform, but suggest and evoke, not name things but create their atmosphere." Arthur Symons whose book *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) spread the movement among larger audiences said, "to name is to destroy to suggest is to create."

5.5.1 Symbolism and Modern Literature

The influence of symbolism on modern literature in England began with only a limited writers. It was adopted only by those writers who were looking for a way out of Naturalism. George Moore, an advocate of Naturalism turned against the movement he had so ardently adopted, and saw in symbolism the possibilities of a future literature. However, it was Arthur Symons who

popularized the movement in England. James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Lawrence, Conrad, Huxley are some of the important British novelists used symbols with the same emphasis as was done by the French masters. The extensive and the deep symbolic *leitmotif* made their work imbued with multiplicity of meanings. Here, it may be relevant to point out that no work can be itself just with the help of symbols. The symbols merely help to organize and extend the material which must draw its strength from class-structures, tensions between characters and manners and morals of the society and people. Nevertheless, a traditional symbol works inward, restricts the range of activity, whereas the modern novelist used symbols in a suggestive way. For example, Victorian novelists Dickens, Thackeray, Hardy all use symbols, but symbols as used by these authors have a definite meaning. What the symbols suggest is finite, is caught within the terms of the novel. But the way Joyce, Virginia Woolf or Conrad use the symbols is very different.

Novelists often merely give the materials and let the symbols and the other devices suggest whatever the reader can make of them. Moreover, symbols too will not always be clear. They may be in different forms of short incidents, casual images, broken conversations, minor characters, peripheral scenes etc. The reader's involvement in such a work has to be total and complete otherwise some subtle stand or motif is likely to be lost.

Symbolic patterns, thus help the artist to probe into the unknown. The restrictions of surface reality prove no hindrance. As Darwin's *The Origin of Species* upset the preconceptions and changed the artistic purposes of the late Victorians, similarly, the Symbolist Movement in a way ushered in the Modernist revolution in literature.

5.6 Main Points :

- * Darwin's *The Origin of Species* left a special influence on literature in the form of a literary movement known as Naturalism.
- * Much of the late Victorian literature was written under the influence of Naturalism.
- * A French movement known as Aestheticism started in France also to some extent had influenced English literature.
- * But soon the naturalist influence withered and the Symbolist movement started in France ushered in the modernist revolution in literature.

5.7 Important Influences on Modern Literature

Modern literature has been vastly influenced by the theories of

- * Freud
- * Jung
- * Henri Bergson.

New explorations in science and technology, philosophy and psychology

influenced literature to quite a great extent. Human race started moving faster as a result of man's growing mastery of the physical world and its material resources. With the growth of new ideas in politics and the invention of new theories in science and technology, philosophy and psychology, there was virtually an explosion of knowledge in the world.

The most pervasive influence on literature of the present age is of Freud. Freud's theory of subconscious proved that there lay a swamp of irrational motives involving sex, parental authority, fixation, sexual repression. The whole paraphernalia of the unconscious gave freedom to the literary artist in his search for new ways of describing human behaviour.

Jung – another important influence still delved deeper and proved the relationship of the modern man to the beginning of the culture. Modern man, according to Jung, is related to primitive man by a common cultural tie. His theory propounded the collective unconscious of the race as the repository of its taboos. In this collective unconscious, which is the inheritance of everyone born into culture can be discovered – the origin of neurosis and myth. The influence on modern fiction of this finding is immense. The novelist dredged up old myths and reinterpreted them in the light of modern experience. The use of myth provides related ideas of situation and character and gives the novelist a ready made framework through which he can comment. Joyce's *Ulysses* built on Homer's *Odyssey* is the most remarkable example of the use of myth.

Another important influence on modern fiction has been that of Henri Bergson. His theory of time, as *La Duree*, was derived from the fact that all time is heterogeneous, always in motion, fluid, ever-shifting and things in it are indistinguishable. Space, on the other hand, is homogeneous, still, measurable. Clock therefore is redundant, Time-durational or psychological – is natural. Surface reality according to such a conception, came to be disbelieved. Bergson's idea of reality conceived the world as a flux of interpenetrated elements unseizable by the intellect. All the past is always present in the mind along with the present with its interpenetration into the future. This is what one critic has called "one concentrated now". It is not that all time is relative or all reality is relative, even the nature of human experience is also relative. Reality cannot be apprehended by intellect only. To attain a complete picture of reality another faculty of mind, i.e., intuition is necessary. Bergson's philosophy gave a jolt to those postulates which sustained *Naturalism*. It nourished the *Symbolist Doctrine* which created the atmosphere for much of the modern literature.

5.8 First World War and The Modern Literature

The traumatic event which hastened the dissolution of familiar boundaries

was the First World War of 1914-18. The war had speeded up social change, as it had never speeded up before. It emancipated women, it emancipated the working class. It affected everything and everybody. Nothing was as it was before. It brought into society a sense of urgency and a new tempo. It made for a new consciousness of self and the place of self in society. It created an atmosphere in which the loss of old certainties, the presence of new anxieties and thrusting forward of public issues combined to isolate man from man and a group from group. The modern man found himself to be a bewildered man in a bewildering universe. The war has been the subject of a hundred memories, defining in their varied terms impact on the shocked nerves of generation. What in essence died, Lawrence tried to reveal. "It was in 1915 the old world ended. In the winter of 1915-16, the spirit of the old London collapsed, the city, in some way perished, perished from being the heart of the world and became a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears and horrors. The integrity of London collapsed and the genuine debasement began..."

5.9 Bloomsbury Group and Literary Experimentation

The task of the literary writer became extremely difficult. New techniques had to be devised to reflect the fragmentation of society. And a world which had already become a disturbing enigma, where nothing was constant except flux, nothing fixed except the law of relativity and nothing determinable except the principle of indeterminacy. Such quest was beset with its own challenges and risks.

As scientific horizons broadened, the unseen and the unknown became more significant, the chief mysteries of nature seemed to dwell in realms farthest removed from man imprisoned by his senses. Reality as science gauged in was broken into pieces and all the arts reflected this change in perspective. The rational view of the universe determined by cause and effect was shattered. Man's complacency was destroyed. The fundamental idea that nature exhibits an inexorable sequence of cause and effect was soon abandoned. The very base of Naturalism no longer existed, leaving the way open for literary theories that encompassed the metaphysical, the irrational and the unknown. The principle of selection which the Victorian writers applied could not hold good in the context of myriad realities and experiences and the welter of emotion. Hence, the entire ethos of modern literature and modern writer's numerous and even frantic experiments with new techniques of expression must be understood as the total endeavour to come to terms with a situation which has no exact parallel in the entire history of human race.

The efforts of the members of the **Bloomsbury Group** in this regard are worth mentioning. They put the historical record straight, it may be pointed out that the early years of the century saw a resurgence of political liberalism in England. The process was started right back in 1884 by the foundation of

the Fabian society. Later on, the foundation of *The New Statesman*, in 1913, as the mouthpiece of the Fabian society influenced many young literary minds. D.H. Lawrence, George Orwell, C.P. Snow, Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, were all active contributors to *The New Statesman*.

The formation of the **Bloomsbury Group** ushered in an era of intellectual liberalism. The political liberalism combined with the intellectual liberalism practiced by the members of the Bloomsbury Group pointed towards the direction of emancipation, humanity and concern for the higher values of life. In the first two decades of the century, intellectual liberalism was a dominant trend in fiction. The novelists like Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster and Aldous Huxley became conscious of the kind of liberalism they had been practicing along with others. Forster agreed that in the light of the new trends and knowledge; "it became rather difficult to write novels....I think one of the reasons why I stopped writing novels is that the social aspect of the world changed so much I had been accustomed to write about the old fashioned world with us, the homes and its family life and its comparative peace. All that went and though I can think about the new world I cannot put it into fiction."

'The new world', (E.M. Forster talks about) and its horror and uncertainties, its doubts and anxieties, created a void, which was partially filled by literary experimentation. And those writers who took up the challenge were known as *Avant Garde* writers.

These *Avant Garde* writers revolted against the photographic representation of life or reality in art and letters. These writers experimented with new modes and methods. Thus, a new note of modernity is struck. Consequently, many schools and literary movements surfaced.

5.10 Some Important Literary Movements

The following are some of the important movements which will be discussed briefly :

- * Impressionism
- * Imagism
- * Surrealism and
- * Expressionism.

5.10.1 Impressionism

Impressionism was the name given in derision (from the painting by Monet called, 'Impression Soleil Levant') to the art of the group of French Painters who held their first exhibition in 1874. Their aim was to render the effects of light on objects rather than the objects themselves. They painted out of doors, using a high key and bright colours. Claude Monet (1840-1936), Alfred Siseley

(1839-99) and Camille Pissarro (1831-1903) carried out their aims most completely. Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), Edgar Degas and Cezanne were also associated with the movement.

In the literary sense *impressionism* applies to works or passages that concentrate on the

- * description of transitory mental impressions as felt by an observer rather than
 - * on the explanation of their external causes.
- “*Impressionism* in literature is thus neither a school nor a movement but a kind of subjective tendency manifested in deceptive techniques.”
(*Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*).

5.10.2 Imagism

Imagism is the literary outgrowth of impressionism. The imagists were a group of poets including Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell and T.E. Hulme who felt that poetry should present :

- * images (usually visual) rather than ideas or emotions and should
- * use common rather than poetic language.
- * Influenced by the Japanese *haiku* and partly by ancient Greek lyrics, the imagists cultivated
- * concision and directness, building their short poems around
- * single images.
- * They also preferred looser crudeness to traditional regular rhythms.

5.10.3 Surrealism

Surrealism, Super-realism, an outgrowth of the Symbolist Movement attempted to express the apparently disordered order of the unconscious mind. Surrealism often drew heavily on Freud's work for its subject matter and its symbolism. During the first world war **Dadaism** had arisen as a protest, by means of infantile language, against all established logic, institutions and values. Andre Breton, a psychologist broke away from Dadaism and founded the new school with his first *Surrealistic Manifesto* in 1924. “Surrealism seeks to break down the boundaries between rationality and irrationality, exploring the resources and revolutionary energies of dreams, hallucinations and sexual desire. Influenced both by the symbolists and by Sigmund Freud's theories of the unconscious, the Surrealists experimented with automatic writing and with the free association of random images brought together in surprising juxtaposition.” (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*).

Essentially a surrealist strives to present a dream world, leaving the interpretation of the dream to his audience. He cultivates free association

and automatic writing and decries any concept of art or talent.

Since these terms imply a deliberate control on the part of artist who delights in the illogical and inexplicable, the tendencies can be briefly illustrated by two of the surrealistic proverbs of Paul Eluard and Benjamin Peret :

“Elephants are contagious” and “Beat your mother while she’s young” or Andre Breton’s idea of a soluble fish. Probably the most widely known manifestations of surrealism are the time watches and clocks of the painter Dali.

The influence direct or indirect, of surrealist innovations can be found in many modern writers in prose and verse who have broken with conventional modes of artistic organisation to experiment with free association. They violated syntax. There is non-logical and non-chronological order dream like and nightmarish sequences and the juxtaposition of bizarre, shocking or seemingly unrelated images.

Surrealism also attempted to become an international revolutionary movement, associated for a while with the Communist international. Although dissolved as a coherent movement by the end of 1930s, its tradition has survived in many forms of post-war experimental writing. The adjective *Surreal* and *Surrealistic* are often used in a loose sense to refer to any bizarre imaginative effect.

5.10.4 Expressionism

Another important movement of the twentieth century is *Expressionism*. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* records “Expressionism, a general term for a mode of literary or visual art which is an extreme reaction against realism or naturalism presents a world violently distorted under the pressure of intense personal moods, ideas and emotions : image and language thus express feeling and imagination rather than represent external reality.”

Instead of representing the world as it objectively is, the author undertakes to express inner experience by representing the world as it appears to his state of mind or that of one of his characters – an emotionally troubled or abnormal state of mind. Often the work implies that this mental condition is representative of anxiety-ridden modern man in an industrial and technological society which is drifting towards chaos. T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* may be considered expressionist in its fragmentary rendering of post-war desolation. Expressionistic art frequently depersonalized and dehumanized the subject to convey more strongly the shock the expressionistic artist felt at being alive in the modern world.

5.11 Main Points

- * The modern world witnessed an explosion of knowledge.
- * The modern literature came to be influenced vastly by this explosion.

- * Freud with his theory of unconscious prompted the writers to delve deep into the psychic regions of human mind.
- * Jung with his theory of the collective unconscious took the writers to dig up the old myths
- * Henri Bergson's theory of time as La Duree made clock redundant and prompted the writers to focus on time personal.
- * First World War shattered man's belief in all structures.
- * The anxiety and void created by War was filled by literary experimentation.
- * Avant Garde writers experimented with new literary forms.
- * New Literary movements such as Impressionism, Imagism, Surrealism and Expressionism extended for avant garde writers new horizons.
- * *Impressionism* concentrates on mental impressions and not on the explanation of their external causes.
- * Imagism discards traditional regular rhythms and the Imagist writers built their poems around single images.
- * Surrealism presents a dream world and illogical and inexplicable tendencies.
- * Expressionism relies more on the expression of inner experience objectively.

Dear Student,

Now we shall discuss how various literary forms came to be influenced by this explosion of knowledge and literary experimentation. We shall take up the modern Novel.

5.12 The Modern Novel :

The modern novel represents

- * A reaction against the well-made novel of the nineteenth century.
- * The modern novel tends towards formalisation.
- * The role of both plot and character in the conventional sense has dwindled.
- * There is a shift from externals to the inner-self of the character or characters.
- * This type of novel is known as the "Stream of Consciousness" novel or popularly known as the psychological novel.

Now let us repeat the basic features of the modern novel :

- * The story does not move in a chronological order.
- * The author takes strange liberties with time.

- * The reader cannot afford to miss even a single line or he would miss certain subtle shade of character.
- * The novel now is more like a poem where each word is loaded with meaning.
- * Things are not stated, they are conveyed subtly.
- * There is no description. Instead there is an oblique rendering through symbols.

5.13 Activity for the student

1. Define Modernism
2. Discuss the impact of the First World War on literature.
3. Comment on the Symbolist movement in literature.
4. Explain the term Impressionism.

(see the solutions at 5.19)

5.14 Modern Drama

Drama in the early years of the twentieth century was influenced to a large extent by Henric Ibsen's drama of social comment. Some of the notable English dramatists were committed to the social theatre, popularly known as the *Theatre of Ideas*. Some burning social problems were taken up for the subject matter of drama by dramatists like G.B. Shaw, Galsworthy, and J.H. Barrie.

George Bernard Shaw wrote with an avowed conviction. "I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinion in these matters." Shaw was concerned with the problems of contemporary society and its maladjustment to modern conditions and needs, with the absurdities and irrationalities which it inherited and persisted in. However, in the later phase Shaw's work changed into more speculative and timeless interest. *Back to Methuselah* (1922), *Saint Joan* (1923) and *Geneva* (1938) display mature art as compared to *Man and Superman* and *Major Barbara* (1905) which showed Ibsen's influences.

James Joyce's *Exiles* (1918) was another play with a marked Ibsen influence. John Galsworthy added another dimension to "Theatre of Ideas". Galsworthy's *The Silver Box* (1906), *Strife* (1908) and *Justice* (1910) succeeded in showing that a didactic aim and serious theme like that of social justice could be good theatre. Harvey Granville Barker with some notable works especially *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905) treated the conflict between public and personal responsibility with intellectual subtlety and feeling.

The "Manchester School" of playwrights wrote plays that at their best were both realistic and good theatre, e.g., Stanley Houghton's *Hindle Wake* (1912). Another worth mentioning name in the drama of ideas is that of J.H. Barrie. Barrie did not attract much attention as his treatment of ideas lacked the

crusading spirit that is so characteristic to this kind of writing. However, his plays had one quality in abundance, that of entertainment.

But the most important development of the period was *Poetic Drama* – which was in a way a reaction against the naturalistic drama of the earlier years.

5.15.1 Poetic Drama

The student may note that in poetic drama, *the dialogue is written in verse*.

The first very successful verse drama has been that of medieval England, in the Miracle and Morality plays. But the greatest periods of poetic drama are fifth century in Greece. Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were the great practitioners of poetic drama. In England, it flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth century in the hands of University Wits, Shakespeare, and his successors. These dramatists very successfully used the blank verse. Heroic dramas of the Restoration were written in heroic couplets.

The revival of poetic drama in the twentieth century in the hands of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot remains one of the most significant achievements of the twentieth century dramatic literature. These two dramatists brought in a kind of “renaissance of imagination.” However, in the early years of the twentieth century Stephen Phillips (1864-1915) wrote verse drama as a reaction against *Naturalism*. *Paolo and Francesca*, *Herod*, *Ulysses*, *The Sin of David* and *Nero* are some of his poetic plays.

Lancelles Abercrombie (1881-1938) and Dr. Gordon Bottomley are two other playwrights to have used verse in drama. But their contribution remains insignificant.

W.H. Auden in collaboration with Christopher Isherwood wrote some good poetic plays titled *The Dog Beneath the Skin*, *The Ascent of F6* and *On the Frontier*. Stephen Spender with *The Trial of a Judge* earned for himself a place as a poetic dramatist.

Christopher Fry in his poetic plays imparted some mystical suggestions and philosophical speculations.

W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) began by writing dreamy plays on Irish mythological themes. *The Countess Cathleen* and *The Land of the Heart's Desire* contain some of the most musical, moving and characteristic poetry of that period.

However, it was in the hands of T.S. Eliot, we have an elaborate form of poetic drama, in which lack of action is replaced by the incantatory power of words. His plays represent an attempt to restore ritual to drama. Eliot developed a theory of the nature and function of poetic drama before he composed his well-acclaimed poetic plays. In his essay “Three Voices of Poetry” (1953) Eliot takes up the problem of poetic communication in detail.

Eliot did not approve of blank-verse for the modern poetic drama because the

rhythm of regular blank verse had become too remote from the movement of modern speech.

Eliot aimed at avoiding the Shakespearian versification and also bridging the gulf between the language of poetry and the living speech of the people in contemporary society. Therefore, the poetry of the modern poetic drama should be rooted in the living speech of the people but at the same time it must strive towards the state of music towards the intensity of expressiveness which can articulate those vague indefinite feelings which can never be truly focused. Eliot emphasized that :

- * The language of verse should be able to depict the reality from within so far as the creation of character was concerned,
- * The poetic speech must be found for all the “characters” and poetry must be widely distributed.
- * It should help the poet to extract utmost emotional intensity from the given situation.
- * The poetry should forward the action.
- * The author must extract poetry from the character, as it were, and
- * Not impose his poetry on the character.

To sum up Eliot’s theory of poetic drama, we can say that Eliot believed that a poetic play must :

- * Justify itself dramatically,
- * It must go beyond the popular traditions of the Naturalistic drama,
- * It must emulate the conventions set by the Classical dramatists,
- * It should dramatise human consciousness rather than
- * Merely deal with human behaviour,
- * It must develop a dramatic pattern to depict the human soul in such a way as to lead the audience to an awareness of the permanent and universal.

This kind of drama required more than the mere presentation of a surface appearance of the actual life. Eliot believed that instead of presenting ordinary reality the drama must portray authentic experience of man, precisely and objectively. His plays *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1949) and *The Confidential Clerk* (1959) remain highly successful poetic plays. Eliot’s attempt at reviving the poetic drama is in accordance with his quest for meaning in his poetry in an age of dehumanization. Eliot with the help of his verse plays has worked for the restoration of the realm of spiritual essence and for the integration of personality.

5.13 Main Points

- * Modern Drama is the Drama of Ideas.
- * Modern Drama is influenced by Ibsen's Theatre of Ideas.
- * Irish Theatre left a strong impact on Modern Drama.
- * Bernard Shaw and his Fabian society made a significant contribution to modern Drama.
- * The most important experiment in the field of drama has been the poetic drama.
- * T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats popularized poetic drama.
- * T.S. Eliot discussed the problem of poetic communication in detail.
- * Eliot did not approve of blank verse as practised by Shakespeare.
- * Language of poetic drama should be rooted in the living speech of the people.
- * Poetry should be widely distributed to comprehend the inner motivations of all characters presented in a play.

5.16 Modern Poetry

Modern Poetry has had to cope with new doctrine and system, such as Marxism, depth psychology, comparative anthropology, and Neo-Thomism. It has sought to assimilate their internal relationships to system of poetic structure, and their contents to myths. Myth has assumed overwhelming importance as a poetic truth independent of private truths of science.

Modern poets have been oppressed both by science and society and have felt more than usual sense of crisis.

- * the effect of two world wars
- * the breakdown of cultural tradition
- * loss of religious faith
- * the rise of media of mass-communication and
- * the decline of importance of individual has conspired to drive the poets for self-conscious isolation
- * The language of modern poetry is difficult, obscure and "pure".

The poets have sought to avoid the terms in which our society expresses itself, distrusting them as stereotypes of mass emotions. Rejecting also the poetic diction and rhetoric of the past, they have been forced to reinterpret myths in reaction on the one hand, against the debased currency of popular feeling and on the other hand decadent romanticism.

Many modern poets have rejected direct statement for indirection and logical development of ideas for either a "metaphysical" exploration of the logic of metaphor or a symbolist development of the multiple associations of words.

The result is ambiguity, complexity and irony, dramatically organized in a structure of opposing tensions which is the business of the poem to resolve.

5.16.1 Techniques of Modern Poetry :

The traditional genres still exist in modern poetry but for the most part they have undergone radical changes.

The dramatic lyric has become the norm of poetry and the longer narrative and reflective poems have largely disappeared.

True narrative now seems impossible since the poetry no longer finds significance in external action, but the reflective poem appears in a new guise in Eliot's *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*.

W.H. Auden and others have at times made use of verse epistle. It is habitual mingling of levity and seriousness.

Modern poetry continually verges upon satire, and *vers-de-socite* both generally mordant.

Eliot has practiced both and his poetry of the inhuman modern city is descended not only from Baudelaire but from the informal mock-heroics of Swift, W.B. Yeats and W.H. Auden.

Auden's "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" is a carefully written modern pastoral elegy.

Surrealism with its stress on the role of the irrational in arts has exercised indirectly an influence on the modern poetic climate.

By the 1930s, side by side, with and often overlapping the poetry of social awareness, a taste for the bizarre and disquieting effects had become an accepted mode for the poetry. Surrealism has had the effect of proving the way for a poetry where the importance of precise moral and rational content was now discounted and where communication with an audience meant a sense of mystery. Such is the background for good deal of poetry of Dylan Thomas and also of George Baker.

5.16.2 Post-First War Poetry

Around 1930s, there was an expansion of higher education. Literature after 1933 was coming to be written and read by those with a new outlook and new interest that were earnest and more straightforward than what had gone before.

Literature should be intelligent and 'common-sensical' became an accepted view.

Although the best known poets of the 1930s followed Pound and Eliot in their satire and terse colloquialism, for the most part they did not continue the symbolist side of their work.

This partial lack of continuity was an indication of the new social and political conditions that were being reflected in the writing of the period before World War II.

Some of the most moving poetry of the decade was written, in fact, by poets who were weighing and questioning the demands of their political belief and their capacity to respond to them.

One of the most recurrently discussed topics in the thirties was the relationship of the poet and the poetry of politics. It came to be believed that the political poets of the 1930s were more interested in content and wide readership than in form. There was certainly a significant break with the past. *New Signatures* (1932) and *The Faber Book of the Twentieth Century Verse* (1936) are the most characteristic anthologies of this period.

5.17 Main Points

We can, once again, recapitulate some of the important trends in the modern poetry.

- * It is a poetry of revolt, revolt against tradition.
- * Consequently, it is experimental in form and content.
- * The poet sees life in its naked realism.
- * The squalor and dinginess of the industrial civilization are reflected in the works of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, W.B. Yeats and W.H. Auden, Wilfred Blunt. W.H. Henley and Kipling are other realistic poets.
- * The tragedy of everyday life has induced in the poet a mood of a disillusionment and so the poetry today is bitter and pessimistic.

A.E. Houseman and Thomas Hardy are pessimists to the core. They keep alive the spirit of questioning and give a jolt to the feelings of Victorian self-smugness.

Impressionism, Imagism and Surrealism are some other innovations in the modern poetry.

The Impressionistic poets seek to convey the vague, fleeting sensations passing through their minds by the use of a novel imagery and metaphor.

The Imagists headed by Ezra Pound aim at the clarity of expression through the use of hard, accurate and definite images to convey their intellectual and emotional complexes.

This poetry has the rhythm of life, its throb of joy, its hush of pain, its infinity of experience. The modern poet does not take you on a perpetual joy flight into the regions of romance. But one is welcome to walk with him on the more human roads.

5.18 Solution to the Student's Activity

Q.1 In simple terms, modernism began as a revolt against bourgeois values in France, Victorian attitudes in England and Puritanism and Materialism in the United States of America. According to Frank Kermode, "Modernism stands for a deterioration of logic". The movement, according to him, has generated an immense amount of theory. Stephen Spender believes that Modernism discards contemporary values. According to Mr. Berman "To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises adventure; power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy, everything we have, everything we are." Thus, modernism may be taken as a continuous openness for discovery. Every new stage and discovery calls for continuous reflective negotiation. In literature, modernism has come to mean a constant search for new devices.

Q.2 Modern novel has been tremendously influenced by the First World War. The hitherto known moral and social codes became redundant and were challenged. Skepticism grew. The modern man found himself rudderless. The modern novelist felt the oppressive pressure of the times. The novelists were in continuous search of devices to render the fragmentation of society. In fiction, the great surge of experimentation in 1920s and 1930s was in large measures caused by the novelist's search for devices which could reflect the crisis of the age.

Q.3 Symbolist Movement started in France and was led by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine and Mallarme. The movement had left a great influence on Pound, Eliot and other English writers. These writers contended that art could express reality higher than that received either by senses or the intellect through the manipulation of symbols. Objects tend to be suggested rather than named. Ideas may be important but are characteristically presented obliquely through a variety of symbols and must be apprehended largely by intuition and feeling. English novelists have consciously incorporated symbolism into the pattern of their technique. Arthur Symon's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* had a far reaching effect on modern literature.

Q.4 The term "Impressionism is commonly said to have been derived from Claude Monte's painting 'Impressions'. In literature it has been viewed as "subjective naturalism". Instead of having the theory, the artist is concerned with the impression it produces. The impressionist poets desired to capture the fleeting impression at the very moment in which sensations are transformed into feelings. In prose literature, the works of GonCourt brothers are generally regarded as impressionistic. Modern British literature has been vastly influenced by this movement. The works of Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf show the influence of this movement.

5.19 Important Landmarks

5.19.1 Murder in the Cathedral by T.S. Eliot

Murder in the Cathedral is a poetic drama by T.S. Eliot. Eliot accepted the commission to write a play for the Canterbury Festival of June 1935 at the request of George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, and he chose for his subject matter the martyrdom of the most famous of all English saints, Thomas Becket, who was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 to 1170, when he was brutally murdered on 29th Dec. in his own cathedral church by four Knights who left the place shouting that they were the King's men. Thus, the play deals with the assassination of Thomas Becket.

The play is divided into two parts. In Part I, the news comes to the people of Canterbury that the exiled Archbishop has patched up a reconciliation with the king and he is returning home. On his arrival, he is confronted by four tempters who remind him of his former powers and they suggest various means by which he can regain his power and glory by submitting before the king. But Becket is unmoved by these allurements.

In an interlude, Becket preaches a Christmas sermon in which he reminds his congregants of the paradox of Christmas, which is a mixture of the feelings of joy and sorrow. He also gives a hint that he has chosen to leave himself in the hands of God to face martyrdom.

In Part II, on the fourth day after Christmas, the people of Canterbury have forebodings of the doom. The four knights accuse Becket of ingratitude to the king and later enter the Cathedral and murder the Archbishop. Then they step out of the Cathedral and present their side of the story to the audience. The priests of the Cathedral are aware that 'God has now given' another saint to Canterbury.

Though based on the historical act, i.e., the murder of Thomas A. Becket by the agents of King Henry II, this play is designed as a religious play. Eliot's focus here is not historical. Rather, as pointed out by D.E. Jones, the murder of Becket in the Cathedral provides him an opportunity to introduce "what was to be the central theme of all his plays, the role of spiritually elect in society." The play has been described as a "full-scale study of martyrdom". The central theme of the play is the significance of sainthood and martyrdom.

5.19.2 Lord Jim by Conrad

Lord Jim is today "Conrad's most widely appreciated novel, and many also consider it to be his most characteristic work of art" writes Robert E. Kuehn. It was published in monthly instalments in the Blackwood's Magazine from Oct. 1899 to Nov. 1900 and finally published in book form in 1900. It was first conceived as a short-story 'Tuan Jim : A Sketch' and it dealt with the Patna episode and its consequences. However, it was later enlarged by the addition

of Patusan section and made into a full-length novel. This division of the novel into the events surrounding the Patna episode and the later events in Patusan is considered to be a structural weakness of the novel.

Lord Jim, a young man of romantic imagination is an officer on the pilgrimage ship Patna. One calm night in the Red Sea while Jim is on the bridge lulled into a sense of perfect security, the Patna collides with a submerged wreck. No one of the 800 pilgrims realises what has happened but a terrible panic breaks out in the upper-deck among the white officers and engineers. Jim is disdainful of them when they lower the boat with haste. But suddenly when the boat is in water, Jim too jumps. He had not meant to do so but at the moment of crisis, he jumps. And it is this lapse, for which he has to atone. 'The acute sense of lost honour tortures him all his life. In deserting the Patna, he betrays himself and for this act he suffers terribly. It is at the court of inquiry, Marlow meets him. Marlow is the narrator. He is attracted to Jim. He is moved by the pitiful sight of Jim and is made uneasy by the moral and philosophical questions raised by Jim's failure to behave honourably under stress.

Jim flees from one spot to another; gives up one job after another, always in flight from the exposure of his identity and his past. At last in far off Patusan, he wins admiration of the people and becomes the adviser of these savage and trusting people. But soon a group of pirates- Brown and his men-comes there and Jim decides to let them go while others in the village oppose his decision, but Jim remains firm. He responds to Brown and his men humanely became unconscious, it is the kind of response he would like to evoke from the world for his own act of cowardice. But Brown and his men before leaving cause havoc. The ambush of Dain Waris' camp brings Jim's leadership and his life to an end. He goes to Doramin and allows him to shoot him. His death like his life is open to various interpretations-is it a suicide, a courageous gesture of atonement, a final flight from reality to a place where at last "nothing can touch him !" It is all of these-self-destructive, wasteful and yet undeniably fine.

Thus, we see that Conrad in this novel through the story of Jim has dramatized his own most persistent and unanswerable questions about the nature of man. In Marlow's unrelenting attempts to see Jim as whole, to account for his fine aspirations and his cowardice, to judge him fairly, we recognise our own difficulty in assessing character. Jim remains something of an enigma both for Marlow and for the readers. In the novel, Conrad has raised the significance of Jim's action to a metaphysical level and while portraying Jim's spiritual odyssey, he explores the theme of guilt and atonement.

5.20 Summing Up

To look back over the literary achievement of England in the modern period is

to be struck by how intensely rich and dense it has been above all in the period from about 1890 to 1920 when two or three consecutive generations of writers distilled a remarkable fund of cultural and material experience not on the basis of any single aesthetic or movement but through a multiplicity of directions and dimensions. It has been one of the great periods of literature and its energies have derived not only from those writers who have stood apart from their culture but also from those who have lived with it and from it.

5.21 Short Notes

Imagism

Imagism refers to a concept of poetry associated with a movement that flourished between 1912 and 1919. Ezra Pound made references to it in 1912 in the appendix to *Ripostes*. Pound established its association with T.E. Hulme. Amy Lowell's *Some Imagist Poets* constitutes the most deliberate statements of Imagist theory which believes in short poem structured by the single image or metaphor and rhythm of cadences, presenting for direct apprehension by the reader, an object or scene from the external world and refusing to implicate the poem's effect in extended abstract meanings. The general trend of the movement has been toward encouraging formal experimentation, especially with image and metaphor.

Surrealism

Andre Breton in his first *Manifesto* (1924) defined surrealism as an attempt to give expression to the "real functioning of thought" through pure psychic automatism by means of written or spoken word or by any other means available. The study of dreams, of hallucinations, the practice of automatic writing under the dictation of the subconscious are considered by the Surrealist as the true means of knowledge. They ascribe a great importance to the analysis of the interpretation of the sleeping and waking states. Since 1945, surrealism has attracted many young writers and its influence is still important.

Expressionism

The movement started in Germany, spread to France, is mainly concerned with the forceful representation of emotions. The practice springs from a violent anti-realism and is based on the refusal to imitate, repeat, reproduce that which already exists. In expressionistic works, expression always precedes and thus determines the form. The art work frequently depersonalizes and dehumanizes its subject to convey more strongly the shock the expressionistic artist feels at keeping alive in the modern world.

Stream-of-Consciousness

William James stated in his *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) : "Consciousness does not appear to be itself chopped up by bits...It is nothing joined; it flows, let us call it the Stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life. The stream-of-consciousness thus came to be used metaphorically to suggest the continuity of mental processes. The novelists who used this technique made consciousness the central subject of their novels. By consciousness, they meant the entire area of higher awareness. Novelists like Henry James, Conrad, E.M. Forster, D.H. Lawrence, and Elizabeth Bowen very successfully made use of this technique.

Major influences on the literature of the modern age: By the years, 1870 and 1880, a change was felt in the English literary scene. The Victorian life-style started witnessing a change of direction, the establishment of the labour movement, the spread of education, the rapid rise of urbanization, the restless desire to probe and question, and the new developments in the study of science and psychology – were some of the major influences on the literature of the modern age. The most significant and pervasive influence, however, has been that of Sigmund Freud. His theory of the subconscious and probing into the human psyche for all kinds of behaviour, ushered in a new wave and a definite trend in the writing of literature. The World Wars and the shattering experiences also had a tremendous influence on the content of modern literature.

Salient features of Modern Poetry : Modern Poetry is significantly a poetry of revolt. Experimental, both in form and content, the poetry of the modern age is starkly realistic and reflects the chaos and meaninglessness of life. It deals with the human predicament and situation of the isolated man. The language of modern poetry is not only difficult, but also obscure due to its pure form. The modern poets do not make direct statements, instead the mode of poetry is highly symbolic and metaphorical. Irony and complexity of ideas are the marked features of the poetry of this age. Keeping in pace with the newly developing doctrines and systems, modern poetry endeavours to assimilate a relationship between these systems and the poetic structure.