

A Companion to
B.A. English
*Poetry *Short Stories *Prose

Edited by Pulak Bhattacharyya

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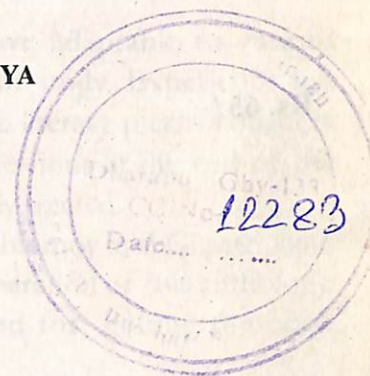
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A Companion to
B. A. ENGLISH
POETRY, SHORT STORIES & PROSE

EDITED BY
P. BHATTACHARYYA



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Preface

This book aims to provide a selection of English poetry, short stories and prose pieces for students in colleges and universities and others beyond the high-school age. The major purpose of every such book must be to provide appreciative interpretation of the work of the most important authors. The present volume is a humble attempt to accomplish these ends satisfactorily with a selection of authors sufficiently limited for clearness and with adequate accuracy and fullness of details, biographical and other.

An anthology meant for examination preparation should supply a systematic statement of the important facts, word meanings and possible questions so that the greater part of the student's time, in class and without, may be left free for the study of the literature itself. This book is intended to serve that purpose too.

I hope that the book may prove adaptable to various methods and conditions of classroom study. Experience has suggested the brief explanation of the literary pieces enhances the desire for a detailed study. The questions at the end of the pieces are, of course, meant to be freely treated.

I am indebted to my students- Chinmoy and Gayatri, who have been a great help to me in the preparation of this anthology. My special thanks to M/S Book Land for getting the book published on time.

June 2007

Pulak Bhattacharyya

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POETRY SECTION

UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

: WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Born in Cumberland-part of the scenic region in northwest England called the Lake District; William Wordsworth was the second of five children. His sister was the poet and diarist Dorothy Wordsworth. With the death of his mother in 1778, his father sent him to Hawkshead Grammar School. In 1783, William's father died and the Wordsworth children were left under the guardianship of their uncles. Although many aspects of William's boyhood were positive, he recalled bouts of loneliness and anxiety. It took him many years, and much writing, to recover from the death of his parents and his separation from his siblings.

Wordsworth began attending St John's College, Cambridge in 1787. His youngest brother, Christopher, rose to be Master of Trinity College of that institution. Three years later, in 1790, he visited Revolutionary France and supported the Republican movement. The following year, he graduated from Cambridge without distinction.

In November 1791, Wordsworth returned to France and took a walking tour of Europe that included the Alps and Italy. He fell in love with a French woman, Annette Vallon, who in 1792 gave birth to their child, Caroline. Because of lack of money and Britain's tensions with France, he returned alone to England the next year.

1793 saw Wordsworth's first published poetry with the collections 'An Evening Walk' and 'Descriptive Sketches'. That year, he also met Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Somerset. The two poets quickly developed a close friendship. In 1797, Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, moved to Somerset, just a few miles away from

Coleridge's home. Together, Wordsworth and Coleridge produced "Lyrical Ballads" (1798), an important work in the English Romantic movement.

The source of Wordsworth's philosophical allegiances as articulated in 'The Prelude' and in such shorter works as 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey' has been the source of much critical debate. While it had long been supposed that Wordsworth relied chiefly on Coleridge for philosophical guidance, more recent scholarship has suggested that Wordsworth's ideas may have been formed years before he and Coleridge became friends in the mid 1790s.

Wordsworth received an honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree in 1838 from Durham University and the same honor from Oxford University the next year. With the death in 1843 of Robert Southey, Wordsworth became the Poet Laureate.

In 1802, after returning from his trip to France with Dorothy to visit Annette and Caroline, Wordsworth received the inheritance owed by Lord Lonsdale since John Wordsworth's death in 1783. Later that year, he married a childhood friend, Mary Hutchinson.

TEXT :

Earth has not anything to show more fair;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty.
This city now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

ABOUT THE POEM :

In the poem, 'Upon Westminster Bridge' William Wordsworth depicts the beauty of the city of London, from the Westminster Bridge, in the very early hours of a bright morning. The poet is fascinated by the calm and serene atmosphere of the city and he says that it would be someone with a dull heart who could remain untouched by such a beautiful sight. The poet feels as if the city of London was wearing a splendid garment embossed with the ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples all glittering in the smokeless sky along with the first rays of the sun. The poet realises to his surprise that he has never before seen the valley, rock or hill gleaming so beautifully in the morning sun. The river Thames moving gently underneath the bridge enriches the beauty of the landscape while the strong and mighty inhabitants of the city are still tranquil in their deep slumber.

WORD NOTES :

Fair: with no uncertainty or possibility of error.

Majesty: impressive dignity and stateliness grandeur, as of a king or green.

Domes: rounded roof with a circular base.

Steep: rising or falling sharply, not gradually.

Splendour: state or quality of being splendid, magnificent, glorious.

Glideth: move along smoothly and continuously.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. 'A sight so touching in its majesty.' - What 'sight' is referred to here? How is it 'touching in its majesty'?
2. Describe the feelings of the poet at the sight of the mighty city lying in the bright morning sunlight from the Westminster Bridge.
3. "Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep." - Elucidate.

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4. How does Wordsworth bring out the sense of contrast between noise and calm in the sonnet?
5. Consider the poem 'Upon Westminster Bridge' as a sonnet.
6. Describe Wordsworth's view of London in the poem. Do you feel his description of the "beauty of the morning" is also a suggestion of an indictment of the city's ugly intensity as it turns active? [2005]
7. Summarize Wordsworth's main suggestions in the poem. Will you consider him a celebrant or a critic of Industrial London?
8. How does Wordsworth glorify the beauty of London in the morning? What does he mean when he says 'all bright and glittering in the smokeless air'? [GU 2007]



TO AUTUMN

: JOHN KEATS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

John Keats was born on 31 October 1795, the first of Frances Jennings and Thomas Keats's five children, one of whom died in infancy.

Details of Keats's early life are scarce. During the last few years of his life, letters allow one to track him virtually week-to-week but his childhood and adolescence are another matter. Indeed, virtually all the information known is in the form of reminiscences, many taken years after Keats had died. Understandably, one must view these memories with some skepticism. Whether discussing Keats's physical appearance (his brother George said he resembled their mother while a family friend said it was the father) or his pastimes, these sources often contradict one another.

Keats's father, Thomas Keats, died on Sunday, 15 April 1804. Barely two months later, on 27 June 1804, Frances Jennings remarried but the marriage was a failure. The children were immediately sent to live with their grandmother and, a few years later, their mother joined them. The upheaval in the children's lives continued. On 8 March 1805, their grandfather died and the financial turmoil, which haunted Keats's life, began. The problems were multiplied with his mother's death in mid-March of 1810 and his grandmother's death in December of 1814. Keats, as the eldest child, was old enough to try and help his mother through her illness; her death impressed itself upon him deeply.

Richard Abbey now became the primary 'adult' influence in Keats's life. Abbey withdrew John and George from school and apprenticed John to an apothecary/surgeon named Dr. Hammond. Keats displayed great aptitude for the difficult job though his

enthusiasm waned as his interest in poetry grew. For the next three years, he studied medicine. He also wrote his first poem in 1814. On 1 October 1815, Keats entered Guy's Hospital for more formal training.

However, the most momentous event for John Keats was the publication of his first poem in 'The Examiner'. There was little critical reception, but Keats was attracting new friends who shared his literary tastes, among them Leigh Hunt, Benjamin Haydon and John Reynolds. Hunt was the earliest and most enthusiastic supporter of Keats. As a critic on the fringes of the literary establishment, he did all he could to champion his friend's career. By this time, Keats had decided to end his medical training. He had no illusions of the difficulty of a poetic career but he was determined to follow his dream. He was already borrowing as many books as possible from various friends, and became an ardent admirer of Spenser and Shakespeare. This devotion to reading, which had begun after his father's death and remained throughout his life, inspired his most famous poem of 1816, 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer'.

By the time Keats was just twenty-three years, he was already composing at a rapid pace while further developing his poetic philosophy. His love of the extravagant wordplay of the Elizabethans was now tempered by his own maturity. Personal grief and worry had made him older than his years. Nevertheless, he also possessed an innate love of life and the Wordsworthian celebration of the natural world. Keats was now able to draw these disparate influences together and create his own unique philosophy. In him, the school of life, with all its troubles and triumphs, had an apt pupil. Rarely has a poet so beautifully captured the natural world in all its glory.

Though Keats died young, his volume of poetic output is considerable. It became commonplace to view Keats as a tragic soul, too sensitive for this world and driven from it by harsh critical reviews. Rarely has a poet so thoroughly captured life in all its natural glory, without affectation or exaggeration. And rarely, too, has a man lived such an admirable and passionate life. He once remarked hopefully, 'I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death.' At a mere twenty-five years of age, John Keats achieved this dream.

Text :

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

5

10

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spare the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

15

20

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,-
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

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ABOUT THE POEM :

John Keats personifies the autumn season, highlighting the qualities of this 'least celebrated' of all the seasons. The last of the great odes of Keats, here we find a unique glorification of the season of autumn which is the season of 'mellow fruitfulness'. Autumn is the season of mists and ripening of fruits and vegetables, together with the gourd and hazel shells swelling to the core. Mother Nature is dressed up in all her bounty and there is an absolute sense of abundance and perfection all around. The poet gives his imagination a lofty flight. He imagines that the abundance and beauty all around is due to the conspiracy between the season and the 'maturing sun'.

Keats, in the second stanza of the poem, personifies autumn as a woman. Autumn is also the harvesting season when crops are harvested and stored in the granary. The poet also visualizes autumn as a reaper and a gleaner. The season is also personified as a cider presser, patiently watching juice being extracted from the apples.

Though autumn lacks the sweet music of the spring-the songs of the cuckoo and the nightingale, the poet's rare sensibility finds music unique to the season- melancholic note of the gnats, the ticking of the hedge crickets, the song of the robin, the loud bleating of the lambs and the twittering of migratory swallows

The poem is a celebration of the season of autumn with all its beauty and blossoms. However, at the same time, one cannot ignore the melancholic undertone in the poem.

WORD NOTES :

Season of mists : In Autumn fog and mists can be seen

Thatch-eaves: the bottom edge of a thatched roof

Mellow: ripe and sweet.

Moss: small flowerless plant forming a dense growth in moist places.

Hazel shells: outer covering of hazel, a round, brown edible nut

Gourd: fleshy fruit of a climbing plant.

Kernel: softer part inside the shell of a nut or stone of fruit.

Clammy: unpleasantly moist and sticky.

O'er brimmed...clammy cells: The sticky cells of the honeycomb overflow with honey.

TO AUTUMN

Granary: Storehouse where grains are kept.

Winnowing: The process by which corn is separated from the husk.

Twined: twist.

Gleaner: gatherer [of crops]

Laden: loaded.

Brook: small stream.

Cider press: a press for crushing apples to make cider, an alcoholic drink

Oozings: tickle or slow outflow.

Stubble: lower ends of corn-stalks left in the ground after harvest.

Gnats: small biting fly.

Aloft: high up; upwards.

Bleat: cry of a sheep, goat.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. What, according to Keats, are the characteristic features of the autumn season?
2. Why is autumn called 'close bosom friend' of the sun? What does it conspire with the sun?
3. What is personification? How does Keats personify autumn in the ode?
4. What according to Keats constitute the music of autumn?
5. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem 'Ode to Autumn'.
6. Write a brief note on the form and structure of 'Ode to Autumn'.
7. Bring out the sensuous richness of autumn as revealed in Keats's Ode.
8. What aspects of romanticism do you find in the poem?
9. Three stanzas in the poem, 'To Autumn' present three different aspects of the autumn season. How does Keats glorify the season through these pictures?

[GU 2004]



SHAKESPEARE

: MATTHEW ARNOLD

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Matthew Arnold, poet and critic, was born at Laleham on the Thames, the eldest son of Thomas Arnold and Mary (Penrose) Arnold. He was educated at Winchester; Rugby, where he won a prize for a poem on "Alaric at Rome"; and Oxford, to which he went as a Scholar of Balliol College in 1841, and where he won the Newdigate Prize for 'Cromwell, A Prize Poem.'

Arnold's literary career - leaving out the two prize poems - began in 1849 with the publication of 'The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems by A', which attracted little notice - although it contained perhaps Arnold's most purely poetical poem 'The Forsaken Merman'. 'Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems', published in 1852, also failed to create any stir in the literary world.

Arnold's work as a critic begins with the 'Preface to the Poems' which he issued in 1853 under his own name, including extracts from the earlier volumes along with 'Sohrab and Rustum' and 'The Scholar-Gipsy'. In its emphasis on the importance of subject in poetry, on 'clearness of arrangement, rigor of development, simplicity of style' learned from the Greeks, and in the strong imprint of Goethe and Wordsworth, may be observed nearly all the essential elements in his critical theory. He was still primarily a poet, however, and in 1855 appeared 'Poems, Second Series', among them 'Balder Dead.'

After the publication in 1867 of New Poems, which included 'Thyrsis' and 'Rugby Chapel,' Arnold turned almost entirely from literature to social and theological writings.

The most important characteristic in Arnold's poetry is that he derived the subject matter of his narrative poems from various

SHAKESPEARE

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traditional or literary sources. His greatest defect as a poet is said to be his lack of ear and his frequent failure to distinguish between poetry and prose. His significant if curious estimate of his own poems in 1869 was that they represented 'on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century.'

TEXT :

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

5

10

ABOUT THE POEM :

In his sonnet, the poet Mathew Arnold pays tribute to Shakespeare, who has always remained the highest pinnacle of human knowledge. The poet tells us about the mysteriousness, incomprehensibility and inaccessibility of the greatest writer of English literature. His artistic and creative skills enabled him to rise to a position, which cannot be questioned or enquired into by the critics. The poet says that Shakespeare is like loftiest mountain whose grand cover the exposed and visible only to the stars. He had a lofty imagination and a great depth of thought. By virtue of his imaginative and creative power, he could grasp and unveil the mysteries of Nature. Shakespeare received no formal education, he learned from his own experiences of life and his own persistent endeavour. During his lifetime, Shakespeare's dramatical or poetical works were never

bothered. Alternatively, poetical works were never bothered for the patronage and approbation of others. Disappointments, sorrows and sufferings could never dissuade his determination to excel in his literary works. He had an indomitable spirit and he was the delineator of tragic destiny of humankind. Tragedies of life could never dishearten him.

WORD NOTES :

Others: famous authors, other than Shakespeare

Out-topping: exceeding the limits [here- of knowledge]

Uncrowns: reveals

Steadfast: firm and not changing or yielding

Dwell: live as an inhabitant.

Impair damage, weaken.

All weakness impairs - All the frailties of man that damage his spirit and make him weak in his life struggle

'All ... bow' - all the miseries and unaccounted sorrows that make a man bow and bend

Victorious brow - the power of Shakespeare's genius has successfully overcome all the obstacles of life.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. To what extent does the sonnet reflect the greatness of Shakespeare?
2. Enumerate the qualities of Shakespeare as mentioned by Arnold in the sonnet.
3. Do you feel Arnold's eulogy of Shakespeare is a piece of blind faith rather than an objective assessment of the great dramatist and poet?
4. Summarize the qualities of Shakespeare as described by Arnold in the poem.



LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

: ROBERT BROWNING

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Robert Browning was born on May 7, 1812, in Camberwell (a suburb of London), the first child of Robert and Sarah Anna Browning. His mother was an accomplished pianist. Mr. Browning had angered his own father and forgone a fortune: the poet's grandfather had sent his son to oversee a West Indies sugar plantation, but the young man had found the institution of slavery so abhorrent that he gave up his prospects and returned home, to become a clerk in the Bank of England. On this very modest salary, he was able to marry, raise a family, and to acquire a library of 6000 volumes. He was an exceedingly well-read man who could recreate the siege of Troy with the household chairs and tables for the benefit of his inquisitive son.

Indeed, most of Robert's education came at home. He was an extremely bright child and a voracious reader and had mastered Latin, Greek, French and Italian by the time he was only fourteen. He attended the University of London in 1828, the first year it opened, but left in discontent to pursue his own reading at his own pace. This somewhat idiosyncratic but extensive education has led to difficulties for his readers: he did not always realize how obscure his references and allusions were.

In the 1830's he met the actor William Macready and tried several times to write verse drama for the stage. At about the same time he began to discover that his real talents lay in taking a single character and allowing him to discover himself to us by revealing more of himself in his speeches than he suspects-the characteristics of the dramatic monologue. In 1845 he saw Elizabeth Barrett's 'Poems' and contrived to meet her. Although she was an invalid and very much under the control of a domineering father, the two married

in September 1846 and a few days later eloped to Italy, where they lived until her death in 1861. The years in Florence were among the happiest for both of them. Her love for him was demonstrated in the 'Sonnets from the Portuguese', and to her he dedicated 'Men and Women', which contains his best poetry. Public sympathy for him after her death (she was a much more popular poet during their lifetimes) surely helped the critical reception of his *Collected Poems* (1862) and *Dramatis Personae* (1863). The *Ring and the Book* (1868-9), based on an "old yellow book" which told of a Roman murder and trial, finally won him considerable popularity. He and Tennyson were now mentioned together as the foremost poets of the age. Although he lived and wrote actively for another twenty years, the late '60s were the peak of his career. His influence continued to grow, however, and finally led to the founding of the Browning Society in 1881. He died in 1889, on the same day that his final volume of verse 'Asolando' was published.

TEXT :

I

Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles,
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop 5
As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since 10
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

II

Now, the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills 15
From the hills

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires 20
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

III

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass 25
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer time, o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone— 30
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold 35
Bought and sold.

IV

Now, the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper over rooted, by the gourd
Over scored, 40
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced 45
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

V

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
Smiles to leave 50

To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
 In such peace,
 And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
 Melt away—
 That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair 55
 Waits me there
 In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
 For the goal,
 When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
 Till I come. 60

VI

But he looked upon the city, every side,
 Far and wide,
 All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
 Colonnades,
 All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then, 65
 All the men!
 When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
 Either hand
 On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
 Of my face, 70
 Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
 Each on each.

VII

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
 South and North,
 And they built their gods a brazen pillar high 75
 As the sky,
 Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
 Gold, of course.
 Oh, heart! Oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!
 Earth's returns 80
 For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
 Shut them in,
 With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
 Love is best.

ABOUT THE POEM :

In the poem 'Love among the Ruins', Robert Browning describes the ephemeral existence of earthly things. The valley covered with grasses, used as a pasture for sheep's was once a capital of the kingdom of some powerful rulers. The kings held their royal court and their ministers and councilors exercised powers of waging wars and concluding peace treaties. The place where once the domes of royal palaces shot their spires was now lying bare and intersected by sense streams. There was also an invulnerable amphitheatre constructed by marble. The vestige of the old city can be guessed by the stock where criminals were punished and the wooden structure used for the purpose. Among the ruins, a single tower stands overgrown with the thorny hedges and 'over scored' with gourds. The temples on the hills, the rows of pillars on the opening places, the causeys, the bridges and the aqueducts are still seen as the testimonials of the ruined only. The poet says that all their works, their lives were transitory and the cruel hands of time and death destroyed them all. These relics are now lying scattered only to bear testimony of their mighty work. But amidst the ruins of the old city there awaits a yellow haired girl for her lover and when her eyes met his face he knew that their love will remain forever. Love is the only thing bestowed upon the humans, which is beyond the reach of death and time, and it remains perpetually forever.

WORD NOTES :

Solitary: isolated, unfrequented.

Tinkle: make short light ringing sounds.

Stray: wander from the right place, from one's companions.

Crop: bite off, eat down.

Wielding: Control, handle, manage.

Boast: declare one's achievements etc. with excessive pride, exaggerate.

Verdure: green vegetation.

Rill: small stream.

Spire: tapering structure esp. on church tower.

Abreast: side by side and facing same way.

Overspread: cover surface.

Embeds: fix in surrounding mass.

Vestige: trace, evidence.

Multitude: great numbers great number.

Tame: domesticate, subdue.

Turret: small tower esp. decorating building

Gourd: fleshy fruit of trailing or climbing cucumber like plant.

Winks: close and open (one eye) esp. as signal.

Chinks: narrow opening.

Sublime: of most exalted kind.

Minion: servile subordinate.

Dames: woman who has been knighted.

Fleece: wooly coat of sheep etc., fleecy lining.

Charioteers: chariot driver.

Glades: clear space in forest.

Brazen: of or like brass.

Folly: foolishness.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. How does Browning distinguish between the transitory nature of power with the permanence of glory?
2. Illustrate how Browning makes an effective use of his poetic technique to explore the twin worlds of the past and of the present.
3. Give, after Browning, a picture of the past glory of the ruined city.
4. In what sense, according to Browning, 'Love is best'?
5. Consider 'Love among the Ruins' as a dramatic lyric.
6. Why does Browning in his poem, 'Love among the Ruins' go back to history? How does Love triumph over Power according to the poet? Elucidate. [GU 2004]
7. Why does Browning conclude the poem 'Love among the Ruins' with the words 'love is best'? How will you relate the ending of the poem with the picture of an ancient glorious kingdom narrated by the poet? [GU 2007]



THE DARKLING THRUSH

: THOMAS HARDY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), English poet and novelist is famous for his depictions of the imaginary county 'Wessex'. Hardy's work reflected his stoical pessimism and sense of tragedy in human life.

Born into the family of a master mason, at Egdon Heath, in Dorset, near Dorchester on June 2, 1840, Thomas has a pleasant childhood. His mother, whose tastes included Latin poets and French romances, provided for his education. After schooling in Dorchester, Hardy was apprenticed to an architect. He worked in an office, which specialized in restoration of churches. In 1874, Hardy married Emma Lavinia Gifford.

At the age of 22 Hardy moved to London and started to write poems, which idealized the rural life. In 1867, Hardy left London for the family home in Dorset, and resumed work briefly with Hicks in Dorchester.

Unable to find a public for his poetry, Hardy turned to fiction. His first novel, 'The Poor Man and the Lady', was written in 1867, but many publishers rejected the book and he destroyed the manuscript. His first book that gained notice was 'Far from the Madding Crowd' (1874). After its success Hardy devoted himself entirely to writing and produced a series of novels, among them 'The Return of the Native' (1878) and 'The Mayor of Casterbridge' (1886).

'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' (1891) came into conflict with Victorian morality. Hardy's next novel, 'Jude the Obscure' (1895) aroused even more debate. The story dramatized the conflict between carnal and spiritual life. In 1896, disturbed by the public uproar over the unconventional subjects of two of his greatest novels- 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' and 'Jude the Obscure', Hardy announced that he would never write fiction again.

During the remainder of his life, Hardy wrote several collections of poems. His gigantic panorama of the Napoleonic Wars, 'The Dynasts' composed between 1903 and 1908, was mostly in blank verse. Hardy succeeded on the death of his friend George Meredith to the presidency of the Society of Authors in 1909. King George V conferred on him the Order of Merit and he received in 1912 the gold medal of the Royal Society of Literature.

Emma Hardy died in 1912 and in 1914; Hardy married his secretary, Florence Emily Dugdale. From 1920 through 1927, Hardy worked on his autobiography, which was disguised as the work of Florence Hardy. It appeared in two volumes (1928 and 1930). Hardy's last book published in his lifetime was 'Human Shows' (1925).

Hardy died in Dorchester, Dorset, on January 11, 1928. His ashes were cremated in Dorchester and buried with impressive ceremonies in the Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey. Hardy's 'Winter Words' appeared posthumously in 1928.

TEXT :

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.
The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.
At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;

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THE DARKLING THRUSH

An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.
So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound.
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

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ABOUT THE POEM :

In the poem 'The Darkling Thrush' the poet, Thomas Hardy depicts the scene of a cold winter evening. As the poet was leaning against a wooden gate, the frost was settling upon everything around him and the last rays of the setting sun were becoming dimmer. The whole atmosphere was quite melancholy and desolated as the people around were also heading fast towards their homes to get rid of the growing cold. The creeper plants around the poet looked barren and he compares them with the strings of some broken musical instrument. The nineteenth century was coming to an end and the overhanging clouds above the earth looked like the canopy above the graveyard of the dead century. The wind blowing over the place seemed to be the dirge sung to lament the loss of that year. Every living creatures of the earth seemed to be devoid of the enthusiasm and the zest for life like the poet himself. Suddenly breaking the silence of the whole atmosphere, an old thrush started to sing a joyous song conveying the blessing of happiness. Though its feathers had been destroyed by the storm, the thrush was singing a happy song. The poet wonders what made the thrush sing with such an elated heart. There was nothing in the gloomy atmosphere that could inspire the bird to sing such a delighted song. The poet thus comes to the conclusion that the bird must have seen some good fortune remaining in store for all the earthly creatures of which the poet is quite unaware of.

WORD NOTES :

- Desolate*: solitary, lonely, deserted uninhabited.
Tangled: twist into a confused mass; entangle.
Lyres: ancient musical instrument with strings in a U-shaped frame.
Shrunken: having shrunk.
Shrink: make or become smaller.
Bleak: cold and cheerless.
Twigs: a small shoot issuing from a branch or stem.
Evensong: service of evening prayer in the Church of England.
Thrush: songbird, esp. one with a speckled breast.
Frail: not strong, physically weak.
Gaunt: lean and haggard.
Nigh: near.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

- How does Hardy bring out the bleakness of wintry scene in the poem?
- In what way is the thrush similar or dissimilar to the natural scene?
- On what note does the poem end? Is it appropriate to the setting?
- Discuss the central idea of the poem 'The Darkling Thrush'.
[GU 2007]
- Illustrate the poet's attention to the minute details of description.
- Evaluate Hardy's philosophy of life as embodied in 'The Darkling Thrush'?
- How does Hardy distinguish between relative visions of man and the bird in the poem?
- Examine the structure of the lyric. Does the poem show any development of the theme?
- 'Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew And I was unaware'
 a. Name the poem where these lines occur.
 b. Elucidate the idea contained in the quoted lines. [GU 2005]



NO SECOND TROY

: WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Irish poet, dramatist and prose writer and the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923, William Butler Yeats is regarded as one of the greatest English language poets of the 20th century.

William Butler Yeats was born in Dublin into an Irish Protestant family. His father, John Butler Yeats, a clergyman's son, was a lawyer turned to an Irish Pre-Raphaelite painter. Yeats's mother, Susan Pollexfen, came from a wealthy family. Yeats spent the early years of his life in London and Sligo, a beautiful county on the west coast of Ireland, where his mother had grown and which he later depicted in his poems.

As a writer, Yeats made his debut in 1885, when he published his first poems in *The Dublin University Review*. In 1887, the family returned to Bedford Park, and Yeats devoted himself to writing. In 1889, Yeats met his great love, Maud Gonne (1866-1953), an actress and Irish revolutionary, whom he wrote many poems. She married in 1903 Major John MacBride, and this episode inspired Yeats's poem 'No Second Troy'.

Through Maud's influence, Yeats joined the revolutionary organization Irish Republican Brotherhood. Later an 1899 police report described Yeats as "more or less revolutionary". Maud had devoted herself to political struggle, but Yeats viewed with suspicion her world full of intrigues. He was more interested in folktales as a part of an exploration of national heritage and for the revival of Celtic identity. His study with George Russell and Douglas Hyde of Irish legends and tales was published in 1888 under the name *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*.

Although Irish politics was a central theme in many of Yeats's

writings, he made clear a distinction between political and religious propaganda and art. In 1932, Yeats founded the Irish Academy of Letters. Never a sophisticated political thinker and favoring the leadership of the few, Yeats was briefly involved in 1933-34 with the fascist Blueshirts in Dublin and wrote some marching songs for them. In his final years, Yeats worked on the last version of *A Vision*, which attempted to present a theory of the archetypes of human personality, and published the 'Oxford Book of Verse' (1936) and 'New Poems' (1938). Yeats died in 1939 in Menton, France.

TEXT :

Why should I blame her that she filled my days
 With misery, or that she would of late
 Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways,
 Or hurled the little streets upon the great,
 Had they but courage equal to desire? 5
 What could have made her peaceful with a mind
 That nobleness made simple as a fire,
 With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
 That is not natural in an age like this,
 Being high and solitary and most stern? 10
 Why, what could she have done being what she is?
 Was there another Troy for her to burn?

ABOUT THE POEM :

W. B. Yeats in his poem 'No Second Troy' tells us about his love for Maud Gonne an Irish Revolutionist. His love was unrequited but he does not blame her for the mental agony he had suffered. She had an indomitable spirit and an unquenchable faith in her mission. Being a revolutionist, she instigated the common people to rebel against the affluent section of Ireland to free her motherland from the alien rule. It was a noble cause for which she fought and the poet pays tribute to her simple mind. The poet says her beauty was unique and unmatched in her age. He compares her beauty with a 'tightened bow', which may describe her sexual attraction. However, the bow also depicts the story of death and destruction brought about in the

city of Troy for recovery of Helen, the most beautiful woman of ancient Greece.

WORD NOTES :

Her: [here] Maud Gonne.

Taught ignorant men most violent ways: Maud Gonne had instigated the common people to rebel against the affluent section of Ireland to free her motherland from the alien rule.

Courage equal to desire: Maud Gonne was efficient in inciting people to extreme violence. The problem was that the courage of these people did not live up to her expectations.

Hurled: throw violently.

Tightened bow: An image drawn from William Blake. Maud Gonne's beauty was ethereal- out of this world.

High and solitary: Maud Gonne was too beautiful and cultured to fit into the boots of a typical revolutionary.

Another Troy for her to burn: In beauty, Maud Gonne could be compared to the legendary Helen of Troy. Had she not married Macbride, her beauty might have inspired conflicts like the Trojan War.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. To whom is the poem 'No Second Troy' addressed and why?
2. Give a pen-picture of Maud Gonne as presented by Yeats in the poem 'No Second Troy'.
3. Can 'No Second Troy' be considered a love poem? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Write a note on Yeats's conception of revolution in the poem.
5. How does Yeats present Maud Gonne in the poem?
6. Illustrate Yeats's Homeric treatment of the subject he chooses in 'No Second Troy'.



SONG OF MYSELF

: WALT WHITMAN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Walt Whitman was born on May 31, 1819, in West Hills, Long Island. The poet's childhood was lived in alternation between the farm on Long Island and the streets of the neighbouring city of Brooklyn. He left school at the age of eleven and took up a variety of jobs - as an office boy, as a printer, as a rural schoolteacher and a journalist editing magazines. His ardent and restless spirit marked him as a modern man free from all conventions as a true American, democratic and individualistic.

Whitman's first published book of poetry entitled 'Leaves of Grass' came out on July 4, 1855. It contained some remarkable poems with originality of thought and style. He was greatly influenced by Abraham Lincoln and in a section of the volume entitled 'Memories of President Lincoln', he wrote the famous poems 'O Captain, My Captain' and the magnificent elegy, 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'. As a poet of liberation, he is still considered a symbol that inspired liberated humanist voice against forces of injustice. Besides poetry, Whitman also wrote some vigorous prose-essays and articles.

TEXT :

I

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.
I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer
grass.
My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil,
this air,

5

SONG OF MYSELF

27

Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their
parents the same,
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.
Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

II

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded
with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.
The atmosphere is not a perfume; it has no taste of the distillation,
it is odorless,
It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and
naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.
The smoke of my own breath,
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch and
vine,
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing
of blood and air through my lungs,
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and
dark-color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,
The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the eddies
of the wind,
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs
wag,
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields
and hill-sides,
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising
from bed and meeting the sun.

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Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you reckon'd the
earth much? 30

Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?
Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin
of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions
of suns left,) 35
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look
through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books,

You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from
me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.

III

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the beginning
and the end,

But I do not talk of the beginning or the end. 40

There was never any more inception than there is now,
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,

And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,

Always the procreant urge of the world. 45
Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance
and increase, always sex,

Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed of life.
To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that it is so.
Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well entretied,
braced in the beams,

Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical, 50
I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my
soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,

Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes age, 55
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they
discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty
and clean,

Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less
familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied--I see, dance, laugh, sing;

As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side through
the night, and withdraws at the peep of the day with stealthy tread, 60

Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the house
with their plenty,

Shall I postpone my acceptance and realization and scream at my
eyes,

That they turn from gazing after and down the road,

And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,

Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and which
is ahead? 65

IV

Trippers and askers surround me,

People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the ward and
city I live in, or the nation,

The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old and
new,

My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,

The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love, 70

The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing or loss
or lack of money, or depressions or exaltations,

Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful news,
the fitful events;

These come to me days and nights and go from me again,

But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,
 Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary,
 Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable certain
 rest,
 Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,
 Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it.
 Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog with
 linguists and contenders, 80
 I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

ABOUT THE POEM :

Whitman's poem can be considered a celebration of the self, which extends to even the common masses of America. The poem represents an awakening of the self to dive deep within to discover the mysteries of life and the glorification of the body and soul to mingle with the Universal.

'Song of Myself' was the opening poem in the first edition (1855) of 'Leaves of Grass'. The poet invites his soul to observe a blade of grass, which stands for the democratic liberalism of American. Whitman shuns educational and institutional ideals. Instead, he wishes to have a direct communion with Nature. He, therefore, wishes to become one with Nature and to experience every sight and sound of Nature. Through the poem, the poet suggests the pantheistic form of Nature that provides the right wisdom of life. Therefore, he discards bookish knowledge and favours the knowledge inherent in Nature. Whitman believes that there is no origin and end and hence, he lives for the present. He feels that the procreant urge has become the only desire of modern American man. Nevertheless, he considers that there should be a fusion between body and soul. In fact, he rightly considered body to be the gateway of the soul. However, it is the urge to create which lies in harmony with Nature and God. Therefore, Whitman glorifies his body and soul and undertakes a mystical journey of uniting with Nature and the divine. Hence, the poet no longer desires to be tied down by worldly attractions and personal and impersonal feelings. He loses his sense of argument to mingle with the Universal Spirit.

WORD NOTES :

Assume: take for granted

I loafe grass: The blade of grass symbolizes the miracle of the universe and paves the path of the poet's mystic journey. The 'grass' also stands for American democracy

My tongue: The poet's language and heritage

Thirty seven years old: an autobiographical touch. At this age his self-realization dawned on him

Creeds Abeyance: beliefs and institutional ideas are not considered significant by the poet. Instead, he wishes to have a direct communion with Nature

Original energy: Whitman yearns for a bond with the primeval Nature uncorrupted by human energy.

Distillation: extraction

Crotch: angle between two branches of a tree

Eddies: whirl

Light kisses, a few embraces: Whitman suggests an intimacy between his 'self' and Nature

Specters: ghosts, abstract teachings

Procreant urge: the strong desire to give birth to

Knit of identity: the identity one derives from a sexual bond.

Equanimity: evenness of mind

Basket covered with white towel: Refers to the old German custom of a fickle lover gifting a basket for one jilted in love. In the poem, the poet suggests how sexual love may transcend animal physical pleasure and fill the lover with a sense of gratification.

Impalpable: not perceivable by touch

Through fog: failure of language and logic

Through fog contenders: a reference to the poet's failed language and logic in pursuit of truth.

★ QUESTIONS ★

1. Discuss 'Song of Myself' as Whitman's spiritual autobiography.
2. Consider the poem as a compromise between the mundane and the mystical, with illustrations from all the four sections of 'Song of Myself'.
3. Write a note on the handling of symbolism in the sections you have read. What is the special significance of the symbol of 'grass' in the first section?
4. How does Whitman celebrate himself in the first section of the poem 'Song of Myself'?
5. Why, according to Whitman, man should go into open nature without any inhibition?
6. Why does Whitman ask man to 'listen to all sides and filter them from' his self.
7. How does Whitman identify himself with fundamental generative forces in Nature?
8. In what ways does Whitman's attitude towards senses constitute a basic paradox in the poem?
9. 'I celebrate myself, and sing myself. ... For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you'.
 - a. Name the poem and the poet.
 - b. Who does the poet refer to as 'you'?
 - c. Explain the ideas contained in the poem.

[GU 2007]



THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

: ROBERT LEE FROST

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Robert Lee Frost, born on Mar. 26, 1874, was one of America's leading 20th-century poets and a four-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize. An essentially pastoral poet often associated with rural New England, Frost wrote poems whose philosophical dimensions transcend any region. He was a pioneer in the interplay of rhythm and meter and in the poetic use of the vocabulary and inflections of everyday speech. His poetry is thus at the same time, traditional and experimental, regional and universal.

After his father's death in 1885, when young Frost was 11, the family left California and settled in Massachusetts. Frost attended high school in that state, entered Dartmouth College, but remained less than one semester. Returning to Massachusetts, he taught school and worked in a mill and as a newspaper reporter. In 1894 he sold "My Butterfly: An Elegy" to The Independent, a New York literary journal. A year later he married Elinor White, with whom he had shared valedictorian honors at Lawrence (Mass.) High School. From 1897 to 1899, he attended Harvard College as a special student but left without a degree. Over the next ten years he wrote (but rarely published) poems, operated a farm in Derry, New Hampshire (purchased for him by his paternal grandfather), and supplemented his income by teaching at Derry's Pinkerton Academy.

In 1912, at the age of 38, he sold the farm and used the proceeds to take his family to England, where he could devote himself entirely to writing. His efforts to establish himself and his work were almost immediately successful. 'A Boy's Will' was accepted by a London publisher and brought out in 1913, followed a year later by North of Boston. Favorable reviews on both sides of the Atlantic resulted in American publication of the books by Henry Holt and Company,

Frost's primary American publisher, and in the establishing of Frost's transatlantic reputation.

As part of his determined efforts on his own behalf, Frost had called on several prominent literary figures soon after his arrival in England. One of these was Ezra Pound, who wrote the first American review of Frost's verse for Harriet Munroe's Poetry magazine. Frost became especially close to a brooding Welshman named Edward Thomas, whom he urged to turn from prose to poetry. Thomas did so, dedicating his first and only volume of verse to Frost before his death in World War I.

The Frosts sailed for the United States in February 1915 and landed in New York City two days after the U.S. publication of 'North of Boston' (the first of his books to be published in America). Sales of that book and of 'A Boy's Will' enabled Frost to buy a farm in Franconia, N.H.; to place new poems in literary periodicals and publish a third book, 'Mountain Interval' (1916); and to embark on a long career of writing, teaching, and lecturing. In 1924, he received a Pulitzer Prize in poetry for 'New Hampshire' (1923). He was lauded again for 'Collected Poems' (1930), 'A Further Range' (1936) and 'A Witness Tree' (1942). Over the years, he received an unprecedented number and range of literary, academic, and public honors.

Frost's importance as a poet derives from the power and memorability of particular poems. 'The Death of the Hired Man' (from North of Boston) combines lyric and dramatic poetry in blank verse. After Apple-Picking (from the same volume) is a free-verse dream poem with philosophical undertones. Mending Wall (also published in North of Boston) demonstrates Frost's simultaneous command of lyrical verse, dramatic conversation, and ironic commentary. 'The Road Not Taken', 'Birches' (from Mountain Interval) and the oft-studied 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' (from New Hampshire) exemplify Frost's ability to join the pastoral and philosophical modes in lyrics of unforgettable beauty.

The poetic and political conservatism of Frost caused him to lose favor with some literary critics, but his reputation as a major poet is secure. He unquestionably succeeded in realizing his life's ambition: to write "a few poems it will be hard to get rid of."

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

35

TEXT :

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth.

5

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same.

10

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

15

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

20

ABOUT THE POEM :

Robert Frost in his poem "The Road Not Taken" dwells on the impact of selection of a particular path in human life. He says that once while traveling he came up with the situation where he has choose between two roads, which ran to different directions. He found that the first one has been frequently trodden by the travelers and the impressions of their footsteps made the surface of the road black while the other road was covered by intense grasses suggesting less use. After lingering for sometime, he chooses the path that was less frequented. The poet was quite aware of his choice and he

doubted that in his lifetime he could never change the choice he made. Yet his intuition told that a day would come in his distant future when he would look back in retrospect and feel proud that he took the road, which was quite uncommon and scarcely frequented by travelers.

WORD NOTES :

Diverged: Divided into two, bifurcated

Travel both: The poet was a lone traveler; it was not possible for him to take both the roads at a time

Yellow wood: The leaves of the trees wore a yellow colour, suggestive of the autumn season

Undergrowth: Shrubs, Bushes

And looked down one as far as I could: The poet inspected one of the two roads and strained his eyes as far as he could.

Wanted wear: The road was less frequented by travelers.

The passing there: People who passed by that way.

Trodden: to walk

Somewhere ages and ages hence: Referring to a point of time in distant future

And that has made all the difference: The fact he had to make a choice and choose the road less traveled by made all the difference to him.

★ QUESTIONS ★

1. Discuss the significance of the title of the poem, 'The Road Not Taken'.
2. 'Two roads diverged in a yellow wood' [GU 2005]
How did the poet Robert Frost feel when he saw the two roads?
How did the roads differ from each other? Which road did the poet take and why?
3. Bring out the meaning and significance of the line - 'And that has made all the difference'?
4. Discuss the central idea of the poem 'The Road Not Taken'. [GU 2007]

5. Examine the poem as an illustration of our everyday life.
6. What does Frost mean by the lines?

And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler?

7. I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

[GU 2004]

- a. Where do these lines occur?
- b. Name the poet.
- c. Expand the idea contained in the poem.
- d. What does the poet mean by the expression 'the difference'?



THE HOLLOW MEN

: THOMAS STEARN ELIOT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Thomas Stearn Eliot was born on 26 September 1888. He was the youngest of seven children, born when his parents were prosperous and secure in their mid-forties. Afflicted with a congenital double hernia, he was in the constant eye of his mother and five older sisters.

Eliot's attending Harvard seems to have been a foregone conclusion. Despite his feelings of alienation from both of the regions he called home, Eliot impressed many classmates with his social ease when he began his studies at Harvard in the fall of 1906. Like his brother Henry before him, Eliot lived his freshman year in a fashionable private dormitory in a posh neighborhood around Mt. Auburn Street known as the 'Gold Coast.' He joined a number of clubs, including the 'Literary Signet'.

In December 1908, a book Eliot found in the Harvard Union library changed his life: Arthur Symons's 'The Symbolist Movement in Literature' (1895) introduced him to the poetry of Jules Laforgue, and Laforgue's combination of ironic elegance and psychological nuance gave his juvenile literary efforts a voice. By 1909-1910, his poetic vocation had been confirmed: he joined the board and was briefly secretary of Harvard's literary magazine, 'the Advocate'.

In May 1910, a suspected case of scarlet fever almost prevented Eliot's graduation. By fall, though, he was well enough to undertake a postgraduate year in Paris. He struck up a warm friendship with a fellow lodger, Jean Verdenal, a medical student who later died in the battle of the Dardanelles and to whom Eliot dedicated "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

In early spring 1915 Eliot's old Milton Academy and Harvard friend Scofield Thayer, later editor of the 'Dial' and then also at Oxford, introduced Eliot to Vivien Haigh-Wood, a dancer and a friend of Thayer's sister. Eliot was drawn instantly to Vivien's exceptional frankness and charmed by her family's Hampstead polish. Abandoning his habitual tentativeness with women, in June 1915 he married Vivien on impulse at the Hampstead Registry Office. His parents were shocked, and then, when they learned of Vivien's history of emotional and physical problems, profoundly disturbed. The marriage nearly caused a family break, but it also indelibly marked the beginning of Eliot's English life. Vivien refused to cross the Atlantic in wartime, and Eliot took his place in literary London.

Yet the years of Eliot's literary maturation were accompanied by increasing family worries. Eliot's father died in January 1919, producing a paroxysm of guilt in the son who had hoped he would have time to heal the bad feelings caused by his marriage and emigration. At the same time, Vivien's emotional and physical health deteriorated and the financial and emotional strain of her condition took its toll. After an extended visit in the summer of 1921 from his mother and sister Marion, Eliot suffered a nervous collapse and, on his physician's advice, took a three-month's rest cure.

Whether because of the breakdown or the long needed rest it imposed, Eliot broke through a severe writer's block and completed a long poem he had been working on since 1919. Assembled out of dramatic vignettes based on Eliot's London life, 'The Waste Land' made a great impact on the literary circles. A poem suffused with Eliot's horror of life, it was taken over by the postwar generation as a rallying cry for its sense of disillusionment.

Eliot spent much of the last half of his career writing one kind of drama or another, and attempting to reach a larger and more varied audience. As early as 1923, he had written parts of an experimental and striking jazz play, 'Sweeney Agonistes'. However, Eliot's reputation as a poet and man of letters, increasing incrementally from the mid-1920s, advanced and far outstripped his theatrical success. As early as 1926, he delivered the prestigious Clark Lectures at Cambridge University, followed in 1932-1933 by the

Norton Lectures at Harvard, and just about every other honor the academy or the literary world had to offer. In 1948, Eliot received the Nobel Prize for literature during a fellowship stay at the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study. By 1950, his authority had reached a level that seemed comparable in English writing to that of figures like Samuel Johnson or Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Text :

*Mistab Kurtz-be dead
A penny for the Old Guy*

I

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar
Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;
Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
Remember us--if at all--not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams
In death's dream kingdom
These do not appear:
There, the eyes are
Sunlight on a broken column
There, is a tree swinging

THE HOLLOW MEN

And voices are
In the wind's singing
More distant and more solemn
Than a fading star.
Let me be no nearer
In death's dream kingdom
Let me also wear
Such deliberate disguises
Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves
In a field
Behaving as the wind behaves
No nearer-
Not that final meeting
In the twilight kingdom

III

This is the dead land
This is cactus land
Here the stone images
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a dead man's hand
Under the twinkle of a fading star.
Is it like this
In death's other kingdom
Waking alone
At the hour when we are
Trembling with tenderness
Lips that would kiss
Form prayers to broken stone.

IV

The eyes are not here
There are no eyes here
In this valley of dying stars
In this hollow valley
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms
In this last of meeting places
We grope together
and avoid speech



Gathered on this beach of the tumid river
 Sightless, unless
 The eyes reappear
 As the perpetual star
 Multifoliate rose
 Of death's twilight kingdom
 The hope only
 Of empty men.

V

Here we go round the prickly pear
 Prickly pear prickly pear
 Here we go round the prickly pear
 At five o'clock in the morning
 Between the idea
 And the reality
 Between the motion
 And the act
 Falls the shadow
 For Thine is the Kingdom
 Between the conception
 And the creation
 Between the emotion
 And the response
 Falls the Shadow
 Life is very long
 Between the desire
 And the spasm
 Between the potency
 and the existence
 Between the essence
 And the descent
 Falls the Shadow
 For Thine is the Kingdom
 For thine is
 Life is
 For Thine is the

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THE HOLLOW MEN

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*This is the way the world ends
 This is the way the world ends
 This is the way the world ends
 Not with a bang but a whimper.*

ABOUT THE POEM :

'The Hollow Men' describes the pathetic and wretched condition of modern men who have lost their faith, their moral strength and humanity. These effigies leaning together with their straw filled heads produce dry whisper as the wind blows over them. They symbolize the men spiritually empty and barren, men lying in the valley of bones as in 'the Wasteland', the rats' valley where dead men lost their bones. They are described as 'paralysed force', gesture without motion, which placed them in the category of negative souls in who lived in the world without praise or blame, and thus are rejected by both Heaven and Hell. These hollow men are in death's 'dream kingdom' and they clearly recall the bold and positive souls who had the courage to face truths as they are and thus have passed to Death's other kingdom leading to find redemption. In death's dream kingdom, the world of lower vision to which the hollow men are confined, the redeeming eyes can appear only in dreams. The hollow men as they cannot face reality avoid that vision by putting on deliberate disguises. Thereafter the hollow men gather on the beach of the tumid river waiting for the guidance of some blessed eye to lead them to heaven but are incapable of that self-purification which can makes them worthy of that privilege.

WORD NOTES :

Hollow men: False, insincere men

Stuffed men: Men filled with useless and silly ideas in their heads

Headpiece: helmet

Dried voices: voices without any emotion

Dry cellar: underground storeroom that is not wet

Paralyzed: palsied, inactive

Violent souls: persons capable of using violence.

Death's dream kingdom: visionary kingdom of God visited by a soul after death

Rat's coat, crow skin: refers to the practice of farmers who hang up the dead bodies or skins of pests like crows and rats to scare others from the fields

Twilight kingdom: transitional state between this life and the next.

Dead land: barren desert

Cactus land: desert where cactus grows

Stone images: idols made of stone

Supplication: humble prayer

Death's other kingdom: The kingdom of God where every man has to go after death.

Lips that would kiss/form prayers: The lips of the hollow men were unable to kiss but offer only prayers to broken images of stone.

The eyes are not here ... no eyes here: The hollow men are like the blind people unable to have the blessed vision of Heaven

Hollow valley: empty, barren valley

Broken jaw: indicates the lack of the power of communication

Lost kingdoms: kingdom of men and their illusions

Tumid river: indicates the River Acheron of hell where the dead souls meet to be ferried across the river to the land of God.

Perpetual star: the over existing and glowing star

Multifoliate rose - a rose with many petals, a vision of Heaven as a beautiful blooming rose, with Virgin Mary and other saints forming the many petals

Death's twilight kingdom: a transitional kingdom where only the hollow men have still the hope seeing the beautified vision.

Here we Morning: a parody of children's rhyme

Prickly pear: cactus growing in desert

Falls the shadow: the troublesome shadows coming to the valley of the shadow of death, mentioned in the Bible

For thine is the kingdom: The universe is God's kingdom, mentioned in the Bible.

Essence Descent: according to Plato, every bodily existence is the projection of an abstract idea.

This is the way...: Another parody of children's rhyme

Not with a bang - not with a loud sound: the earth will not end with a violent bang.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. Describe critically the poem as a comment on sterility and triviality of modern age.
2. Explain Eliot's handling of imagery and symbols in the poem.
3. What are the reasons of the poem's difficulty? Cite reasons referring to allusiveness and tonal opposites in it.
4. Give after Eliot the picture of the 'dead land' of the hollow men.
5. Bring out the meaning and significance of the final choral chant of the poem.
6. How does Eliot present the hopeless state of the empty, passive lives of the hollow men?
7. Is 'The Hollow Men' a unified poem, or a sequence of fragments whose thematic and stylistic links are to be traced by the reader?
8. How does T.S. Eliot use the epigraphs to unify his material by giving it a historical framework?



NIGHT OF THE SCORPION

: NISSIM EZEKIEL

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Nissim Ezekiel is probably the most famous living Indian poet in English. Displaying a dedication of heroic dimensions to his vocation, he has created an opus remarkable for its range and depth. He was responsible for spearheading the modernist revolution in Indian poetry in English.

Born in Mumbai to a family of educationists, Ezekiel belonged to Mumbai's Jewish community known as 'Bene Israel'. In 1947, Ezekiel did his Masters in Literature from Wilson College, University of Mumbai. In 1947-48, he taught English literature at Khalsa College, Mumbai and published literary articles. After dabbling in radical politics for a while, he sailed to London in November 1948. He studied philosophy at Birkbeck College. After a three and half years stay, Ezekiel worked his way home as a deck-scrubber aboard a cargo ship carrying arms to Indochina.

He married Daisy Jacob in 1952. In the same year, Fortune press (London) published his first collection of poetry, *A Time to Change*. He joined 'The Illustrated Weekly of India' as an assistant editor in 1953 and stayed there for two years. Soon after his return from London, he published his second book of verse *Sixty Poems*. For the next 10 years, he also worked as a broadcaster on arts and literature for All India Radio.

Nissim Ezekiel's first major literary endeavour, 'The Unfinished Man' was published in 1960. After working as an advertising copywriter and general manager of a picture frame company (1954-59), he co-founded the literary monthly *Imprint*, in 1961. He became art critic of *The Times of India* (1964-66) and edited *Poetry India* (1966-67). From 1961 to 1972, he headed the English department

NIGHT OF THE SCORPION

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of Mithibai College, Mumbai. *The Exact Name*, his fifth book of poetry was published in 1965. During this period, he had short tenures as visiting professor at University of Leeds (1964) and University of Chicago (1967). In 1969, Writers Workshop, Calcutta published his *The Three Plays*. A year later, he presented an art series of ten programs for Mumbai television.

On the invitation of the US government, he went on a month long tour to the US in November 1974. In 1976, he translated poetry from Marathi, and co-edited a fiction and poetry anthology. His poem 'The Night of the Scorpion' is used as study material in Indian and British schools.

Ezekiel received the Sahitya Akademi cultural award in 1983 and the Padma Shri in 1988. He was professor of English and reader in American literature at University of Mumbai during the 1990s, and secretary of the Indian branch of the writers' organization International PEN.

After a prolonged battle with Alzheimer's disease, Nissim Ezekiel died in Mumbai, January 9 2004 at the age of 79.

TEXT :

I remember the night my mother
was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours
of steady rain had driven him
to crawl beneath a sack of rice.
Parting with his poison-flash
of diabolic tail in the dark room-
He risked the rain again.
The peasants came like swarms of flies
and buzzed the Name of God a hundred times
to paralyse the Evil One.
With candles and with lanterns
throwing giant scorpion shadows
on the sun-baked walls
they searched for him; he was not found.
They clicked their tongues.
With every movement that the scorpion made

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his poison moved in Mother's blood, they said.
 May he sit still, they said.
 May the sins of your previous birth
 be burned away tonight, the said.
 May your suffering decrease
 the misfortunes of your next birth, they said
 May the sum of evil
 balanced in this unreal world
 against the sum of good
 become diminished by your pain they said.
 May the poison purify your flesh
 of desire, and your spirit of ambition,
 they said, and they sat around
 on the floor with my mother in the centre
 the peace of understanding on each face.
 More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours,
 more insects and the endless rain.
 My mother twisted through and through
 groaning on a mat.
 My father, sceptic, rationalist,
 trying every curse and blessing,
 powder, mixture, herb, and hybrid.
 He even poured a little paraffin
 upon the bitten toes and put a match to it.
 I watched the flame feeding on my mother.
 I watched the holy man perform his rites
 to tame the poison with incantation.
 After twenty hours it lost its sting.
 My mother only said
 Thank God the scorpion picked on me
 and spared my children.

ABOUT THE POEM :

The poem depicts the incident when his mother was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours of incessant down of incessant downpour had compelled the scorpion to enter the house and take shelter beneath

a sack of rice and coincidentally the poet's mother was stung by it. The rustic peasant population of the superstitious village community came in huge numbers and tried to mitigate her pain through their superstitious rituals. They had the opinion that the evil effect might be for her sins in her previous birth or it might be atonement for her future life. However, the poet's father being a skeptic and a rationalist tried to relieve his wife using all powder, mixture, herb and hybrid. While the simple peasants chanted the name of gods and clicked their lounges to stop movement of the scorpion as well as the poison, the poet's father burned the scar with some paraffin. A holy man offered Vedic sites and uttered incantation to lessen her pain. Ultimately, after twenty hours, her pain ceased and she heaved a sight of relief that the scorpion has at least spared her children.

WORD NOTES :

Scorpion: an insect with a sting in its tail

Poison flash: the sudden thrust of poison by the scorpion

Diabolic tail: devilish tail of the scorpion with which it stings.

Swarms of flies: [here] to gather in large numbers

Evil one: the devil. Here, the scorpion

Giant scorpion shadows: The lights of the lanterns cast shadows like that of huge scorpions on mud walls

Sun baked: mud heated and dried by the heat of the sun.

Clicked their tongues: to make sounds as a display of lament and sympathy

With every moment mother's blood: As the scorpion freely moved about, the peasants believed that the poison too flowed in the mother's blood to make her suffer more

Previous birth: earlier birth

Sins of previous birth tonight: The ignorant peasants hoped that the deadly poison might burn away the sins of the mother's previous birth that night

Next birth: the belief that man is born again after death

This unreal world: This world which is an illusion

Purify your spirit of ambition: The peasants, in their

ignorance, believed that the poison might purify the mother's soul of sins and desires of flesh and rid her spirit of ambition
Peace of understanding: The peace one feels as one understands something, which has troubled him for a long time.
More insects: the lights of the neighbor cast insect like shadows in the wall

Skeptic: to doubt anything that is not reasonable
Rationalist: one who thinks that reason has a final say in all matters.

Hybrid: combination of different types of drugs

Holy man: medicine man who might be a priest, capable of working magic cures

Incantation: magic spell.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. Discuss Ezekiel's use of irony in the poem.
2. What aspect of Indian society does the poet highlight? Do the peasants evoke the poet's admiration or satire?
3. Analyse the conflict between superstition and reason in the poem.
4. What are the things the neighbours do to mitigate the sufferings of the poet's mother?
5. Describe the scene when the poet's mother was stung by a scorpion.
6. What aspects of village life are projected in the poem 'Night of the Scorpion'?
7. Do you think that the peasants of the poem are more religious than superstitious? Give reasons for your answer.



DAWN AT PURI

: JAYANTA MAHAPATRA

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Jayanta Mahapatra, born on 22 October 1923 in Cuttack, belongs to a lower middle-class family. He had his early education at Stewart school, Cuttack. After his Master's Degree in Physics, he joined as a teacher in 1949 and served in different Government college of Orissa.

Jayanta Mahapatra began writing poems rather late in comparison with his contemporaries. However, this late beginning does not in anyway distort his achievement. His poems have appeared in most of the reputed journals of the world. He received the prestigious Jacob Glatstein Memorial Award (Chicago) in 1975. He is the first Indian poet in English to have received the Central Sahitya Akademi Award (1981) for his 'Relationship'. His other volumes include 'Close the Sky', 'Ten by Ten', 'Svayamvara & Other Poems', 'A Rain of Rites', 'Waiting', 'The False Start & Life Sings'. His translations from Oriya to English bear the stamp of his originality too.

Mahapatra's early poems were born of love, of love's selfishness. They celebrate not only passion, the body's spacious business, but consistently evoke a melancholic atmosphere rent with absences, fears, foreboding and sufferings. However, slowly and steadily the poet released himself from this lonesome citadel of love, and learnt involving himself with other men, living or dead with many other succulent chambers of living. Fear of ageing, fear of death, and love for life and memory, love for the golden past an inquisitiveness to live amid contraries of life, and a complete absorption in and identification with culture and tradition of Orissa—all these run simultaneously, as it were, the poet is sincerely trying to uphold the lost dimension of blood and the living. Death is a new beginning for the poet, and life a 'telegraph key tapping away in the dark'.

The richness and sophistication of language, the softness and delicacy of the words chosen, systematized orchestration of

authenticated experiences through the exact palpability of images, the sincerity of harping on the 'feel' of the experiences rather than on their 'thought' and the sweetness of music emerging from a fountain-like flow of the verse-form contribute to the greatness and ingenuity of Mahapatra's poetry.

Besides being one of the most popular Indian poets of his generation, Mahapatra was also part of the trilogy of poets who laid the foundations of Indian English Poetry. He shared a special bond with A. K. Ramanujan, one of the finest poets in the Indian English literature. Mahapatra is also different in not being a product of the Bombay school of poets. Over time, he has managed to carve a quiet, tranquil poetic voice of his own--distinctly different from those of his contemporaries. His wordy lyricism combined with authentic Indian themes put him in a league of his own.

TEXT :

Endless crow noises.
A skull on the holy sands
Tilts its empty country towards hunger.
White-clad widowed women
past the centres of their lives
are waiting to enter the Great temple.
Their austere eyes
Stare like those caught in a net,
Hanging by the dawn's shining strands of faith
The frail early light catches
ruined, leprous shells leaning against one another,
a mass of crouched faces without names,
and suddenly breaks out of my hide
into the smoky blaze of a sullen solitary pyre
that fills my aging mother:
her last wish to be cremated here
twisting uncertainty like light
on the shifting sands.

ABOUT THE POEM :

In his poem 'Dawn at Puri' the poet dwells with the early morning scene of the temple of Jagannath at Puri. Large number of devotees, which include beggars and other disease stricken people, gather in the city to offer their prayers and rituals. The noises of the

crows add to the clamorous environment of the area. Human skulls on the holy sands of the beach suggest clearly the poverty of the inhabitants. The middle-aged white clad widowed women have the look of ascetics with their austere eyes as if they are compelled to abide by the social customs that have never given them any contentment or satisfaction of their heart. Human skulls and shells gathered by the waves on the beach symbolize the ephemeral existence of the earthly beings. The poet recollects the past memory of the solitary blazing pyre of his mother who was cremated on the sandy seashore at Puri as a fulfillment of her last wish.

WORD NOTES :

Tilts: assume sloping position or heel over.

Austere: lacking comfort, severely simple

Strands: run aground in difficulties esp. without money or transport.

Frail: fragile, delicate

Leprous: fragile, delicate

Leprous: contagious disease of skin and nerves.

Sullen: dull, gloomy.

Pyre: pile of combustible material esp. for burning corpse.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. Give, after Mahapatra, a description of the 'dawn' at Puri and his own reaction to it. [GU 2005]
2. How does the poet present the sad predicament of the widows and lepers?
3. Critically analyse the theme of the poem, 'Dawn at Puri'
4. Give the meanings of the following:—
 - (a) 'Their austere eyes
Stare like those caught in a net'.
 - (b) 'Twisting uncertainty like light
On the shifting sands'.
5. Show how Mahapatra vividly portrays the dawn about the great temple.
6. "Her last wish shifting sands." -Explain these lines with reference to the dominant tone of the poem.

THE FROG AND THE NIGHTINGALE

: VIKRAM SETH

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Vikram Seth, though born in Calcutta, at the Bata Shoe Company town of Batanagar, he spent his childhood in a number of places, from Patna to London. He himself spent extended periods away at boarding school from the age of five. His father, Prem, was an executive of the Bata India Limited shoe company who migrated to post-Partition India from West Punjab in Pakistan. His mother was the first woman judge on the Delhi High Court as well as the first woman to become Chief Justice of a state High Court, at Shimla.

Having lived in London for many years, Vikram Seth now maintains residences near Salisbury, England, where he is a notable participant in local literary and cultural events. In 2006, he bought and renovated the house of the seventeenth century Anglican divine and metaphysical poet George Herbert and in Delhi, where he lives with his parents and keeps his extensive library and papers.

In 1980-82 Seth did extensive field work in China gathering data for his intended doctoral dissertation on Chinese population planning; he was attached to Nanjing University while in China and became fluent in Mandarin within six months, later translating Chinese as well as Hindi poetry into English. He took advantage of his Chinese language fluency to return home to Delhi overland via Xinjiang and Tibet, resulting in 'From Heaven Lake: Travels through Sinkiang and Tibet' (1983), a combination travel narrative and personal memoir written at the suggestion of his father.

Seth is now best known for his novels, though he has characterised himself as a poet first and novelist second. He has published five volumes of poetry. His first, Mappings (1980), was originally privately published; it attracted little attention and indeed

THE FROG AND THE NIGHTINGALE

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Philip Larkin, to whom he sent it for comment, referred to it rather scornfully among his intimates, though he offered Seth encouragement. Whether or not Seth's poetry is expressly influenced by Larkin, it contains similar elements: a highly colloquial vocabulary and syntax with enjambment and rhyme; closely structured form but without rigidity.

TEXT :

Once upon a time a frog
croaked away in Bingle Bog.
Every night from dusk to dawn
He croaked awn and awn and awn.
Other creatures loathed his voice, 5
But, alas, they had not choice,
And the crass cacophony
Blared out from the sumac tree
At whose foot the frog each night
Minstrelled on till morning light. 10
Neither stones nor prayers nor sticks,
Insults or complaints or bricks
Stilled the frog's determination
To display his heart's elation.
But one night a nightingale 15
In the moonlight cold and pale
Perched upon the sumac tree
Casting forth her melody.
Dumbstruck sat the gaping frog,
And the whole admiring bog 20
Stared towards the sumac, rapt,
And, when she had ended, clapped.
Ducks had swum and herons waded
To her as she serenaded,
And a solitary loon 25
Wept beneath the summer moon.
Toads and teals and tiddlers, captured

By her voice, cheered on, enraptured
 'Bravo!' 'Too divine!' 'Encore!'
 So the nightingale once more,
 Quite unused to such applause,
 Sang till dawn without a pause.
 Next night when the Nightingale
 Shook her head and twitched her tail,
 Closed an eye and fluffed a wing
 And had cleared her throat to sing
 She was startled by a croak.
 'Sorry-was that you who spoke?'
 She enquired when the frog
 Hopped towards her from the bog.
 'Yes,' the frog replied. 'You see,
 I'm the frog who owns this tree.
 In this bog I've long been known
 For my splendid baritone
 And of course, I wield my pen
 For Bog Trumpet now and then'
 'Did you-did you like my song?'
 'Not to bad-but far too long.
 The technique was fine, of course,
 But it lacked a certain force.'
 'Oh!' the nightingale confessed.
 Greatly flattered and impressed
 That a critic of such note
 Had discussed her art and throat:
 'I don't think the song's divine
 But-oh well-at least it's mine.'
 'That's not much to boast about.'
 Said the heartless frog. 'Without
 Proper training such as I
 -And few others-can supply,
 You'll remain a mere beginner.
 But with me you'll be a winner.'
 'Dearest frog,' the nightingale

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THE FROG AND THE NIGHTINGALE

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Breathed "This is a fairy tale-
 And you're Mozart in disguise
 Come to earth before my eyes.'
 'Well, I charge a modest fee.'
 'Oh!' 'But it won't hurt, you'll see'
 Now the nightingale inspired,
 Flushed with confidence, and fired
 With both art and adoration
 Sang-and was a huge sensation:
 Animals for miles around
 Flocked towards the magic sound,
 And the frog with great precision
 Counted heads and charged admission.
 Though next morning it was raining,
 He began her vocal training.
 'But I can't sing in this weather'
 'Come, my dear-we'll sing together.
 Just put on your scarf and sash.
 Koo-oh-ah! ko-ash! ko-ash!'
 (So the frog and nightingale
 journeyed up and down the scale
 For six hours, till she was shivering
 And her voice was hoarse and quivering.
 Though subdued and sleep-deprived,
 In the night her throat revived.
 And the sumac tree was bowed
 With a breathless, titled crowd:
 Owl of Sandwich, Duck of Kent,
 Mallard and Milady Trent,
 Martin Cardinal Mephisto,
 And the Count of Monte Cristo.
 Ladies with tiaras glittering
 In the interval sat twittering-
 And the frog observed them glitter
 With a joy both sweet and bitter.
 Every day the frog who'd sold her

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Songs for silver tried to scold her :
 'you must practise even longer
 Till your voice, like mine, grows stronger.
 In the second song last night
 You got nervous, in mid-flight.
 And, my dear, lay on more trills :
 Audiences enjoy such frills.
 You must make your public happier :
 Give them something sharper, snappier.
 We must aim for better billings.
 You still owe me sixty shillings.
 Day by day the nightingale
 Grew more sorrowful and pale.
 Night on night her tired song
 Zipped and trilled and bounced along,
 'Till the birds and beasts grew tired
 At a voice so uninspired.
 And the ticket office gross
 Crashed, and she grew more morose-
 For her ears were now addicted
 To applause quite unrestricted,
 And to sing into the night
 All alone gave no delight.
 Now the frog puffed up with rage.
 'Brainless bird-you're on the stage-
 Use your wits and follow fashion
 Use your lungs out with your passion.'
 trembling terrified to fail,
 Blind with tears, the nightingale
 Heard him out in silence, tried,
 Puffed up, burst a vein, and died.
 Said the frog: 'I tried to teach her,
 But she was a stupid creature-
 Far too nervous, far too tense,
 Far too prone to influence.
 Well, poor bird-she should have known

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THE FROG AND THE NIGHTINGALE

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That your song must be your own.
 That's why I sing with panache :
 "Koo-oh-ah! ko-ash! ko-ash!"
 And the foghorn of the frog
 Blared unrivalled through the bog.

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ABOUT THE POEM :

In this poem, Vikram Seth dwells on two classes of artists in the society. One, those sham artists who pose as great connoisseurs of art to enjoy the glitz and glamour of publicity and the other section who doesn't devote whole heartedly to their art but are inspired by the monetary gains. Once there lived a frog in a bog at the foot of a sumac tree and used to croak every day though all the creatures of the forest loathed his voice. Neither the stones, nor prayers; sticks, insults or complaints, could compel the frog to sing his ludicrous song until a nightingale perched upon the sumac tree and began to sing her melodious notes. The frog was dumbstruck and all the animate objects of the bog listened to the nightingale in rapt attention. They were enchanted by the song and appreciated it by applause. The next night as the nightingale was about to sing her notes the frog interrupted her notes the frog interrupted her and convinced her that he has a great taste for music. The frog offered his views upon the nightingale's piece and the bird did not realise that the false praise and the senseless criticism of the frog might ruin her. They agreed to collect a moderate charge from their audience the frog encouraged her to sing more profusely, the bird grew more weak and pale, and the quality of her songs degraded day by day. The audience was not at all entertained by such an uninspiring voice and their business bore a heavy loss. The frog rebuked the poor bird for not being able to perform as per the expectations of the audience. Ultimately, the bird died and the frog remained the invincible and the unchallenged singer of the bog.

WORD NOTES :

- Croaked*: deep hoarse sound.
Loathed: detest, hate.
Blared: sound or utter loudly.
Minstrel: medieval singer or musician, musical entertainer with black face.
Elation: make delighted or proud.
Perched: bird's resting place above ground.
Gaping: open mouthed stare.
Bog: wet spongy ground.
Heron: long necked long legged wading bird.
Waded: walk through.
Enraptured: delight intensely.
Encore: audience's call for repetition of item.
Twisted: reproach, taunt, usually good-humouredly.
Fluffed: soft fur, feathers.
Startled: shocked, surprised.
Wield: hold and use, control.
Sash: strip or loop of cloth worn over one shoulder or round waist.
Subdued: suppress, conquer.
Twittering: utter succession of light tremulous sounds.
Trills: quavering sound, esp. quick alternation of notes.
Frills: unnecessary embellishments.
Snappier: brisk, lively, neat and elegant.
Bill: programme of entertainment.
Puffed: short quick blast of breath.
Unrivalled: having no equal.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. Examine 'The Frog and the Nightingale' as a beast fable.
2. Write a note on the element of satire in the poem, 'The Frog and the Nightingale'.

3. Illustrate Seth's use of language in the poem. Does it heighten the realism or do you think it only lightens the energy of the poem?
4. How does the frog impress the nightingale in their meeting and lead the nightingale to her ruin?
5. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem.
6. Try to draw a parallel between the tale of the frog and the nightingale and human life situations. Is there any moral attached to it?
[GU 2004]
7. Discuss the central idea of the poem 'The Frog and the Nightingale'.
[GU 2007]



SHORT STORIES SECTION

THE FLY

: KATHERINE MANSFIELD

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Katherine Mansfield, (1888-1923), pseudonym of Kathleen Murry, original name Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp, was a British short-story writer, born in Wellington, New Zealand. She is considered one of the great masters of the short-story form.

Mansfield's stories are poetic, delicate, and ironic; they are characterized by a subtle sensitivity to mood and emotion, revealing the inner conflicts her characters face and resolve. She uses the short story form as a medium to present to us the lives of ordinary mortals. Mansfield's creative years were burdened with loneliness, illness, jealousy, and alienation - all this find expression in her work with the bitter depiction of marital and family relationships of her middle-class characters. Like the Russian writer Anton Chekhov, Mansfield depicted trivial events and subtle changes in human behavior. In the words of H.E. Bates, she 'saw the possibilities of telling the story by what was left out as much as by what was left in, or alternately describing one set of events and consequences while really indicating another' and further, 'she delights in making her characters show their thoughts by a kind of mental soliloquy, fluttering, gossipy, breathless with question and answer'. In her last years Mansfield lived much of her time in southern France and in Switzerland, seeking relief from tuberculosis. Without the company of her literary friends, family, or her husband, she wrote much about her own roots and her childhood. Mansfield died of a pulmonary hemorrhage on January 9, 1923, in Gurdjieff Institute, near Fontainebleau, France. Her last words were: "I love the rain. I want the feeling of it on my face."

Mansfield's major writings include *In a German Pension* (1911). Her family memoirs were collected in *Bliss* (1920), which secured her reputation as a writer. In the next two years she did her best

work, the peak of her achievement being the *Garden Party* (1922), which she wrote during the final stages of her illness. Only three volumes of Mansfield's stories were published during her lifetime. *The Dove's Nest* (1923) and *Something Childish* (1924), both edited by her husband, were published after Mansfield's death, as were other collections of her poems, journals, and letters.

THE FLY :

This short story, though brief, has been described as 'one of the fifteen finest short stories ever written' (Thorpe). *The Fly* can be considered as an indictment of life at the same time as it suggests the indomitable nature of the human spirit that refuses to be crushed down by the adversities of life. The fly episode symbolizes the innate inclination of humans to survive even in the midst of calamity.

TEXT :

"Y'are¹ very snug² in here," piped old Mr. Woodifield, and peered out of the great, green-leather armchair by his friend the boss's desk as a baby peers out of its pram. His talk was over; it was time for him to be off. But he did not want to go. Since he had retired, since his ... stroke, the wife and the girls kept him boxed up³ in the house every day of the week except Tuesday. On Tuesday he was dressed and brushed and allowed to cut back to the City⁴ for the day. Though what he did there the wife and girls couldn't imagine. Made a nuisance of himself to his friends, they supposed.... Well, perhaps so. All the same, we cling to our last pleasures as the tree clings to its last leaves⁵. So there sat old Woodifield, smoking a cigar and staring almost greedily at the boss, who rolled in his office chair, stout, rosy, five years older than he, and still going strong, still at the helm⁶. It did one good to see him.

Wistfully, admiringly, the old voice added, "It's snug in here, upon my word!"

"Yes, it's comfortable enough," agreed the boss, and he flipped the *Financial Times* with a paper knife. As a matter of fact he was proud of his room; he liked to have it admired, especially by old Woodifield. It gave him a feeling of deep, solid satisfaction to be

THE FLY

planted there in the midst of it in full view of that frail old figure in the muffler.

"I've had it done up lately," he explained, as he had explained for the past-how many?-weeks. "New carpet," and he pointed to the bright red carpet with a pattern of large white rings. "New furniture," and he nodded towards the massive bookcase and the table with legs like twisted treacle. "Electric heating!" He waved almost exultantly towards the five transparent, pearly sausages glowing so softly in the tilted copper pan.

But he did not draw old Woodifield's attention to the photograph over the table of a grave-looking boy in uniform⁷ standing in one of those spectral photographers' parks with photographers' storm-clouds behind him. It was not new. It had been there for over six years.

"There was something I wanted to tell you," said old Woodifield, and his eyes grew dim remembering. "Now what was it? I had it in my mind when I started out this morning." His hands began to tremble, and patches of red showed above his beard.

Poor old chap, he's on his last pins⁸, thought the boss. And, feeling kindly, he winked at the old man, and said jokingly, "I tell you what. I've got a little drop of something here that'll do you good before you go out into the cold again. It's beautiful stuff. It wouldn't hurt a child." He took a key off his watch-chain, unlocked a cupboard below his desk, and drew forth a dark, squat bottle. "That's the medicine," said he. "And the man from whom I got it told me on the strict Q.T.⁹ it came from the cellars at Windsor Castle¹⁰."

Old Woodifield's mouth fell open at the sight. He couldn't have looked more surprised if the boss had produced a rabbit.

"It's whisky, ain't it?" he piped feebly.

The boss turned the bottle and lovingly showed him the label. Whisky it was.

"D'you know," said he, peering up at the boss wonderingly, "they won't let me touch it at home." And he looked as though he was going to cry.

"Ah, that's where we know a bit more than the ladies," cried the boss, swooping across for two tumblers that stood on the table with the water-bottle, and pouring a generous finger into each. "Drink it down. It'll do you good. And don't put any water with it. It's sacrilege to tamper with stuff like this. Ah!" He tossed off his, pulled out his handkerchief, hastily wiped his moustaches, and cocked an eye at old Woodifield, who was rolling his in his chaps.

The old man swallowed, was silent a moment, and then said faintly, "It's nutty!"

But it warmed him; it crept into his chill old brain—he remembered.

"That was it," he said, heaving himself out of his chair. "I thought you'd like to know. The girls were in Belgium last week having a look at poor Reggie's grave, and they happened to come across your boy's. They're quite near each other, it seems."

Old Woodifield paused, but the boss made no reply. Only a quiver in his eyelids showed that he heard.

"The girls were delighted with the way the place is kept," piped the old voice. "Beautifully looked after. Couldn't be better if they were at home. You've not been across, have yer?"

"No, no!" For various reasons the boss had not been across. "There's miles of it," quavered old Woodifield, "and it's all as neat as a garden. Flowers growing on all the graves. Nice broad paths." It was plain from his voice how much he liked a nice broad path.

The pause came again. Then the old man brightened wonderfully.

"D'you know what the hotel made the girls pay for a pot of jam?" he piped. "Ten francs! Robbery, I call it. It was a little pot, so Gertrude says, no bigger than a half-crown. And she hadn't taken more than a spoonful when they charged her ten francs. Gertrude brought the pot away with her to teach 'em a lesson. Quite right, too; it's trading on our feelings. They think because we're over there having a look round we're ready to pay anything. That's what it is." And he turned towards the door.

"Quite right, quite right!" cried the boss, though what was quite right he hadn't the least idea. He came round by his desk, followed the shuffling footsteps to the door, and saw the old fellow out. Woodifield was gone.

For a long moment the boss stayed, staring at nothing, while the grey-haired office messenger, watching him, dodged in and out of his cubbyhole like a dog that expects to be taken for a run. Then: "I'll see nobody for half an hour, Macey," said the boss. "Understand? Nobody at all."

"Very good, sir."

The door shut, the firm heavy steps recrossed the bright carpet, the fat body plumped down in the spring chair, and leaning forward, the boss covered his face with his hands. He wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep....

It had been a terrible shock to him when old Woodifield sprang that remark upon him about the boy's grave. It was exactly as though the earth had opened and he had seen the boy lying there with Woodifield's girls staring down at him. For it was strange. Although over six years had passed away, the boss never thought of the boy except as lying unchanged, unblemished in his uniform, asleep for ever. "My son!" groaned the boss. But no tears came yet. In the past, in the first months and even years after the boy's death, he had only to say those words to be overcome by such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping could relieve him. Time, he had declared then, he had told everybody, could make no difference. Other men perhaps might recover, might live their loss down, but not he. How was it possible! His boy was an only son. Ever since his birth the boss had worked at building up this business for him; it had no other meaning if it was not for the boy. Life itself had come to have no other meaning. How on earth could he have slaved, denied himself, kept going all those years without the promise for ever before him of the boy's stepping into his shoes and carrying on where he left off?

And that promise had been so near being fulfilled. The boy had been in the office learning the ropes for a year before the war. Every morning they had started off together; they had come back by the same train. And what congratulations he had received as the boy's father! No wonder; he had taken to it marvellously. As to his popularity with the staff, every man jacked¹² of them down to old Macey couldn't make enough of the boy. And he wasn't in the least spoilt. No, he was just his bright natural self, with the right word for everybody, with that boyish look and his habit of saying, "Simply splendid!"

But all that was over and done with as though it never had been. The day had come when Macey had handed him the telegram that brought the whole place crashing about his head. "Deeply regret to inform you..."¹³ And he had left the office a broken man, with his life in ruins.

Six years ago, six years.... How quickly time passed! It might have happened yesterday. The boss took his hands from his face: he was puzzled. Something seemed to be wrong with him. He wasn't feeling as he wanted to feel. He decided to get up and have a look at the boy's photograph. But it wasn't a favourite photograph of his; the expression was unnatural. It was cold, even stern-looking. The boy had never looked like that.

At that moment the boss noticed that a fly had fallen into his broad inkpot, and was trying feebly but desperately to clamber out again. Help! Help! said those struggling legs. But the sides of the inkpot were wet and slippery; it fell back again and began to swim. The boss took up a pen, picked the fly out of the ink, and shook it on to a piece of blotting paper. For a fraction of a second it lay still on the dark patch that oozed round it. Then the front legs waved, took hold, and, pulling its small, sodden body up, it began the immense task of cleaning the ink from its wings. Over and under, over and under, went a leg along a wing as the stone goes over and under the scythe. Then there was a pause, while the fly, seeming to stand on the tips of its toes, tried to expand first one wing and then the other. It succeeded at last, and, sitting down, it began, like a

minute cat, to clean its face. Now one could imagine that the little front legs rubbed against each other lightly, joyfully. The horrible danger was over; it had escaped; it was ready for life again¹⁴.

But just then the boss had an idea. He plunged his pen back into the ink, leaned his thick wrist on the blotting-paper, and as the fly tried its wings down came a great heavy blot. What would it make of that! What indeed! The little beggar seemed absolutely cowed, stunned, and afraid to move because of what would happen next. But then, as if painfully, it dragged itself forward. The front legs waved, caught hold, and, more slowly this time, the task began from the beginning.

He's a plucky little devil, thought the boss, and he felt a real admiration for the fly's courage. That was the way to tackle things; that was the right spirit. Never say die; it was only a question of... But the fly had again finished its laborious task, and the boss had just time to refill his pen, to shake fair and square on the new-cleaned body yet another dark drop. What about it this time? A painful moment of suspense followed. But behold, the front legs were again waving; the boss felt a rush of relief. He leaned over the fly and said to it tenderly, "You artful little b..." And he actually had the brilliant notion of breathing on it to help the drying process. All the same, there was something timid and weak about its efforts now, and the boss decided that this time should be the last, as he dipped the pen deep into the inkpot.

It was. The last blot fell on the soaked blotting-paper, and the dragged fly lay in it and did not stir. The back legs were stuck to the body; the front legs were not to be seen.

"Come on," said the boss. "Look sharp!" And he stirred it with his pen-in vain. Nothing happened or was likely to happen. The fly was dead.

The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paper knife and flung it into the waste-paper basket. But such a grinding feeling of wretchedness seized him that he felt positively frightened. He started forward and pressed the bell for Macey.

"Bring me some fresh blotting-paper," he said sternly, "and look sharp about it." And while the old dog¹⁵ padded away he fell to wondering what it was he had been thinking about before. What was it? It was ... He took out his handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. For the life of him he could not remember.

WORDS NOTES :

1. *Y'are* : you are (Concise form).
2. *snug*: cosy. The office was homelike; comfortable.
3. *boxed up*: movements restricted; confined; caged; locked up.
4. *City*: London. In particular, the business area of London.
5. *we cling to our last pleasures*: It is the undying optimism in humans that make them hang on to the last pleasures of life even though they know that such pleasures are temporal.
6. *at the helm*: in command; in control; in authority.
7. *in uniform*: in army uniform. The boss's son was called for army duty and had died in action in course of the World War (1914-18). Katherine Mansfield's brother had also died in similar circumstances.
8. *on his last pins*: in the last days of life.
9. *on the strict Q.T.* : 'in the strictest confidence'. Q.T- quiet (slang).
10. *Windsor Castle*: Home of the Royal family of England.
11. *But no tears came yet*: Unlike in the past, the remembrance of his dead son failed to move the boss to tears.
12. *every man jack*: every one of them. Everybody. Jack is a common name and so loosely applied to everybody.
13. *Deeply regret to inform you...*: during the war, news of death of those killed in action was conveyed to family members by telegrams that contained these words of condolence.
14. *it was ready for life again*: Having overcome its adversity, the fly was again ready for life. A parallel situation existed for the boss who had overcome the tragedy of his son's death in the war.
15. *old dog*: faithful servant (slang).

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. Make a critical assessment of Mansfield as a short storywriter with special reference to *The Fly*.
2. Do you agree with the view that *The Fly* symbolizes the indomitable spirit in human beings? Give reasons for your answer. [GU 2007]
3. "*The horrible danger was over; it had escaped; it was ready for life again.*" Discuss the significance of this expression in the light of your reading of Mansfield's short story *The Fly*.
4. Make a critical assessment of the character of the Boss. Do you think that he is as proud and strong as he appears to be? Give reasons.



THE WEED

: AMRITA PRITAM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Amrita Pritam (b. 1919) is a well-known name in Indian literature, being the first most prominent woman Punjabi poet and fiction writer. Born on 31 August 1919, Amrita Pritam had a distorted childhood. She lost her mother when she was just 11, and at a later adolescent stage, her poetry was something, which her father thoroughly despised because of its unconventional tone. What he anticipated from his exceptionally talented daughter was religious verse and not the sensuous and spontaneous outpourings of love.

The first woman recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award, Amrita Pritam was also the first Punjabi woman to receive the Padma Shree from the President of India in 1969. Though critical of the socialist camp, her works were translated in all the east European languages including French, Japanese and Danish. *Mehfil*, a quarterly from Michigan State University had an issue completely devoted to her works. She was awarded the Jnanpeth award in 1982 for her lifetime contribution to Punjabi literature.

Amrita Pritam is often regarded as the "goddess of defiance". Her works, especially the poetry, tempts the reader to break off the existential contrarities and contradictions of life. Her principal task was to portray the society as it subsisted with stink and flavour, good and bad. In truth, it was her creative talent wrought up with the twinge of bereavement that came of age during the dark days of the Partition of Punjab. Small wonder then, that one of the most beautifully weird poems ever written by Amrita was the *New Heer* or *Aankhaan Waris Shah Nu*, which was addressed "to the author of the Punjabi romantic epic of immortal love".

THE WEED

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THE WEED :

Gender discrimination forms a major issue in this short story. Amrita Pritam presents to us the memorable character of Angoori who is the quintessence of the downtrodden womenfolk of India dominated by the males in an unsympathetic society that turns a deaf ear to the women's needs and desires. It is a society where all the finer things of life are considered the exclusive prerogative of men. The term 'weed' is used in its varied meanings- as '*a plant of no utility*', '*a troublesome, harmful or unprofitable thing*', and as '*a feeble and contemptible person*'.

TEXT :

Angoori was the new bride of the old servant of my neighbour's neighbour¹. Every bride is new, for that matter; but she was new in a different way: the second wife of her husband who could not be called new because he had already drunk once at the conjugal well². As such, the prerogatives of being new went to Angoori only. This realization was further accentuated when one considered the five years that passed before they could consummate their union.

About six years ago Prabhati had gone home to cremate his first wife. When this was done, Angoori's father approached him and took his wet towel, wringing it dry, a symbolic gesture of wiping away the tears of grief that had wet the towel. There never was a man, though, who cried enough to wet a yard-and-a-half of calico³. It had got wet only after Prabhati's bath. The simple act of drying the tear-stained towel on the part of a person with a nubile daughter was as much as to say, 'I give you my daughter to take the place of the one who died. Don't cry anymore. I've even dried your wet towel.'

This is how Angoori married Prabhati. However, their union was postponed for five years, for two reasons: her tender age, and her mother's paralytic attack. When, at last Prabhati was invited to take his bride away, it seemed he would not be able to, for his employer was reluctant to feed another mouth from his kitchen. But when Prabhati told him that his new wife could keep her own house, the employer agreed.

At first, Angoori kept purdah⁴ from both men and women. But the veil soon started to shrink until it covered only her hair, as was becoming to an orthodox Hindu woman. She was a delight to both ear and eye. A laughter in the tinkling of her hundred ankle-bells, and a thousand bells in her laughter.

'What are you wearing Angoori?'

'An anklet. Isn't it pretty?'

'And what's on your toe?'

'A ring.'

'And on your arm?'

'A bracelet.'

'What do they call what's on your forehead?'

'They call it aliband⁵.'

'Nothing on your waist today, Angoori?'

'It's too heavy. Tomorrow I'll wear it. Today, no necklace either. See! The clasp is broken. Tomorrow I'll go to the city to get a new clasp ... and buy a nose-pin. I had a big nose-ring. But my mother-in-law kept it.'

Angoori was very proud of her silver jewelry, elated by the mere touch of her trinkets. Everything she did seemed to set them off to maximum effect.

The weather became hot with the turn of the season. Angoori too must have felt it in her hut where she passed a good part of the day, for now she stayed out more. There were a few huge *neem* trees in front of my house, underneath them an old well that nobody used except an occasional construction worker. The spilt water made several puddles, keeping the atmosphere around the well cool. She often sat near the well to relax.

'What are you reading, *bibi*?⁶' Angoori asked me one day when I sat under a *neem* tree reading.

'Want to read it?'

'I don't know reading.'

'Want to learn?'

'Oh, no!'

'Why not? What's wrong with it?'

'It's a sin for women to read!'

'And what about men?'

'For them, It's not a sin.'

'Who told you this nonsense?'

'I just know it.'

'I read. I must be sinning.'

'For city women, it's no sin. It is for village women.'

We both laughed at this remark. She had not learned to question all that she was told to believe. I thought that if she found peace in her convictions, who was I to question them?

Her body redeemed her dark complexion, an intense sense of ecstasy always radiating from it, a resilient sweetness⁷. They say a woman's body is like a lump of dough; some women have the looseness of under-kneaded dough, while others have the clinging plasticity of leavened dough. Rarely does a woman have a body that can be equated to rightly kneaded dough, a baker's pride. Angoori's body belonged to this category, her rippling muscles impregnated with the metallic resilience of a coiled spring. I felt her face, arms, breasts, legs with my eyes and experienced a profound languor⁸. I thought of Prabhati: old, short, loose-jawed, a man whose stature and angularity would be the death of Euclid⁹. Suddenly a funny idea struck me: Angoori was the dough covered by Prabhati. He was her napkin, not her taster.¹⁰ I felt a laugh welling up inside me, but I checked it for fear that Angoori would sense what I was laughing about. I asked her how marriages are arranged where she came from.

'A girl, when she's five or six, adores someone's feet. He is the husband.'

'How does she know it?'

'Her father takes money and flowers and puts them at his feet.'

'That's the father adoring, not the girl.'

'He does it for the girl. So it's the girl herself.'

'But the girl has never seen him before!'

'Yes, girls don't see.'

'Not a single girl even sees her future husband!'

'No... she hesitated. After a long, pensive pause, she added, 'Those in love ... they see them.'

'Do girls in your village have love-affairs?'

'A few.'

'Those in love, they don't sin?' I remembered her observation regarding education for women.

'They don't. See, what happens is that a man makes the girl eat the weed and then she starts loving him.'

'Which weed?'

'The wild one.'

'Doesn't the girl know that she has been given the weed?'

'No, he gives it to her in a *paan*. After that, nothing satisfies her but to be with him, her man. I know. I've seen it with my own eyes.'

'Whom did you see?'

'A friend; she was older than me.'

'And what happened?'

'She went crazy. Ran away with him to the city.'

'How do you know it was because of the weed?'

'What else could it be? Why would she leave her parents? He brought her many things from the city: clothes, trinkets, sweets.'

'Where does this weed come in?'

'In the sweets: otherwise how could she love him?'

'Love can come in other ways. No other way here?'

'No other way. What her parents hated was that she was that way.'

'Have you seen the weed?'

'No, they bring it from a far country. My mother warned me not to take *paan* or sweets from anyone. Men put the weed in them.'

'You were very wise. How come your friend ate it?'

'To make herself suffer,' she said sternly. The next moment her face clouded, perhaps in remembering her friend 'Crazy. She went crazy, the poor thing,' she said sadly. 'Never combed her hair, singing all night ...'

'What did she sing?'

'I don't know. They all sing when they eat the weed. Cry too.'

The conversation was becoming a little too much to take, so retired.

I found her sitting under the *neem* tree one day in a profoundly abstracted mood. Usually one could hear Angoori coming to the

well; her ankle-bells would announce her approach. They were silent that day.

'What's the matter, Angoori?'

She gave me a blank look and then, recovering a little, said,

'Teach me reading, *bibi*.'

'What has happened?'

'Teach me to write my name.'

'Why do you want to write? To write letters? To whom?'

She did not answer, but was once again lost in her thoughts.

'Won't you be sinning?' I asked, trying to draw her out of her mood. She would not respond. I went in for an afternoon nap. When I came out again in the evening, she was still there singing sadly to herself. When she heard me approaching, she turned around and stopped abruptly. She sat with hunched shoulders because of the chill in the evening breeze.

'You sing well, Angoori.' I watched her great effort to turn back the tears and spread a pale smile across her lips.

'I don't know singing.'

'But you do, Angoori!'

'This was the ...'

'The song your friend used to sing,' I completed the sentence for her.'

'I heard it from her.'

'Sing it for me.'

She started to recite the words. 'Oh, it's just about the time of year for change. Four months winter, four months summer, four months rain! ...'

'Not like that. Sing it for me' I asked. She wouldn't, but continued with the words:

Four months of winter reign in my heart;

My heart shivers, O my love.

Four months of summer, wind shimmers in the Sun.

Four months come the rains; clouds tremble in the sky.

'Angoori!' I said loudly. She looked as if in a trance, as if she had eaten the weed. I felt like shaking her by the shoulders. Instead, I took her by the shoulders and asked if she had been eating regularly.

She had not; she cooked for herself only, since Prabhati ate at his master's. 'Did you cook today?' I asked.

'Not yet.'

'Did you have tea in the morning?'

'Tea? No milk today.'

'Why no milk today?'

'I didn't get any. Ram Tara ...'

'Fetches the milk for you?' I added. She nodded.

Ram Tara was the night-watchman. Before Angoori married Prabhati, Ram Tara used to get a cup of tea at our place at the end of his watch before retiring on his cot near the well. After Angoori's arrival, he made his tea at Prabhati's. He, Angoori and Prabhati would all have tea together sitting around the fire. Three days ago Ram Tara went to his village for a visit.

'You haven't had tea for three days?' I asked. She nodded again. 'And you haven't eaten, I suppose?' She did not speak. Apparently, if she had been eating, it was as good as not eating at all.

I remembered Ram Tara: good-looking, quick-limbed, full of jokes. He had a way of talking with smiles trembling faintly at the corner of his lips.

'Angoori?'

'Yes, *bibi*.'

'Could it be the weed?'

Tears flowed down her face in two rivulets, gathering into two tiny puddles at the corners of her mouth.

'Curse on me!' she started in a voice trembling with tears, 'I never took sweets from him... not a betel even but tea ...¹¹' She could not finish. Her words were drowned in a fast stream of tears.

[Translated from Punjabi by Raj Gill]

WORDS NOTES :

1. *neighbour's neighbour*: This suggests that the narrator did not know Angoori intimately. Note how the word *neighbour* is repeated to suggest distance.
2. *drunk once ... well*: Prabhati had already married once.
3. *calico*: absorbent cotton cloth (such as the type used in towels).

THE WEED

4. *purdah*: In the Indian sub continent and SE Asia, a curtain, a veil; used to screen women from men or strangers.
5. *aliband*: a piece of jewellery worn at the forehead. Usually worn by newly married women.
6. *bibi*: (fr. Persian) a term (respectfully used) for the lady of the household.
7. *resilient sweetness*: An attractive suppleness. Sign of health and vigour.
8. *languor*: dreaminess, pensiveness.
9.*death of Euclid*: Prabhati was so bad looking that he would put the Greek mathematician Euclid (who himself was rather ugly) not just to shame but to death. A humorous exaggeration.
10. *Angoori was the ... taster*: Considering the differences in age and physical structure between Prabhati and Angoori, the narrator felt that all the former could probably do was to shield his youthful, attractive wife from others. It was unlikely that Prabhati could ever satisfy Angoori physically.
11. *I never took.... tea*: Unknowingly Angoori, in all her simplicity, admits to falling in love with Ram Tara

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. Do you agree with the view that Amrita Pritam portrays 'The Weed' as a symbol of the unknown or the unsaid? Give a reasoned answer.
2. The Life of Angoori can be taken as a criticism of a typical male dominated Indian society. Discuss.
3. Write a note on Amrita Pritam's depiction of the common folk and their superstitious belief; in her story The Weed. [GU 2005]



THE WHITE STOCKING

: D.H.LAWRENCE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

English novelist, storywriter, critic, poet and painter, D.H.Lawrence was one of the greatest figures in 20th-century English literature. His frank treatment of sex arose obscenity trials, which are still part of the relationship between literature and society. He saw sex and intuition as a key to undistorted perception of reality. In 1912 he wrote: "*What the blood feels, and believes, and says, is always true.*"

David Herbert Lawrence was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, in the family of a coalminer. Lawrence's childhood was dominated by poverty and friction between his parents. In a letter from 1910 to the poet Rachel Annand Taylor he later wrote: "*Their marriage life has been one carnal, bloody fight. I was born hating my father: as early as ever I can remember, I shivered with horror when he touched me. He was very bad before I was born.*" Encouraged by his mother, with whom he had a deep emotional bond and who figures as Mrs. Morel in his first masterpiece, Lawrence became interested in arts. Lawrence matriculated at 22 and briefly pursued a teaching career at Davidson Road School in Croydon in South London (1908-1911). His mother died in 1910 - he helped her die by giving her an overdose of sleeping medicine. This scene was re-created in his novel *Sons and Lovers*.

Lawrence's best-known work, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was first published privately in 1928. This novel narrates the love affair between a wealthy, married woman, and a man who works on her husband's estate. The book was banned for a time in both UK and the US as pornographic. In UK it was published in unexpurgated form in 1960 after an obscenity trial. Lawrence's other novels from the 1920s include *Women in Love* (1920) and *Aaron's Rod* (1922). In *Kangaroo* (1923) Lawrence expressed his own idea of a 'superman'. *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) was a vivid evocation of Mexico and its ancient Aztec religion.

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Lawrence's non-fiction works include *Movements in European History* (1921), *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1922), *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923) and *Apocalypse* (1931).

THE WHITE STOCKING :

(1914) This story presents an insight into the love life of a middle class family. Mr. Whiston, after two years of a pleasant married life, receives a jolt when his wife admits to secretly accepting valentines from her former employer. The undeniable attraction towards an old flame and the guilt associated with it; the boredom of marital life; the allure of wealth and a higher social status; the conflict between male ego and the fickleness of the female mind - all these find faithful expression in this short story.

TEXT :

"I'm getting up, Teddlinks¹," said Mrs. Whiston, and she sprang out of bed briskly.

"What the Hanover's² got you?" asked Whiston.

"Nothing. Can't I get up?" She replied animatedly.

It was about seven o'clock, scarcely light yet in the cold bedroom. Whiston lay still and looking at his wife. She was a pretty little thing, with her fleecy, short black hair all tousled. He watched her as she dressed quickly, flicking her small, delightful limbs, throwing her cloths about her. Her slovenliness³ and untidiness did not trouble him. When she picked up the edge of her petticoat, ripped off a torn string of white lace, and flung it on the dressing-table, her careless abandon made his spirit glow. She stood before the mirror and roughly scrambled together her profuse little mane of hair. He watched the quickness and softness of her young shoulders, calmly, like a husband, and appreciatively.

"Rise up," she cried, turning to him with a quick wave of her arm—"and shine forth."

They had been married two years. But still, when she had gone out of the room, he felt as if all his light and warmth were taken away, he became aware of the raw, cold morning. So he rose himself, wondering casually what had roused her so early. Usually she lay in bed as late as she could.

Whiston fastened a belt round his loins and went downstairs in shirt and trousers. He heard her singing in her snatchy fashion. The stairs creaked under his weight. He passed down the narrow little passage, which she called a hall, of the seven and sixpenny house which was his first home.

He was a shapely young fellow of about twenty-eight, sleepy now and easy with well-being. He heard the water drumming into the kettle, and she began to whistle. He loved the quick way she dodged the supper cups under the tap to wash then for breakfast. She looked an untidy minx, but she was quick and handy enough.

"Teddilinks," she cried.

"What?"

"Light a fire, quick"

She wore an old, sack-like dressing-jacket of black silk pinned across her breast. But one of the sleeves, coming unfastened, showed some delightful pink upper-arm.

"Why don't you sew your sleeve up?" he said, suffering from the sight of the exposed soft flesh.

"Where?" she cried, peering round. "Nuisance," she said, seeing the gap, then with light fingers went on drying the cups.

The kitchen was of fair size, but gloomy. Whiston poked out the dead ashes.

Suddenly a thud was heard at the door down the passage.

"I'll go," cried Mrs. Whiston, and she was gone down the hall.

The postman was a ruddy-faced⁴ man who had been a soldier. He smiled broadly, handing her some packages.

"They've not forgot you," he said impudently.

"No—Lucky for them," she said, with a toss of the head. But she was interested only in her envelopes this morning. The postman waited inquisitively, smiling in an ingratiating fashion. She slowly, abstractedly, as if she did not know anyone was there, closed the door in his face, continuing to look at the addresses on her letters.

She tore open the thin envelope. There was a long, hideous, cartoon valentine⁵. She smiled briefly and dropped it on the floor. Struggling with the string of a packet, she opened a white cardboard box, and there lay a white silk handkerchief packed neatly under the

paper lace of the box, and her initial, worked in heliotrope, fully displayed. She smiled pleasantly, and gently put the box aside. The third envelope contained another white packet—apparently a cotton handkerchief neatly folded. She shook it out. It was a long white stocking, but there was a little weight in the toe. Quickly, she thrust down her arm, wriggling her fingers into the toe of the stocking, and brought out a small box. She peeped inside the box, then hastily opened a door on her left hand, and went into the little, cold sitting-room. She had her lower lip caught earnestly between her teeth.

With a little flash of triumph, she lifted a pair of pearl ear-rings from the small box, and she went to the mirror. There, earnestly, she began to hook them through her ears, looking at herself sideways in the glass. Curiously concentrated and intent she seemed as she fingered the lobes of her ears, her head bent on one side.

Then the pearl ear-rings dangled under her rosy, small ears. She shook her head sharply, to see the swing of the drops. They went chill against her neck, in little, sharp touches. Then she stood still to look at herself, bridling her head in the dignified fashion. Then she simpered⁶ at herself. Catching her own eye, she could not help winking at herself and laughing.

She turned to look at the box. There was a scrap of paper with this posy⁷:

"Pearls may be fair, but thou art fairer.

Wear these for me, and I'll love the wearer."

She made a grimace and a grin. But she was drawn to the mirror again, to look at her ear-rings.

Whiston had made the fire burn, so he came to look for her. When she heard him, she started round quickly, guilty. She was watching him with intent blue eyes when he appeared.

He did not see much, in his morning-drowsy warmth. He gave her, as ever, a feeling of warmth and slowness. His eyes very blue, very kind, his manner simple.

"What ha' you got?" he asked.

"Valentines," she said briskly, ostentatiously⁸ turning to show him the silk handkerchief. She thrust it under his nose. "Smell how good," she said.

"Who's that from?" he replied, without smelling.
 "It's valentine," she cried. "How do I know who it's from?"
 "I'll bet you know," he said.
 "Ted! - I don't!" she cried, beginning to shake her head, then stopping because of the ear-rings.
 He stood still a moment, displaced.
 "They've no right to send you valentines, now," he said.
 "Ted! - Why not? You're not jealous, are you? I haven't the least idea who it's from. Look-there's my initial"- she pointed with an emphatic finger at the heliotrope⁹ embroidery—

*"E for Elsie,
 Nice little gelsie,"*

She sang.
 "Get out." He said. "You know who it's from."
 "Truth, I don't," she cried.
 He looked round, and saw the white stocking lying on a chair.
 "Is this another?" he said.
 "No, that's a sample," she said. "There's only a comic." And she fetched in the long cartoon.
 He stretched it out and looked at it solemnly.
 "Fools!" he said, and went out of the room.
 She flew upstairs and took off the ear-rings. When she returned, he was crouched before the fire blowing the coals. The skin of his face was flushed, and slightly pitted, as if he had had small-pox. But his neck was white and smooth and goodly. She hung her arms round his neck as he crouched there, and clung to him. He balanced on his toes.
 "This fire's slow-coach¹⁰," he said.

"And who else is a slow-coach?" she said.
 "One of us two, I know," he said, and he rose carefully. She remained clinging round his neck, so that she was lifted off her feet.
 "Ha! - swing me," she cried.

He lowered his head, and she hung in the air, swinging from his neck, laughing. Then she slipped off.
 "The kettle is singing," she sang, flying for the teapot. He bent down again to blow the fire. The veins in his neck stood out, his shirt collar seemed too tight.

*"Doctor Wyer,
 Blow the fire,
 Puff ! puff ! puff !"*
 She sang, laughing.
 He smiled at her.

She was so glad because of her pearl ear-rings.

Over the breakfast she grew serious. He did not notice. She became portentous¹¹ in her gravity. Almost it penetrated through his steady good-humour to irritate him.

"Teddy!" she said at last.

"What?" he asked.

"I told you a lie," she said, humbly tragic.

His soul stirred uneasily.

"Oh aye?" he said casually.

She was not satisfied. He ought to be more moved.

"Yes," she said.

He cut a piece of bread.

"Was it a good one?" he asked.

She was piqued¹². Then she considered - was it a good one? Then she laughed.

"No," she said, "it wasn't up to much."

"Ah!" he said easily, but with a steady strength of fondness for her in his tone. "Get it out then."

It became a little more difficult.

"You know that white stocking," she said earnestly. "I told you a lie. It wasn't a sample. It was a valentine."

A little frown came on his brow.

"Then what did you invent it was as a sample for?" he said. But he knew this weakness of hers. The touch of anger in his voice frightened her.

"I was afraid you'd be cross," she said pathetically.

"I'll bet you were vastly afraid," he said.

"I was, Teddy."

There was a pause. He was resolving one or two things in his mind.

"And who sent it?" he asked.

"I can guess," she said, "though there wasn't a word with it except—"

She ran to the sitting-room and returned with a slip of paper.

*"Pearls may be fair, but thou art fairer
Wear these for me, and I'll love the weaver."*

He read it twice, then a dull red flush came on his face.

"And who do you guess it is?" he asked, with a ringing of anger in his voice.

"I suspect it's Sam Adams," she said, with a little virtuous indignation.

Whiston was silent for a moment.

"Fool!" he said. "An' what's it got to do with pearls? — and how can he say 'wear these for me' when there's only one? He hasn't got the brain to invent a proper verse."

He screwed the slip of paper into a ball and flung it into the fire.

"I suppose he thinks it'll make a pair with the one last year," she said.

"Why, did he send one then?"

"Yes. I thought you'd be wild if you knew."

His jaw set rather sullenly.

Presently he rose, and went to wash himself, rolling back his sleeves and pulling open his shirt at the breast. It was as if his fine, clear-cut temples and steady eyes were degraded by the lower, rather brutal part of his face. But she loved it. As she whisked about, clearing the table, she loved the way in which he stood washing himself. He was such a man. She liked to see his neck glistening with water as he swilled it. It amused her and pleased her and thrilled her. He was so sure, so permanent, he had her so utterly in his power. It gave her a delightful, mischievous sense of liberty. Within his grasp, she could dart about excitingly.

He turned round to her, his face red from the cold water, his eyes fresh and very blue.

"You haven't been seeing anything of him, have you?" he asked roughly.

"Yes," she answered, after a moment, as if caught guilty. "He got into the tram with me, and he asked me to drink a coffee and a Benedictine in the Royal."

"You've got it off fine and glib¹³," he said sullenly. "And did you?"

"Yes," she replied, with the air of a traitor before the rack.

The blood came up into his neck and face, he stood motionless, dangerous.

"It was cold, and it was such fun to go into the Royal," she said.

"You'd go off with a nigger for a packet of chocolate¹⁴," he said, in anger and contempt, and some bitterness. Queer how he drew away from her, cut her off from him.

"Ted - how beastly!" she cried. "You know quite well —" She caught her lips, flushed, and the tears came to her eyes.

He turned away, to put on his neck-tie. She went about her work, making a queer pathetic little mouth, down which occasionally dripped a tear.

He was ready to go. With his hat jammed down on his head, and his overcoat buttoned up to his chins, he came to kiss her. He would be miserable all the day if he went without. She allowed herself to be kissed. Her cheek was wet under his lips, and his heart burned. She hurt him so deeply. And she felt aggrieved, and did not quite forgive him.

In a moment she went upstairs to her ear-rings. Sweet they looked nestling in the little drawer — sweet! She examined them with voluptuous¹⁵ pleasure, she threaded them in her ears, she looked at herself, she posed and postured and smiled, and looked sad and tragic and winning and appealing, all in turn before the mirror. And she was happy, and very pretty.

She wore her ear-rings all morning, in the house. She was self-conscious, and quite brilliantly winsome¹⁶, when the baker came, wondering if he would notice. All the tradesmen left her door with a glow in them, feeling elated, and unconsciously favouring the delightful little creature, though there had been nothing to notice in her behaviour.

She was stimulated all the day. She did not think about her husband.

He was the permanent basis from which she took these giddy little flights into nowhere. At night, like chickens and curses¹⁷, she would come home to him, to roost.

Meanwhile Whiston, a traveller and confidential support of a small firm, hastened about his work, his heart all the while anxious for her, yearning for surety, and kept tense not getting it.

II

She had been a warehouse girl in Adams's lace factory before she was married. Sam Adams was her employer. He was a bachelor of forty, growing stout, a man well dressed and florid, with a large brown moustache and thin hair. From the rest of his well-groomed, showy appearance, it was evident his baldness was a chagrin to him. He had a good presence, and some Irish blood in his veins.

His fondness for the girls, or the fondness of the girls for him, was notorious. And Elsie, quick, pretty, almost witty little thing—she *seemed* witty, although, when her sayings were repeated, they were entirely trivial—she had a great attraction for him. He would come into the warehouse dressed in a rather sporting reefer coat, of fawn colour, and trousers of fine black-and-white check, a cap with a big peak and a scarlet carnation in his button-hole, to impress her. She was only half impressed. He was too loud for her good taste. Instinctively perceiving this, he sobered down to navy blue. Then a well-built man, florid, with large brown whiskers, smart navy blue suit, fashionable boots, and manly hat, he was the irreproachable. Elsie was impressed.

But meanwhile Whiston was courting her, and she made splendid little gestures, before her bedroom mirror, of the constant-and-true sort.

"True, true till death——"

That was her song. Whiston was made that way, so there was no need to take thought for him.

Every Christmas Sam Adams gave a party at his house, to which he invited his superior work-people — not factory hands and labourers, but those above. He was a generous man in his way, with a real warm feeling for giving pleasure.

Two years ago Elsie had attended this Christmas-party for the last time. Whiston had accompanied her. At that time he worked for Sam Adams.

She had been very proud of herself, in her close-fitting, full-skirted dress of blue silk. Whiston called for her. The she tripped beside him, holding her large cashmere shawl across her breast. He strode with long strides, his trousers handsomely strapped under his boots, and her silk shoes bulging the pockets of his full-skirted overcoat.

They passed through the park gates, and her spirits rose. Above them the Castle Rock¹⁸ loomed grandly in the night, the naked trees stood still and dark in the frost, along the boulevard.

They were rather late. Agitated with anticipation, in the cloak-room she gave up her shawl, donned her silk shoes, and looked at herself in the mirror. The loose bunches of curls on either side her face danced prettily, her mouth smiled.

She hung a moment in the door of the brilliantly lighted room. Many people were moving within the blaze of lamps, under the crystal chandeliers, the full skirts of the women balancing and floating, the side-whiskers and white cravats of the men bowing above. Then she entered the light.

In an instant Sam Adams was coming forward, lifting both his arms in boisterous welcome. There was a constant red laugh on his face.

"Come late, would you," he shouted, "likely royalty."

He seized her hands and led her forward. He opened his mouth wide when he spoke, and the effect of the warm, dark opening behind the brown whiskers was disturbing. But she was floating into the throng on his arm. He was very gallant.

"Now then," he said, taking her card to write down the dances, I've got *carte blanche*¹⁹, haven't I?"

"Mr. Whiston doesn't dance," she said.

"I am a lucky man!" he said, scribbling his initials. "I was born with an *amourette*²⁰ in my mouth."

He wrote on, quietly. She blushed and laughed, not knowing what it meant.

"Why, what is that?" she said.

"It's you, even littler than you are, dressed in little wings," he said.

"I should have to be pretty small to get in your mouth," she said.

"You think you're too big, do you?" he said easily.

He handed her her card, with a bow.

"Now I'm set up, my darling, for this evening," he said. Then, quick, always at his ease, he looked over the room. She waited in front of him. He was ready. Catching the eye of the band, he nodded. In a moment, the music began. He seemed to relax, giving himself up.

"Now then, Elsie," he said, with a curious caress in his voice that seemed to lap the outside of her body in a warm glow, delicious. She gave herself to it. She liked it.

He was an excellent dancer. He seemed to draw her close in to him by some male warmth of attraction, so that she became all soft and pliant to him, flowing to his form, whilst he united her with him and they lapsed along in one movement. She was just carried in kind of strong, warm flood, her feet moved of themselves, and only the music threw her away from him, threw her back to him, to his clasp, in his strong form moving against her, rhythmically, deliciously.

When it was over, he was pleased and his eyes had a curious gleam which thrilled her and yet had nothing to do with her. Yet it held her. Her did not speak to her. He only looked straight into her eyes with a curious, gleaming look that disturbed her fearfully and deliciously. But also there was in his look some of the automatic irony of the *roné*. It left her partly cold. She was not carried away.

She went, driven by an opposite, heavier impulse, to Whiston. He stood looking gloomy, trying to admit that she had a perfect right to enjoy her self apart from him. He received her with rather grudging kindness.

"Aren't you going to play whist?" she asked.

"Aye," he said. "Directly."

"I do wish you could dance"

"Well, I can't," he said. "So you enjoy yourself."

"But I should enjoy it better if I could dance with you."

"Nay, you're all right," he said. "I'm not made that way."

"Then you ought to be!" she cried.

"Well, it's my fault, not yours. You enjoy yourself," he bade her. Which she proceeded to do, a little bit irked.

She went with anticipation to the arms of Sam Adams, when the time came to dance with him. It *was* so gratifying, irrespective of the man. And she felt a little grudge against Whiston, soon forgotten when her host was holding her near to him, in a delicious embrace. And she watched his eyes, to meet the gleam in them, which gratified her.

She was getting warmed right through, the glow was penetrating into her, driving away everything else. Only in her heart was a little tightness, like conscience.

When she got a chance, she escaped from the dancing-room to the card-room. There, in a cloud of smoke, she found Whiston playing cribbage²¹. Radiant, roused, animated, she came up to him and greeted him. She was too strong, too vibrant a note in the quiet room. He lifted his head, and a frown knitted his gloomy forehead.

"Are you playing cribbage? Is it exciting? How are you getting on?" she chattered.

He looked at her. None of these questions needed answering, and he did not feel in touch with her. She turned to the cribbage-board.

"Are you white or red?" she asked.

"He's red," replied the partner.

"Then you're losing," she said, still to Whiston. And she lifted the red peg from the board. "One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—right up there you ought to jump—"

"Now put it back in its right place," said Whiston.

"Where was it?" she asked gaily, knowing her transgression. He took the little red peg away from her and stuck it in its hole.

The cards were shuffled.

"What a shame you're losing!" said Elsie.

"You'd better cut for him," said the partner.

She did so, hastily. The cards were dealt. She put her hand on his shoulder, looking at his cards.

"It's good," she cried, "isn't it?"

He did not answer, but threw down two cards. It moved him more strongly than was comfortable, to have her hand on his

shoulder, her curls dangling and touching his ears, whilst she was roused to another man. It made the blood flame over him.

At that moment Sam Adams appeared, florid and boisterous, intoxicated more with himself, with the dancing, than with wine. In his eye the curious, impersonal light gleamed.

"I thought I should find you here, Elsie," he cried boisterously, a disturbing, high note in his voice.

"What made you think so?" she replied, the mischief rousing in her. The florid, well-built man narrowed his eyes to a smile.

"I should never look for you among the ladies," he said, with a kind of intimate, animal call to her. He laughed, bowed, and offered her his arm.

"Madam, the music waits."

She went almost helplessly, carried along with him, unwilling, yet delighted.

That dance was intoxication to her. After the first few steps, she felt herself slipping away from herself. She almost knew she was going, she did not even want to go. Yet she must have chosen to go. She lay in the arm of the steady, close man with whom she was dancing, and she seemed to swim away out of contact with the room, into him. She had passed into another, denser element of him, an essential privacy. The room was all vague around her, like an atmosphere, like under sea, with a flow of ghostly, dumb movements. But she herself was held real against her partner, and it seemed she was connected with him, as if the movements of his body and limbs were her own movements, yet not her own movements—and oh, delicious! He also was given up, oblivious, concentrated, into the dance. His eye was unseeing. Only his large, voluptuous body gave off a subtle activity. His fingers seemed to search into her flesh. Every moment, and every moment, she felt she would give way utterly, and sink molten: the fusion point was coming when she would fuse down into perfect unconsciousness at his feet and knees. But he bore her round the room in the dance, and he seemed to sustain all her body with his limbs, his body, and his warmth seemed to come closer into her, nearer, till it would fuse right through her, and she would be as liquid to him, as an intoxication only.

THE WHITE STOCKING

It was exquisite. When it was over, she was dazed, and was scarcely breathing. She stood with him in the middle of the room as if she were alone in a remote place. He bent over her. She expected his lips on her bare shoulder, and waited. Yet they were not alone, they were not alone. It was cruel.

"'Twas good, wasn't it, my darling?" he said to her, low and delighted. There was a strange impersonality about his low, exultant call that appealed to her irresistibly. Yet why was she aware of some part shut off in her? She pressed his arm, and he led her towards the door.

She was not aware of what she was doing, only a little grain of resistant trouble was in her. The man, possessed, yet with a superficial presence of mind, made way to the dining-room, as if to give her refreshment, cunningly working to his own escape with her. He was molten hot, filmed over with presence of mind, and bottomed with cold disbelief.

In the dining-room was Whiston, carrying coffee to the plain, neglected ladies. Elsie saw him, but felt as if he could not see her. She was beyond his reach and ken. A sort of fusion existed between her and the large man at her side. She ate her custard, but an incomplete fusion all the while sustained and contained within the being of her employer.

But she was growing cooler. Whiston came up. She looked at him, and saw him with different eyes. She saw his slim, young man's figure real and enduring before her. That was he. But she was in the spell with the other man, fused with him, and she could not be taken away.

"Have you finished your cribbage?" she asked, with hasty evasion of him.

"Yes," he replied. "Aren't you getting tired of dancing?"

"Not a bit," she said.

"Not she," said Adams heartily. "No girl with any spirit gets tired of dancing.—Have something else, Elsie. Come—sherry. Have a glass of sherry with us, Whiston."

Whilst they sipped the wine, Adams watched Whiston almost cunningly, to find his advantage.

"We'd better be getting back— there's the music," he said. "See the women get something to eat, Whiston, will you, there's a good chap?"

And he began to draw away. Elsie was drifting helplessly with him. But Whiston put himself beside them, and went along with them. In silence they passed through to the dancing-room. There Adams hesitated, and looked round the room. It was as if he could not see.

A man came hurrying forward, claiming Elsie, and Adams went to his other partner. Whiston stood watching during the dance. She was conscious of him standing there observant of her, like a ghost, or a judgement, or a guardian angel. She was also conscious, much more intimately and impersonally, of the body of the body of the other man moving somewhere in the room. She still belonged to him, but a feeling of distraction possessed her, and helplessness. Adams danced on, adhering to Elsie, waiting his time, with the persistence of cynicism.

The dance was over. Adams was detained. Elsie found herself beside Whiston. There was something shapely about him as he sat, about his knees and his distinct figure, that she clung to. It was as if he had enduring form. She put her hand on his knee. "Are you enjoying yourself?" he asked.

"Ever so," she replied, with a fervent, yet detached tone. "It's going on for one o'clock," he said.

"Is it?" she answered. It meant nothing to her. "Should we be going?" he said.

She was silent. For the first time for an hour or more an inkling of her normal consciousness returned. She resented it. "What for?" she said.

"I thought you might have had enough," he said. A slight soberness came over her, an irritation at being frustrated of her illusion.

"Why?" she said.

"We've been here since nine," said.

That was no answer, no reason. It conveyed nothing to her. She sat detached from him. Across the room Sam Adams glanced at her. She sat there exposed for him.

"You don't want to be too free with Sam Adams," said Whiston cautiously, suffering. "You know what he is."

"How, free?" she asked.

"Why — you don't want to have too much to do with him."

She sat silent. He was forcing her into consciousness of her position. But he could not get hold of her feeling, to change them. She had a curious, perverse desire that he should not.

"I like him," she said.

"What do you find to like in him?" he said, with a hot heart.

"I don't know — but I like him," she said.

She was immutable. He sat feeling heavy and dulled with rage. He was not clear as to what he felt. He sat there unliving whilst she danced. And she, distracted, lost to herself between the opposing forces of the two men, drifted. Between the dances, Whiston kept near to her. She was scarcely conscious. She glanced repeatedly at her card, to see when she would dance again with Adams, half in desire, half in dread. Sometimes she met his steady, glaucous eye as she passed him in the dance. Sometimes she saw the steadiness of his flank as he danced. And it was always as if she rested on his arm, were borne along, up-borne by him, away from herself. And always there was present the other's antagonism. She was divided.

The time came for her to dance with Adams. Oh, the delicious closing of contact with him, of his limbs touching her limbs, his arm supporting her. She seemed to resolve. Whiston had not made himself real to her. He was only a heavy place in her consciousness.

But she breathed heavily, beginning to suffer from the closeness of strain. She was nervous. Adams also was constrained. A tightness, a tension was coming over them all. And he was exasperated, feeling something counteracting physical magnetism, feeling a will stronger with her than his own, intervening in what was becoming a vital necessity to him.

Elsie was almost lost to her own control. As she went forward with him to take her place at the dance, she stooped for her pocket-handkerchief. The music sounded for quadrilles. Everybody was ready. Adams stood with his body near her, exerting his attraction over her. He was tense and fighting. She stooped for her pocket-

handkerchief, and shook it as she rose. It shook out and fell from her hand. With agony, she saw she had taken a white stocking instead of a handkerchief. For a second it lay on the floor, a twist of white stocking. Then, in an instant, Adams picked it up, with a little, surprised laugh of triumph.

"That'll do for me," he whispered-seeming to take possession of her. And he stuffed the stocking in his trousers pocket, and quickly offered her his handkerchief.

The dance began. She felt weak and faint, as if her will were turned to water. A heavy sense of loss came over her. She could not help herself any more. But it was peace.

When the dance was over, Adams yielded her up. Whiston came to her.

"What was it as you dropped?" Whiston asked.

"I thought it was my handkerchief—I'd taken a stocking by mistake," she said, detached and muted.

"And he's got it?"

"Yes."

"What does he mean by that?"

She lifted her shoulders.

"Are you going to let him keep it?" he asked.

"I don't let him."

There was a long pause.

"Am I to go and have it out with him?" he asked, his face flushed,

his blue eyes going hard with opposition.

"No," she said pale.

"Why?"

"No— I don't want you to say anything about it."

He sat exasperated and nonplussed.

"You'll let him keep it, then?" he asked.

She sat silent and made no form of answer.

"What do you mean by it?" he said, dark with fury. And he started up.

"No!" she cried. "Ted!" and she caught hold of him, sharply detaining him.

It made him black with rage.

"Why?" he said.

Then something about her mouth was pitiful to him. He did not understand, but he felt she must have her reasons.

"Then I'm not stopping here," he said. "Are you coming with me?"

She rose mutely, and they went out of the room. Adams had not noticed.

In a few moments they were in the street.

"What the hell do you mean?" he said, in a black fury.

She went at his side, in silence, neutral.

"That great hog, an' all," he added.

Then they went a long time in silence through the frozen, deserted darkness of the town. She felt she could not go indoors. They were drawing near her house.

"I don't want to go home," she suddenly cried in distress and anguish. "I don't want to go home."

He looked at her.

"Why don't you?" he said.

"I don't want to go home," was all she could sob.

He heard somebody coming.

"Well, we can walk a bit further," he said.

She was silent again. They passed out of the town into the fields. He held her by the arm—they could not speak.

"What's a-matter?" he asked at length, puzzled.

She began to cry again.

At last he took her in his arms, to soothe her. She sobbed by herself, almost unaware of him.

"Tell me what's a-matter, Elsie," he said. "Tell me what's a-matter—my dear—tell me, then—"

He kissed her wet face, and caressed her. She made no response. He was puzzled and tender and miserable.

At length she became quite. Then he kissed her, and she put her arms round him, and clung to him very tight, as if for fear and anguish. He held her in his arms, wondering.

"Ted!" she whispered, frantic. "Ted!"

"What, my love?" he answered, becoming also afraid.

"Be good to me," she cried. "Don't be cruel to me."
 "No, my pet," he said, amazed and grieved. "Why?"
 "Oh, be good to me," she sobbed.
 And he held her very safe, and his heart was white-hot with love for her. His mind was amazed. He could only hold her against his chest that was white-hot with love and belief in her. So she was restored at last.

III

She refused to go to her work at Adam's any more. Her father had to submit and she sent in her notice-she was not well. Sam Adams was ironical. But he had a curious patience. He did not fight.

In a few weeks, she and Whiston were married. She loved him with passion and worship, a fierce little abandon of love that moved him to the depths of his being, and gave him a permanent surety and sense of realness in himself. He did not trouble about himself any more: he felt he was fulfilled and now he had only the many things in the world to busy himself about. Whatever troubled him, at the bottom was surety. He had found himself in this love.

They spoke once or twice of the white stocking.

"Ah!" Whiston exclaimed. "What does it matter?"

He was impatient and angry, and could not bear to consider the matter.

She was quite happy at first, carried away by her adoration of her husband. Then gradually she got used to him. He always was the ground of her happiness, but she got used to him, as to the air she breathed. He never got used to her in the same way.

Inside of marriage she found her liberty. She was rid of the responsibility of herself. Her husband must look after that. She was free to get what she could out of her time.

So that, when, after some months, she met Sam Adams, she was not quite as unkind to him as she might have been. With a young wife's new and exciting knowledge of men, she perceived he was in love with her, she knew he had always kept an unsatisfied desire for her. And, sportive, she could not help playing a little with this, though she cared not one jot for the man himself.

When Valentine's Day came, which was near the first anniversary of her wedding day, there arrived a white stocking with a little amethyst²³ brooch. Luckily Whiston did not see it, so she said nothing of it to him. She had not the faintest intention of having anything to do with Sam Adams, but once a little brooch was in her possession, it was hers, and she did not trouble her head for a moment how she had come by it. She kept it.

Now she had the pearl ear-rings. They were a more valuable and a more conspicuous present. She would have to ask her mother to give them to her, to explain their presence. She made a little plan in her head. And she was extraordinarily pleased. As for Sam Adams, even if he saw her wearing them, he would not give her away. What fun, if he saw her wearing his ear-rings! She would pretend she had inherited them from her grandmother, her mother's mother. She laughed to herself as she went down town in the afternoon, the pretty drops dangling in front of her curls. But she saw no one of importance.

Whiston came home tired and depressed. All day the male in him had been uneasy, and this had fatigued him. She was curiously against him, inclined, as she sometimes was nowadays, to make mock of him and jeer at him and cut him off. He did not understand this, and it angered him deeply. She was uneasy before him.

She knew he was in a state of suppressed irritation. The veins stood out on the backs of his hands, his brow was drawn stiffly. Yet she could not help goading him.

"What did you do wi' that white stocking?" he asked, out of a gloomy silence, his voice strong and brutal.

"I put it in a drawer- why?" she replied flippantly.

"Why didn't you put it on the fire back²⁴?" he said harshly. "What are you hoarding it up for?"

"I'm not hoarding it up," she said. "I've got a pair."

He relapsed into gloomy silence. She, unable to move him, ran away upstairs, leaving him smoking by the fire. Again she tried on the ear-rings. Then another little inspiration came to her. She drew on the white stockings, both of them.

Presently she came down in them. Her husband still sat immovable and glowering by the fire.

"Look!" she said. "They'll do beautiful."

And she picked up her skirts to knees, and twisted round, looking at her pretty legs in the neat stockings.

He filled with unreasonable rage, and took the pipe from his mouth.

"Don't they look nice?" she said. "One from last year and one from this, they just do. Save you buying a pair."

And she looked over her shoulders at her pretty calves, and at the dangling frills of her knickers.

"Put your skirts down and don't make a fool of yourself," he said.

"Why a fool of myself?" she asked. And she began to dance slowly round the room, kicking up her feet half reckless, half jeering, in a ballet-dancer's fashion. Almost fearful, yet in defiance, she kicked up her legs at him, singing as she did so. She resented him.

"You little fool, ha' done with it," he said. "And you'll backfire them stockings, I'm telling you." He was angry. His face flushed dark, he kept his head bent. She ceased to dance.

"I shan't," she said. "They'll come in very useful." He lifted his head and watched her, with lighted, dangerous eyes.

"You'll put 'em on the fire back, I tell you," he said. It was a war now. She bent forward, in a ballet-dancer's fashion, and put her tongue between her teeth.

"I shan't backfire them stockings," she sang, repeating his words, "I shan't I shan't, I shan't."

And she danced round the room doing a high kick to the tune of her works. There was a real biting indifference in her behavior.

"We'll see whether you will or not," he said "trollops! You'd like Sam Adams to know you was wearing 'em, wouldn't you? That's what would please you."

"Yes, I'd like him to see how nicely they fit me, he might give me some more then."

And she looked down at her pretty legs.

He knew somehow that she *would* like Sam Adams to see how pretty her legs looked in the white stockings. It made his anger go deep, almost to hatred.

"Yet nasty trolley²⁵, he cried. "Put yer petticoats down, and stop being so foul-minded."

"I'm not foul-minded," she said. "My legs are my own. And why shouldn't Sam Adams think they're nice?"

There was a pause. He watched her with eyes glittering to a point.

"Have you been havin' owt²⁶ to do with him?" he asked.

"I've just spoken to him when I've seen him," she said. "He's not as bad as you would make out."

"Isn't he?" he cried, a certain wakefulness in his voice. "Them who has anything to do wi' him is too bad for me, I tell you."

"Why, what are you frightened of him for?" she mocked.

She was rousing all his uncontrollable anger. He sat glowering. Every one of her sentences stirred him up like a red-hot iron. Soon it would be too much. And she was afraid herself: but she was neither conquered nor convinced.

A curious little grin of hate came on his face. He had a long score against her.

"What am I frightened of him for?" he repeated automatically. "What am I frightened of him for? Why, for you, you stray-running little bitch."

She flushed. The insult went deep into her, right home.

"Well, if you're so dull—" she said lowering her eyelids, and speaking coldly, haughtily.

"If I'm so dull I'll break your neck the first word you speak to him," he said, tense.

"Pff!" she sneered. "Do you think I'm frightened of you?" she spoke coldly, detached.

She was frightened, for all that, white round the month.

His heart was getting hotter.

"You *will* be frightened of me, the next time you have anything to do with him," he said.

"Do you think *you'd* ever be told-ha!"

Her jeering scorn made him go white-hot, molten. He knew he was incoherent, scarcely responsible for what he might do. Slowly, unseeing, he rose and went out of doors, stifled, moved to kill her.

He stood learning against the garden fence, unable either to see or hear. Below him, far off, fumed the lights of the town. He stood still, unconscious with a black storm of rage, his face lifted to the night.

Presently, still unconscious of what he was doing, he went indoors again. She stood, a small, stubborn figure with tight-pressed lips and big, sullen, childish eyes, watching him, with fear. He went heavily across the floor and dropped into his chair.

There was a silence.

"You're not going to tell me everything I shall do and everything I shan't," she broke out at last.

He lifted his head.

"I tell you *this*," he said, low and intense, "Have anything to do with Sam Adams, and I'll break your neck."

She laughed, shrill and false.

"How I hate your word 'break your neck,'" she said, with a grimace of the mouth. "it sounds so common and beastly. Can't you say something else—"

There was a dead silence.

"And besides," she said, with a queer chirrup of mocking laughter, "with do you know about anything? He sent me an amethyst brooch and a pair of pearl ear-rings."

"He what?" said Whiston, in a suddenly normal voice. His eyes were fixed on her.

"Sent me a pair of pearl ear-rings, and an amethyst brooch," she repeated, mechanically, pale to the lips.

And her big, black, childish eyes watched him, fascinated, held in her spell.

He seemed to thrust his face and his eyes forward at her, as he rose slowly and came to her. She watched transfixed in terror. Her throat made a small sound, as she tried to scream.

Then, quick as lightning, the back of his hand struck her with a crash across the mouth, and she was flung back blinded against the wall. The shock shook a queer sound out of her. And then she saw him still coming on, his eyes holding her, his fist drawn back, advancing slowly. At any instant the blow might crash into her.

Mad with terror, she raised her hands with a queer clawing movement to cover her eyes and her temples, opening her mouth in a dumb shriek. There was no sound. But the sight of her slowly arrested him. He hung before her, looking at her fixedly, as she stood crouched against the wall with open, bleeding mouth, and wide-staring eyes, and two hands clawing over her temples. And his lust to see her bleed, to break her and destroy her, rose from an old source against her. It carried him. He wanted satisfaction.

But he had seen her standing there, a piteous, horrified thing, and he turned his face aside in shame and nausea. He went and sat heavily in his chair, and a curious ease, almost like sleep, came over his brain.

She walked away from the wall towards the fire, dizzy, white to the lips, mechanically wiping her small, bleeding mouth. He sat motionless. Then, gradually, her breath began to hiss, she shook, and was sobbing silently, in grief for herself. Without looking he saw. It made his mad desire to destroy her come back.

At length he lifted his head. His eyes were glowing again, fixed on her.

"And what did he give them you for?" he asked, in a steady, unyielding voice.

Her crying dried up in a second. She also was tense.

"They came as valentines," she replied, still not subjugated²⁷, even if beaten.

"When, today?"

"The pearl ear-rings today-the amethyst brooch last year."

"You've had it a year?"

"Yes."

She felt that nothing would prevent him if he rose to kill her. She could not prevent him any more. She was yielded up to him. They both trembled in the balance, unconscious.

"What have you had to do with him?" he asked, in a barren voice.

"I've not had anything to do with him," She quavered. "You just kept 'em because they were jewellery?" he said.

A weariness came over him. What was the worth speaking any more of it? He did not care any more. He was dreary and sick. She began to cry again, but he took no notice. She kept wiping her mouth on her handkerchief. He could see it, the blood-mark. It made him only more sick and tired of the responsibility of it, the violence, the shame.

When she began to move about again, he raised his head once more from his dead, motionless position.

"Where are the things?" he said.

"They are upstairs," she quavered. She knew the passion had gone down in him.

"Bring them down," he said.

"I won't," she wept, with rage. "You're not going to bully me and hit me like that on the mouth."

And she sobbed again. He looked at her in contempt and compassion and in rising anger.

"Where are they?" he said.

"They're in the little drawer under the looking-glass," she sobbed. He went slowly upstairs, struck a match, and found the trinkets. He brought them downstairs in his hand.

"These?" he said, looking at them as they lay in his palm.

She looked at them without answering. She was not interested in them any more.

He looked at the little jewels. They were pretty.

"It's none of their fault," he said to himself.

And he searched round slowly, persistently, for a box. He tied the things up and addressed them to Sam Adams. Then he went out in his slippers to post the little package.

When he came back she was still sitting crying.

"You'd better go to bed," he said.

She paid no attention. He sat by fire. She still cried.

"I'm sleeping down here," he said. "Go you to bed."

In a few moments she lifted her tear-stained, swollen face and looked at him with eyes all forlorn and pathetic. A great flash of anguish went over his body. He went over, slowly, and very gently took her in his hands. She let herself be taken. Then as she lay against his shoulder, she sobbed aloud:

"I never meant—"

"My love—my little love—" he cried, in anguish of spirit, holding her in his arms.

WORDS NOTES :

1. *Teddilinks*: Edward (Teddy) affectionately called as Teddilinks.
2. *banover's*: (slang) Hell.
3. *slovenliness*: untidiness, carelessness.
4. *ruddy faced*: red faced. Healthy/happy, sanguine.
5. *valentine*: card / gift sent to a sweetheart on St. Valentine's day.
6. *simpered*: (gave a) silly smile.
7. *posy*: flower / flowery poetic lines.
8. *ostentatiously*: with pretence, showy, gaudily.
10. *slow-coach*: one who is slow, lazy.
11. *portentous*: prophetic. Something that foreshadows a coming event.
12. *piqued*: offended, aroused.
13. *glib*: speak with ease. One who can speak fluently, convincingly.
14. *nigger*.....*chocolate*: A racial slur. "You are gullible enough to go with a nigger (Negro) if he bribes you with a chocolate."
nigger: (derogatory) a member of any dark-skinned people, a Negro.
15. *voluptuous*: producing a gratification of the senses.
16. *winsome*: cheerful, causing joy.
17. *like chickens and curses*: probably taken from the saying—"bad wishes are like hens: they come home to roost".
18. *Castle Rock*: A place in Nottingham. This is one of Lawrence's favourite locations, used in earlier novels like *Sons and Lovers*.
19. *carte blanche*: (French) blank card. A card used in parties to record partners in dances.

20. *amourette*: (French) love affair. "born with an amourette...mouth": lucky in love affairs.
21. *cribbage*: card game scored by moving pegs in a board (cribbage board).
22. *quadrilles*: square dance of five or six figures in various rhythms.
23. *amethyst*: blue-purple gemstone. The birthstone for February and used in rings and other ornaments.
24. *fire-back*: back of the fire, in the fire.
25. *nasty trolley*: nasty, immoral woman.
26. *owt*: anything.
27. *subjugated*: bring under control. Mrs. Whiston did not accept defeat though she realized that the truth had been revealed.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. Examine "*The White Stocking*" as an analysis of love in working class life.
2. Lawrence tried "to depict the emotional life faithfully and to stress—in the face of dead conventions and false romanticism—that it must be given full play in our lives". Discuss.
3. Make a brief assessment of the character of Mrs. Whiston.



A DEVOTED SON

: ANITA DESAI

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Anita Desai (b.1937), Indian novelist is known for her studies of Indian life, especially for her sensitive portrayal of the inner life of her female characters. Several of Desai's novels explore tensions of family life and the estrangement of middle-class women. Desai's characters live and strive to attain their goals in a complex and unsympathetic world. One of her recurring themes is the struggle of women to assert their independence in a male-dominated society. In her later novels Desai has dealt with such themes as German anti-Semitism, the demise of traditions, and Western stereotypical views of India.

Desai shows in her writings an exploration of the 'modern Indian sensibility'. *Since her preoccupation is with the inner world of sensitivity rather than the outer world of action, she has tried to forge a style supple and suggestive enough to convey the fever and fretfulness of the stream of consciousness of her principal characters* (Srinivasa Iyengar).

As a novelist Desai made her debut in 1963 with *The Peacock*. She had started to write short stories regularly before her marriage. This was followed by *Voices of the City* (1965) and *Fire on the Mountain* (1977). Other novels and collections of short stories, such as *Games at Twilight and Other Stories* (1978), followed. Two of her novels, *Clear Light of Day* (1980) and *In Custody* (1984), were short listed for Britain's highest literary award, the Booker Prize. Other works by Desai include *Journey to Ithaca* (1995), *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), and the short-story collection *Diamond Dust* (2000). Her contribution to Indian literature was acknowledged when she was honoured with the Padma Shree in 1990. In 1993 she became a creative writing teacher at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Desai is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in London and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She received the Guardian Award for Children's Fiction for

the novel *The Village by the Sea* (1982), and the 1978 National Academy of Letters Award for *Fire on the Mountain* (1977).

A DEVOTED SON :

This story shows how the most sincere endeavor of an over-caring, devoted son to help his father overcome the ailments of old age is misinterpreted by the aged man who sees his son as a conspirator engaged in starving him to death. Desai beautifully portrays the problems of generation gap through the growing discontentment of the aging father who sees himself as a typical victim of filial intolerance. What was once to the old man a source of pride now becomes a burden as the overtly devoted son takes extreme care to ensure that his father does not have access to any of the stuff that is detrimental to health. Desai emphasizes the fact that *talent and skill, if displayed for too long, cease to dazzle*.

TEXT :

When the results appeared in the morning papers, Rakesh scanned them, barefoot and in his pyjamas, at the garden gate, then went up the steps to the verandah where his father sat sipping his morning tea and bowed down to touch his feet.

'A first division, son?' his father asked, beaming, reaching for the papers.

'At the top of the list, papa,' Rakesh murmured, as if awed.

'First in the country.'

Bedlam broke loose then¹. The family whooped and danced. The whole day long visitors streamed into the small yellow house at the end of the road, to congratulate the parents of this *Wunderkind*, to slap Rakesh on the back and fill the house and garden with the sounds and colours of a festival. There were garlands and *halwa*, party clothes and gifts (enough fountain pens to last years, even a watch or two), nerves and temper and joy, all in a multicoloured whirl of pride and great shining vistas newly opened: Rakesh was the first son in the family to receive an education, so much had been sacrificed in order to send him to school and then medical college, and at last the fruits of their sacrifice had arrived, golden and glorious.

A DEVOTED SON

To everyone who came to him to say, '*Mubarak*, Varmaji, your son has brought you glory,' the father said, 'Yes, and do you know what is the first thing he did when he saw the results this morning? He came and touched my feet. He bowed down and touched my feet.' This moved many of the women in the crowd so much that they were seen to raise the ends of their saris and dab at their tears while the men reached out for the betel-leaves and sweetmeats that were offered around on trays and shook their heads in wonder and approval of such exemplary filial behaviour. 'One does not often see such behaviour in sons any more,' they all agreed, a little enviously perhaps. Leaving the house, some of the women said, sniffing, 'At least on such an occasion they might have served pure *ghee* sweets²,' and some of the men said, 'Don't you think old Varma was giving himself airs³? He needn't think we don't remember that he comes from the vegetable market himself, his father used to sell vegetables and he has never seen the inside of a school.' But their was more envy than rancour in their voices and it was, of course, inevitable—not every son in that shabby little colony at the edge of the city was destined to shine as Rakesh shone, and who knew that better than the parents themselves?

And that was only the beginning, the first step in a great, sweeping ascent to the radiant heights of fame and fortune. The thesis he wrote for his MD brought Rakesh still greater glory, if only in select medical circles. He won a scholarship. He went to the USA (that was what his father learnt to call it and taught the whole family to say — not America, which was what the ignorant neighbours called it, but, with a grand familiarity, 'the USA') where he pursued his career in the most prestigious of all hospitals and won encomiums from his American colleagues which were relayed to his admiring and glowing family. What was more, he came *back*, he actually returned to that small yellow house in the once-new but increasingly shabby colony, right at the end of the road where the rubbish vans tripped out their stinking contents for pigs to nose in and rag-pickers to build their shacks on⁴, all steaming and smoking just outside the neat wire fences and well-tended gardens. To this Rakesh returned and the first thing he did on entering the house was to slip out of

the embraces of his sisters and brothers and bow down and touch his father's feet.

As for his mother, she gloated chiefly over the strange fact that he had not married in America, had not brought home a foreign wife as all her neighbours had warned her he would, for wasn't that what all Indian boys went abroad for? Instead he agreed, almost without argument, to marry a girl she had picked out for him in her own village, the daughter of a childhood friend, a plump and uneducated girl, it was true, but so old-fashioned, so placid, so complaisant that she slipped into the household and settled in like a charm, seemingly too lazy and too good-natured to even try and make Rakesh leave home and set up independently, as any other girl might have done. What was more, she was pretty—really pretty, in a plump, pudding way that only gave way to fat—soft, spreading fat like warm wax—after the birth of their first baby, a son, and then what did it matter?

For some years Rakesh worked in the city hospital, quickly rising to the top of the administrative organization, and was made a director before he left to set up his own clinic. He took his parents in his car, a new, sky-blue ambassador with a rear window full of stickers and charms revolving on strings—to see the clinic when it was built, and the large sign-board over the door on which his name was printed in letters of red, with a row of degrees and qualifications to follow in like so many little black slaves of the regent. Thereafter his fame seemed to grow just a little dimmer—or maybe it was only that everyone in town had grown accustomed to it at last—but it was also the beginning of his fortune for he now became known not only as the best but also the richest doctor in town.

However, all this was not accomplished in the wink of an eye. Naturally not. It was the achievement of a lifetime and it took up Rakesh's whole life. At the time he set up his clinic his father had grown into an old man and retired from his post at the kerosene dealer's depot at which he had worked for forty years, and his mother died soon after, giving up the ghost⁷ with a sigh that sounded positively happy, for it was her own son who ministered to her in her last illness and who sat pressing her feet at the last moment—such a son as few women had borne.

For it had to be admitted—and the most unsuccessful and most rancorous of neighbours eventually did so—that Rakesh was not only a devoted son and a miraculously good-natured man contrived somehow to obey his parents and humour his wife and show concern equally for his children and his patients, but there was actually a brain inside this beautifully polished and formed body of good manners and kind nature and, in between ministering to his family and playing host to many friends and coaxing them all into feeling happy and grateful and content, he had actually trained his hands as well and emerged an excellent doctor, a really fine surgeon. How one man—and a man born to illiterate parents, his father having worked for a kerosene dealer and his mother having spent her life in a kitchen—had achieved, combined and conducted such a medley of virtues, no one could fathom, but all acknowledged his talent and skill.

It was a strange fact, however, that talent and skill, if displayed for too long, cease to dazzle. It came to pass that the most admiring of all eyes eventually faded and no longer blinked at his glory. Having retired from work and having lost his wife, the old father very quickly went to pieces⁸, as they say. He developed so many complaints and fell ill so frequently and with such mysterious diseases that even his son could no longer make out when it was something of significance and when it was merely a peevish whim. He sat huddled on his string bed most of the day and developed an exasperating habit of stretching out suddenly and lying absolutely still, allowing the whole family to fly around him in a flap, wailing and weeping, and then suddenly sitting up, stiff and gaunt, and spitting out a big gob of betel juice as if to mock their behavior.

He did this once too often: there had been a big party in the house, a birthday party for the younger son, and the celebrations had to be suddenly hushed, covered up and hustled out of the way when the daughter-in-law discovered, or thought she discovered, that the old man, stretched out from end to end of his string bed, had lost his pulse; the party broke up, dissolved, even turned into a band of mourners, when the old man sat up and the distraught daughter-in-law received a gob of red spittle right on the hem of her new organza sari. After that no one much cared if he sat up

cross-legged on his bed, hawking and spitting, or lay down flat and turned grey as a corpse. Except, of course, for that pearl amongst pearls, his son Rakesh.

It was Rakesh who brought him his morning tea, not in one of the china cups from which the rest of the family drank, but in the old man's favorite brass tumbler, and sat at the edge of his bed, comfortable and relaxed with the string of his pyjamas dangling out from under his fine lawn night-shirt, and discussed or, rather, read out the morning news to his father. It made no difference to him that his father made no response apart from spitting. It was Rakesh, too, who, on returning from the clinic in the evening, persuaded the old man to come out of his room, as bare and desolate as a cell, and take the evening air out in the garden, beautifully arranging the pillows and bolsters on the *divan* in the corner of the open verandah. On summer nights he saw to it that the servants carried out the old man's bed onto the lawn and himself helped his father down the steps and onto the bed, soothing him and settling him down for a night under the stars.

All this was very gratifying for the old man. What was not so gratifying was that he even undertook to supervise his father's diet. One day when the father was really sick, having ordered his daughter-in-law to make him a dish of *soojie halwa* and eaten it with a saucerful of cream, Rakesh marched into the room, not with his usual respectful step but with the confident and rather contemptuous stride of the famous doctor, and declared, 'No more *halwa* for you, papa. We must be sensible, at your age. If you must have something sweet, Veena will cook you a little *kheer*, that's light, just a little rice and milk. But nothing fried, nothing rich. We can't have this happening again.'

The old man who had been lying stretched out on his bed, weak and feeble after a day's illness, gave a start at the very sound, the tone of these words. He opened his eyes-rather, they fell open with shock-and he stared at his son with disbelief that darkened quickly to reproach. A son who actually refused his father the food he craved? No, it was unheard of, it was incredible. But Rakesh had turned his back to him and was cleaning up the litter of bottles and

packets on the medicine shelf and did not notice while Veena slipped silently out of the room with a little smirk that only the old man saw, and hated.

Halwa was only the first item to be crossed off the old man's diet. One delicacy after the other went-everything fried to begin with, then everything sweet, and eventually everything, everything that the old man enjoyed⁹. The meals that arrived for him on the shining stainless steel tray twice a day were frugal to say the least-dry bread, boiled lentils, boiled vegetables and, if there were a bit of chicken or fish, that was boiled too. If he called for another helping-in a cracked voice that quavered theatrically-Rakesh himself would come to the door, gaze at him sadly and shake his head, saying, 'Now, papa, we must be careful, we can't risk another illness, you know,' and although the daughter-in-law kept tactfully out of the way, the old man could just see her smirk sliding merrily through the air. He tried to bribe his grandchildren into buying him sweets (and how he missed his wife now, that generous, indulgent and illiterate cook), whispering, 'Here's fifty paise,' as he stuffed the coins into a tight, hot fist. 'Run down to the shop at the crossroads and buy me thirty paise worth of *jalebis*, and you can spend the remaining twenty paise on yourself. Eh? Understand? Will you do that? He got away with it once or twice but then was found out, the conspirator was scolded by his father and smacked by his mother and Rakesh came storming into the room, almost tearing his hair as he shouted through compressed lips, 'Now papa, are you trying to turn my little son into a liar? Quite apart from spoiling your own stomach, you are spoiling him as well-you are encouraging him to lie to his own parents. You should have heard the lies he told his mother when she saw him bringing back those *jalebis* wrapped up in filthy newspaper. I don't allow anyone in my house to buy sweets in the bazaar, papa, surely you know that. There's cholera in the city, typhoid, and gastroenteritis¹⁰-I see these cases daily in the hospital, how can I allow my own family to run such risks?' The old man sighed and lay down in the corpse position. But that worried no one any longer.

There was only one pleasure left in the old man now (his son's early morning visits and readings from the newspaper could no longer

be called that) and those were visits from elderly neighbours. These were not frequent as his contemporaries were mostly as decrepit and helpless as he and few could walk the length of the road to visit him anymore. Old Bhatia, next door, however, who was still spry enough to refuse, adamantly, to bathe in the tiled bathroom indoors and to insist on carrying out his brass mug and towel, in all seasons and usually at impossible hours, into the yard and bathe noisily under the garden tap, would look over the hedge to see if Varma were out on his verandah and would call to him and talk while he wrapped his *dhobi* about him and dried the sparse hair on his head, shivering with enjoyable exaggeration. Of course these conversations, bawled across the hedge by two rather deaf old men conscious of having their entire households overhearing them, were not very satisfactory but Bhatia occasionally came out of his yard, walked down the bit of road and came in at Varma's gate to collapse onto the stone plinth built under the temple tree. If Rakesh was at home he would help his father down the steps into the garden and arrange him on his night bed under the tree and leave the two old men to chew betel-leaves and discuss the ills of their individual bodies with combined passion.

'At least you have a doctor in the house to look after you,' sighed Bhatia, having vividly described his martyrdom to piles.

'Look after me?' cried Varma, his voice cracking like an ancient clay jar. 'He - he does not even give me enough to eat.'

'What?' said Bhatia, the white hairs in his ears twitching. 'Doesn't give you enough to eat? Your own son?'

'My own son. If I ask him for one more piece of bread, he says no, papa, I weighed out the *ata* myself and I can't allow you to have more than two hundred grams of cereal a day. He *weighs* the food he gives me, Bhatia - he has scales to weigh it on. That is what it has come to.'

'Never,' murmured Bhatia in disbelief. 'It is possible, even in this evil age¹¹, for a son to refuse his father food?'

'Let me tell you,' Varma whispered eagerly. 'Today the family was having fried fish - I could smell it. I called to my daughter-in-law to bring me a piece. She came to the door and said no....'

'Said no?' it was Bhatia's voice that cracked. A drongo shot out of the tree and sped away. Ita?

'No, she said no; Rakesh has ordered her to give me nothing fried. No butter, he says, no oil...'

'No butter? No oil? How does he expect his father to live?'

Old Verma nodded with melancholy triumph. 'That is how he treats me - after I have brought him up, given him an education, made him a great doctor. Great doctor! This is the way great doctors treat their fathers, Bhatia,' for the son's sterling personality and character now underwent a curious sea change¹². Outwardly all might be the same but the interpretation had altered: his masterly efficiency was nothing but cold heartlessness, his authority was only tyranny in disguise.

There was cold comfort in complaining to neighbours and, on such a miserable diet, Varma found himself slipping, weakening and soon becoming a genuinely sick man. Powders and pills and mixtures were not only brought in when dealing with a crisis like an upset stomach but became a regular part of his diet - became his diet, complained Varma, supplanting the natural foods he craved. There were pills to regulate his bowel movements, pills to bring down his blood pressure, pills to deal with his arthritis and, eventually, pills to keep his heart beating. In between there were panicky rushes to the hospital, some humiliating experiences with the stomach pump and enema, which left him frightened and helpless. He cried easily, shrivelling up on his bed, but if he complained of a pain or even a vague, grey fear in the night, Rakesh would simply open another bottle of pills and force him to take one. 'I have my duty to you papa,' he said when his father begged to be let off.

'Let me be,' Varma begged, turning his face away from the pills on the outstretched hand. 'Let me die. It would be better. I do not want to live only to eat your medicines.'

'Papa, be reasonable.'

'I leave that to you,' the father cried with sudden spirit. 'Leave me alone, let me die now, I cannot live like this.'

Lying all day on his pillows, fed every few hours by his daughter-in-law's own hands, visited by every member of his family daily - and

then he says he does not want to live "like this"; Rakesh was heard to say, laughing, to someone outside the door.

'Deprived of food,' screamed the old man on the bed, 'his wishes ignored, taunted by his daughter-in-law, laughed at by his grandchildren-that is how I live', but he was very old and weak and all anyone heard was an incoherent croak, some expressive grunts and cries of genuine pain. Only once, when old Bhatia had come to see him and they sat together under the temple tree, they heard him cry, 'God is calling me-and they won't let me go.'

The quantities of vitamins and tonic he was made to take were not altogether useless. They kept him alive and even gave him a kind of strength that made him hang on long after he ceased to wish to hang on. It was as though he were straining at a rope, trying to break it, and it would not break, it was still strong. He only hurt himself, trying.

In the evening, that summer, the servants would come into his cell¹³, grip his bed, one at each end, and carry it out to the verandah, there setting it down with a thump that jarred every tooth in his head. In answer to his agonized complaints they said the doctor sahib had told them he must take the evening air and the evening air they would make him take-thump. Then Veena, that smiling, hypocritical pudding in a rustling sari, would appear and pile up the pillows under his head till he was propped up stiffly into a sitting position that made his head swim and his back ache.

'Let me lie down,' he begged. 'I can't sit up any more.'

'Try, papa, Rakesh said you can if you try,' she said, and drifted away to the other end of the verandah where her transistor radio vibrated to the lovesick tunes from the cinema that she listened to all day.

So there he sat, like some stiff corpse, terrified, gazing out on the lawn where his grandsons played cricket, in danger of getting one of their hard-spun balls in his eye, and at the gate that opened onto the dusty and rubbish-heaped lane but still bore, proudly, a newly touched-up signboard that bore his son's name and qualifications, his own name having vanished from the gate long ago¹⁴.

At last the sky-blue Ambassador arrived, the cricket game broke up in haste, the car drove in smartly and the doctor, the great doctor, all in white, stepped out. Someone ran up to take his bag from him, others to escort him up the steps. 'Will you have tea?' his wife called, turning down the transistor set, 'Or a Coca-Cola? Shall I fry you some *samosas*?' But he did not reply or even glance in her direction. Ever a devoted son, he went first to the corner where his father sat gazing, stricken, at some undefined spot in the dusty yellow air that swam before him. He did not turn his head to look at his son. But he stopped gobbling air with his uncontrolled lips and set his jaw as hard as a sick and very old man could set it.

'Papa,' his son said, tenderly, sitting down on the edge of the bed and reaching out to press his feet.

Old Varma tucked his feet under him, out of the way, and continued to gaze stubbornly into the yellow air of the summer evening.

'Papa, I'm home.'

Varma's hand jerked suddenly, in a sharp, derisive movement, but he did not speak.

'How are you feeling, papa?'

Then Varma turned and looked at his son. His face was so out of control and all in pieces, that the multitude of expressions that crossed it could not make up a whole and convey to the famous man exactly what his father thought of him, his skill, his art.

'I'm dying,' he croaked. 'Let me die, I tell you.'

'Papa, you're joking,' his son smiled at him, lovingly. 'I've brought you a new tonic to make you feel better. You must take it, it will make you feel stronger again. Here it is. Promise me you will take it regularly, papa.'

Varma's mouth worked as hard as thought he still had a gob of betel in it (his supply of betel had been cut off years ago). Then he spat out some words, as sharp and bitter as poison, into his son's face. 'Keep your tonic - I want none-I want none- I won't take any more of-of your medicines. None. Never,' and he swept the bottle out of his son's hand with a wave of his own, suddenly grand, suddenly effective.

His son jumped, for the bottle was smashed and thick brown syrup had splashed up, staining his white trousers. His wife let out a cry and came running. All around the old man was hubbub once again, noise, attention.

He gave one push to the pillows at his back and dislodged them so he could sink down on his back, quite flat again. He closed his eyes and pointed his chin at the ceiling, like some dire prophet, groaning, 'God is calling me- now let me go.'

WORDS NOTES :

1. *bedlam broke loose*: expression to suggest that there was rush and madness everywhere. [Bedlam: a lunatic asylum, a madhouse].
2. *at least... ghee sweets*: The womenfolk complain that Mr. Varma had not served expensive sweets. Depicts a typical situation where the womenfolk criticize more out of envy than anything else.
3. *old Varma... airs*: The men disapprove of Mr. Varma for sounding too proud of his son's achievements. Another example of criticism generated by envy / jealousy.
4. *rubbish van... shacks on*: a typical picture of Indian semi-urban life where rubbish-vans load garbage at the roadsides and rag pickers build shacks near it.
5. *plump, pudding... matter?*: Wives are not expected to be beautiful after delivering the first child.
6. *wink of an eye*: a brief moment, as being the time it takes to wink.
7. *giving up the ghost*: dying. [give up the ghost = to die].
8. *went to pieces*: (fig.) broke down emotionally or mentally.
9. *one delicacy... enjoyed*: the old man felt that by depriving him of fried and sweet things, he was intentionally being deprived of his favourite food items. Most of his favourite foodstuffs were, in all probability, fried or sweet.
10. *cholera... gastroenteritis*: diseases [epidemics] generally spread by germs contained in filthy food.
11. *evil age*: [here] the age that belongs to people like Varma's son. Varma and Bhatia consider themselves of a bygone age.
12. *sea changes*: radical changes, notable or unexpected alteration or transformation.

13. *cell*: Varma finds his room no better than a (prison) cell.

14. *his own name... ago*: Varma realizes that he is no longer the master of the house.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. 'God is calling me-and they won't let me go.'
Who is the speaker here? Who does he refer to as *they*? Describe the circumstances leading to this outburst.
2. 'No butter? No oil? How does he expect his father to live?'
Discuss, in the light of this statement, Desai's portrayal of a typical Indian mentality.
3. Examine Rakesh's relationship with his father. Would you call him a 'devoted' son? Why / Why not?
4. Comment on the title of Anita Desai's Short story-"A Devoted Son". Do You feel there is a touch of irony in the Story?
[GU 2005]
5. How does the father son relationship in the story "A Devoted Son" reflect on the traditional Indian values?
[GU 2007]



THE LOTUS EATER

: W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

W(illiam) Somerset Maugham (1874-1965), British novelist, playwright and short-story writer was the highest paid author in the world in the 1930s. However, as Maugham declared in his autobiography *The Summing Up* (1938), he was at best 'in the very first row of the second-raters'. Maugham's popularity as an author was immense but still he failed to earn serious recognition. His skill in handling plot has led many a critic to compare him with the famous French novelist and short-story writer, Guy de Maupassant. Maugham is deemed one of the modern masters of the art of the novel and short story who has influenced practitioners of that genre from his time to the present. In most of his writings the surroundings are international and the stories are told in clear, economical style with cynical or resigned undertone.

W. Somerset Maugham was born in Paris and studied medicine at the University of Heidelberg and at Saint Thomas's Hospital, London. His partially autobiographical novel *Of Human Bondage* (1915) is generally acknowledged as his masterpiece and is one of the best realistic English novels of the early 20th century. The story follows the childhood, youth, and early manhood of Philip Carey, who is born with a deformed foot. *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919) is a story of the conflict between the artist and conventional society, based on the life of the French painter Paul Gauguin. Other novels include *The Painted Veil* (1925), *Cakes and Ale* (1930), *Christmas Holiday* (1939), *The Hour Before the Dawn* (1942), *The Razor's Edge* (1944), and *Cataline: A Romance* (1948). Among the collections of his short stories are *The Trembling of a Leaf* (1921), which includes "Miss Thompson," later dramatized as *Rain*; *Ashenden: or The British Agent* (1928); *First Person Singular* (1931); *Ah King* (1933); and *Quartet* (1948).

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Maugham had an unconventional view of life and this is reflected in most of his writings. He used to believe that there is a true harmony in the contradictions of mankind and that the normal is in reality the abnormal. "*The ordinary is the writer's richest field*", he stated in *The Summing Up* (1938). He further wrote "*Most people cannot see anything, but I can see what is in front of my nose with extreme clearness; the greatest writers can see through a brick wall. My vision is not so penetrating.*"

THE LOTUS EATER :

What happens when somebody gives up his future for an enjoyable present? Does it really help to live in a fool's paradise believing that the future is too far to be considered seriously?

The title of this short story is based on an incident described in Homer's *Odyssey*. The mariners of Ulysses, sailing home to Ithaca from the Trojan War, reach the island of the *Lotus* plant. Drugged into inaction after consuming the plant, the mariners break into a chorus of the sorrow and pain that come with toil, and the joy that they had in that magic languor.

The Lotus Eater presents the interesting character of Thomas Wilson, who, like the mariners of Ulysses, sacrifices his future for a life of inaction, isolation, peace and pleasure at the enchanting island of Capri, near the city of Naples, South-Central Italy. He makes a mockery of life and the ease and luxury of the body finally leads to the death of the soul.

TEXT :

Most people, the vast majority in fact, lead the lives that circumstances have thrust upon them, and though some repine¹, looking upon themselves as round pegs in square holes², and think that if things had been different they might have made a much better showing, the greater part accept their lot, if not with serenity, at all events with resignation. They are like tram-cars travelling for ever on the selfsame rails. They go backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, inevitably, till they can go no longer and then are sold as scrap-iron. It is not often that you find a man who has boldly taken the course of his life into his own hands. When you do, it is worthwhile having a good look at him.

That was why I was curious to meet Thomas Wilson. It was an interesting and a bold thing he had done. Of course the end was not yet and until the experiment was concluded it was impossible to call it successful. But from what I had heard it seemed he must be an odd sort of fellow and I thought I should like to know him. I had been told he was reserved, but I had a notion that with patience and tact I could persuade him to confide in me. I wanted to hear the facts from his own lips. People exaggerate, they love to romanticize, and I was quite prepared to discover that his story was not nearly so singular as I had been led to believe.

And this impression was confirmed when at last I made his acquaintance. It was on the Piazza in Capri, where I was spending the month of August at a friend's villa, and a little before sunset, when most of the inhabitants, native and foreign, gather together to chat with their friends in the cool of the evening. There is a terrace that overlooks the Bay of Naples, and when the sun sinks slowly into the sea the island of Ischia is silhouetted against a blaze of splendour. It is one of the most lovely sights in the world. I was standing there with my friend and host watching it, when suddenly he said:

'Look, there's Wilson.'

'Where?'

'The man sitting on the parapet, with his back to us. He's got a blue shirt on.'

I saw an undistinguished back and a small head of grey hair, short and rather thin.

'I wish he'd turn round,' I said.

'He will presently.'

'Ask him to come and have a drink with us at Morgano's.'

'All right.'

The instant of over-whelming beauty had passed and the sun, like the top of an orange, was dipping into a wine-red sea. We turned round and leaning our backs against the parapet looked at the people who were sauntering to and fro. They were all talking their heads off and the cheerful noise was exhilarating. Then the church bell, rather cracked, but with a fine resonant note, began to ring. The

Piazza at Capri, with its clock tower over the footpath that leads up from the harbour, with the church up a flight of steps, is a perfect setting for an opera by Donizetti, and you felt that the voluble⁵ crowd might at any moment break out into a rattling chorus. It was charming and unreal.

I was so intent on the scene that I had not noticed Wilson get off the parapet and come towards us. As he passed us my friend stopped him.

'Hullo, Wilson, I haven't seen you bathing the last few days.'

'I've been bathing on the other side for a change.'

My friend then introduced me. Wilson shook hands with me politely, but with indifference; a great many strangers come to Capri for a few days, or a few weeks, and I had no doubt he was constantly meeting people who came and went; and then my friend asked him to come along and have a drink with us.

'I was just going back to supper,' he said.

'Can't it wait?' I asked.

'I suppose it can,' he smiled.

Though his teeth were not very good his smile was attractive. It was gentle and kindly. He was dressed in a blue cotton shirt and a pair of gray trousers, much creased and none too clean, of a thin canvas, and on his feet he wore a pair of very old espadrilles⁶. The get-up was picturesque, and very suitable to the place and the weather, but it did not at all go with his face. It was a lined, long face, deeply sunburned, thin-lipped, with small grey eyes rather close together and tight, neat features. The grey hair was carefully brushed. It was not a plain face, indeed in his youth Wilson might have been good-looking, but a prim one. He wore the blue shirt, open at the neck, and the grey canvas trousers, not as though they belonged to him, but as though, shipwrecked in his pyjamas, he had been fitted out with odd garments by compassionate strangers. Notwithstanding this careless attire he looked like the manager of a branch office in an insurance company, who should by rights be wearing a black coat with pepper-and-salt trousers⁷, a white collar, and an unobjectionable tie. I could very well see myself going to him to claim the insurance money when I had lost a watch, and being rather disconcerted while

I answered the questions he put to me by his obvious impression, for all his politeness, that people who made such claims were either fools or knaves.

Moving off, we strolled across the Piazza and down the street till we came to Morgano's. We sat in the garden. Around us people were talking in Russian, German, Italian, and English. We ordered drinks. Donna Lucia, the host's wife, waddled up and in her low, sweet voice passed the time of day with us. Though middle-aged now and portly, she had still traces of the wonderful beauty that thirty years before had driven artists to paint so many bad portraits of her. Her eyes, large and liquid, were the eyes of Hera and her smile was affectionate and gracious. We three gossiped for a while, for there is always a scandal of one sort or another in Capri to make a topic of conversation, but nothing was said of particular interest and in a little while Wilson got up and left us. Soon afterwards we strolled up to my friend's villa to dine. On the way he asked me what I had thought of Wilson.

'Nothing,' I said. 'I don't believe there's a word of truth in your story.'

'Why not?'

'He isn't the sort of man to do that sort of thing.'

'How does anyone know what anyone is capable of?'

'I should put him down as an absolutely normal man of business who's retired on a comfortable income from gilt-edged securities⁸. I think your story's just the ordinary Capri tittle-tattle⁹.'

'Have it your own way,' said my friend.

We were in the habit of bathing at a beach called the Baths of Tiberius¹⁰. We took a fly down the road to a certain point and then wandered through lemon groves and vineyards, noisy with cicadas¹¹ and heavy with the hot smell of the sun, till we came to the top of the cliff down which a steep winding path led to the sea. A day or two later, just before we got down my friend said:

'Oh, there's Wilson back again.'

like the top of
round and leaning out
who were sauntering

place being crunched over the beach, the only drawback to the bathing was the shingle and not sand, and as we came along
He was standing up, a pipe in his mouth,

and he wore nothing but a pair of trunks. His body was dark brown, thin, but not emaciated, and, considering his wrinkled face and grey hair, youthful. Hot from our walk, we undressed quickly and plunged at once into the water. Six feet from the shore it was thirty feet deep, but so clear that you could see the bottom. It was warm, yet invigorating.

When I got out Wilson was lying on his belly, with a towel under him reading a book. I lit a cigarette and went and sat down beside him.

'Had a nice swim?' he asked.

He put his pipe inside his book to mark the place and closing it put it down on the pebbles beside him. He was evidently willing to talk.

'Lovely,' I said. 'It's the best bathing in the world.'

'Of course people think those were the Baths of Tiberius.' He waved his hand towards a shapeless mass of masonry that stood half in the water and half out. 'But that's all rot. It was just one of villas, you know.'

I did. But it is just as well to let people tell you things when they want to. It disposes them kindly towards you if you suffer them to impart information. Wilson gave a chuckle.

'Funny old fellow, Tiberius. Pity they're saying now there's not a word of truth in all those stories about him.'

He began to tell me all about Tiberius. Well, I had read my Suetonius¹² too and I had read histories of the Early Roman Empire, so there was nothing very new to me in what he said. But I observed that he was not ill-read. I remarked on it.

'Oh, well, when I settled down here I was naturally interested, and I have plenty of time for reading. When you live in a place like this, with all its associations, it seems to make history so actual. You might almost be living in historical times yourself.'

I should remark here that this was in 1913. The world was an easy, comfortable place and no one could have imagined that anything might happen seriously to disturb the serenity of existence.

'How long have you been here?' I asked.

'Fifteen years.' He gave the blue and placid sea a glance, and a

strangely tender smile hovered on his thin lips. 'I fell in love with the place at first sight. You've heard, I daresay, of the mythical German who came here on the Naples boat just for lunch and a look at the Blue Grotto and stayed forty years; well, I can't say I exactly did that, but it's come to the same thing in the end. Only it won't be forty years in my case. Twenty-five. Still, that's better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick¹³.'

I waited for him to go on. For what he will just said looked indeed as though there might be something after all in the singular story I had heard. But at that moment my friend came dripping out of the water very proud of himself because he had swum a mile, and the conversation turned to other things.

After that I met Wilson several times, either in the Piazza or on the beach. He was amiable and polite. He was always pleased to have a talk and I found out that he not only knew every inch of the island but also the adjacent mainland. He had read a great deal on all sorts of subjects, but his specialty was the history of Rome and on this he was very well informed. He seemed to have little imagination and to be of no more than average intelligence. He laughed a good deal, but with restraint, and his sense of humour was tickled by simple jokes. A commonplace man. I did not forget the odd remark he had made during the first short chat we had had by ourselves, but he never so much as approached the topic again. One day on our return from the beach, dismissing the cab at the Piazza, my friend and I told the driver to be ready to take up to Anacapri at five. We were going to climb Monte Solaro, dine at a tavern we favoured, and walk down in the moon-light. For it was full moon and the views by night were lovely. Wilson was standing by while we gave the cabman instructions, for we had given him a lift to save him the hot dusty walk, and more from politeness than for any other reason I asked him if he would care to join us.

'It's my party,' I said.

'I'll come with pleasure,' he answered.

But when the time came to set out my friend was not feeling well, he thought he had stayed too long in the water, and would not face the long and tiring walk. So I went alone with Wilson. We climbed

the mountain, admired the spacious view, and got back to the inn as night was falling, hot, hungry, and thirsty. We had ordered our dinner beforehand. The food was good, for Antonio was an excellent cook, and the wine came from his own vineyard. It was so light that you felt you could drink it like water and we finished the first bottle with our macaroni. By the time we had finished the second we felt that there was nothing much wrong with life. We sat in a little garden under a great vine laden with grapes. The air was exquisitely soft. The night was still and we were alone. The maid brought us *bel paese* cheese and a plate of figs. I ordered coffee and strega, which is the best liqueur they make in Italy. Wilson would not have a cigar, but lit his pipe.

'We've got plenty of time before we need start,' he said, 'the moon won't be over the hill for another hour.'

'Moon or no moon,' I said briskly, 'of course we've got plenty of time. That's one of the delights of Capri, that there's never any hurry.'

'Leisure,' he said. 'If people only knew! It's the most priceless thing a man can have and they're such fools they don't even know it's something to aim at. Work? They work for work's sake. They haven't got the brains to realize that the only object of work is to obtain leisure.'

Wine has the effect on some people of making them indulge in general reflections. These remarks were true, but no one could have claimed that they were original. I did not say anything, but struck a match to light my cigar.

'It was full moon the first time I came to Capri,' he went on reflectively. 'It might be the same moon as tonight.'

'It was, you know,' I smiled.

He grinned. The only light in the garden was what came from an oil lamp that hung over our heads. It had been scanty to eat by, but it was good now for confidences.

'I didn't mean that. I mean, it might be yesterday. Fifteen years it is, and when I look back it seems like a month. I'd never been to Italy before. I came for my summer holiday. I went to Naples by boat from Marseilles and I had a look round, Pompeii, you know,

and Paestum and one or two places like that; then I came here for a week. I liked the look of the place right away, from the sea, I mean, as I watched it come closer and closer; and then when we got into the little boats from the steamer and landed at the quay, with all that crowd of jabbering people who wanted to take your luggage, and the hotel touts, and the tumbledown houses on the Marina and the walk up to the hotel, and dining on the terrace—well, it just got me. That's the truth. I didn't know if I was standing on my head or my heels. I'd never drunk Capri wine before, but I'd heard of it; I think I must have got a bit tight. I sat on that terrace after they'd all gone to bed and watched the moon over the sea, and there was Vesuvius with a great red plume of smoke rising up from it. Of course I know now that wine I drank was ink, Capri wine my eye, but I thought it all right then. But it wasn't the wine that made me drunk, it was the shape of the island and those jabbering people, the moon and the sea and the oleander in the hotel garden. I'd never seen an oleander before.'

It was a long speech and it had made him thirsty. He took up his glass, but it was empty. I asked him if he would have another *strega*.

'It's sickly stuff. Let's have a bottle of wine. That's sound, that is, pure juice of the grape and can't hurt anyone.'

I ordered more wine, and when it came filled the glasses. He took a long drink and after a sigh of pleasure went on.

'Next day I found my way to the bathing-place we go to. No bad bathing, I thought. Then I wandered about the island. As luck would have it, there was *fiesta*¹⁴ up at the Punta di Timberio and I ran straight into the middle of it. An image of the Virgin and priests, acolytes swinging censers¹⁵, and a whole crowd of jolly, laughing, excited people, a lot of them all dressed up. I ran across an Englishman there and asked him what it was all about. "Oh, it's the feast of the Assumption," he said, "at least that's what the Catholic Church says it is, but that's just their hanky-panky. It's the festival of Venus. Pagan, you know. Aphrodite rising from the sea and all that." It gave me quite a funny feeling to hear him. It seemed to take one a long way back, if you know what I mean. After that I went down one

night to have a look at the Faraglioni by moonlight. If the fates had wanted me to go on being a bank manager they oughtn't to have let me take that walk.

'You were a bank manager, were you?' I asked.

I had been wrong about him, but not far wrong.

'Yes. I was manager of the Crawford Street branch of the York and City. It was convenient for me because I lived up Hendon way. I could get from door to door in thirty-seven minutes.'

He puffed at his pipe and relit it.

'That was my last night, that was. I'd got to be back at the bank on Monday morning. When I looked at those two great rocks sticking out of the water, with the moon above them, and all the little lights of the fisherman in their boats catching cuttlefish, all so peaceful and beautiful, I said to myself, well, after all, why should I go back? It wasn't as if I had anyone dependent on me. My wife had died of bronchial pneumonia four years before and the kid went to live with her grandmother, my wife's mother. She was an old fool, she didn't look after the kid properly and she got blood-poisoning, they amputated her leg, but they couldn't save her and she died, poor little thing.'

'How terrible,' I said.

'Yes, I was cut up at the time, though of course not so much as if the kid had living with me, but I dare say it was a mercy. Not much chance for girl with only one leg. I was sorry about my wife too. We got on very well together. Though I don't know if it would have continued. She was the sort of women who was always bothering about what other people'd think. She didn't like travelling. Eastbourne was her idea of a holiday. D'you know, I'd never crossed the channel till after her death.'

'But I suppose you've got other relations, haven't you?'

'None. I was an only child. My father had a brother, but he went to Australia before I was born. I don't think anyone could easily be more alone in the world than I am. There wasn't any reason I could see why I shouldn't do exactly what I wanted. I was thirty-four at that time.'

He had told me he had been on the island for fifteen years.

That would make him forty-nine. Just about the age I should have given him.

'I'd been working since I was seventeen. All I had to look forward to was doing the same old thing day after day till I retired on my pension. I said to myself, is it worth it? What's wrong with chucking it all up and spending the rest of my life down here? It was the most beautiful place I'd ever seen. But I'd had business training, I was cautious by nature. "No," I said, "I won't be carried away like this, I'll go tomorrow like I said I would and think it over. Perhaps when I get back to London I'll think quite differently." Damned fool, wasn't I? I lost a whole year that way.'

'You didn't change your mind, then?'

'You bet I didn't. All the time I was working I kept thinking of the bathing here and the vineyards and the walks over the hills and the moon and the sea, and the Piazza in the evening where everyone walks about for a bit of a chat after the day's work is over. There was only one thing that bothered me: I wasn't sure if I was justified in not working like everybody else did. Then I read a sort of history book, by a man called Marion Crawford¹⁶ it was, and there was a story about Sybaris and Crotona¹⁷. There were two cities; and in Sybaris they just enjoyed life and had a good time, and in Crotona they were hardy and industrious and all that. And one day the men of Crotona came over and wiped Sybaris out, and then after a while a lot of other fellows came over from somewhere else and wiped Crotona out. Nothing remains of Sybaris, not a stone, and all that's left of Crotona is just one column. That settled the matter for me.'

'Oh?'

'It came to the same in the end, didn't it? And when you look back now, who were the mugs?'

I did not reply and he went on.

'The money was rather a bother. The bank didn't pension one off till after thirty years' service, but if you retired before that they gave you a gratuity. With that and what I'd got for the sale of my house and the little I'd managed to save, I just hadn't enough to buy an annuity to last the rest of my life. It would have been silly to

sacrifice everything so as to lead a pleasant life and not have a sufficient income to make it pleasant. I wanted to have a little place of my own, a servant to look after me, enough to buy tobacco, decent food, books now and then, and something over for emergencies. I knew pretty well how much I needed. I found I had just enough to buy an annuity for twenty-five years.'

'You were thirty-five at the time?'

'Yes. It would carry me on till I was sixty. After all, no one can be certain of living longer than that, a lot of men die in their fifties, and by the time a man's sixty he's had the best of life.'

'On the other hand no one can be sure of dying at sixty,' I said.

'Well, I don't know. It depends on himself, doesn't it?'

'In your place I should have stayed on at the bank till I was entitled to my pension.'

'I should have been forty-seven then. I shouldn't have been too old to enjoy my life here, I'm older than that now and I enjoy it as much as I ever did, but I should have been too old to experience the particular pleasure of a young man. You know, you can have just as good a time at fifty as you can at thirty, but it's not the same sort of good time. I wanted to live the perfect life while I still had the energy and the spirit to make the most of it. Twenty-five years seemed a long time to me, and twenty-five years of happiness seemed worth paying something pretty substantial for. I'd made up my mind to wait a year and I waited a year. Then I sent in my resignation and as soon as they paid me my gratuity I bought the annuity and came on here.'

'An annuity for twenty-five years?'

'That's right.'

'Have you never regretted?'

'Never. I've had my money's worth already. And I've got ten years more. Don't you think after twenty-five years of perfect happiness one ought to be satisfied to call it a day?'¹⁸

'Perhaps.'

He did not say in so many words what he would do then, but his intention was clear. It was pretty much the story my friend had told me, but it sounded different when I heard it from his own lips.

I stole a glance at him. There was nothing about him that was not ordinary. No one, looking at that neat, prim face, could have thought him capable of an unconventional action. I did not blame him. It was his own life that he had arranged in this strange manner, and I did not see why he should not do what he liked with it. Still, I could not prevent the little shiver that ran down my spine.

'Getting chilly?' he smiled. 'We might as well start walking down. The moon'll be up by now.'

Before we parted Wilson asked me if I would like to go and see his house one day; and two or three days later, finding out where he lived, I strolled up to see him. It was a peasant's cottage, well away from the town, in a vineyard, with a view of the sea. By the side of the door grew a great oleander in full flower. There were only two small rooms, a tiny kitchen, and a lean-to in which firewood could be kept. The bedroom was furnished like a monk's cell, but the sitting-room, smelling agreeably of tobacco, was comfortable enough, with two large arm-chairs that he had brought from England, a large roll-top desk, a cottage piano, and crowded bookshelves. On the walls were framed engravings of pictures by G.F. Watts and Lord Leighton¹⁹. Wilson told me that the house belonged to the owner of the vineyard who lived in another cottage higher up the hill, and his wife came in every day to do the rooms and the cooking. He had found the place on his first visit to Capri, and taking it on his return for good had been there ever since. Seeing the piano and music open on it, I asked him if would play.

'I'm no good, you know, but I've always been fond of music and I get a lot of fun out of strumming.'

He sat down at the piano and played one of the movements from a Beethoven sonata. He did not play very well. I looked at his music, Schumann and Schubert, Beethoven, Bach, and Chopin. On the table on which he had his meals was a greasy pack of cards. I asked him if he played patience.

'A lot.'

From what I saw of him then and from what I heard from other people I made for myself what I think must have been a fairly accurate picture of the life he had led for the last fifteen years. It was

certainly a very harmless one. He bathed; he walked a great deal, and he seemed never to lose his sense of the beauty of the island which he knew so intimately; he played the piano and he played patience; he read. When he was asked to a party he went and, though a trifle dull, was agreeable. He was not affronted if he was neglected. He liked people, but with an aloofness that prevented intimacy. He lived thriftily, but with sufficient comfort. He never owed a penny. I imagine he had never been a man whom sex had greatly troubled, and if in his younger days he had had now and then a passing affair with a visitor to the island whose head was turned by the atmospheres, his emotion, while it lasted, remained, I am pretty sure, well under his control. I think he was determined that nothing should interfere with his independence of spirit. His only passion was for the beauty of nature, and he sought felicity in the simple and natural things that life offers to everyone. You may say that it was a grossly selfish existence. It was. He was of no use to anybody, but on the other hand he did nobody any harm. His only object was his own happiness, and it looked as though he had attained it. Very few people know where to look for happiness; fewer still find it. I don't know whether he was a fool or a wise man. He was certainly a man who knew his own mind. The odd thing about him to me was that he was so immensely commonplace. I should never have given him a second thought but for what I knew, that on a certain day, ten years from then, unless a chance illness cut the thread before, he must deliberately take leave of the world he loved so well. I wondered whether it was the thought of this. Never quite absent from his mind, that gave him the peculiar zest with which he enjoyed every moment of the day.

I should do him an injustice if I omitted to state that he was not at all in the habit of talking about himself. I think the friend I was staying with was the only person in whom he had confided. I believe he only told me the story because he suspected I already knew it, and on the evening on which he told it to me he had drunk a good deal of wine.

My visit drew to a close and I left the island. The year after, war broke out. A number of things happened to me, so that the course

of my life was greatly altered, and it was thirteen years before I went to Capri again. My friend had been back some time, but he was no longer so well off, and had moved into a house that had no room for me; so I was putting up at the hotel. He came to meet me at the boat and we dined together. During dinner I asked him where exactly his house was.

'You know it,' he answered. 'It's the little place Wilson had. I've built on a room and made it quite nice. With so many other things to occupy my mind I had not given Wilson a thought for years, but now, with a little shock, I remembered. The ten years he had before him when I made his acquaintance must have elapsed long ago.'

'Did he commit suicide as he said he would?'

'It's rather a grim story.'

Wilson's plan was all right. There was only one flaw in it and this, I suppose, he could not have foreseen. It had never occurred to him that after twenty-five years of complete happiness, in this quiet backwater, with nothing in the world to disturb his serenity, his character would gradually lose its strength. The will needs obstacles in order to exercise its power; when it is never thwarted, when no effort is needed to achieve one's desires because one has placed one's desires only in the things that can be obtained by stretching out one's hand, the will grows impotent. If you walk on a level all the time the muscles you need to climb a mountain will atrophy. These observations are trite, but there they are. When Wilson's annuity expired he had no longer the resolution to make the end, which was the price he had agreed to pay for that long period of happy tranquility. I do not think, as far as I could gather, both from what my friend told me and afterwards from others, that he wanted courage. It was just that he couldn't make up his mind. He put it off from day to day.

He had lived on the island for so long and had always settled his accounts so punctually that it was easy for him to get credit, never having borrowed money before, he found a number of people who were willing to lend him small sums when now he asked for them. He had paid his rent regularly for so many years that his

landlord, whose wife Assunta still acted as his servant, was content to let things slide for several months. Everyone believed him when he said that a relative had died and that he was temporarily embarrassed because owing to legal formalities he could not for some time get the money that was due to him. He managed to hang on after this fashion for something over a year. Then he could get no more credit from the local tradesmen, and there was no one to lend him any more money. His landlord gave him notice to leave the house unless he paid up the arrears of rent before a certain date. The day before this he went into his tiny bedroom, closed the door and the window, drew the curtain, and lit a brazier of charcoal²⁰. Next morning when Assunta came to make his breakfast she found him insensible but still alive. The room was draughty, and thought he had done this and that to keep out the fresh air he had not done it very thoroughly. It almost looked as though at the last moment, and desperate though his situation was, he had suffered from a certain infirmity of purpose. Wilson was taken to the hospital, and though very ill for some time he at last recovered. But as a result either of the charcoal poisoning or of the shock he was no longer in complete possession of his faculties. He was not insane, at all events not insane enough to be put in a asylum, but he was quite obviously no longer in his right mind.

'I went to see him,' said my friend. 'I tried to get him to talk, but he kept looking at me in a funny sort of way, as though he couldn't quite make out where he'd seen me before. He looked rather awful lying there in bed, with a week's growth of grey beard on his chin; but except for that funny look in his eyes he seemed quite normal.'

'What funny look in his eyes?'

'I don't know exactly how to describe it. Puzzled. It's an absurd comparison, but suppose you threw a stone up into the air and it didn't come down but just stayed there...'

'It would be rather bewildering,' I smiled.

'Well, that's the sort of look he had.'

It was difficult to know to do with him. He had no money and no means of getting any. His effects were sold²¹, but for too little to

pay what he owed. He was English, and the Italian authorities did not wish to make themselves responsible for him. The British Consul in Naples had no funds to deal with the case. He could of course be sent back to England, but no one seemed to know what could be done with him when he got there. Then Assunta, the servant, said that he had been a good master and a good tenant, and as long as he had the money had paid his way, he could sleep in the woodshed in the cottage in which she and her husband lived, and he could share their meals. This was suggested to him. It was difficult to know whether he understood or not. When Assunta came to take him from the hospital he went with her without remark. He seemed to have no longer a will of his own. She had been keeping him now for two years.

'It's not very comfortable, you know,' said my friend. They've rigged him up a ramshackle bed and given him a couple of blankets, but there's no window, and it's icy cold in winter and like an oven in summer. And the food's pretty rough. You know how these peasants eat: macaroni on Sundays and meat once in a blue moon²².'

'What does he do with himself all the time?'
He wanders about the hills. I've tried to see him two or three times, but it's no good; when he sees you coming he runs like a hare. Assunta comes down to have a chat with me now and then and I give her a bit of money so that she can buy him tobacco, but God knows if he ever gets it.'

'Do they treat him all right?' I asked.

'I'm sure Assunta's kind enough. She treats him like a child. I'm afraid her husband's not very nice to him. He grudges the cost of his keep. I don't believe he's cruel or anything like that, but I think he's a bit sharp with him. He makes him fetch water and clean the cow-shed and that sort of thing.'

'It sounds pretty rotten,' I said.

'He brought it on himself. After all, he's only got what he deserved.'

'I think on the whole we all get what we deserve,' I said.

'But that doesn't prevent its being rather horrible.'

Two or three days later my friend and I were taking a walk. We were strolling along a narrow path through an olive grove.

'There's Wilson,' said my friend suddenly. 'Don't look; you'll only frighten him. Go straight on.'

I walked with my eyes on the path, but out of the corners of them I saw a man hiding behind an olive tree. He did not move as we approached, but I felt that he was watching us. As soon as we had passed I heard a scamper. Wilson, like a hunted animal, had made for safety. That was the last I ever saw of him.

He died last year. He had endured that life for six years. He was found one morning on the mountainside lying quite peacefully as though he had died in his sleep. From where he lay he had been able to see those two great rocks called the Faraglioni, which stand out of the sea. It was full moon and he must have gone to see them by moonlight. Perhaps he died of the beauty of that sight.

WORDS NOTES :

1. *repine*: the action or an act of repining. To fret or to complain.
2. *round pegs in square holes*: round pegs do not fit in square holes. Hence this metaphor means one who is unfitted for his occupation / position in life.
3. *romanticize*: to make unrealistic. People have a tendency of fictionalizing truth.
4. *talking their heads off*: talking excessively. Similar clichés are 'to talk nineteen to the dozen', 'to talk a person's ear off' etc.
5. *voluble crowd*: talkative, articulate crowd that might behave unpredictably. [*voluble* also means *inconstant, variable*]
6. *espadrilles*: a light canvas shoe with plaited fibre sole. Originally worn in the Pyrenees [Mountain range of Southwestern Europe]
7. *pepper-and-salt trousers*: a kind of cloth made of interwoven dark and light threads, presenting a flecked or speckled appearance [OTD].
8. *gilt-edged securities*: securities (esp. Govt. stocks) having a high degree of reliability as an investment.

9. *tittle-tattle*: idle talk or petty gossip.
10. *Baths of Tiberius*: Tiberius [42 BC - AD 37] was the second Emperor of Rome.
11. *noisy with cicadas*: large winged insects, the males of which make shrill chirping sounds.
12. *Suetonius*: [full name Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (70?-130?)]. Roman biographer and historian of culture, whose writings are a primary source of information about the lives of the first 12 Caesars and of Roman men of letters. His work was so popular that his biographical approach set the pattern of historical writing for a long time.
13. *a poke...sharp stick*: a jab, a push. A momentary incident.
14. *fešta*: [In Italy] a festival, a holy day.
15. *acolytes...censers*: The attendants of the main priests (acolytes) were swinging vessels containing lighted incense (censers).
16. *Marion Crawford*: Francis Marion Crawford (1854-1909). American novelist who wrote more than forty books, many of them about Italy.
17. *Sybaris and Crotona*: ancient Greek cities.
18. *call it a day*: [here] be satisfied with what one has done.
19. *G.F. Watts and Lord Leighton*: George Frederic Watts (1817-1904) English painter and sculptor, who painted about 300 portraits, including those of the Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi and the English poets Robert Browning and Alfred Lord Tennyson. Baron Frederick Leighton of Stretton (1830-1896), English academic painter and sculptor. Leighton began his art studies at the age of ten in Rome, Italy. He painted mythological and historical subjects, and his espousal of classicism established his reputation in England.
20. *lit a brazier of charcoal*: Wilson had attempted to commit suicide by sleeping in locked room with a brazier of coals burning. He had hoped to die peacefully by Carbon Monoxide poisoning.
21. *His effects were sold*: The movable properties of Wilson were sold for money. [here- effects mean property, belongings, goods]
22. *once in a blue moon*: [idiom] very rarely, seldom.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. Do you think that *The Lotus Eater* is an appropriate title for Maugham's short story? Give reasons.
2. 'He was of no use to anybody, but on the other hand he did nobody any harm'
Who is the person referred to here? What kind of life did he spend? What happens at the end?
Make a critical assessment of the character of Wilson.
3. Sketch the character of Thomas Wilson. Is the name "*Lotus Eater*" appropriate for him?

[GU 2005,07]



PROSE SECTION

INDIAN CULTURE

: SRI AUROBINDO

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Sri Aurobindo was born in Kolkata, August 15, 1872. In 1879 at the age of 7 years, he went to England for education. He was brought up at first in an English family at Manchester. Sri Aurobindo joined St. Paul's school, London in 1884 and in 1890 joined the King's College, Cambridge for 2 years. He returned to India in February 1893. From 1893-1901 he worked in Baroda service, Revenue Department. He was even a professor of English and Vice Principal in Baroda College. He learned Sanskrit and several Modern Indian Languages to assimilate the spirit of Indian civilization from past to present. From 1910, he devoted his life to spiritual work. In the year 1904, he began the practice of yoga. He searched to unite and harmonize the two ends of existence spirit and Matter.

Sri Aurobindo was an Indian nationalist of great repute. He started two weeklies, 'The Karmayogi' in English and 'The Dharma' in Bengali. In the year 1914, on August 15, the monthly Arya was launched. It continued for seven years and through it, he presented to the world his great spiritual vision and the paths to attain.

Among his other major works are 'The Life Divine', 'The Synthesis of Yoga', 'The Human Cycle', 'The Ideal of Human Unity', 'Essays on the Gita', 'The Foundation of Indian Culture' etc.

Though he was devoted to the search of truth and union with the Divine, Sri Aurobindo remained in touch with the world events and monuments. He sought for the evolution of a spirit of oneness of humanity and its progress. His death in December 5, 1950, was therefore a crude jolt to humankind at large, the loss of a great patriotic leader, a poet and a seer.

TEXT :

The question before us is whether Indian culture has a sufficient power for the fortifying and ennobling of our normal human existence. Apart from its transcendental aims, has it any pragmatic, non-ascetic, dynamic value, any power for expansion of life and for the right control of life? This is a question of central importance. For if it has nothing of this kind to give us, then whatever its other cultural greatness, it cannot live. It becomes an abnormal Himalayan hothouse splendour, which could subsist in its peninsular seclusion, but must perish, in the keen and arduous air of the modern struggle of life. No anti-vital culture can survive. A too intellectual or too ethereal, civilisation void of strong vital stimulus and motive must languish for want of sap and blood. A culture to be permanent and completely serviceable to man must give him something more than some kind of rare transcendental up rush towards an exceeding of all earthly life values. It must do more even than adorn with a great curiosity of knowledge, science and philosophic enquiry or a rich light and blaze of art, poetry and architecture, the long stability and orderly well-being of an old, ripe and human society. All this Indian culture did in the past to a noble purpose. But it must satisfy too the tests of a progressive life-power. There must be some inspiration for the terrestrial endeavor of man, an object, a stimulus, a force for development and a will to live. Whether or not our end is silence and Nirvana, a spiritual cessation or a material death, this is certain that the world itself is a mighty labour of a vast Life-Spirit and man the present doubtful crown on earth and the struggling but still unsuccessful present hero and protagonist of its endeavour of its drama. A great human culture must see this truth in some fullness; it must impart some conscious and ideal power of self-effectuation to this upward effort. It is not enough to find a stable base for life, not enough to adorn it, not enough to shoot up sublimely to summits beyond it, the greatness and growth of the race on earth must be our equal care. To miss this great intermediate reality is a capital imperfection and in itself a seal of failure.

Our critics will have it that the whole body of Indian culture bears the stamp of just such a failure. The Western impression has been that Hinduism is an entirely metaphysical and other worldly system dreaming things beyond, oblivious of the now and here: a depressing sense of the unreality of life or an intoxication of the infinite turns it away from any nobility, vitality and greatness of human aspiration and the earth's labour. Its philosophy may be sublime, its religious spirit fervent, and its ancient social system strong, symmetrical and stable, its literature and its art good in their own way, but the salt of life is absent, the breath of will-power, the force of a living endeavour. This new journalistic Apollo, our Archer who is out to cleave with his arrows the python coils of Indian barbarism, abounds in outcries in this sense. But, if that is so, evidently India can have done nothing great, contributed no invigorating power to human life, produced no men of mighty will, no potent personalities, no strong significant human lives, no vital human figures in art and poetry, no significant architecture and sculpture. And that is what our devil's advocate tells us in graphic phrases. He tells us that there is in this religion and philosophy a general undervaluing of life and endeavour. Life is conceived as a shore less expanse in which generations rise and fall as helplessly and purposelessly as waves in mid-ocean, the individual is everywhere dwarfed and depreciated, one solitary great character, Gautama Buddha who, "perhaps never existed", is India's sole contribution to the world's pantheon, or for the rest a pale featureless Ashoka. The characters of drama and poetry are lifeless exaggerations or puppets of supernatural powers; the art is empty of reality; the whole history of civilization makes a drab, effete, melancholy picture. There is no power of life in this religion and this philosophy, there is no breath of life in this history, and there is no colour of life in this art and poetry that is the blank result of Indian culture. Whoever has seen at first hand and felt the literature, followed the history, studied the civilization of India can see that this is a bitter misrepresentation, a violent caricature, an absurd falsehood. But it is an extreme an unscrupulous way of putting an impression often given to the European mind and, as before, we must see why different eyes see the same object in such different colours. It is the same primary misunderstanding that is at the root. India has

lived and lived richly, splendidly, greatly, but with a different will in life from Europe. The idea and plan of her life have been peculiar to her temperament, original and unique. Her values are not easy to seize for an outsider and her highest things are easily open to hostile misrepresentation by the ignorant, precisely because they are too high for the normal untrained mind and apt to shoot beyond its limits.

There are three powers that we must grasp in order to judge the life-value of a culture. There is, first, the power of its original conception of life; there is, next, the power of the forms, types and rhythms it has given to life; there is, last, the inspiration, the vigour, the force of vital execution of its motives manifested in the actual lives of men and of the community that nourished under its influence. The European conception of life is a thing with which we in India are now very familiar, because our present thought and effort are obscured with its shadow when they are not filled with its presence. For we have been trying hard to assimilate something of it, even to shape ourselves, and especially our political, economic and outward conduct into some imitation of its forms and rhythms. The European idea is a conception of a Force that manifests itself in the material universe and a Life in it of which man is almost the only discoverable meaning. This anthropocentric view of things has not been altered by the recent stress of Science on the vast blank in inanities of an inconsistent mechanical Nature. And in man, thus unique in the inert drift of Nature, the whole effort of Life is to arrive at some light and harmony of the understanding and ordering reason, some efficient rational power, adorning beauty, strong utility, vital enjoyment, economic welfare. The free power of the individual ego, the organised wills of the corporate ego, these are the great needed forces. The development of individual personality and organised efficient national life are the two things that matter in the European ideal. These two powers have grown, striven, run riot at times, and the restless and often violent vividness of the historic stir and the literary and artistic vivacity of Europe are due to their powerful colours. The enjoyment of life and force, the gallop of egoistic passion and vital satisfaction are allowed and insistent strain, a constant high voiced motive. Against them is another opposite effort,

the endeavour to govern life by reason, science, ethics, art; a restraining and harmonising utility is here the foremost motive. At different times different powers has taken the lead. Christian religiosity too has come in and added new tones, modified some tendencies, deepened others. Each age and period has increased the wealth of contributory lines and forces and helped the complexity and largeness of the total conception. At present the sense of the corporate live dominates and it is served by the idea of a great intellectual and material progress, and ameliorated political and social state governed by science. There is an ideal of intelligent utility, libertine equality or else an ideal of stringent organisation and efficiency and a perfectly mobilised, carefully marshaled uniting of forces in a ceaseless pull towards the general welfare. This endeavour of Europe has become terribly outward and mechanical in its appearance; but some renewed power of a more humanistic idea is trying to beat its way in again and man may perhaps before long refuse to be tied on the wheel of his own triumphant machinery and conquered by his apparatus. At any rate, we need not lay too much emphasis on what may be a passing phase. The broad permanent European conception of life remains and it is in its own limits a great and invigorating conception, imperfect, narrow at the top, shut in under a heavy lid, poor in its horizons, too much of the soil, but still with a sense in it that is strenuous and noble.

The Indian conception of life starts from a deeper centre and moves "on less external lines to a very different objective. The peculiarity of the Indian eye looks through the force, and searches for the spirit in things everywhere. The peculiarity of the Indian will in life is that it feels itself to be unfulfilled, not in touch with perfection not permanently justified in an intermediate satisfaction if it has not found and does not live in the truth of the spirit. The Indian idea of the world, of Nature and of existence is not physical, but psychological and spiritual. Spirit, soul, consciousness are not only greater than inert matter and inconsistent force, but they precede and originate these lesser things. All force is power, or means of a secret spirit; the force that sustains the world is a conscious Will, and Nature is its machinery of executive power. Matter is the body

or field of a consciousness hidden within it, the maternal universe a form and movement of the spirit. Man himself is not a life and mind born of Matter are eternally subject to physical Nature, but a spirit that uses life and body. It is an understanding faith in this conception of existence, it is the attempt to live it out, it is the science and practice of this high endeavour, and it is the aspiration to break out in the end from this mind bound to life and matter into a greater spiritual consciousness that is the innermost sense of Indian culture. It is this that constitutes the much talked of Indian spirituality. It is evidently very remote from the dominant European idea; it is different even from the form given by Europe to the Christian conception of life. But it does not mean at all that Indian culture concedes no reality to life, follows no material or vital aims and satisfactions, or cares to do nothing for our actual human existence. It cannot truly be contended that a conception of this kind can give no powerful and inspiring motive to the human effort of man. Certainly, in this view, matter, mind, life, reason, form are only powers of the spirit and valuable not for their own sake, but because of the spirit within them, *atmartham*; they exist for the sake of the self, says the Upanishad, and this is certainly the Indian attitude to these things. But that does not depreciate a hundredfold significance. Form and body immensely increase in importance if they are felt to be instinct with the life of the Spirit and are conceived as support for the rhythm of its workings. And human life was in ancient Indian thought no vile and unworthy existence; it is the greatest thing known to us; it is desired, the Purana boldly says, even by the gods in heaven. The deepening and raising of the riches or the most potent energies of our minds, our hearts, our life-power, our bodies are all means by which the spirit can proceed to self-discovery and the return to its own infinite freedom and power. For when mind and heart and reason heighten to their greatest lights and powers, they bring embodied life to the point where it can open to a still greater light and power beyond them; the individual mind widens into a vast universal consciousness and lifts towards a high spiritual transcendence. These are at least no sterilising and depressing ideas; they exalt the life of man and make something like godhead its logical outcome.

The dignity given to human existence by the Vedantic thought and by the thought of the classical ages of Indian culture exceeded anything conceived by the western idea of humanity. Man in the West has always been only an ephemeral creature of Nature or a soul manufactured at birth by an arbitrary breath of the whimsical Creator and set under impossible conditions to get salvation, but far more likely to be thrown away into the burning refuse-heap of Hell as a hopeless failure. At best, he is exalted by a reasoning mind and will and an effort to be better than God or Nature made him. Far more ennobling, inspiring, filled with the motive-force of a great idea is the conception placed before us by Indian culture. Man in the Indian idea is a spirit veiled in the works of energy, moving to self-discovery, capable of Godhead. He is a soul that is growing through Nature to conscious self-hood; he is a divinity and an eternal existence; he is an ever flowing wave of the God Ocean, an inextinguishable spark of the supreme Fire. Even, he is in his uttermost reality identical with the ineffable Transcendence from which he came and greater than the godheads whom he worships. The natural half-animal creature that for a while he seems to be is not at all his whole being and is not in any way his real being. His inmost reality is the divine Self or at least one dynamic eternal portion of it, and to find that and exceed his outward, apparent, natural self is the greatness of which he alone of terrestrial beings is capable. He has the spiritual capacity to pass to a supreme and extraordinary pitch of manhood and that is the first aim, which is proposed to him by Indian culture. Living no more in the first crude type of an undeveloped humanity to which most men still belong, *na yatha prakrto janah*, he can even become a free perfected semi divine man, *mukta, siddha*. But he can do more; released into the cosmic consciousness, his spirit can become one with God, one self with the Spirit of the Universe or rise into a Light and Vastness that transcends the universe; his nature can become one dynamic power with universal Nature or one Light with a transcendental Gnosis. To be shut up for ever in his ego is not his ultimate perfection; he can become a universal soul, one with the supreme Unity, one with others, one with all being. This is the high sense and power concealed in his

humanity that he can aspire to this perfection and transcendence. And he can arrive at it though any or all of his natural powers if they will accept release, through his mind and reason and thought and their illumination, through his heart and its unlimited power of love and sympathy, through his will and its dynamic drive towards mastery and right action, through his ethical nature and its hunger for the universal Good, through his aesthetic sense and its seeking after delight and beauty, or through his inner soul and its power of absolute spiritual calm, wideness, joy and peace.

This is the sense of that spiritual liberation and perfection of which Indian thought and inner discipline have been full since the earliest Vedic times. However high and arduous this aim may be it has always seemed to it possible and even in a way near and normal, once spiritual realisation has discovered its path. The positivist Western mind finds it difficult to give this conception the rank of a living and intelligible idea. The status of the siddha, bhagavata, mukta appears to it a baseless chimera. It seems to its Christian associations a blasphemy against the solitary greatness of God, before whom man is only a grovelling worm, to its fierce attachment to the normal ego a negation of personality and a repellent menace, to its earthbound rationalism a dream, a self-hypnotic hallucination or a deluding mania. And yet in ancient Europe the Stoics, Platonists, Pythagoreans had made some approach to this aspiration, and even afterwards, a few rare souls have envisaged or pursued it through occult ways. And now it is again beginning to percolate into the Western imagination, but less as a dynamic life-motive than in Poetry, and in certain aspects of general thought or through movements like Theosophy that draw from ancient and oriental sources. Science and philosophy and religion still regard it with scorn as an illusion, with indifference as a dream or with condemnation as a heathen arrogance. It is the distinction of Indian culture to have seized on this great dynamic hope, to have kept it a living and practicable thing and to have searched out all the possible paths to this spiritual way of perfect existence. Indian thought has made this great thing the common highest aim and universal spiritual destiny of the soul that is in every human creature.

The value of the Indian conception for life must depend on the relations and gradations by which it connects this difficult and distinct perfection with our normal living and present everyday nature. Put over against the latter without any connection or any gradations that lead up to it and make it possible, it would be either a high unattainable ideal or the detached remote passion of a few exceptional spirits. Or even it would discourage the springs of our natural life by the too great contrast between the spiritual being and our own poor imperfect nature. Something of the kind has happened in later times; the current Western impression about the exaggerated asceticism and other worldliness of Indian religion and philosophy is founded on the growing gulf created by a later thought between man's spiritual possibilities and his terrestrial status. But we must not be misled by extreme tendencies or the overemphasis put upon them in a period of decline. If we would get at the real meaning of the Indian idea of life, we must go back to its best times. And we must not look at this or that school of philosophy or at some side of it as the whole of Indian thought; the totality of the ancient philosophical thinking, religion, literature, art, Society must be our ground of enquiry. The Indian conception in its early soundness made no such mistake as to imagine that this great thing can or even ought to be done by some violent, intolerant, immediate leap from one pole of existence to its opposite. Even the most extreme philosophies do not go so far. The workings of the Spirit in the Universe were a reality to one side of the Indian mind, to another only a half reality, a self-descriptive Lila or illusory Maya to the one the world was an the action of the Infinite Energy, Shakti, to the other a figment of some secondary paradoxical consciousness in the eternal, Maya; but life as an intermediate reality was never denied by any school of Indian thinking. Indian thought recognised that the normal life of man has to be passed through with a conscientious endeavour to fulfill its purpose: its power must be developed with knowledge, its forms must be pursued, interpreted and fathomed; its values must be worked out, possessed and lived; its enjoyment must be fully taken on their own level. Only afterwards can we go on to self-existence or a supra-existence. The spiritual perfection, which open before man with a crown of long, patient,

millennial out flowering of the spirit in life in nature. This belief in a gradual spiritual progress an evolution here is indeed the secret of the almost universal Indian acceptance of the truth of reincarnation. It is only by millions of lives in inferior forms that the secrets soul of the universe, conscious even in the inconscient, cetanah acetanehu, has arrived at humanity: it is only by hundreds or thousands, perhaps even millions of human lives that man can grow into his divine self-existence. Every life is a step, which he can take backward, or forward; his action in life, his will in life, his thought and knowledge by which he governs and directs his life, determine what he is yet to be from the earliest stages to the last transcendence. Yatha karma yatha srutam.

This belief in a gradual soul evolution with a final perfection or divine transcendence and human life as its first direct means and often-repeated opportunity, is the pivot of the Indian conception of existence. Indian culture did not deface or impoverish the richness of the grand game of human life; it never depressed or mutilated the activities of our nature. On the contrary, subject to a certain principle of harmony and government, it allowed them their full often their extreme value. Man was allowed to fathom on his way all experience, to give to his character an action a large rain and heroic proportions, and to fill in life opulently with colour and beauty and enjoyment. This life side of the Indian idea is stamped in strong relief over the epic and classical literature. It is amazing indeed that any one with an eye or a brain could have read the Ramayana, Mahabharata, the dramas, the literary epics, the romances and the great abundance of gnomic and lyric poetry in Sanskrit and in the later tongues (to say nothing of the massive remains of other cultural work and social and political system and speculation), and yet failed to perceive this breadth, wealth and greatness. One must have read without eyes to see or without a mind to understand; most indeed of the adverse critics have not read or studied at all, but only flung about their preconceived notions with a violent or a high-browed ignorant assurance.

But while it is the generous office of culture to enrich, enlarge and encourage human life, it must also give the vital forces a guiding

law, subject them to some moral and rational government and lead them beyond their first natural formulations, until it can find for life the clue to a spiritual freedom, perfection and greatness. The pre-eminent value of the ancient Indian civilisation lay in the power with which it did this work, the profound wisdom and high and subtle skill with which it based society and ordered the individual life, and encouraged and guided the propensities of human nature and finally turned them all towards the realisation of its master idea. The mind it was training, while not called away from its immediate aims, was never allowed to lose sight of the use of life as a discipline for spiritual perfection and a passage to the Infinite.

The Indian mind whether in the government of life or in the discipline of spirituality, kept always in sight two main truths of our existence. First, our being in its growth has stages through which it must pass: if there are sometimes leaps forward, yet most of its growth is a developing progression; the swiftest race has its stadia. Then again, life is complex and the nature of man is complex; in each life, man has to figure a certain sum of his complexity and put that into some kind of order. But the initial movement of life is that form of it, which develops the powers of the natural ego in man; self-interest and hedonistic desire, are the original human motives - ka-ma, artha. Indian culture gave a large recognition to this primary turn of our nature. These powers have to be accepted and put in order; for the natural ego-life must be lived and the forces it evolves in the human being must be brought to fullness. But this element must be kept from making any too unbridled claim or heading furiously towards its satisfaction, only so can it get its full 'results without disaster and only so can it be inspired eventually to go beyond itself and turn in the end to a greater spiritual Good and Bliss. An internal or external anarchy cannot be the rule; a life governed in any absolute or excessive degree by self-will, passion, sense-attraction, self-interest and desire cannot be the natural whole of a human or a humane existence. The tempting imagination that it can and that this is the true law is a lure with which the Western mind has played in characteristic leanings or outbursts; but this turn unjustly called Paganism, for the Greek or Pagan intelligence had a noble thought

for law and harmony and self-rule, is alien to the Indian spirit. India has felt the call of the senses not less than Greece, Rome or modern Europe; she perceived very well the possibility of a materialistic life and its attraction worked on certain minds and gave birth to the philosophy of the Charvakas; but this could not take full hold or establish even for a time any dominant empire. Even if we can see in it, which lived on a grand scale, a certain perverse greatness, still a colossal egoism indulgent of the sole life of the mind and the senses was regarded by her as the nature of the Asura and Rakshasa. It is the Titanic, gigantic or demoniac type of spirit, permitted in its own plane, but not the proper law for a human life. Another power claim man and overtops desire and self-interest and self-will, the power of the Dharma.

The Dharma, at once religious law of action and deepest law of our nature, is not, as in the Western idea, a creed, cult or ideal inspiring an ethical and social rule; it is the right law of functioning of our life all its parts. The tendency of man to seek after a just and perfect law of his living finds its truth and its justification in the Dharma. Everything indeed has its Dharma, its law of life imposed on it by its nature; but for man the Dharma is the conscious imposition of a rule of ideal living on all his members. Dharma is fixed in its essence, but still it develops in our consciousness and evolves and has its stages; there are gradations of spiritual and ethical ascension in the search for the highest law of our nature. All men cannot follow in all things one common and invariable rule. Life is too complex to admit of the arbitrary ideal simplicity, which the moralising theorist loves. Natures differ; the position, the work we have to do has its own claims and standards, aim and bent; the call of life, the call of the spirit within is not the same for everyone: the degree and turn of development and the capacity, *adhika-ra* are not equal. Man lives in society and by society, and every society has its own general Dharma, and the individual life must be fitted into this wider law of movement. But there too the individual's part in society, and his nature and the needs of his capacity and temperament vary and have many kinds and degrees: the social law must make some room for this variety and would lose by being rigidly one for all. The

man of knowledge, the man of power, the productive and acquisitive man, the priest, scholar, poet, artist, ruler, fighter, trader, tiller of the soil, craftsman, labourer, servant cannot usefully have the same training, cannot be shaped in the same pattern, cannot all follow the same way of living. All ought not to be put under the same tables of the law, for that would be a senseless geometric rigidity that would spoil the plastic truth of life. Each has his type of nature and there must be a rule for the perfection of the type; each has his own proper function and there must be a canon and ideal for the function. There must be in all things some wise and understanding standard of practice and idea of perfection and living rule—that is the one thing needful for the Dharma. A lawless impulsion of desire and interest and propensity cannot be allowed to lead human conduct; even in the frankest following of desire and interest and propensity there must be a governing, restraining, and directing line, a guidance. There must be an ethic or a science, a restraint as well as a scope arising from the truth of the thing sought, a standard of perfection, an order. Differing with the type of the man and the type of the function these special Dharmas would yet rise towards the greater law and truth that contains and overtops the others and is universally effective. This then was the Dharma, special for the special person, stage of development, pursuit of life or individual field of action, but universal too in the board lines, which all ought to pursue.

The universal embracing Dharma in the Indian idea is a law of ideal perfection for the developing mind and soul of man; it compels him to grow in the power and force of certain high or large universal qualities, which in their harmony build a highest type of manhood. In Indian thought and life this was the ideal of the best, the law of the good and noble man, the discipline laid down for the self-perfecting *arya*, *srestha*, *sajjana*, *sadhu*. The ideal was not a purely moral or ethical conception, although that element might predominate; it was also intellectual, religious, social, aesthetic, the flowering of the whole ideal man, the perfection of the total human nature. The most varied qualities met in the Indian conception of the best, *srestha*, the good and noble man, *arya*. In the heart benevolence, beneficence, love, compassion, altruism, long-suffering,

liberality, kindness, patience, in the character courage, heroism, energy, loyalty, continence, truth, honour, justice, faith, obedience and reverence where these were due, but power too to govern and direct, a fine modesty and yet a strong independence and noble pride; in the mind wisdom and intelligence and love of learning, knowledge of all the best thought, and openness to poetry, art and beauty, an educated capacity and skill in works; in the inner being a strong religious sense, piety, love of God, seeking after the Highest, the spiritual turn; in social relations and conduct a strict observance of all the social Dharmas, as father, son, husband, brother, kinsman, friend, ruler or subject, master or servant, priest or warrior or worker, king or sage, member of clan or cast: this was the total ideal of the Arya, the man high upbringing and noble nature. The ideal is clearly portrayed in the written records of ancient India during two millenniums and it is the very life-breath of Hindu ethics. It was the creation of an at once ideal and rational mind, spirit-wise and worldly-wise, deeply religious, nobly ethical, firmly yet flexibly intellectual, scientific and aesthetic, patient and tolerant of life's difficulties and human weakness, but arduous in self-discipline. This was the mind that was at the base of the Indian civilisation and gave its characteristic stamp to all the culture.

But even this was only the foundation and preparation for another highest thing, which by its presence exalts human life beyond itself into something spiritual and divine. Indian culture raised the crude animal life of desire, self-interest and satisfied propensity beyond its first intention to a noble self-exceeding and shapeliness by infusing into it the order and high aims of the Dharma. But its profounder characteristic-aim and in this it was unique-was to raise this nobler life too of the self-perfecting human being beyond its own intention to a mightiest self-exceeding and freedom; it laboured to infuse into it the great aim of spiritual liberation and perfection, *mukti, moksha*. The Law and its observance are neither the beginning nor the end of man; there is beyond the field of the Law a larger realm of consciousness in which, climbing, he emerges into a great spiritual freedom. Not a noble but ever death-bound manhood is the highest height of man's perfection: immortality, freedom, divinity

are within his grasp. Ancient Indian culture held this highest aim constantly before the inner eye of the soul and insistently inspired with its prospect and light the whole conception of existence. The entire life of the individual was ennobled by this aim; the whole ordering of society was cast into a scale of graduated ascension towards this supreme summit.

A well-governed system of the individual and communal existence must be always in the first instance an ordering of the three first powers recognised by Indian thought. The calm of the natural functionings must be recognised in it to the full, the pursuit of personal and communal interest and the satisfaction of human desires as of human needs must amply admitted and there must be an understanding combination of knowledge and labour towards these ends. But all must be controlled, uplifted and widened to greater aims by the ideal of the Dharma. And if, as India behaves, there is a higher spiritual consciousness towards which man can rise, that ascent must be kept throughout in view as the supreme goal of life. The system of Indian culture at once indulged and controlled man's nature; it fitted him for his social role; it stamped on his mind the generous ideal of an accomplished humanity refined, harmonised in all its capacities, ennobled in all its members; but it placed before him to the theory and practice of a highest change, familiarised him with the conception of a spiritual existence and sowed in him a hunger for the divine and the infinite. The symbols of his religion were filled with suggestions which led towards it, at every step he was reminded of lives behind and in front and of worlds beyond the material existence; he was brought close to the nearness, even to the call and pressure of the Spirit that is greater than the life it informs, of the final goal, of a high possible immortality, freedom, God-consciousness, divine Nature. Man was not allowed to forget that he had in him a highest self beyond his little personal ego and that always he and all things live, move and have their being in God, in the Eternal in the spirit. There were ways and disciplines provided the number by which he could realise this liberating truth or could at least turn and follow at a distance this highest aim according to his capacity and nature, *adhikara*. Around him, he saw and revered the powerful practicers and mighty masters of these disciplines. These men were in early times the teachers of his youth, the

summits of his society, the inspirers and fountainheads of his civilisation, the great lights of his culture. Spiritual freedom, spiritual perfection were not figured as a far-off intangible ideal, but presented at the highest human aim towards which all must grow in the end and were made near and possible to his endeavour from a first practicable basis of life and the Dharma. The spiritual idea governed, enlightened and gathered towards itself all the other life-motives of a great civilised people.

ABOUT THE ESSAY :

Here, in this essay, Sri Aurobindo throws the light upon the Indian conception of life i.e. "Indian Culture" and its vital effects. The author analyses the different aspects of Indian Culture and the principles that the culture is based on.

The essay challenges the shortsighted surveys of the western schools of Indian culture. The author here analyses the vital features of Indian culture that gives it a unique characteristic. He brings to light the qualities which are responsible for making a culture stable and of great service to man. A culture besides having transcendental values, aesthetic features and a strong literary background must also possess vitality, a will to live life. It must be able to contribute to the greatness and progress of human race. On these grounds, the Westerners have leveled criticisms against Indian Culture as belonging to an unreal world of illusion lacking a breath of life. But then the author points out that if this has been the case then India would not have been the proud land of great personalities, rich culture and literature. Different people have different viewpoint on the same subject. The Indian culture is too grand and sublime for the ignorant Western mind to grasp properly.

WORD NOTES :

Fortifying: strengthening.

Ennobling: make noble.

Transcendental: not based on experience.

Pragmatic: dealing with matters from a practical point of view.

Subsist: exist

Seclusion: keeping apart a part or person.

Arduous: zeal, enthusiasm, passion.

Languish: lack of vitality

Adorn: add beauty to decorate

Protagonist: leading person

Sublime: the highest

Oblivious: unaware or unconscious

Vent: opening allowing the passage of air etc. outlet.

Barbarism: uncultured state or act.

Abound: be rich, be plentiful.

Outcries: strong public protest.

Invigorating: giving strength.

Pantheon: building in which illustrious dead are buried or have memorials.

Dreab: dull, uninteresting.

Effete: womanish in appearance or manner.

Melancholy: mental depression, tendency to sad, saddening depressing.

Caricature: comically exaggerated representation esp. of a person.

Anthropocentric: regarding humankind as the centre of existence.

Obscured: unexplained.

Assimilate: absorb or be absorbed.

Harmony: creating a pleasant effect.

Vivacity: in a lively manner.

Insistent: forcing itself on the attention.

Ameliorated: making or becoming better.

Stringent: strict.

Concedes: admit to be true.

Contented: showing or feeling happy.

Vile: disgusting.

Embodied: comprise.

Exalt: raise in rank or power etc.

Ephemeral: lasting or of use for only a short time.

Veil: thing that hides or disguises.

Ineffable: too great for description is words that must not be uttered.

Arduous: hard to accomplish, laborious.

Chimera: monster with a lion's head, goat's body and serpent's tail.

Blasphemy: irreverent talk or treatment of a religious or sacred thing.

Menace: threat, dangerous thing or person.

- Eternal*: without any end or beginning; existing always.
Paradoxical: self contradictory or absurd statement.
Fathomed: measured the depth.
Reincarnation: rebirth of a soul in a new body.
Point: crucial or essential person, point etc.
Opulently: wealthy, luxuries, abundant.
Propensities: inclination, tendency.
Hedonistic: be pleasure.
Unbridled: remove constraints.
Perverse: deliberately or stubbornly departing from what is reasonable or required.
Anarchy: disorder esp. political.
Demoniac: fiercely energetic.
Altruism: unselfishness as a principle of action.
Reverence: capacity for holding in deep ... affectionate or religious respect.
Piety: quality of being religious.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. Illustrate Sri Aurobindo's affirmation of superiority of Indian culture against its western counterpart.
2. What is Aurobindo's view on Dharma?
3. What are the differences between Indian and Western Culture as perceived by Sri Aurobindo? Discuss.
4. Dharma is the law of ideal perfection for the developing mind and soul of man. Discuss.
5. How does Sri Aurobindo present the Indian conception of life? [GU 2005]
6. According to Indian view, how can man attain spiritual liberation and perfection?



UPON AFFECTATION

: LORD CHESTERFIELD

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Lord Chesterfield was, at the same time, a great statesman, diplomatist and a letter-writer. He was a prominent thinker of his times who tenaciously propagated his ideology through all odds, stamping out every obstacle with his stodginess. The husky matters of Chesterfield's observations are also put into life in a new form. If one goes to ingratiate oneself to his philosophy, one must inject in one's own self the mystic as well as the fabulous aspects of thoughts that remain inherent in his writing. As a politician, Chesterfield is popularly known for his brilliant administration in Ireland from 1745-46. He breathed his last in 1773.

TEXT :

Most people complain of fortune, few of nature; and the kinder they think the latter has been to them, the more they murmur at what they call the injustice of the former.

Why have not I the riches, the rank, the power, of such and such, is the common expostulation with fortune ; but why have not I the merit, the talents, the wit, or the beauty, of such and such others, is a reproach rarely or never made to nature.

The truth is, that nature, seldom profuse, and seldom niggardly, has distributed her gifts more equally than she is generally supposed to have done. Education and situation make the great difference. Culture improves, and occasions elicit, natural talents. I make no doubt but that there are potentially, if I may use that pedantic word, many Bacons, Lockes, Newtons, Caesars, Cromwells, and Marlboroughs at the plough tail, behind counters, and, perhaps, even among the nobility ; but the soil must be cultivated, and the season favourable, for the fruit to have all its spirit and flavour.

If sometimes our common parent has been a little partial, and not kept the scales quite even; if one preponderates too much, we throw into the lighter a due counterpoise of vanity, which never fails to set all right. Hence, it happens, that hardly any one man would, without reserve, and in every particular, change with any other.

Though all are thus satisfied wit the dispensations of nature, how few listen to her voice! How few follow her as a guide! In vain, she points out to us the plain and direct way to truth; vanity, fancy, affectation and fashion assume her shape and wind us through fairy-ground to folly and error.

These deviations from nature are offended by serious consequences, and always by ridiculous once; for there is nothing truer than the tried observation, 'that people are never ridiculous for being what they really are, but for affecting what they really are not'. Affectation is the only source, and at the same time, the only justifiable object, of ridicule. No man whatsoever, be his pretensions what they will, has a natural right to be ridiculous; it is an acquired right, and not to be acquired without some industry, which perhaps is the reason why so many people are so jealous and tenacious of it. Even some people's VICES are not their own, but affected and adopted, though at the same time unenjoyed, in hopes of shining in those fashionable societies where the reputation of certain vices gives luster. In these cases, the execution is commonly as awkward as the design is absurd, and the ridicule equals the guilt.

This calls to my mind a thing that really happened not many years ago. A young fellow of some and fortune, just let loose from the universities, resolved, in order to make a figure in the world, to assume the shining character of what he called a rake. Byway of learning the rudiments of his intended profession, he frequented the theatres; where he has often drunk, and always noisy. Being one night at the representation of that most absurd play, the *Libertine* destroyed, he has so charmed with the profligacy of the hero of the piece that, to the edification of the audience, he swore many oaths that he would be the libertine destroyed. A discreet friend of his who sat by him, kindly represented to him that to be the libertine was a laudable design, which he greatly approved of, but that to be the libertine destroyed, seemed to him and unnecessary part of his

plan and rather rash. He persisted, however, in his resolution, and insisted upon being the libertine, and destroyed. Probably he was so; at least the presumption is in his favour. There are, I am persuaded, so many cases of this nature, that for my own part I would desire no greater step towards the reformation of manners for the next twenty years, than that our people should have no vices but their own.

The blockhead who affects wisdom, because nature has given him dullness, becomes ridiculous only by his adopted characters; where as he might have stagnated unobserved in his native mud, or perhaps he engrossed deeds, collected shells, and studied heraldry, or logic, with some success.

The shining coxcomb aims at all, and decides finally upon everything, because nature has given him pertness. The degree of parts and animal spirits, necessary to constitute that character, if properly applied, might have made him useful in many parts of life; but his affectation and presumption make him useless in most, and ridiculous in all.

The septuagenary fine gentleman might probably, and his long experience and knowledge of the world, be esteemed and respected in the several relations of domestic life, which, at his age, nature points out to him: he will most ridiculously spin out the rotten thread of his former gallantries. He dresses, languishes, ogles, as he did at five-and-twenty; and modestly intimates that he is not without a *bonne fortune*; which *bonne fortune* at last appears to be the prostitute he had long kept not to himself, whom he marries and owns, because the poor girl was so fond of him and so desirous to be made an honest woman.

The sexagenary widow remembers that she was handsome, but forgets that it was thirty years ago, and thinks herself so, or at least, very likeable, still. The pardonable affectations of her youth and beauty unpardonably continue, increase even with her years, and are doubly exerted in hopes of concealing the number. All the gaudy glittering parts of dress, which rather degraded than adorned her beauty in its bloom, now exposed to the highest and justest, ridicule her shriveled over ground carcass. She totters or sweats under the load of her jewels, embroideries, and brocades, which, like so many Egyptian hieroglyphics, serve only to authenticate the venerable

antiquity of her august mummy. Her eyes dimly twinkle tenderness, or leer desire: their language, however inelegant is intelligible; and the half-pay captain understands it. He addresses his vows to her vanity, which assures her they are sincere. She pities him and prefers him to credit, decency, and every social duty. He tenderly prefers her, though not without some hesitation, to a jail.

Self-love, kept within due bounds, is a natural and useful sentiment. It is, in truth, social love too, as Mr. Pope has very justly observed: it is the spring of many good actions, and of no ridiculous ones. But self-flattery is only the ape, or caricature of self-love, and resembles it no more than to heighten the ridicule. Like other flattery, it is the most profusely bestowed and greedily swallowed, where it is the least deserved. I will conclude this subject with the substance of a fable of the ingenious Monsieur de la Motte, which seems not inapplicable to it.

Jupiter made a lottery in heaven, in which mortals, as well as gods, were allowed to have tickets. The prize was WISDOM; and Minerva got it. The mortals murmured and accused the gods of foul play. Jupiter, to wipe off this aspersion, declared another lottery, for mortals singly and exclusively of the gods. The prize was FOLLY. They got it and shared it among themselves. All were satisfied. The loss of WISDOM was neither regretted nor remembered; FOLLY supplied its place, and those who had the largest share of it, thought themselves the wisest.

ABOUT THE ESSAY :

Here in this essay "Upon Affectation" the author Lord Philip Dormer Chesterfield shows one of the most common human behaviour of affecting others. The word "affectation" itself means to adopt artificial manner i.e. the people try to hide its original self and try to be that what they are not which in consequences invites the criticism of the other people and bring disrespect to them. According to the author people are never ridiculers for being what they really are but for affecting what they really are not. The author says that the people always complains that fortune has done nothing to them, they often question that why they have not the rank, rich, power etc. but never ever tried to read or understand their own inner self, never ever

tried to read or understand their own inner self, never listen to their own inner voice which results to deviations from nature which lead to serious consequences of being ridiculous. The author also regrets that self-flattery has replaced self-love and jolly wisdom.

This essay is thus a general observation on a particular type of human behaviour which tells us how man acts against the will of nature and chooses proxy for assimilating the qualities not his own. The popular and pandemic culture, outpoured from human behavior is that most people expect fortune should favour them with riches, power and all other props of potentate. However, they refuse to have nature's gifts like talents, the wits and so on and so forth, considering them as mere insignificant aspects. They seem to be happier with the aspects of the former gifts than those of the latter since their creative adoptability is sillier. This implies that unlike the great authors and philosophers the general mass of people are less interested in cultivating the crops and prefer to walk along the direct way to indulge in folly and error, the consequence of such a behavior is serious as well as ridiculous.

WORD NOTES :

Expostulation: make a protest, remonstrate.

Reproach: express disapproval to a person or oneself for a fault.

Profuse: lavish, extravagant.

Elicit: draw out facts a response etc. esp. with difficulty.

Pedantic: person who insists on adherence to formal rules or literal meaning.

Vanity: useless, ineffective.

Counterpoise: counter balance, state of equilibrium.

Preponderates: be greater in influence, quantity or number, predominate.

Tenacious: keeping a firm hold.

Vices: weakness.

Rudiment: elements or first principles of a subject.

Profligacy: recklessly extravagant.

Edification: improving morally or intellectually.

Libertine: sexually promiscuous person.

Laudable: commendable, praiseworthy.

Coccomb: ostentatiously conceited man, (displaying of wealth)

Pertness: impudent, disrespect.
Septuagenary: Between 70-79 years of age
Gallantries: devotion to women.
Ogles: Stares
Sexagenary: Between 60-69 years of age.
Gaudy: tastelessly showy.
Carcass: dead body of animal.
Gable: fiction esp. supernatural.
Ingenious: frank.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. Point out, after Chesterfield, the different kinds of 'affectation' that seize people.
2. Describe after Chesterfield how people deviate from nature.
3. 'People are never ridiculous for being what they are but for affecting what they really are not'. Discuss on the basis of this observation Lord Chesterfield's views on affectation. [GU 2002]
4. 'Affectation is the only source, and at the same time the only justifiable object of ridicule' - Discuss with reference to the essay. [GU 2007]
5. 'that people are never ridiculous for being what they really are but for affecting what they are not - How according to Lord Chesterfield affectation is a justifiable object of ridicule? [GU 2000]
6. What does the author say about the septuagenarian fine gentleman and sexagenarian widow in his prose piece 'Upon Affectation'?
7. 'These deviations from nature are often attended by serious consequences'. [GU 2005]
 - a. What deviations from nature are referred to here?
 - b. What are the serious consequences?



ON DRESS

: OLIVER GOLDSMITH

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Oliver Goldsmith, the son of a poor Protestant clergyman, was born on Nov 10, 1728, at Pallasmore in the country of Longford, Ireland. At the age of eight he had an attack of small-pox, which left him partially disfigured. Having a small stature and pockmarked, Oliver was undoubtedly ugly and this made him the butt of ridicule of his teachers and classmates alike.

Oliver started his education at the village school and later attended grammar schools at Elphin, Athlone and Edgeworths. His education in these schools was unsatisfactory. At last, he entered Trinity College, Dublin, in 1744. Here too he did not show any promise of his future greatness. He seemed to have learned nothing here but the arts of dissipation and practical joking. It is said that he was involved in a college riot and ran away from the College, but after some time he returned to complete his B. A. in 1749.

In 1752, he was sent to Edinburgh to study medicine. But he studied medicine in an altogether desultory fashion, devoting most of his time to singing songs and telling tales. At this period of his life, he found literature as a means to livelihood by composing stray works for the London book-sellers. In 1759, his 'An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe' was published. It brought him some other offers from the publishers. A bookseller approached him to start a weekly magazine and Goldsmith seized this opportunity. He started a weekly magazine named 'The Bee', which lasted for two months. Some of his essays appeared in this magazine.

The year 1761 may be taken as the turning point in his literary career. In that year, his 'Chinese Letters' appeared in John Newbery's Public Ledger. It is a delightful series of shrewd but good-natured reflections on life and was later on published separately as 'The Citizen of the World'. In this year, also Goldsmith made the acquaintance

of Dr. Johnson and was eventually admitted into the literary world, which included Edmund Burke and Sir Joshua Reynolds. In 1766, he wrote the 'Vicar of Wakefield', a novel that immediately gained a place among the English classics. Nevertheless, the novel was an important landmark in the history of English novel.

Goldsmith wrote many essays on personal and impersonal subjects in the manner of Addison. His essays, especially those published in 'The Bee', are admirable. His essays are characterised by whimsicality, satire, mild humour, but there is all over them a stamp of graceful charm. He anticipates in many ways the methods of Elia and Leigh Hunt.

Text :

Foreigners observe, that there are no ladies in the world more beautiful, or more ill dressed than those of England. Our countrywomen have been compared to those pictures, where the face is the work of a Raphael; but the draperies thrown out by some empty pretender, destitute of taste, and entirely unacquainted with design.

If I were a poet, I might observe, on this occasion, that so much beauty set off with all the advantages of dress would be too powerful an antagonist for the opposite sex and therefore it was wisely ordered, that our ladies should want taste, lest their admirers should entirely want reason.

But to confess a truth, I do not find they have a greater aversion to fine clothes than the women of any other country whatsoever. I cannot fancy that a shopkeeper's wife in Cheapside has a greater tenderness for the fortune of her husband than a citizen's wife in Paris; or that miss in a boarding school is more an economist in dress than mademoiselle in a nunnery.

Although Paris may be accounted the soil in which almost every fashion takes its rise, its influence is never so general there as with us. They study there the happy method of uniting grace and fashion, and never excuse a woman for being awkwardly dressed, by saying her clothes are made in the mode. A French woman is a perfect architect in dress; she never, with Gothic ignorance, mixes the orders; she never tricks out a squabby Doric shape with Corinthian finery;

or, to speak without metaphor, she conforms to general fashion, only when it happens not to be repugnant to private beauty.

Our ladies, on the contrary, seem to have no other standard for grace but the run of the town. If fashion gives the word, every distinction of beauty, complexion, or stature ceases. Sweeping trains, Prussian bonnets, and Trollopes, as like each other, as if cut from the same piece, level 0 to one standard.

The Mall, the gardens, and the playhouses are filled with ladies in uniform, and their whole appearance shows as little variety or taste as if their clothes were bespoke by the colonel of a marching regiment, or fancied by the same artist who dresses the three battalions of guards.

But not only ladies of every shape and complexion, but of every age too, are possessed of this unaccountable passion of dressing in the same manner. A lady of no quality can be distinguished from a lady of some quality only by the redness of her hands; and a woman of sixty, masked, might easily pass for her granddaughter. I remember, a few days ago, to have walked behind a damsel, tossed out in all the gaiety of fifteen; her dress was loose, unstudied, and seemed the result of conscious beauty. I called up all my poetry on this occasion, and fancied twenty Cupids prepared for execution in every folding of her white negligee. I had prepared my imagination for an angel's face; but what was my mortification to find that the imaginary goddess was no other than my cousin Hannah, four years older than myself and I shall be sixty-two the twelfth of next November.

After the transports of our first salute were over, I could not avoid running my eye over her whole appearance. Her gown was of cambric, cut short before, in order to discover a high-heeled shoe, which was buckled almost at the toe. Her cap, if cap it might be called that cap was none, consisted of a few bits of cambric, and flowers of painted paper stuck on one side of her head. Her bosom, that had felt no hand but the hand of time, these twenty years, rose suing, but in vain, to be pressed. I could, indeed, have wished her more than an handkerchief of Paris-net to shade her beauties; for, as Tasso says of the rosebud, 'Quanto si mostra men, Santo e' pi u bella' I should think her's most pleasing when least discovered.

As my cousin had not put on all this finery for nothing, she

was at that time sallying out to the Park, when I had overtaken her. Perceiving, however, that I had on my best wig, she offered, if I would 'squire her there, to send home the footman. Though I trembled for our reception in public, yet I could not, with any civility, refuse; so, to be as gallant as possible, I took her hand in my arm, and thus we marched on together.

When we made our entry at the Park, two antiquated figures, so polite and so tender as we seemed to be, soon attracted the eyes of the company. As we made our way among crowds who were out to show their finery as well as we, wherever we came I perceived we brought good humour in our train. The polite could not forbear smiling, and the vulgar burst out into a horselaugh at our grotesque figures. Cousin Hannah, who was perfectly conscious of the rectitude of her own appearance, attributed all this mirth to the oddity of mine; while I as cordially placed the whole to her account. Thus, from being two of the best-natured creatures alive, before we got half way up the Mall, we both began to grow peevish, and, like two mice on a string, endeavoured to revenge the impertinence of others upon ourselves. 'I am amazed, Cousin Jeffrey,' says miss, 'that I can never get you to dress like a Christian. I knew we should have the eyes of the park upon us, with your great wig - so frizzed, and yet so beggarly, and your monstrous muff. I hate those odious muffs.' I could have patiently borne a criticism on all the rest of my equipage; but, as I had always a peculiar veneration for my muff, I could not forbear being piqued a little; and throwing my eyes with a spiteful air on her bosom, 'I could heartily wish, madam', replied I, 'that for your sake, my muff was cut into a tipper.'

As my cousin, by this time, was grown heartily ashamed of her gentleman usher, and as I was never very fond of any kind of exhibition myself, it was mutually agreed to retire for a while to one of the seats, and from that retreat remark on others as freely as they had remarked on us.

When seated, we continued silent for some time, employed in very different speculations. I regarded the whole company, now passing in review before me, as drawn out merely for my amusement. For my entertainment the beauty had all that morning been improving her charms, the beau had put on lace, and the young doctor a big

wig, merely to please me. But quite different were the sentiments of Cousin Hannah; she regarded every well-dressed woman as a victorious rival, hated every face that seemed dressed in good humour, or wore the appearance of greater happiness than her own. I perceived her uneasiness, and attempted to lessen it, by observing, that there was no company in the Park to-day. To this she readily assented, 'and yet', says she, 'it is full enough of scrubs of one kind or another. My smiling at this observation gave her spirits to pursue the bent of her inclination, and now she began to exhibit her skill in secret history, as she found me disposed to listen. 'Observe,' says she to me, 'that old woman in tawdry silk, and dressed out even beyond the fashion. That is Miss Biddy Evergreen. Miss Biddy, it seems, has money, and as she considers that money was never so scarce as it is now, she seems resolved to keep what she has to herself. She is ugly enough you see; yet I assure you, she has refused several offers to my own knowledge, within this twelve month. Let me see, her doctor, and a Scotch preacher, who had like to have carried her off. All her time is passed between sickness and finery. Thus she spends the whole week in a close chamber, with no other company but her monkey, her apothecary, and cat, and comes dressed out to the Park every Sunday, to show her airs, to get new lovers, to catch a new cold, and to make new work for the doctor.'

There goes Mrs. Roundabout, I mean the fat lady in the lute string Trollope. Between you and I, she is but a cutler's wife. See how she is dressed, as fine as hands and pins can make her, while her two marriageable daughters, like bunters, in stuff gowns, are now taking six pennyworth of tea at the White Conduit-house. Odious puss! How she waddles along, with her train two yards behind her. She puts me in mind of my Lord Bantam's Indian sheep, which are obliged to have their monstrous tails trundled along in a go-cart. For all her airs, it goes to her husband's heart to see four yards of good lute string wearing against the ground, like one of his knives on a grindstone. To speak my mind, cousin Jeffrey, I never liked tails; for suppose a young fellow should be rude, and the lady should offer to step back in a fright, instead of retiring she treads upon her train, and falls fairly on her back; and then you know, cousin-her clothes may be spoiled.

Ah! Miss Mazzard! I knew we should not miss her in the Park; she in the monstrous Prussian bonnet. Miss, though so very fine, was bred a milliner, and might have had some custom if she had minded her business; but the girl was fond of finery, and instead of dressing her customers, laid out all her goods in adorning herself. Every new gown she put on impaired her credit; she still, however, went on improving her appearance and listening her little fortune, and is now, you see, become a belle and a bankrupt.

My cousin was proceeding in her remarks, which were interrupted by the approach of the very lady she had been so freely describing. Miss had perceived her at a distance, and approached to salute her. I found, by the warmth of the two ladies protestations, that they had been long intimate esteemed friends and acquaintance. Both were so pleased at this happy reencounter, that they were resolved not part for the day. So we all crossed the Park together, and I saw them into a hackney coach at the gate of St James's. I could not, however, help observing, 'that they are generally most ridiculous themselves, who are apt to see most ridicule in others.'

On Dress: The essay represents Goldsmith's view about good taste. Dress habits for him; reflect on the status of a civilization. They have a lot to say about people's refinement or sensibility. The author notes that French women do have a remarkable dress-sense; they are perfect architects in dress. He makes other observation on this issue based on his experienced ideas, making the essay a fine blend of objectivity and personalised intensity.

ABOUT THE ESSAY :

In this essay 'On Dress', Olivier Goldsmith, with great humour and in a modest way, expresses his own view about good tastes. The essay is based on a woman's craze for dress. The peculiarity of the essay is that it does not describe the dress of a particular country or civilization. Rather, the essay is a study of the whims of a particular sex. The author begins by quoting that no women in the world are more beautiful than those of England. However, the tragedy is that the English women are the worst dressed in the world. The author notes that the French women have a remarkable dressing sense and are perfect architects in dress. The author observes the peculiarity

ON DRESS

of woman's character on making herself well dressed & in making jealous comments on other well-dressed women. The author describes this particular characteristic by citing a brief experience with his cousin.

WORD NOTES :

- Draperies*: clothing or hangings arranged in folds.
- Destitute*: lacking.
- Bespoke*: made to order (past part bespeak).
- Gaiety*: merrymaking.
- Sallying*: set out on a walk.
- Squire* attends or escort.
- Rectitude*: correctness, moral uprightness.
- Mirth*: merriment, laughter.
- Peevish*: irritable.
- Impertinence*: disrespect.
- Equipage*: outfit.
- Veneration*: respect.
- Apothecary*: dispensing chemist.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. Summarise Goldsmith's observations on "dress". How does he compare a French woman with her English counterpart in matter of dress?
2. Write a note on Goldsmith's experience with his cousin. What general ideas does he gather from this experience?
3. What are the fundamental differences in the dress habits of the French and the English ladies as observed by Goldsmith? Discuss.
4. Narrate the author's encounter with Hannah and their adventure in St. James Park.

[GU 2005]



CIVILIZATION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE MASS OF THE PEOPLE

: LORD MACAULAY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Thomas Babington Macaulay, essayist, historian and statesman, was born in 1800 at Rothley Temple, Leicestershire. He was the son of M. Zachary, the philanthropist. He was educated privately as well as at Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1825, he began to contribute to Edinburgh Review in which his essay on Milton appeared. He soon became one of the valued writers for that periodical with which his connection endured for many years. He had graduated in Law and began to practice at the bar. He entered Parliament from the constituency of Edinburgh in 1830 and two years later was appointed a commissioner, and a year later Secretary of the Board of Control. In 1834, tempted by the large salary that would enable him to save enough to support himself for the rest of his life, he accepted an appointment as a member of the Supreme Council of India, where he stayed for five years. During this period, he assisted in preparing a criminal code for India, which did not, however, become law until 1860.

Back in England, he returned to the Parliament as member for Edinburgh, and in 1839 became Secretary of War. Edinburgh rejected him in 1847 but made amends by electing him in 1852. He did not sit idle during this period. He published his 'Lays of Ancient Rome' in 1842 and in the following years revised some of his Edinburgh Review articles for publication in book form. Since 1839 he had been at work on his 'History of England' but it was not until 1848 that the first two volumes of the History appeared. Volumes III and IV were published seven years later and the fifth was published posthumously (1861). Macaulay's chief virtue is the vividness of the picture he can give of a personality. This vividness is due to two things: his great erudition and his skill as a writer. His virtues and his faults as a writer spring from the same fundamental fact that Macaulay is a rhetorician. He was 'gifted with a remarkable vividness and accuracy.'

TEXT :

In one respect, it must be admitted that the progress of civilization has diminished the physical comforts of a portion of the poorest class. It has already been mentioned that, before the Revolution, many thousands of square miles, now enclosed and cultivated, were marsh, forest and heath. Of this wild land much was, by law, common and much of what was not common, by law worth so little that the proprietors suffered it to be common infect. In such a tract, squatters and trespassers were tolerated to an extent now unknown. The peasant who dwelt there could, at little or no charge, procure occasionally some palatable addition to his hard fare and provide himself with fuel for the winter. He kept a flock of geese on what is now an orchard rich with apple blossoms. He snared wild fowl on the fen, which has long since been drained and divided into cornfields and turnip fields. He cut turf among the furze bushes on the moor, which is now a meadow bright with clover and renowned for butter and cheese. The progress of agriculture and the increase of population necessarily deprived him of these privileges. However, against this disadvantage a long list of advantages is to be set off. Of the blessings, which civilization and philosophy bring with them a large proportion is common to all ranks, and would, if withdrawn, be missed as painfully by the labourer as by the peer. The marketplace, which the rustic can now reach with his cart in an hour, was, a hundred and sixty years ago, a day's journey from him. The street which now affords to the artisan, during the night a secure, a convenient and a brilliantly lighted walk was, a hundred and sixty years ago, so dark after sunset that he would not have been able to see his hand, so ill paved that he would have run constant risk of breaking his neck, and so ill watched that he would have been in imminent danger of being knocked down and plundered of his small earnings. Every bricklayer who falls from a scaffold, every sweeper of a crossing who is run over by a carriage may now have his wounds dressed and his limbs set with a skill such as, a hundred and sixty years ago, all the wealth of a great lord like Ormond, or of a merchant prince like Clayton, could not have purchased. Some

frightful diseases have been extirpated by science; and some have been banished by police. The term of human life has been lengthened over the whole kingdom, and especially in the towns. The year 1685 was not accounted sickly; yet in the year 1685 more than one in twenty-three of the inhabitants of the capital died. At present only one inhabitant of the capital in forty dies annually. The difference in salubrity between the London of the nineteenth century and the London of the seventeenth century is very far greater than the difference between London in an ordinary year and London in a year of cholera.

Still more important is the benefit, which all orders of society, and especially the lower orders, have derived from the mollifying influence of civilization on the national character. The groundwork of the character has indeed been the same through many generations, in the sense in which the groundwork of the character of an individual may be said to be the same when he is a rude and thoughtless schoolboy and when he is refined and accomplished man. It is pleasing to reflect that the public mind of England softened while it has ripened, and that we have, in the course of ages, become, not only a wiser, but also a kinder people. There is scarcely a page of the history or lighter literature of the seventeenth century, which does not contain some proof that our ancestors were less humane than their posterity. The discipline of workshops, of schools, of private families, though not more efficient at present, was infinitely harsher. Masters, well born and bred, were in the habit of beating their servants. Pedagogues knew no way of imparting knowledge but by beating their pupils. Husbands, of decent station, were not ashamed to beat their wives. The implacability of hostile factions was such as we can scarcely conceive. Wings were disposed to murmur because Stafford was suffered to die without seeing his bowels burned before his face. Tories reviled and insulted Russell as his coach passed from the Tower to the Scaffold in Lincoln's Inn Fields, as little mercy was shown by the populace to sufferers of a humbler rank. If an offender was put into the pillory, it was well if he escaped with life from the shower of brickbats and paving stones. If he was tied in the cart's tail, the crowd pressed round him, imploring the hangman

to give it the fellow well, and make him howl. Gentleman arranged parties of pleasure to Bridewell on court days for the purpose of seeing the wretched women who beat hemp there whipped. A man pressed to death for refusing to plead, a woman burned for coining, excited less sympathy than is now felt for a galled horse or an overdriven ox. Fights compared with which a boxing match is a refined and humane spectacle were among the favourite diversions of a large part of the town. Multitudes assembled to see gladiators hack each other to pieces with deadly weapons, and shouted with delight when one of the combatants lost a finger or an eye. The prisons were hells on earth, seminaries of every crime and of every disease. At the assizes the lean and yellow culprits brought with them from their cells to the dock an atmosphere of stench and pestilence which sometimes avenged them signally on bench, bar, and jury. But on all this misery, society looked with profound indifference. Nowhere could be found that sensitive and restless compassion which has, in our time, extended a powerful protection to the factory child, to the Hindoo widow, to the negro slave, which pries into the stores and water casks of every emigrant ship, which winces at every lash laid on the back of a drunken soldier, which will not suffer the thief in the hulks to be ill fed or overworked, and which has repeatedly endeavoured to save the life even of the murderer. It is true that compassion ought, like all other feelings, to be under the government of reason, and has, for want of such government, produced some ridiculous and some deplorable effects. But the more we study the annals of the past, the more shall we rejoice that we live in a merciful age, in an age in which cruelty is abhorred, and in which pain, even when deserved, is inflicted reluctantly and from a sense of duty. Every class doubtless has gained largely by this great moral change; but the class which has gained most is the poorest, the most dependent, and the most defenseless.

The general effect of the evidence, which has been submitted to the reader, seems hardly to admit of doubt. Yet, in spite of evidence, many will still image to themselves the England of the Stuarts as a more pleasant country than the England in which we live. It may, at first sight, seem strange that society, while constantly

moving forward with eager speed, should be constantly looking backward with tender regret. But these two propensities, inconsistent as they may appear, can easily be resolved into the same principle. Both spring from our impatience of the state in which we actually are. That impatience, while it stimulates us to surpass preceding generations, disposes us to overrate their happiness. It is, in some sense, unreasonable and ungrateful in us to be constantly discontented with a condition, which is constantly improving. But, in truth, there is constant improvement precisely because there is constant discontent. If we were perfectly satisfied with the present, we should cease to contrive, to labour, and to save with a view to the future. And it is natural that, being dissatisfied with the present, we should form a too favourable estimate of the past.

In truth, we are under a deception similar to that which misleads the traveller in the Arabian Desert. Beneath the caravan, all is dry and bare but far in advance, and far in the rear, is the semblance of refreshing waters. The pilgrims hasten forward and find nothing but sand where an hour before, they were toiling through sand. A similar illusion seems to haunt nations through every stage of the long progress from poverty and barbarism to the highest degree of opulence and civilization. But, if we resolutely chase the mirage backward, we shall find it recede before us into the regions of fabulous antiquity. It is now the fashion to place the golden age of England in times when noblemen were destitute of comforts the want of which would be intolerable to a modern footman, when farmers and shopkeepers breakfasted on loaves the very sight of which would raise a riot in a modern workhouse, when to have a clean shirt once a week was a privilege reserved for the higher class of gentry, when men died faster in the purest country air than they now die in the most pestilential lanes of our towns, and when men died faster in the lanes of our towns than they now die on the coast of Guiana. We too shall, in our turn, be outstripped and in our turn be envied. It may well be, in the twentieth century, that the peasant of Dorset shire may think himself miserably paid with twenty shillings a day, that labouring men may be as little used to dine without meat

as they now are to eat rye bread; that sanitary police and medical discoveries may have added several more years to the average length of human life; that numerous comforts and luxuries which are now unknown, or confined to a few, may be within the reach of every diligent and thrifty working man. And yet it may then be the mode to assert that the increase of wealth and the progress of science have benefited the few at the expense of the many, and to talk of the reign of Queen Victoria as the time when England was truly merry England, when all classes were bound together by brotherly sympathy, when the rich did not grind the faces of the poor, and when the poor did not envy the splendour of the rich.

ABOUT THE ESSAY :

The essay is a representation of Macaulay's views on the effects brought on by civilization on the life of people of England. The loss of the earlier easy-going life of the peasants is contrasted with the 'blessings' of civilization- cities with paved and well-lighted streets and secure living conditions in a salubrious atmosphere. Further, the essayist describes the softening influence of civilisation on the mind and heart of the people. At the same time, Macaulay deplores the common sentiment of the Englishmen that lead them to gloat over the past. Finally, he regards discontentment as divine; because without it, there would be no improvement in the future.

WORD NOTES :

Heath: area of flattish uncultivated land with low shrubs

Squatters: person who inhabits unoccupied premises without permission.

Trespassers: an unlawful or unauthorized intrusion (esp. on land or property).

Palatable: acceptable, satisfactory.

Turf: layer of grass etc. with earth & malted roots as the surface of grass land.

Plundered: exploit.

Humane: sympathetic, benevolent.

Posterity : succeeding generations.

Implacability : unable to make clamor quite.

Bowels : intestine.

Populace : the common people.

Pillory : wooden framework with holes for the head & hands holding & allowing him or her publicly ridicule.

Hemp : Asian herbaceous plant.

Assizes : court periodically administering the civil and criminal law.

Stench : foul smell.

Pestilence : fatal epidemic disease.

Winces : involuntary shrinking movement of the face.

Hulks : body of dismantled ship.

Annals : historical records.

Surpass : be greater or better.

Contrive : plan, manage.

Caravan : people traveling together esp. across a desert.

Semblance : appearance.

Opulence : wealthy, abundant.

Shrine : place hallowed by some memory or association.

Veneration : respect deeply.

Desiccated : remove moisture from.

Nettles : plant with jagged leaves covered with stinging hairs.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. How has according to Macaulay, civilization affected the masses?
[GU 2000]
2. What, according to Macaulay are the advantages, which came in the wake of civilization and how are they set off against the disadvantages from which the people had suffered before civilization came?
[GU 1999]
3. What are benefits of civilization for the common people?
[GU 2001, 07]
4. What, according to Macaulay, are the benefits, which all orders of society can derive from the influence of civilization on the national character?
[GU 2003]

5. How does Macaulay show the difference in the state of human life before and after the revolution?
[GU 2005]
6. Narrate, according to Macaulay the mollifying effects of civilization on all aspects of British national character.
7. What, according to Macaulay, are the experiences of nations in their onward march from poverty and barbarism to opulence and civilisation?
8. In which respect, according to Macaulay, did the progress of civilisation diminish the physical comforts of a portion of the poorest class?
9. How does "Macaulay resolve the two apparently inconsistent human propensities of moving forward and looking backward into one principle?
10. What is Macaulay's view about the golden age in British history? Can you find any clue to the answer from this essay?



EINSTEIN

C. P. SNOW

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

C. P. Snow was born on 15 Oct. 1905, the second of four sons in a low middle class family living in Leicester. Snow was an English novelist, critic and scientist and educated as a chemist and physicist at the University of Leicester and Cambridge. He did scientific work in the 1930s and during the World War II was the chief of scientific personal for the ministry of labor. He was named a commander of the British Empire in 1943, Knighted in 1957 and created Life Peer in 1964.

Lord Snow is best known for a series of inter related novels that examine English life between 1920 and 1950. The series is named after the first of those novels, 'Strangers and Brokers', which appeared in 1940. Other in the series of 11 novels include 'Time of Hope' (1949), 'The Masters' (1951), 'The New Man' (1954), 'The Affair' (1959) 'Corridors of power' (1964), 'Last Things' (1970) and many more. Snow was a novelist of unique experience. At a period of history when the world of literature and the world of science and technology are sharply separated from each other, he has come to hold a key position in both.

TEXT :

One day at Fenner's just before the last war, G.H. Hardy and I were talking about Einstein. Hardy had met him several times, and I had recently returned from visiting him. Hardy was saying that in his lifetime there had only been two men in the world, in all the fields of human achievement, science, literature, politics, anything you like, who qualified for the Bradman class. One was Lenin, and the other, Einstein.

I wasn't quarrelling with that. It was clear, all the theoretical

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physicists told us so, that if Einstein had not existed, twentieth century physics would itself have been different: this one could say of no one else, not even Rutherford or Bohr: to make this kind of difference was inextricably mixed up with his achievement. Neither Hardy nor I were given to exaggerated estimates of human virtue: but again, we took it for granted that, if the word 'noble' had any meaning, this was the noblest man we had met.

Good, gentle and wise. Hardy recalled that some bright journalist had thrown off that description of Einstein: could I think of any three adjectives more exact? Here, for the first time, I began to hedge. Yes, they were true; but they didn't tell the whole truth, or anything like it. If one was talking in that kind of shorthand, one ought to add another adjective. But what should it be, without disturbing the impression? 'Obstinate' was too weak and too critical, 'counter-suggestible' was faintly grotesque, 'independent' or 'non-conformist' did not say anything like enough, 'deliberately impersonal' was a half-truth.

To begin with, he was much more unlike 'ordinary' men and women than the others I am writing about. In psychological structure, though not, of course, in gifts, one can find plenty of parallels to Lloyd George, Rutherford, Wells, Hardy: most of us have met people bearing them a family resemblance in the course of our everyday lives. Churchill was much stranger. In some ways, I have come to think there were faint likenesses between Churchill and Einstein. I don't mean that they were alike in terms of spirit or intellect: in those respects, no one could bear comparison with Einstein. But in some aspects of their psychological nature, in the ways in which their characters formed themselves, I believe one can find some links.

As with Churchill, there were some singular paradoxes in Einstein's career. I suspect that in natures like theirs, where the ego starts abnormally strong-though Einstein, unlike Churchill, learned to suppress his personal self or forget it-these paradoxes are more likely to occur than with less inflexible men. Anyway, Einstein was universally recognized at thirty-seven as the greatest theoretical physicist of his age, the equal of Newton. That is still his ranking: the work he did between twenty-two and thirty-seven stands there

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forever. But it isn't that, like Newton, he gave up Physics. It remained the prime internal devotion of his life; he worked at it with the ultimate concentration, which was one of his supreme qualities until he died at seventy-six: and almost all his colleagues thought, and still think, that he wasted the second half of his life.

There were other paradoxes. He was the voice of liberal science, the prophet of reason and peace, for a generation. At the end, he believed, without bitterness, in the depth of his gentle and tranquil spirit, that it had all been in vain. He was the most complete of internationalists: he broke away from the Jewish community; he hated all separatisms and nationalisms: yet he was compelled to take his place as the most eminent Jew alive, the committed Zionist. He wanted to lose his personality in the world of nature; but that personality became one of the most publicized of the century, and his face-at first glance the face of an inspired and saintly goliath-as well known as a film star's.

Just to add to the list, he was credited, or blamed, with a paradox that did not exist. It has become a legend that he was responsible for the atomic bomb-which he, the prophet of human brotherhood, had to take on his conscience the slaughter of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the possibility of racial destruction to come. In practice, the discovery of nuclear fission owed nothing to his work: and his part in sending the famous letter to Roosevelt in 1939 was not significant. I will try to depersonalize this story a little later.

It was of course, his moral character, which demonstrated itself in those paradoxes of his life. That character was already formed before he was sixteen. Here we have to rely on the facts and to take his own comments, written when he was an old man, as rationalizations after the event.

'I have never belonged wholeheartedly to a country, a state, or even to my own family.'

'My personal external circumstances played only a minor role in my thoughts and my emotions.'

'Perception of this world by thought, leaving out everything subjective became, partly consciously, my supreme aim.' (O himself, in early adolescence.)

'When I was still a rather precocious young man, I already realised most vividly the futility of the hopes and aspirations that most men pursue throughout their lives.'

'Well-being and happiness never appeared to me as an absolute aim. I am even inclined to compare such moral aims to the ambitions of a pig.'

Those statements were written in old age. They couldn't have been made by many men-perhaps by Spinoza, whom Einstein so much admired and in spirit resembled. But, even from Spinoza or Einstein, they need a bit of understanding. After all, these men did live on this earth like the rest of us.

Einstein's family were easy-going, freethinking lower middle class, were Jewish by origin, but agnostic and indifferent to religion. It was a tolerant and casual home: uncomfortably casual inasmuch as his father, who started a small electrical factory, in Munich when Einstein was one year old (in 1880), did not have the drive to make a go of it. But they were never poor, as the Wellses and the Rutherfords were.

The young Einstein was not a brilliant child. Intellectually, he seemed backward (this was also true of Churchill). He was late in learning to talk. All this is curious, particularly so far a future mathematician. As a rule, mathematical talent shows itself at a very early age. A high proportion of eminent mathematicians have asked questions about large or infinite numbers before they were three: the stories about Hardy and Dirac, for example, are well authenticated.

Well, Einstein was not a mathematician in the sense Hardy was, but no one would suggest that he was devoid of mathematical ability. Little or none of this was detected in his early childhood. He did begin, at the age of ten, to show early maturity, not of intellect, but of character.

His parents, who might have been Catholic converts if they had had any religion at all, sent him first to a Catholic primary school. That he didn't mind. At ten, he went on to one to the Munich secondary schools. That he hated and he hated it for just the same reasons, as he would have hated it at seventy. It was militaristic: at once, and forever, he detested German militarism. Children marched

and drilled: teachers barked: It was a barrack. In later life he became as unqualified a nonconformist as man can be. He often rationalized his actions, but they deserve some inspection. At ten, he was already certain that this disciplined machine was not for him. He had a horror of constraint, in any shape or form, physical, emotional, intellectual. Zwang. Did I know the German word, he asked me, as we talked about English manners. In Munich high school, he made his first strike against Zwang.

He did, in fact, do both a brave and an odd thing. He became, for a short period, about a year, a religious Jew. It was an attempt, as he saw it later, to liberate himself from a purely personal links'. It was also an attempt to mark himself out from the conformity, which surrounded him. As we shall see, he repeated this pattern at the height of his fame: when, without belief, he once more stamped himself as a Jew, an active Zionist. If he was going to be identified with any group-and that was difficult, so unyielding was his ego-then it must be with the poor and persecuted of the world.

This decision, like each single decision that he took in his life, came from within himself. At ten, he seems to have rested as much certainty in his own thought as he did at seventy: his own thought, and that of no one else alive. The religious phase did not last long. Once more, he applied his own thought to it: and at twelve, he emerged into the kind of cosmic religious non-belief, which lasted him a lifetime. He used the word God so often that people were sometimes deceived. From his boyhood, he possessed deep religious feeling: but when he spoke of God, he did not mean what a religious believer means (although he might perhaps have accepted Bonhoeffer's God). As he said himself in middle age: 'I believe in Spinoza's God who reveals himself in the harmony of all beings, not in a God who concerns himself with the fate and actions of men.'

That conclusion he reached in early adolescence, brooding by himself as a pupil-not at all a distinguished one-at the Munich high school. With the same total independence, he decided what to work at. He was quite good, no more, at physics and mathematics. Most of the academic drill struck him as intolerable, and he would not

cooperate. In this, he was quite unlike most clever boys and nearly all future academics. People like Rutherford (who was as original in creative power, though not in temperament) took what they were given and made the best of it. Hardy disliked Winchester, but was a born competitor who wanted the prizes and the Trinity scholarship. To Einstein competition meant nothing: he had no temptation to compromise or please. Here again one can see a ghostly resemblance to the young Churchill, unable or unwilling to make a serious effort at school, except at writing English essays, which he happened to enjoy.

Einstein's father was a peculiarly unsuccessful businessman. The Munich business was a failure, and so, more or less absentmindedly, he moved on to Milan, where he did slightly worse. This move happened when Einstein was fifteen; he was left behind in Munich to complete his schooling. Since his mind had been totally independent before, it could not become more so: but he had six months alone and reached three more solitary decisions.

He arrived in Milan and announced them to a family, which seems to have been as cheerful about them as he was himself. The first was to leave the Munich school, which he hated, and to abandon the final examination, which, he despised. The second was to leave the Jewish community, to which he still formally belonged. The third, and the most dramatic, was to give up his German citizenship. He decided to have no obligations, which he did not make himself. His moral confidence was absolute. He was enough, just on his own.

As an anti-climax, he promptly failed his entrance examination to the Zurich Polytechnic. He wanted to study there, in order to become an electrical engineer-which sounds quaint, because of the legend of Einstein's impracticality: in fact he was no more impractical than Hardy was absentminded: these simple classifications are hard to destroy. Not entirely surprisingly, he passed the entrance examination in the subjects he had studied, and failed in those he had not.

So he, already mature to an extent most men never achieve, had to put in a year in a Swiss Cantonal School, and, with typical unpredictability, enjoyed it. From there he duly passed into Zurich,

with that suspicion of mathematical techniques. At twenty-three, he was already the man whom the world later wished, and failed to understand.

No one has stripped away the claims of self more ruthlessly, not even Niels Bohr, another of the saints of science. But it is wrong to romanticize anyone, even Einstein. It seems to me that a man has to possess a powerful personality to need to subdue it so totally. A more naturally self-forgetful man wouldn't have required such a moral effort to forget himself. He did it: perhaps that was why, when I met him, I felt that he had been shaped by moral experience. It is here that one can pick out the black and white difference from Churchill, a similarly structured personality. Churchill too had a powerful personality: but he didn't submerge it or even try to, he simply gave it freedom. It was probably only in action that he felt the same impersonality into which, by a moral imperative, Einstein serenely made himself.

But he never totally suppressed himself. I think one ought to be a little wary of his attitude to the conventions. Yes, no one has been less conventional: but his rationalizations were somewhat too masterly, somehow a man isn't as totally unconventional as that if he is absolutely free. It's easier sometimes to wear socks, even if other people have the habit of wearing socks, than to explain that socks get holes in them. It takes too much effort to question each social action. Free and easy people take the conventions more lightly, sometimes dropping them, sometimes drifting along. It's more convenient, I should have thought, to get into a dinner jacket than to hack away at shirtsleeves with a razor in order to make a kind of under-vest: but Einstein would firmly have thought the opposite. About him, even in revered old age, there was still a residue—no, not really a residue but a suggestion-of a nonconformer from a central European cafe, the sort of character one used to meet between the wars, who made an impact by wearing odd shoes and his coat on backwards.

As a very young man, when he was producing great discoveries, Einstein's only society was in just those cafes. He was the least sociable of humankind—he spoke of his own unconcealed lack of the need

to frequent my fellow human beings and human communities. Yet he enjoyed the casual easygoing European nights, the cigars, the coffee, the talk; he was both witty and merry, he had a reverberating laugh, he didn't worry about anything. When life had sobered him, when he left responsibility for so much, he missed those nights. He never got used to American parties, where people drank hard and didn't want to argue about ultimate. So far as he was ever at home, at any time in his life, it was in Berne and Zurich before the First World War.

He got married in Berne, as soon as he took on his job at the Patent Office there. About this marriage, and his first wife, there is a conflict of evidence: much of the biographical material is good (there is an especially attractive account by Antonia Vallentin), but here there is some factual mystery. This first wife was a fellow-student at Zurich, four years older than he was: she was a Serbian called Mileva Maric. Here the certainty stops. She seems to have had a limp. Most of Einstein's Swiss contemporaries thought she was gloomy and incompetent; she may have been a genuine depressive. None of this sounds alluring, but other reports give her a Slav nakedness to life, a defenseless charm.

Was the marriage unhappy from the beginning? This will presumably never be known, though I picked up what may have been a clue. Einstein was utterly reticent about his personal life: 'puritanical reserve' was necessary, he said to a scientist seeking truth. Antonia Vallentin, who knew his second wife well, suggests that he was a man of powerful sensuality. When I met him, that was certainly one of the impressions that he gave: but it is entirely possible, and perhaps more probable than possible, that he, like Tolstoy and Gandhi, both of whom he revered, felt that his sensuality was one of the chains of personality that ought to be slipped off. Anyway, in his first marriage he soon had two sons—those two he certainly love. The older gave him no trouble, and in due course became an excellent engineering professor in California. The younger one seems to have inherited, in an acute form, his mother's melancholia, and brought Einstein in middle age what was perhaps his deepest private grief.

Meanwhile, his first child born, Einstein, twenty-six years old,

only three years away from poverty, still a patent examiner, published in the *Annalen der Physik* in 1905 five papers on entirely different subjects. Three of them were among the greatest in the history of physics. One, very simple, gave the quantum explanation of the photoelectric effect—it was this work for which, sixteen years later, he was awarded the Nobel Prize. Another dealt with the phenomenon of Brownian motion, the apparently erratic movement of tiny particles suspended in a liquid: Einstein showed that these movements satisfied a clear statistical law. This was like a conjuring trick, easy when complained: before it, reputable scientists could still doubt the concrete existence of atoms and molecules: this paper was as near to a direct proof of their concreteness as a theoretician could give. The third paper was the special theory of relativity, which quietly amalgamated space, time and matter into one fundamental unity.

This last paper contains no references and quotes no authority. All of them are written in a style unlike any other theoretical physicist's. They contain very little mathematics. There is a good deal of verbal commentary. The conclusions emerge as though with the greatest of ease: the reasoning is unbreakable. It looks as though he had reached the conclusions by pure thought, unaided, without listening to the opinions of others. To a surprisingly large extent, that is precisely what he had done.

It is pretty safe to say that, so long as physics lasts, no one will again make three major discoveries in one year. People have complained that Einstein was not immediately recognised. That seems mildly unrealistic. Within a few months, physicists at Cracow were saying that a new Copernicus had been born. It took about four years for the top German physicists, such as Planck, Nernst, and Von Laue, to begin proclaiming that he was a genius. In 1909, before he had any academic job at all, he was given a honorary degree at Geneva. Just afterwards, Zurich University (not the Polytechnic) offered him a professorship. In 1911, he went to a full chair at the German University at Prague. In 1912, he was recalled to the Zurich Polytechnic, which had had, only a dozen years before, no use for him. In 1913, he was elected to the Prussian Academy of Science, at a high salary for those days, to be left free in Berlin for no

duties except his research. He was by then thirty-four. He was being treated as handsomely as any scientist alive. I don't think the academic community, in particular the German-speaking academic community, comes out of that story badly.

There was, however, trouble in his home. No one knows how deeply it affected him. By the time he had moved to Prague, his marriage was going wrong. Altogether, the stay in Prague was an unhappy one. Einstein had to become a state official of the Habsburg Empire: in order to do this he had to declare his religion. He had lost all connections with Judaism: but anti-Semitism was strong in Austria and that was enough reason for Einstein to insist on registering himself-Israelite. His wife, Milieva, was sunk in melancholia: it didn't help that she was a Slav, in the midst of racial unrest.

When he went to Berlin in 1914, he left his wife and sons in Zurich. The marriage was over: he must have no need, though it seems that he did not say it. He was overcome by sadness, of a kind rare in him, when he left his sons.

He arrived in Berlin some months before war broke out. He was already famous in the scientific world. He was going to attract fame in the world outside such as no scientist has known before or since. He was a pacifist soon forced to watch what he regarded as German madness among, not only the crowd, but his fellow-members of the Academy. He had preserved his Swiss nationality, which was some sort of protection when, with his habitual courage, he became an ally of Romain Rolland. But he soon came to experience the blackest unpopularity. He could shrug it off. Even the scientists of various countries behave as though eight months ago [he was writing to Rolland in May 1915] they had had their brains amputated.

Nevertheless, in the middle of militaristic tumult, he found both personal and creative peace. Perhaps, or probably, the two were connected. Anyway, he went to live in Berlin with one of his uncles: and with this uncle's daughter, who had been unsatisfactorily married, divorced, and had two small daughters, he was happy. Maybe he fell in love: but, once again, this is unknown. Certainly, he wanted no one else. When he was himself divorced, some years

only three years away from poverty, still a patent examiner, published in the *Annalen der Physik* in 1905 five papers on entirely different subjects. Three of them were among the greatest in the history of physics. One, very simple, gave the quantum explanation of the photoelectric effect—it was this work for which, sixteen years later, he was awarded the Nobel Prize. Another dealt with the phenomenon of Brownian motion, the apparently erratic movement of tiny particles suspended in a liquid: Einstein showed that these movements satisfied a clear statistical law. This was like a conjuring trick, easy when complained: before it, reputable scientists could still doubt the concrete existence of atoms and molecules: this paper was as near to a direct proof of their concreteness as a theoretician could give. The third paper was the special theory of relativity, which quietly amalgamated space, time and matter into one fundamental unity.

This last paper contains no references and quotes no authority. All of them are written in a style unlike any other theoretical physicist's. They contain very little mathematics. There is a good deal of verbal commentary. The conclusions emerge as though with the greatest of ease: the reasoning is unbreakable. It looks as though he had reached the conclusions by pure thought, unaided, without listening to the opinions of others. To a surprisingly large extent, that is precisely what he had done.

It is pretty safe to say that, so long as physics lasts, no one will again make three major discoveries in one year. People have complained that Einstein was not immediately recognised. That seems mildly unrealistic. Within a few months, physicists at Cracow were saying that a new Copernicus had been born. It took about four years for the top German physicists, such as Planck, Nernst, and Von Laue, to begin proclaiming that he was a genius. In 1909, before he had any academic job at all, he was given a honorary degree at Geneva. Just afterwards, Zurich University (not the Polytechnic) offered him a professorship. In 1911, he went to a full chair at the German University at Prague. In 1912, he was recalled to the Zurich Polytechnic, which had had, only a dozen years before, no use for him. In 1913, he was elected to the Prussian Academy of Science, at a high salary for those days, to be left free in Berlin for no

duties except his research. He was by then thirty-four. He was being treated as handsomely as any scientist alive. I don't think the academic community, in particular the German-speaking academic community, comes out of that story badly.

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later, he married her. She protected him from nuisances until he died. She was unexacting, she was high-spirited, she was fun, and she was shrewd about people. Unlike his first wife, who was trained as a mathematician, she knew nothing whatever about his work. It was the kind of marriage that some of the greatest scientists have made. It set him free, and left him free. Before he met her, he had been going through a fallow period scientifically. Almost immediately after, he was thinking with a concentration, and reaching a creative ecstasy, more intense than he had known.

In November 1915, he wrote to Arnold Sommerfeld, himself a fine physicist, one of the classical scientific letters:

This last month I have lived through the most exciting and the most exacting period of my life: and it would be true to say that it has also been the most fruitful. Writing letters has been out of the question. I realised that uptill now my field equations of gravitation have been entirely devoid of foundation. When all my confidence in the old theory vanished, I saw clearly that a satisfactory solution could only be reached by linking it with the Reimann variations. The wonderful thing that happened then was that not only did Newton's theory result from it, as a first approximation, but also the perihelion motion of Mercury, as a second approximation. For the deviation of light by the Sun, I obtain twice the former amount.

Sommerfeld wrote a cautious and skeptical reply. Einstein sent him a postcard: 'You will become convinced of the general theory of relativity as soon as you have studied it. Therefore I shall not utter a word in its defense.'

It did not need defense. It was published in 1916. As soon as it reached England-across the increasing harshness of the war scientists thought that it was almost certainly right. The greatest revolution in thought since Newton, they were playing. As a consequence of his theory Einstein had made a prediction. It was prediction of an experimental effect, which astronomers could test. In his paper, he asked them to do so. The English astronomers decided that this should be done. In March 1917 again - across the war-they announced that on 29 March 1919 a total eclipse of the sun was taking place. The critical experiment would be set up and Einstein's theory tested.

That is an old story. The test, of course, came out as predicted, and Einstein's theory stood.

It is a strange theory. As with Rutherford, as with most scientists, if Einstein had never lived most of his work would soon have been done by someone else, and in much the same form. He said himself that that was true of the special theory of relativity. But, when he generalized the special theory so as to include the gravitational field, he did something that might not have been done for generations: and, above all, might not have been done in that way. It might, some good theoreticians have suggested, have ultimately been done in a way easier for others to handle. It remains an extraordinary monolith, like a Henry Moore sculpture, which he alone could have constructed-and at which he himself hacked away, hoping to make something grander, for the rest of his scientific life.

In the meantime his public life, as soon as the general theory was published (his fame had already mounted before the confirmation), was unlike that which any other scientist is likely to experience again. No one knows quite why, but he sprang into the public consciousness, all over the world, as the symbol of science, the master of the twentieth-century intellect, to a large extent the spokesman for human hope. It seemed that, perhaps as a release from the war, people wanted a human being to revere. It is true that they did not understand what they were revering. Never mind, they believed that here was someone of supreme, if mysterious, excellence.

As a symbol of science, either Rutherford or Niels Bohr might have been chosen. Rutherford left a more direct mark on twentieth-century science (Einstein said: 'I consider Rutherford to be one of the greatest experimental scientists of all time, and in the same class as Faraday. The reason I had no opportunity of mentioning him in my writings is because I concentrated on speculative theories, whereas Rutherford managed to reach profound conclusions on the basis of almost primitive reflection combined with relatively simple experimental methods.'). Bohr founded a great Socratic school of theoretical physicists, and influenced others as Einstein never did. Both Rutherford and Bohr were good men; but Rutherford hadn't Einstein's moral independence or resource: Bohr may have had,

but could not project it. No, the public instinct was correct. As Hardy used to quote-it's only the highbrows (in the unpleasant sense) who do not admire the real swells.

Throughout the twenties he made himself the champion of good causes. He became a Zionist, though his religious thinking was quite un-Judaic: he was on the side of Zion, out of an ultimate loyalty and also, as I have said before, because the Jews were the insulted and injured of this world. He spent a lot of time trying to promote international pacifism. This sounds strange to us now, but the twenties was a period of ideals, and even Einstein, the least suggestible of men, shared them. At a later period of his life, some Americans used to call him naive. This made me angry: he was not in the slightest naive: what they meant was that he didn't think that the United States was always a hundred per cent right, and the Soviet Union a hundred per cent wrong.

If they have studied his public attitudes-they might-but they couldn't, reason had gone to sleep-have realized that he had always stood above the battles. He could not have become a partisan if he had tried. In one sense, he was totally detached. In another, he felt an absolute duty to his fellow men. Antonia Vallentin says with accuracy that spiritually he was free of all chains, but that morally he was bound by them. He loved his solitude-'painful when one is young, but delightful when one is more mature': but still, the more so as he became world-famous, he knew his duty. 'The concern for man and his destiny must always be the chief interest of all technical effort. Never forget it among your diagrams and equations.' Later he said: only a life lived for others is worth while.'

In the twenties life had still not quite sobered him. Everyone, including himself, complained about the ordeals of publicity. Here, for once, I register a dissenting vote. There was a streak in him, major prophet though he was which enjoyed the photographers and the crowds. He had an element, as I have indicated before, of the exhibitionist and the actor, coexisting with his spiritual grandeur. If there had not been that element, there would have been no photographers and no crowds. Nothing is easier to avoid than publicity. If one genuinely doesn't want it, one doesn't get it. Einstein

was under no compulsion to travel round the world. If he had entered-it would have been perfectly practicable-to his birthplace in Swabia, he could have revelled in obscurity.

But he didn't. Some of his remarks about publicity in the twenties sounded, as usual, like the Old Testament. But-much more than we think in our rationalisations-what you want is what happens to you.

That wasn't true, though, on the world sense. He had always been more realistic than most men about German politics: he knew the violence seething underneath the Weimar state. As soon as Hitler took the power, Einstein was quicker than any politician to judge what was going to happen. International pacifism, the world community, intellectual cooperation-all his hopes had to be put aside. He was much more rapid than Churchill in recognizing that the Nazi Reich had to be put down by force.

He was himself Hitler's greatest public enemy. He was out of Germany when Hitler became Chancellor: he was a brave man, but he knew that if he returned he would be killed. Through most of 1933 he lived in the little Flemish seaside town of De Haan (Coqs-sur-Mer). There he kept a kind of intellectual court for refugees. De Haan was temporarily the capital of the German-speaking scientific world. Incidentally it is the most agreeable village on the Flanders coast, and they have a pleasant custom of naming streets after great men-Shakespeare laan, Dante laan, Rembrandt laan, and so on. But they haven't yet named a street after their most illustrious resident.

Belgium suited him. He was more comfortable in small cosy countries (Holland was his favourite), but he wasn't safe from the Nazis. Unwillingly he set off on his travels again went to Princeton, and stayed there until he died.

It was kind of exile. There is no doubt that he, who had never recognized any place as home, sometimes longed for the sounds and smells of Europe. Nevertheless, it was in America that he reached his full wisdom and his full sadness. His wife died soon after he got there. His younger son, back in Switzerland, had gone into a mental home. His merriness had finally been worn away. He was left with his duty to other men.

He was left with something else, too. He could still lose his personality; forget everything else, in speculating about the natural world. That was the deepest root of his existence: it remained strong until the night before he died. He once said in public: 'whoever finds a thought which enables us to obtain a slightly deeper glimpse into the eternal secrets of nature, has been given great grace.' He continued—this was the grace of his solitariness—to try to find such thoughts. Quite unlike Newton, who gave up physics entirely in order to become Master of the Mint and perform textual researches on the Bible, Einstein stayed working at science long after most theoreticians, even the best, have taken to something easier. But he worked—and this was the final strangeness of his life—in a direction flat opposite to that of his major colleagues. In the public world, against militarism, against Hitler, against cruelty and unreason, nothing had ever made him budge. In the private world of theoretical physics, with the same quiet but total stubbornness, he would not budge against the combined forces of the colleagues he loved, Bohr, Bern, Dirac, Heisenberg, the major intellects in his own profession.

They believed that the fundamental laws were statistical that, when it came to quantum 'phenomena, in Einstein's picturesque phrase, God had to play at dice. He believed in classical determinism—that in the long run, it should be possible to frame one great field theory in which the traditional concept of causality would re-emerge. Year after year, he explained and redefined his position.

To Carl Stelig: I differ decisively in my opinions about the fundamentals of physics from nearly all my contemporaries, and therefore I cannot allow myself to act as spokesman for theoretical physicists. In particular, I do not believe in the necessity for a statistical formulation of the laws.

To Max Born: I can quite well understand why you take me for an obstinate old sinner, but I feel clearly that you do not understand how I came to travel my lonely way. It would certainly amuse you, although it would be impossible for you to appreciate my attitude. I should also have great pleasure in tearing to pieces your positivistic-philosophical view point.

To James Franck: I can, if the worst comes to the worst, still realise that God may have created a world in which there are no natural laws. In short, a chaos. But that there should be statistical laws with definite solutions, i.e. laws which compel God to throw the dice in each individual case, I find highly disagreeable.

God does not play at dice, he kept saying. But, though he worked for nearly forty years, he never discovered his unified field theory. And it is true that his colleagues, who passionately venerated him, sometimes thought that he was 'an obstinate old sinner'. They believed that he had mispent half the mental lifetime of the most powerful intellect alive. They felt they had lost their natural leader.

The arguments on both sides are most beautiful and subtle. Unfortunately, they cannot be followed without some background of physics: otherwise, Bohr's Discussion on Epistemological Problems and Einstein's Reply ought to be part of everyone's education. No 'More profound intellectual debate has ever been conducted—and, since they were both men of the loftiest spirit, it was conducted with noble feeling on both sides. If two men are going to disagree, on the subject of most ultimate concern to them both, then that is the way to do it. It is a pity that the debate, because of its nature, cannot be common currency.

Perhaps I can, by an analogy, suggest the effect on Einstein's colleagues of his one-man counter-revolution. It was rather as though Picasso, about 1920, at the height of his powers, had announced that some new kind of representational painting alone could be made to contain the visual truth: and had spent the rest of his life industriously but unavailingly trying to find it.

The great debate did not reach its pick until Einstein was old, years after the war. It was never resolved. He and Bohr, with mutual admiration, drew intellectually further apart. In fact, though, when I met Einstein in 1937 he had already separated himself totally, and as proved finally, from the other theorists.

I had already shaken hands with him once or twice at large gatherings. That summer I happened to be in America, and my friend Leopold Infeld, who was collaborating with Einstein at the time, suggested that I might like to spend a day with him.

It turned out to be an abnormally hot day, even for a New York summer. The seats were hot in the car as Infield, a woman friend and I drove out to Long Island. We had a snake by way of lunch, and aimed at arriving at 1 o'clock. Actually, we turned up late. Einstein had taken a house for the summer, since sailing remained one of his continuing pleasures. Infield had not been there: no one in the neighbourhood knew where Einstein was living, nor apparently had the slightest idea who he was. Infield, not the most patient of men, was getting distinctly cross. We had no telephone number. Finally, we had to ring back to Princeton, track down one of the Institute's secretaries (which wasn't easy, because it was either a Saturday or a Sunday) and get direction. At last, we made it, three-quarters of an hour late.

At close quarters, Einstein's head was as I had imagined it: magnificent, with a humanizing touch of the comic. Great furrowed forehead: aureole of white hair: enormous bulging chocolate-brown eyes. I can't guess what I should have expected from such a face if I hadn't known.

What did surprise me was his physique. He had come in from sailing and was wearing nothing but a pair of shorts. It was a massive body, very heavily muscled: he was running to fat round the midriff and in the upper arms, rather like a footballer in middle age, but he was still an unusually strong man. All through his life, he must have had much greater physical strength than any of the others I am writing about. He was cordial, simple, and utterly un-shy. The large eyes looked at me, as though he was thinking: what had I come for, what did I want to talk about? Infield, not only a man of distinguished intellect, but sharp-witted, set to work to find topics, as he went on doing through the afternoon and evening ahead. I was a friend of G.H. Hardy, Infield began. Einstein smiled with pleasure. Yes, a fine man. Then, quite sharply, he asked me: was Hardy still a pacifist? I replied, that he was.

'I do not understand,' he said somberly, 'how such a fine man can be so unrealistic.'

Then he wanted to know if I also was a pacifist. Far from it, I explained. I was by that time certain that war was inevitable. I was

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not so much apprehensive about war, as about the chance that we might lose it. Einstein nodded. About politics that afternoon, he and I and Infield were united. About politics in the widest sense, I don't think there has been a world figure in my time who has been wiser than Einstein. He wasn't much interested in political techniques, and brushed them off too lightly: but his major insights into the world situation, and his major prophecies, have proved more truthful than those of anyone else.

The hours went on. I have a hazy memory that several people drifted in and out of the room, but I do not remember who they were. Stifling heat. There appeared to be no set time for meals. He was already, I think, eating very little, but he was still smoking his pipe. Trays of open sandwiches-various kinds of sausage, cheese, cucumber-came in every now and then. It was all casual and Central European. We drank nothing but soda water. What with the heat and the sandwiches, I got as thirsty as if I had been dehydrated, and drank more soda water in eight hours than I normally did in eight months.

Mostly we talked of politics, the moral and practical choices in front of us, and what could be saved from the storm to come, not only for Europe but for the human race. All the time he was speaking with a weight of moral experience, which was different, not only in quantity but in kind, from anything I had met. By this period, he had lost any intrusion from his own ego, as though it had never existed. It was something like talking to a prophet.

It would be easy to give a false impression. In the face of someone so different from the rest of us, it was hard not to get one. In fact, he was neither sentimental nor unrealistic. His view of life was not unrealistic at all. It was far darker than that of his great friend Paul Langevin. Einstein thought that we should be lucky if the human race was going to stand a chance. but nevertheless, as an absolute moral duty, we had to do what little we could until we dropped.

Infield, who knew him better than anyone at this stage, later wrote-and it seems to me precisely true:

This 'conscience of the world' (Einstein) nurses a deep repugnance for all types of boastfulness, terrorising of one's fellow men and overbearing brutality. One could, therefore, easily have been tempted to portray him as an over sensitive man, who trembles at the very mention of injustice and violence. This picture would be utterly false. I know no one who leads such a lonely and solitary life as he. His great benevolence, his absolute integrity and his social ideas, despite all appearances to the contrary, are thoroughly impersonal and seem to come from another planet. His heart does not bleed, his eyes do not weep.

How did he like England, I asked. Yes, he liked England. It had some of the qualities of his beloved Holland. After all, by world standards, England was becoming a small country. We talked of the people he had met, not only of the scientists but the politicians. Churchill. Einstein admired him. I said that Progressives of my kind wanted him in the government as a token of resistance : this was being opposed, not so much by the Labour party, but by Churchill's own Tories. Einstein was brooding. To defeat Nazism, he said, we should need every kind of force, including nationalism that we could bring together.

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'I do not understand,' he said somberly. (Out of formal clothes. (Hardly lived like that?) were swept aside. It was then that he introduced me to the word Zwang. No Zwang for him. No butlers. No evening dress.

That was my single glimpse of what he might have been like in Switzerland thirty years before. But he did say something which may have been, though I cannot be sure, more personal. It was much later in the day, and getting dark outside. Einstein was talking about the conditions for a creative existence. He said that, in his experience, the best creative work is never done when one is unhappy. He could scarcely think of any physicist who had done fine work in such a state. Or any composer. Or any writer.

It seemed a strange and unexpected remark.

The only exception he could think of, Einstein went on, was Bohr, who had produced his great paper on the hydrogen spectrum when in deep misery.

Neither Infield nor I knew that. Einstein was speaking of his famous contemporaries, a generation before our time. I pulled myself together, and suggested Tolstoy when writing *Anna Karenina*. He had been in a state of profound despair. Einstein was interested. Tolstoy was one of his favourite writers. Just as his taste in physics, and his feeling for the nature of the physical laws, was classical, so was his taste in art. He detested romantic art, in particular German romantic art. He didn't like subjectivism. We talked about books. The novel he valued most of all was *The Brothers Karamazov*. Then Einstein came back to his thoughts upon the creative life. His great head was shaking to and fro :

No, to understand the world one must not be worrying about oneself.' I think in that sense I was a little bit of a pessimist years later.

It was, I think, in that same Long Island house, two years later, that Einstein signed the well-known letter to Roosevelt about the possibility of an atomic bomb. But this event, as I mentioned before, has been wildly melodramatized. Einstein was a character who attracted myths. Some of the myths are true and significant; this myth, though factually true, is not significant.

Let me try to clear the ground. First, Einstein's work had nothing to do either with the discovery or the potential use of nuclear fission. From the moment of the Meitner-Frisch paper in January 1939 (as Niels Bohr said at the time, everyone ought to have seen the meaning of Hahn's 1938 experiments much earlier-'we were all fools'), nuclear

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'It is your style of life.' Suddenly he had begun to laugh. 'It is a splendid style of life. But it is not for me.'

He was enjoying some gigantic joke. But I was puzzled. What was this mysterious 'style of life'? It appeared that, on his first day in England, he had been taken to a great country house. A butler. Evening dress. Einstein had never worn a dinner jacket in his life. Then Lindemann had taken him in to dinner at Christ Church. More butlers. More evening dress. Einstein chortled. He seemed to have the fixed idea that the English, or certainly the English professional classes, spent much of their time getting in and out of formal clothes. Any protests I made (did he think Hardy lived like that?) were swept aside. It was then that he introduced me to the word Zwang. No Zwang for him. No butlers. No evening dress.

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Neither Infield nor I knew that. Einstein was speaking of his famous contemporaries, a generation before our time. I pulled myself together, and suggested Tolstoy when writing *Anna Karenina*. He had been in a state of profound despair. Einstein was interested. Tolstoy was one of his favourite writers. Just as his taste in physics, and his feeling for the nature of the physical laws, was classical, so was his taste in art. He detested romantic art, in particular German romantic art. He didn't like subjectivism. We talked about books. The novel he valued most of all was *The Brothers Karamazov*. Then Einstein came back to his thoughts upon the creative life. His great head was shaking to and fro:

'No, to understand the world one must not be worrying about oneself.'

It was, I think, in that same Long Island house, two years later, that Einstein signed the well-known letter to Roosevelt about the possibility of an atomic bomb. But this event, as I mentioned before, has been wildly melodramatized. Einstein was a character who attracted myths. Some of the myths are true and significant; this myth, though factually true, is not significant.

Let me try to clear the ground. First, Einstein's work had nothing to do either with the discovery or the potential use of nuclear fission. From the moment of the Meitner-Frisch paper in January 1939 (as Niels Bohr said at the time, everyone ought to have seen the meaning of Hahn's 1938 experiments much earlier-'we were all fools'), nuclear

This 'conscience of the world' (Einstein) nurses a deep repugnance for all types of boastfulness, terrorising of one's fellow men and overbearing brutality. One could, therefore, easily have been tempted to portray him as an over sensitive man, who trembles at the very mention of injustice and violence. This picture would be utterly false. I know no one who leads such a lonely and solitary life as he. His great benevolence, his absolute integrity and his social ideas, despite all appearances to the contrary, are thoroughly impersonal and seem to come from another planet. His heart does not bleed, his eyes do not weep.

How did he like England, I asked. Yes, he liked England. It had some of the qualities of his beloved Holland. After all, by world standards, England was becoming a small country. We talked of the people he had met, not only of the scientists but the politicians. Churchill. Einstein admired him. I said that Progressives of my kind wanted him in the government as a token of resistance: this was being opposed, not so much by the Labour party, but by Churchill's own Tories. Einstein was brooding. To defeat Nazism, he said, we should need every kind of force, including nationalism that we could bring together.

Then, because there wasn't much useful to say, I asked why, when he left Germany, he hadn't come to live in England.

'No, No!' said Einstein.

Why not?

'It is your style of life.' Suddenly he had begun to laugh. 'It is a splendid style of life. But it is not for me.'

He was enjoying some gigantic joke. But I was puzzled. What was this mysterious 'style of life'? It appeared that, on his first day in England, he had been taken to a great country house. A butler. Evening dress. Einstein had never worn a dinner jacket in his life. Then Lindemann had taken him in to dinner at Christ Church. More butlers. More evening dress. Einstein chortled. He seemed to have the fixed idea that the English, or certainly the English professional classes, spent much of their time getting in and out of formal clothes. Any protests I made (did he think Hardy lived like that?) were swept aside. It was then that he introduced me to the word Zwang. No Zwang for him. No butlers. No evening dress.

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It is a pity that the story of the letter has obscured the genuine moral dilemma of his last years. Which was-now that the bomb exists, what should a man do? He probably knew little or nothing of the actual development of the bomb. He was not one of the Franck group (once again, organized by Leo Szilard) who protested in advance against its military use on Japan. He was not one, simply because he did not know that the bomb was as good as made. When the first bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, he said simply 'oh weh!' (Oh horrible!). Nothing would convince him that Hiroshima was forgivable, either in moral or practical terms: just as nothing has convinced many of us,

with all the information of the twenty subsequent years, and with our knowledge of how the world has gone. The bomb was made. What should a man do? He couldn't find an answer which people would listen to. He campaigned for a world state: that only made him distrusted both in the Soviet Union and in the United States. He gave a solemn warning to a mass television audience in 1950:

And now the public has been advised that the production of the hydrogen bomb is the new goal, which will probably be accomplished. An accelerated development towards this end has been solemnly proclaimed by the President. If these efforts should prove successful, radioactive poisoning of the atmosphere, and, hence, annihilation of all life on earth will have been brought within the range of what is technically possible. A weird aspect of this development lies in its apparently inexorable character. Each step appears as the inevitable consequence of the one that went before. And at the end, looming ever clearer, lies general annihilation.

That speech made him more distrusted in America. As for practical results, no one listened. Incidentally, in the view of most contemporary military scientists, it would be more difficult totally to annihilate the human species than Einstein then believed. But the most interesting sentences were the ones I have italicized. They are utterly true. The more one has mixed in these horrors, the truer they seem.

He joined in other warnings, one of them signed in the last week of his life. He did not expect them to be effective: he retained the hope of his strong spirit, but intellectually he seems to have had no hope at all.

He was physically the strongest of the men I am discussing. He was also the strongest in spirit. He was used to being solitary. 'It is strange,' he wrote, 'to be known so universally and yet to be so lonely.' Never mind. He was isolated in his search for the unified field. And the latter was the great theme of his life. He could endure it all, unpregnable, and work stoically on. He said: 'One must divide one's time between politics and equations. But our equations are much more important to me.'

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In this biographical sketch on Einstein, Snow eulogies Einstein as a great scientist and as a ray of human hope. According to Snow, Einstein's contribution to the field of science and towards humanity is beyond doubt. This mastermind was awarded the most prestigious award in his field for the quantum explanation. His ideas and innovations have always had a unique touch. No physicist could have made discoveries of that magnitude that Einstein had done in just a year. This man had devoted his entire energy to the welfare and development of human race. Einstein was well aware about the consequences of Atomic bomb, which was dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and he uttered in agony when he thought about humanity. Obviously, Einstein is true well-wisher of human race. Snow praises this great human soul and reasserts his own view about Einstein. In fact, the contribution of Einstein to human civilization can't be measured easily. Snow just wants to pay his tribute through this biographical piece and seeks to establish Einstein as a humanist and pacifist of repute.

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- Intellect*: Talent
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Golliwog: black faced doll with thick hair
Fission: Splitting of the nucleus of an atom with the release of large energy
Rationalizations: reasons
Spinoza: 17th century Dutch philosopher
Authenticated: proved to be true
Militaristic: run by military principles
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Nonconformist: person who does not believe in established religion
Unyielding: Not willing to give in to any belief
Cosmic: of the world
Intolerable: unbearable
Despised: consider something as useless
Quaint: old fashioned
Impracticality: not practical
Constrained: troubled
Spectacularly: brilliantly
Ranked: hated
Federal: union of several states
Calculus: branch of mathematics
Residue: remaining portion of a thing
Reverberating: resounding
Reticent: reserved
Sensuality: of body
Quantum: sudden breakthrough
Photoelectric: using electrical effects produced by light

From his late sixties until his death at seventy-six he was continuously ill-from what appear to have been a variety of causes, an intestinal growth, a disease of the liver, finally a weakening of the aorta wall. He lived on in discomfort, and often in acute pain. He stayed cheerful, serene, detached from his own illness and the approach of death. He worked on. The end of his life was neither miserable nor pathetic. 'Here on earth I have done my job,' he said, without self-pity.

By his bedside, one Sunday night, lay some pages of manuscript. They included more equations leading to the unified field theory, which he had never found. He hoped to be enough out of pain next day to work on them. Early in the morning, the aortic blister broke, and he died.

Good, gentle, wise, Hardy called him, that day at Fenner's. At the time, I wanted to add another word. If we were having the conversation again, I think I should have chosen a clumsy one. Of all the men I have heard of, this one was-in any sense I can imagine, intellectual, emotional, spiritual-the most unbudgeable.

ABOUT THE ESSAY :

In this biographical sketch on Einstein, Snow eulogies Einstein as a great scientist and as a ray of human hope. According to Snow, Einstein's contribution to the field of science and towards humanity is beyond doubt. This mastermind was awarded the most prestigious award in his field for the quantum explanation. His ideas and innovations have always had a unique touch. No physicist could have made discoveries of that magnitude that Einstein had done in just a year. This man had devoted his entire energy to the welfare and development of human race. Einstein was well aware about the consequences of Atomic bomb, which was dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and he uttered in agony when he thought about humanity. Obviously, Einstein is true well-wisher of human race. Snow praises this great human soul and reasserts his own view about Einstein. In fact, the contribution of Einstein to human civilization can't be measured easily. Snow just wants to pay his tribute through this biographical piece and seeks to establish Einstein as a humanist and pacifist of repute.

WORD NOTES :

- Bradman:** Sir Donald Bradman- an Australian Cricketer
Obstinate: Refusing to change one's opinion
Non-Conformist: having no belief in religious beliefs
Intellect: Talent
Paradoxes: situation producing contradictory results
Theoretical physicist: person believing in theories of physics
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Anti-Semitism: against the Jews
Racial: concerning race
Pacifist: person who believes that war is wrong
Nuisances: annoying behaviour
Skeptical: unwilling to believe
Gravitational: having force of attraction
Monolith: large single upright block of stone
Spokesman: person who speaks
Naïve: too ready to believe what is told, innocent behaviour
Nazi: the Army led by Hitler
Chancellor: [here] the head of a State
Profound: strong
Aureole: ring of light seen round the sun
Spectrum: Image as a band of colours
Speculated: guessed
Empirically: on observation
Radioactive: having atoms that break-up and send out radiation
Annihilation: destruction
Stoically: enduring pain without complaint
Aorta: main artery for blood transmission

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. What was Einstein's response to 'the bomb'? What was his reaction? Narrate Einstein's contribution towards humanity as depicted by C.P.Snow. [GU 2007]
2. Narrate, after Snow, the humanism of Einstein.
3. Consider Einstein as a pacifist on basis of Snow's views.
4. Discuss Einstein's achievements as a ray of human hope.
5. Comment on Snow as a biographer.
6. Give an account of the life and works of Einstein on the basis of C.P.Snow's Einstein. [GU 2005]



NOTES ON THE ENGLISH CHARACTER

: E.M.FORSTER

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

E.M.Forster is chiefly remembered as a novelist, primarily for his masterpieces like 'A Passage to India', 'A Room with A View' and 'Howard's End'. Born in the year 1879, Forster displayed in his writings, his profound belief that barriers between humans and races can be broken by developing fellow feeling, overcoming the fundamental social differences. His 'A Passage to India' is an attempt at that. He believed in building personal relation and was always critical about rigidity and dogmatism. Though a true Englishman to the core, all of Forster's literary works criticize the irrelevant tradition and dualities affecting this great nation.

TEXT :

FIRST NOTE :

I had better let the cat out of the bag at once and record my opinion that the character of the English is essentially middleclass. There is a sound historical reason for this, for, since the end of the eighteenth century, the middle classes have been the dominant force in our community. They gained wealth by the Industrial Revolution, political power by the Reform Bill of 1832; they are connected with the rise and organization of the British Empire; they are responsible for the literature of the nineteenth century. Solidity, caution, integrity, efficiency. Lack of imagination, hypocrisy. These qualities characterize the middle classes in every country, but in England they are national characteristics also, because only in England have the middle classes been in power for one hundred and fifty years. Napoleon, in his rude way, called us 'a nation of shopkeepers'. We prefer to call ourselves a great commercial nation-it sounds more dignified-but

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the two phrases amount to the same. Of course, there are other classes: there is an aristocracy, there are the poor. But it is on the middle classes that the eye of the critic rests—just as it rests on the poor in Russia and the aristocracy in Japan. Russia is symbolized by the peasant or the factory worker; Japan by the samurai; the national figure of England is Mr. Bull with his top hat, his comfortable clothes, his substantial stomach, and his substantial balance at the bank. St. George may caper on banners and in the speeches of politicians, but it is John Bull who delivers the goods. Even Saint George—if Gibbon is correct wore a top hat once; he was an army contractor and supplied indifferent bacon. It all amounts to the same in the end.

SECOND NOTE :

Just as the heart of England is the middle classes, so the heart of the middle classes is the public school system. This extraordinary institution is local. It does not even exist all over the British Isles. It is unknown in Ireland, almost unknown in Scotland (countries excluded from my survey), and though it may inspire other great institutions—Aligarh, for example, and some of the schools in the United States—it remains unique, because it was created by the Anglo-Saxon middle classes, and can flourish only where they flourish. How perfectly it expresses their character far better, for instance, than does the university, into which social and spiritual complexities have already entered. With its boarding houses, its compulsory games, its system of prefects and fagging, its insistence on good form and on esprit de corps, it produces a type whose weight is out of all proportion to its numbers.

On leaving his school, the boy either sets to work at once goes into the army or into business, or emigrates—or else proceeds to the university, and after three or four years there enters some other professions—becomes a barrister, doctor, civil servant, school master or journalist. (If through some mishap, he does not become a manual worker or an artist.) In all these careers his education, or the absence of it, influences him. Its memories influence him also. Many men look back on their school days as the happiest of their lives. They

remember with regret that golden time when life, though hard, was not yet complex; when they all worked together, played together, and thought together, as far as they thought at all; when they were taught that school is the world in miniature, and believed that no one can love his country who does not love his school. In addition, they prolonged that time as based they can by joining there Old Boys' Society; indeed, some of them remain Old Boys and nothing else for the rest of their lives. They attribute all good to the school. They worship it. They quote the remark that 'the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton.' It is nothing to them that the remark is inapplicable historically and was never made by the Duke of Wellington, and that the Duke of Wellington was an Irishman. They go on quoting it because it expresses their sentiments; they feel that if the Duke of Wellington did not make it, he ought to have and if he wasn't an Englishman, he ought to have been. And they go forth into a world that is not entirely composed of public-school men or even of Anglo-Saxons, but of men who are as various as the sands of the sea; into a world of whose richness and subtlety they have no conception. They go forth into it with well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds, and undeveloped hearts. And it is this undeveloped heart that is largely responsible for the difficulties of Englishmen abroad. An undeveloped heart not a cold one. The difference is important, and on it, my next note will be based.

For it is not that the Englishman can't feel—it is that he is afraid to feel. He has been taught at his public school that feeling is bad form. He must not express great joy or sorrow, or even open his mouth too wide when he talks—his pipe might fall out if he did. He must bottle up his emotions, or let them out only on a very special occasion.

Once upon a time (this is an anecdote) I went for a week's holiday on the Continent with an Indian friend. We both enjoyed ourselves and were sorry when the week was over, but on parting, our behaviour was absolutely different. He was plunged in despair. He felt that because the holiday was over all happiness was over until the world ended. He could not express his sorrow too much. But in me, the Englishman came out strong. I reflected that we should

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meet again in a month or two, and could write in the interval if we had anything to make a fuss about. It wasn't as if we were parting forever or dying. 'Buck up,' I said, 'do buck up.' He refused to buck up, and I left him plunged in gloom.

The conclusion of the anecdote is even more instructive. For when we met the next month our conversation threw a good deal of light on the English character. I began by scolding my friend. I told him that he had been wrong to feel and display so much emotion upon so slight an occasion; that it was inappropriate. The word 'inappropriate' roused him to fury. 'Why?' he cried. 'Do you measure out your emotions as if they were potatoes? I did not like the simile of the potatoes, but after a moment's reflection I said, 'Yes, I do; and what's more, I think I ought to. A small occasion demands a little emotion, just as a large occasion demands a great one. I would like my emotions to be appropriate. This may be measuring them like potatoes, but it is better than slopping them about like water from a pail, which is what you did.' He did know like the simile of the pail. 'If those are your opinions, they part us forever,' he cried, and left the room. Returning immediately, he added: 'No-but your whole attitude toward emotion is wrong. Emotion has nothing to do with appropriateness. It matters only that it shall be sincere. I happened to feel deeply. I showed it. It doesn't matter whether I ought to have felt deeply or not.'

This remark impressed me very much. Yet I could not agree with it, and said that I valued emotion as much as he did, but used it differently; if I poured it out on small occasions I was afraid of having none left for the great ones, and of being bankrupt at the crises of life. Note the word 'bankrupt'. I spoke as a prudent middle-class nation, always anxious to meet my liabilities. But my friend spoke as an Oriental, and the Oriental has behind him a tradition, not of middle-class prudence, but of kingly munificence and splendour. He feels his resources are endless, just as John Bull feels his are finite. As regards material resources the Oriental is clearly unwise. Money isn't endless. If we spend or give away all the money we have, we haven't any more, and must take the consequences, which are frequently unpleasant. But, as regards the resources of

the spirit, he may be right. The emotions may be endless. The more we express them, the more we may have to express.

True love in this differs from gold and clay,

That to divide is not to take away,

says Shelley. Shelley, at all events, believes that the wealth of the spirit is endless; that we may express it copiously, passionately, and always; and that we can never feel sorrow or joy too acutely.

In the above anecdote, I have figured as a typical Englishman. I will now descend from that dizzy and somewhat unfamiliar height, and return to my business of note taking. A note on the slowness of the English character. The Englishman appears to be cold and unemotional because he is really slow. When an event happens, he may understand it quickly enough with his mind, but he takes quite a long time to feel it. Once upon a time, a coach, containing some Englishmen and some Frenchmen, was driving over the Alps. The horses ran away, and as they were dashing across a bridge the coach caught on the stonework, tottered, and nearly fell into the ravine below. The Frenchmen were frantic with terror: they screamed and gesticulated and flung themselves about, as Frenchmen would. The Englishmen sat quite calm. An hour later, the coach drew up at an inn to change horses, and by that time, the situation was exactly reversed. The Frenchmen had forgotten all about the danger, and were chattering gaily; the Englishmen had just begun to feel it, and one had a nervous breakdown and was obliged to go to bed. We have here a clear physical difference between the two races—a difference that goes deep into character. The Frenchmen responded at once; the Englishmen responded in time. They were slow and they were also practical. Their instinct forbade them to throw themselves about in the coach, because it was more likely to tip over if they did. They had this extraordinary appreciation of fact that we shall notice again and again. When a disaster comes, the English instinct is to do what can be done first, and to postpone the feeling as long as possible. Hence, they are splendid at emergencies. No doubt, they are brave—no one will deny that—but bravery is partly an affair of the nerves, and the English nervous system, as well equipped for meeting a physical emergency. It acts promptly and feels slowly. Such a combination is fruitful, and anyone who

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possesses it has gone a long way toward being brave. And when the action is over, then the Englishman can feel.

There is one more consideration—a most important one. If the English nature is cold, how is it that it has produced a great literature and a literature that is particularly great in poetry? Judged by its prose, English literature would not stand in the first rank. It is its poetry that raises it to, the level of Greek, Persian, or French. And yet the English are supposed to be so unpoetical. How is this? The nation that produced the Elizabethan drama and the Lake Poets cannot be a cold, unpoetical nation. We can't get fire out of ice. Since literature always rests upon national character, there must be in the English nature hidden springs of fire to produce the fire we see. The warm sympathy, the romance, the imagination, that we look for in Englishmen whom we meet, and too often vainly look for, must exist in the nation as a whole, or we could not have this outburst of national song. An undeveloped heart—not a cold one.

The trouble is that the English nature is not at all easy to understand. It has a great air of simplicity, it advertises itself as simple, but the more we consider it, the greater the problems we shall encounter. People talk of the mysterious East, but the West also is mysterious. It has depths that do not reveal themselves at the first gaze. We know what the sea looks like from a distance: it is of one colour, and level, and obviously cannot contain such creatures as fish. But if we look into the sea over the edge of a boat, we see a dozen colours, and depth below depth, and fish swimming in them. That sea is the English character—apparently imperturbable and even. The depths and the colours are the English romanticism and the English sensitiveness—we do not expect to find such things, but they exist. And to continue my metaphor—the fish are the English emotions, which are always trying to get up to the surface, but don't quite know how. For the most part, we see them moving far below, distorted and obscure. Now and then, they succeed and we exclaim, 'Why the Englishman has emotions! He actually can feel!' And occasionally we see that beautiful creature the flying fish, which rises out of the water altogether into the air and the sunlight. English literature is a flying fish. It is a sample of the life that goes on day

after day beneath the surface; it is a proof that beauty and emotion exist in the salt, inhospitable sea.

And now let's get back to terra firma. The Englishman's attitude towards criticism will give us another starting-point. He is not annoyed by criticism. He listens or not as the case may be, smiles and passes on, saying, 'Oh, the fellow's jealous'; 'Oh, I'm used to Bernard Shaw; monkey tricks don't hurt me.' It never occurs to him that the fellow may be accurate as well as jealous, and that he might do well to take the criticism to heart and profit by it. It never strikes him—except as a form of words that he is capable of improvement; his self-complacency is abysmal. Other nations, both Oriental and European, have an uneasy feeling that they are not quite perfect. In consequence, they resent criticism. It hurts them; and their snappy answers often mask a determination to improve themselves. Not so the Englishman. He has no uneasy feeling. Let the critics bark. And the 'tolerant humorous attitude' with which he confronts them is not really tolerant because it is insensitive, and not really humorous, because it is bounded by the titter and the guffaw.

Turn over the pages of Punch. There is neither wit, laughter, nor satire in our national jester—only the snigger of a suburban householder who can understand nothing that does not resemble himself. Week after week, under Mr. Punch's supervision, a man falls off his horse, or a colonel misses a golf ball, or a little girl makes a mistake in her prayers. Week after week ladies show not too much of their legs, foreigners are deprecated, originality condemned. Week after week, a sticklayer does not do as much work as he ought and a futurist does more than he need. It is all supposed to be so good-tempered and clean; it is also supposed to be funny. It is actually an outstanding example of our attitude toward criticism: the middle-class Englishman, with a smile on his dean-shaven lips, is engaged in admiring himself and ignoring the rest of mankind. If, in those colourless pages, he came across anything that really was funny—a drawing by Max Beerbohm, for instance—his smile would disappear, and he would say to himself, 'The fellow's a bit of a crank,' and pass on.

This particular attitude reveals such insensitiveness as to suggest a more serious charge: is the Englishman altogether

indifferent to things of the spirit? Let us glance for a moment at his religion-not, indeed, at his theology, which would not merit inspection, but at the action on his daily life of his belief in the unseen. Here again his attitude is practical. But an innate decency comes out: he is thinking of others rather than of himself. Right conduct is his aim. He asks of his religion that it shall make him a better man in daily life; that he shall be more kind, more just, more merciful, more desirous to fight what is evil and to protect what is good. No one could call this a low conception. It is, as far as it goes, a spiritual one. Yet-and this seems to me typical of the race-it is only half the religious idea. Religion is more than an ethical code with a divine sanction. It is also a means through which man may get into direct contact with the divine, and, judging by history, few Englishmen have succeeded in doing this. We have produced no series of prophets, as has Judaism or Islam. We have not even produced a Joan of Arc, or a Savonarola. We have produced few saints. In Germany, the Reformation was due to the passionate conviction of Luther. In England, it was due to a palace intrigue. We can show a steady level of piety, a fixed determination to live decently according to our lights-little more.

Well, it is something. It clears us of the charge of being an unspiritual nation. That facile contrast between the spiritual East and the materialistic West can be pushed too far. The West also is spiritual. Only it expresses its belief, not in fasting and visions, not in prophetic rapture, but in the daily round, the common task. An incomplete expression, if you like. I agree. But the argument underlying these scattered notes is that the Englishman is an incomplete person. Not a cold or an unspiritual one. But undeveloped, incomplete.

The attitude of the average orthodox Englishman is often misunderstood. It is thought that he must know that a doctrine, say, like that of the Trinity-is untrue. Moslems in particular feel that his faith is a dishonest compromise between polytheism and monotheism. The answer to this criticism is that the average orthodox Englishman is no theologian. He regards the Trinity as a mystery that it is not his place to solve. 'I find difficulties enough in daily life,'

he will say. 'I concern myself with those. As for the Trinity, it is a doctrine handed down to me from my fathers, whom I respect, and I hope to hand it down to my sons, and -that they will respect me. No doubt, it is true, or it would not have been handed down. And no doubt the clergy could explain it to me if I asked them; but, like myself, they are busy men, and I will not take up their time.'

In such an answer, there is confusion of thought, if you like, but no conscious deceit; which is alien to the English nature. The Englishman's deceit is generally unconscious.

For I have suggested earlier that the English are sometimes hypocrites, and it is now my duty to develop this rather painful subject. Hypocrisy is the prime charge that is always brought against us. The Germans are called brutal, the Spanish cruel, the Americans superficial, and so on; but we are perfide Albion, the island of hypocrites, the people who have built up an Empire with a Bible in one hand, a pistol in the other, and financial concessions in both pockets. Is the charge true? I think it is; but while making it we must be quite clear as to what we mean by hypocrisy. Do we mean unconscious deceit? Muddle-headedness? Of this, I believe them to be guilty. When an Englishman has been led into a course of wrong action, he has nearly always begun by muddling himself. A public-school education does not make for mental clearness, and he possesses to a very high degree the power of confusing his own mind. We have seen this tendency at work in the domain of conduct.

Jane Austen may seem an odd authority to cite, but Jane Austen, within her limits, a marvellous insight into the English mind. Her range is limited; her characters never attempt any of the more glaring sins. But she has a merciless eye for questions of conduct, and the classical example of two English people muddling themselves before they embark upon a wrong course of action is to be found in the opening chapters of *Sense and Sensibility*. Old Mr. Dashwood has just died. He has been twice married. By his first marriage he has a son, John; by his second marriage three daughters. The son is well off, and the young ladies and their mother-for Mr. Dashwood's second wife survive him-are badly off. He has called his son to his deathbed and has solemnly adjured him to provide for the second

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have seen this tendency in the domain of conduct. They seem an odd authority to cite, but Jane Austen has a fine insight into the English mind. I have never read any of the more recent English writers, and I find myself muddling myself. I have seen a classical example of two English people muddling themselves. I remember upon a wrong course of action is to be found in the chapters of *Sense and Sensibility*. Old Mr. Dashwood has been twice married. By his first marriage he has three daughters. By his second marriage three daughters. The son is well brought up and their mother for Mr. Dashwood's sake is badly off. He has called his son and his daughter self. There is plenty of emotion but it is more often used to confirm prejudices than to dispel them.

family. Much moved, the young man promises, and mentally decides to give each of his sisters a thousand pounds; and then the comedy begins. For he announces his generous intention to his wife, and Mrs. John Dashwood by no means approves of, depriving their own little boy of so large a sum. The thousand pounds are accordingly reduced to five hundred. But even this seems rather much. Might not an annuity to the stepmother be less of a wrench? Yes-but though less of a wrench it might be more of a drain, for she is very stout and healthy, and scarcely forty. An occasional present of fifty pounds will be better, 'and will, I think, be amply discharging my promise to my father.' Or, better still, an occasional present of fish. And in the end nothing is done, nothing; the four impecunious ladies are not even helped in the moving of their furniture.

Well, are the John Dashwoods hypocrites? It depends upon our definition of hypocrisy. The young man could not see his evil impulses as they gathered force and gained on him. And even his wife, though a worse character, is also self-deceived. She reflects that old Mr. Dashwood may have been out of his mind at his death. She thinks of her own little boy-and surely a mother ought to think of her own child. She has muddled herself so completely that in one sentence she can refuse the ladies the income that would enable them to keep a carriage and in the next can say that they will not be keeping a carriage and so will have no expenses. No doubt, men and women in other lands can muddle themselves, too, yet the state of mind of Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood seems to me typical of England. They are slow-they take time even to do wrong; whereas people in other lands do wrong quickly.

There are national faults as there are national diseases, and perhaps one can draw a parallel between them. It has always impressed me that the national diseases of England should be cancer and consumption-slow, insidious, pretending to be something else; while the diseases proper to the South should be cholera and plague, which strike at a man when he is perfectly well and may leave him a corpse by evening. Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood are moral consumptives. They collapse gradually without realizing what the disease is. There is nothing dramatic or violent about their sin. You cannot call them villains.

Here is the place to glance at some of the other charges that have been brought against the English as a nation. They have, for instance, been accused of treachery, cruelty, and fanaticism. In these charges, I have never been able to see the least point, because treachery and cruelty are conscious sins. The man knows he is doing wrong, and does it deliberately, like Tartuffe or Iago. He betrays his friend because he wishes to. He tortures his prisoners because he enjoys seeing the blood flow. He worships the Devil because he prefers evil to good. From villainies such as these, the average Englishman is free. His character, which prevents his rising to certain heights, also prevents him from sinking to these depths. Because he doesn't produce mystics he doesn't produce villains either; he gives the world no prophets, but no anarchists, no fanatics-religious or political.

Of course, there are cruel and treacherous people in England one has only to look at the police courts-and example of public infamy can be found, such as the Amritsar massacre. But one does not look at the police courts or the military mind to find the soul of any nation; and the more English people one meets the more convinced one becomes that the charges as a whole are untrue. Yet foreign critics often make them. Why? Partly because they fix their eyes on the criminal classes, partly because they are annoyed with certain genuine defects in the English character, and in their irritation throw in cruelty in order to make the problem simpler. Moral indignation is always agreeable, but nearly always misplaced. It is indulged in both by the English and by the critics of the English. They all find it great fun. The drawback is that while they are amusing themselves the world becomes neither wiser nor better.

The main point of these notes is that the English character is incomplete. No national character is complete. We have to look for some qualities in one part of the world and others in another. But the English character is incomplete in a way that is particularly annoying to the foreign observer. It has a bad surface-self-complacent, unsympathetic, and reserved. There is plenty of emotion further down, but it never gets used. There is plenty of brainpower, but it is more often used to confirm prejudices than to dispel them.

THE MARK ON THE WALL

: VIRGINIA WOOLF

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Virginia Woolf is a well-celebrated name in modern English fiction. She was the daughter of eminent Victorian critic and scholar, Sri Leslie Stephen. A highly cultural background and an intellectual circle proved to be immensely helpful in the formative years of her literary career. She was born in 1882, started her literary venture quite early, and was quite successful with her technique and style of writing.

Woolf was a prolific writer and the most memorable of her novels include- 'Mrs.Dalloway', 'To the Lighthouse', 'The Waves' etc. which show her to be experimental and innovatory. Her attitude was helped by certain influences, factors, including negative ones- dissatisfaction with novelists like H.G.Wells, Arnold Bennett and Galsworthy, influence of the Bloomsbury Group, and a sense of tragedy dominant in the novelists Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and the story writer Chekhov. Virginia Woolf is most known for her psychological novels and her innovative stream of consciousness technique. She is essentially modern in her fictional technique- in her narrative skill, technique and portrayal of characters. She stands very close to her two great contemporaries James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence. Her death in the year 1941 was a great jolt to the modern English literature.

TEXT :

Perhaps it was the middle of January in the present year that I first looked up and saw the mark on the wall. In order to fix a date it is necessary to remember what one saw. So now I think of the fire;

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the steady film of yellow light upon the page of my book; the three chrysanthemums in the round glass bowl on the mantelpiece. Yes, it must have been the wintertime, and we had just finished our tea, for I remember that I was smoking a cigarette when I looked up and saw the mark on the wall for the first time. I looked up through the smoke of my cigarette and my eye lodged for a moment upon the burning coals, and that old fancy of the crimson flag flapping from the castle tower came into my mind, and I thought of the cavalcade of red knights riding up the side of the black rock. Rather to my relief, the sight of the mark interrupted the fancy, for it is an old fancy, an automatic fancy, made as a child perhaps. The mark was a small round mark, black upon the white wall, about six or seven inches above the mantelpiece.

How readily our thoughts swarm upon a new object, lifting it a little way, as ants carry a blade of straw so feverishly, and then leave it.... If that mark was made by a nail, it can't have been for a picture, it must have been for a miniature-the miniature of a lady with white powdered curls, powder-dusted cheeks, and lips like red carnations. A fraud of course, for the people who had this house before us would have chosen pictures in that way-an old picture for an old room. That is the sort of people they were-very interesting people, and I think of them so often, in such queer places, because one will never see them again, never know what happened next. They wanted to leave this house because they wanted to change their style of furniture, so he said, and he was in process of saying that in his opinion art should have ideas behind it when we were torn asunder, as one is torn from the old lady about to pour out tea and the young man about to hit the tennis ball in the back garden of the suburban villa as one rushes past in the train.

But as for that mark, I'm not sure about it; I don't believe it was made by a nail after all; it's too big, too round, for that. I might get up, but if I got up and looked at it, ten to one I shouldn't be able to say for certain; because once a thing's done, no one ever knows how it happened. Oh! dear me, the mystery of life; the inaccuracy of thought! The ignorance of humanity! To show how very little control of our possessions we have-what an accidental affair this living is

after all our civilization-let me just count over a few of the things lost in one lifetime, beginning, for that seems always the most mysterious of losses-what cat would gnaw, what rat would nibble-three pale blue canisters of book-binding tools? Then there were the birdcages, the iron hoops, the steel skates, the Queen Anne coalscuttle, the bagatelle board, the hand organ-all gone, and jewels, too. Opals and emeralds, they lie about the roots of turnips. What a scraping paring affair it is to be sure! The wonder is that I've any clothes on my back, that I sit surrounded by solid furniture at this moment. Why, if one wants to compare life to anything, one must liken it to being blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour landing at the other end without a single hairpin in one's hair! Shot out at the feet of God entirely naked! Tumbling head over heels in the asphodel meadows like brown paper parcels pitched down a shoot in the post office! With one's hair flying back like the tail of a racehorse. Yes, that seems to express the rapidity of life, the perpetual waste and repair; all so casual, all so haphazard....

But after life. The slow pulling down of thick green stalks so that the cup of the flower, as it turns over, deluges one with purple and red light. Why, after all, should one not be born there as one is born here, helpless, speechless, unable to focus one's eyesight, groping at the roots of the grass, at the toes of the Giants? As for saying which are trees, and which are men and women, or whether there are such things, that one won't be in a condition to do for fifty years or so. There will be nothing but spaces of light and dark, intersected by thick stalks, and rather higher up perhaps, rose-shaped blots of an indistinct colour-dim pinks and blues-which will, as time goes on, become more definite, become-I don't know what....

And yet that mark on the wall is not a hole at all. It may even be caused by some round black substance, such as a small rose leaf, left over from the summer, and I, not being a very vigilant housekeeper-look at the dust on the mantelpiece, for example, the dust which, so they say, buried Troy three times over, only fragments of pots utterly refusing annihilation, as one can believe.

The tree outside the window taps very gently on the pane.... I want to think quietly, calmly, spaciouly, never to be interrupted,

never to have to rise from my chair, to slip easily from one thing to another, without any sense of hostility, or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts. To steady myself, let me catch hold of the first idea that passes.... Shakespeare.... Well, he will do as well as another. A man who sat himself solidly in an armchair, and looked into the fire, so-A shower of ideas fell perpetually from some very high Heaven down through his mind. He leant his forehead on his hand, and people, looking in through the open door,-for this scene is supposed to take place on a summer's evening-But how dull this is, this historical fiction! It doesn't interest me at all. I wish I could hit upon a pleasant track of thought, a track indirectly reflecting credit upon myself, for those are the pleasantest thoughts, and very frequent even in the minds of modest mouse-coloured people, who believe genuinely that they dislike to hear their own praises. They are not thoughts directly praising oneself; that is the beauty of them; they are thoughts like this:

"And then I came into the room. They were discussing botany. I said how I'd seen a flower growing on a dust heap on the site of an old house in Kingsway. The seed, I said, must have been sown in the reign of Charles the First. What flowers grew in the reign of Charles the First?" I asked-(but I don't remember the answer). Tall flowers with purple tassels to them perhaps; and so it goes on. All the time I'm dressing up the figure of myself in my own mind, lovingly, stealthily, not openly adoring it, for if I did that, I should catch myself out, and stretch my hand at once for a book in self-protection. Indeed, it is curious how instinctively one protects the image of oneself from idolatry or any other handling that could make it ridiculous, or too unlike the original to be believed in any longer. Or is it not so very curious after all? It is a matter of great importance. Suppose the looking glass smashes, the image disappears, and the romantic figure with the green of forest depths all about it is there no longer, but only that shell of a person, which is seen by other people-what an airless, shallow, bald, prominent world it becomes! A world not to be lived in. As we face each other in omnibuses and underground railways, we are looking into the mirror; that accounts for the vagueness, the gleam of glassiness, in our eyes. And the novelists in

future will realize more and more the importance of these reflections, for of course there is not one reflection but an almost infinite number; those are the depths they will explore, those the phantoms they will pursue, leaving the description of reality more and more out of their stories, taking a knowledge of it for granted, as the Greeks did and Shakespeare perhaps-but these generalizations are very worthless. The military sound of the word is enough. It recalls leading articles, cabinet ministers-a whole class of things indeed which as a child one thought the thing itself, the standard thing, the real thing, from which one could not depart save at the risk of nameless damnation. Generalizations bring back somehow Sunday in London, Sunday afternoon walks, Sunday luncheons, and also ways of speaking of the dead, clothes, and habits-like the habit of sitting all together in one room until a certain hour, although nobody liked it. There was a rule for everything. The rule for tablecloths at that particular period was that they should be made of tapestry with little yellow compartments marked upon them, such as you may see in photographs of the carpets in the corridors of the royal palaces. Tablecloths of a different kind were not real tablecloths. How shocking, and yet how wonderful it was to discover that these real things, Sunday luncheons, Sunday walks, country houses, and tablecloths were not entirely real, were indeed half phantoms, and the damnation which visited the disbeliever in them was only a sense of illegitimate freedom. What now takes the place of those things I wonder, those real standard things? Men perhaps, should you be a woman; the masculine point of view which governs our lives, which sets the standard, which establishes Whittaker's Table of Precedency, which has become, I suppose, since the war half a phantom to many men and women, which soon, one may hope, will be laughed into the dustbin where the phantoms go, the mahogany sideboards and the Landseer prints, Gods and Devils, Hell and so forth, leaving us all with an intoxicating sense of illegitimate freedom-if freedom exists....

In certain lights that mark on the wall seems actually to project from the wall. Nor is it entirely circular. I cannot be sure, but it seems to cast a perceptible shadow, suggesting that if I ran my finger

down that strip of the wall it would, at a certain point, mount and descend a small tumulus, a smooth tumulus like those barrows on the South Downs, which are, they say, either tombs or camps. Of the two, I should prefer them to be tombs, desiring melancholy like most English people, and finding it natural at the end of a walk to think of the bones stretched beneath the turf.... There must be some book about it. Some antiquary must have dug up those bones and given them a name.... What sort of a man is an antiquary, I wonder? Retired Colonels for the most part, I daresay, leading parties of aged labourers to the top here, examining clods of earth and stone, and getting into correspondence with the neighbouring clergy, which, being opened at breakfast time, gives them a feeling of importance, and the comparison of arrow-heads necessitates cross-country journeys to the county towns, an agreeable necessity both to them and to their elderly wives, who wish to make plum jam or to clean out the study, and have every reason for keeping that great question of the camp or the tomb in perpetual suspension, while the Colonel himself feels agreeably philosophic in accumulating evidence on both sides of the question. It is true that he does finally incline to believe in the camp; and, being opposed, incites a pamphlet which he is about to read at the quarterly meeting of the local society when a stroke lays him low, and his last conscious thoughts are not of wife or child, but of the camp and that arrowhead there, which is now in the case at the local museum, together with the foot of a Chinese murderess, a handful of Elizabethan nails, a great many Tudor clay pipes, a piece of Roman pottery, and the wine-glass that Nelson drank out of-proving I really don't know what.

No, no, nothing is proved, nothing is known. And if I were to get up at this very moment and ascertain that the mark on the wall is really-what shall we say?-the head of a gigantic old nail, driven in two hundred years ago, which has now, owing to the patient attrition of many generations of housemaids, revealed its head above the coat of paint, and is taking its first view of modern life in the sight of a white-walled fire-lit room,-what should I gain?-Knowledge? Matter for further speculation? I can think sitting still as well as standing up. And what is knowledge? What are our learned men

save the descendants of witches and hermits who crouched in caves and in woods brewing herbs, interrogating shrewmice and writing down the language of the stars? And the less we honour them as our superstitions dwindle and our respect for beauty and health of mind increases.... Yes, one could imagine a very pleasant world. A quiet, spacious world, with the flowers so red and blue in the open fields. A world without professors or specialists or housekeepers with the profiles of policemen, a world, which one could slice with one's thought as a fish slices the water with his fin, grazing the stems of the water lilies, hanging suspended over nests of white sea eggs.... How peaceful it is down here, rooted in the centre of the world and gazing up through the grey waters, with their sudden gleams of light, and their reflections-if it were not for Whitaker's Almanack-if it were not for the Table of Precedency!

I must jump up and see for myself what that mark on the wall really is-a nail, a roseleaf, a crack in the wood?

Here is nature once more at her old game of self-preservation. This train of thought, she perceives, is threatening mere waste of energy, even some collision with reality, for who will ever be able to lift a finger against Whitaker's Table of Precedency? The Archbishop of Canterbury is followed by the Lord High Chancellor; the Lord High Chancellor is followed by the Archbishop of York. Everybody follows somebody, such is the philosophy of Whitaker; and the great thing is to know who follows whom. Whitaker knows, and let that, so Nature counsels, comfort you, instead of enraging you; and if you can't be comforted, if you must shatter this hour of peace, think of the mark on the wall.

I understand Nature's game-her prompting to take action as a way of ending any thought that threatens to excite or to pain. Hence, I suppose, comes our slight contempt for men of action-men, we assume, who don't think. Still, there's no harm in putting a full stop to one's disagreeable thoughts by looking at a mark on the wall.

Indeed, now that I have fixed my eyes upon it, I feel that I have grasped a plank in the sea; I feel a satisfying sense of reality, which at once turns the two Archbishops and the Lord High Chancellor to the shadows of shades. Here is something definite, something real.

Thus, waking from a midnight dream of horror, one hastily turns on the light and lies quiescent, worshipping the chest of drawers, worshipping solidity, worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world, which is a proof of some existence other than ours. That is what one wants to be sure of.... Wood is a pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree; and trees grow, and we don't know how they grow. For years and years, they grow, without paying any attention to us, in meadows, in forests, and by the side of rivers-all things one likes to think about. The cows swish their tails beneath them on hot afternoons; they paint rivers so green that when a moorhen dives one expects to see its feathers all green when it comes up again. I like to think of the fish balanced against the stream 'like flags blown out; and of water beetles slowly raising domes of mud upon the bed of the river. I like to think of the tree itself first the close dry sensation of being wood; then the grinding of the storm; then the slow, delicious ooze of sap. I like to think of it, too, on winter's nights standing in the empty field with all leaves close-furled, nothing tender exposed to the iron bullets of the moon, a naked mast upon an earth that goes tumbling, tumbling, all night long. The song of birds must sound very loud and strange in June; and how cold the feet of insects must feel upon it, as they make laborious progresses up the creases of the bark, or sun themselves upon the thin green awning of the leaves, and look straight in front of them with diamond-cut red eyes.... One by one, the fibres snap beneath the immense cold pressure of the earth, then the last storm comes and, falling, the highest branches drive deep into the ground again. Even so, life isn't done with; there are a million patient, watchful lives still for a tree, all over the world, in bedrooms, in ships, on the pavement, lining rooms, where men and women sit after tea, smoking cigarettes. It is full of peaceful thoughts, happy thoughts, this tree. I should like to take each one separately-but something is getting in the way.... Where was I? What has it all been about? A tree? A river? The Downs? Whitaker's Almanack? The fields of asphodel? I can't remember a thing. Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing.... There is a vast upheaval of matter. Someone is standing over me and saying: "I'm going out to buy a newspaper."

"Yes?"

"Though it's no good buying newspapers..... Nothing ever happens. Curse this war; God damn this war! All the same, I don't see why we should have a snail on our wall."

Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail.

ABOUT THE ESSAY :

The writer engrosses herself into a trail of thoughts tracing from simple every day things to the deeper concerns of life, of the rapidity of life, its waste and repair. In the middle of January, one winter evening the author is mesmerized by a mark on the wall. The author thought of several things of the fire's reflection of the yellow light on the book and the flowers on the mantle piece. The author does not want any sound to disturb her for she wants to dive and sink in the ocean of thought which started from a mark on the wall and went on to expand to a wider horizon of thoughts which hardly bear any relevance to the mark.

WORD NOTES :

Chrysanthemums: a kind of flower.

Mantel piece: A structure that has a shelf at the top.

Cavalcade: procession of riders.

Fancy: imagination.)

Canisters: Metallic and cylindrical containers.

Coal Scuttle: Vessel for coal.

Bagatelle: a kind of game.

Opals: white or bluish stone.

Tube: An underground railway system, especially the one in London.

Asphodel meadows: In Greek mythology, the Elysian fields were covered with immortal Flowers. Reference here is perhaps to experience of after-life.

Charles the First - Ireland (1625 - 49). An unsuccessful ruler who failed to resolve Religious and economic conflicts during his reign.

Whitaker's Table of Precedency: Table of Precedency records graded social ranks, degrees and letter.

Landseer: Sir Edasin Landseer, the Victorian artist whose main subjects were dogs and deer. He modelled the four bronze lions at London's Trafalgar Square in 1867.

Whitaker's Almanack: 19th century London publisher Joseph Whitaker believed that in social hierarchy, each individual must follow a superior.

❖ QUESTIONS ❖

1. Consider *The Mark on the Wall* as a personal, psychological essay.
2. Do you feel Woolf uses the "mark" only as a springboard to expatiate on other impressions haunting her mind?
3. Illustrate the symbol of the "mark" as the writer uses in the piece.



HOW TO BUY A HOUSE

: LAWRENCE DURRELL

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Born to Irish parents at Darjeeling in 1912, Durrell was a widely travelled British author. His experiences are vivid and his writings present such experiences in an enthralling way. Lawrence Durrell's growth as a writer of stature had been the result of not only his worldwide tours necessitated by diplomatic compulsions, which were fraught with rich experiences but also his Indian connection. In 'Blue Thirst' he said -

"You have two birth places. You have the place where you were really born and then you have a place of predilection where you really wake up to reality."

Durrell, a realist, was not a writer concerned merely with the basics of existence. A metaphysical in outlook, his goal in writing was to "sum up in a sort of metaphor the cosmology of a particular moment in which we are living." He questioned the nature and mode of expression of reality and also sought to find the proper way to live as an artist and as a human being.

Today, his reputation chiefly rests in his 'Alexandria Quartet', which comprises of Justine (1957), Balthazar (1958), and 'Bitter Lemons' (1956) - his autobiographical narrative written in an evocative style. 'Reflections on a Marine Venus' (1953) takes a look into the effects of the World War on the whole island in general and its inhabitants in particular.

TEXT :

'Last of all came the Greeks and inquired of the Lord for their gift.

"What gift would you like?" Said the Lord.

"We would like the gift of Power", said the Greeks.

'The Lord replied: "Ah, my poor Greeks, you have come too late. All the

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gifts have been distributed. There is practically nothing left. The gift of Power has been given to the Turks, the Bulgarians the gift of Labour ; the Jews of Calculation, the French of Trickery and the English of Foolishness."

"The Greeks waxed very angry at this and shouted "By what intrigue have we been overlooked?"

"Very well," said the Lord. "Since you insist, you too shall have a present and not remain empty handed-may intrigue be your lot," said the Lord'.

(Bulgarian Folktale)

Sabri Tahir's office in the Turkish quarter of Kyrenia bore a sun-blistered legend describing him as a valuer and estate agent, but his activities had proliferated since the board was painted and he was clearly many things besides. The centre of the cobweb was a dark cool go down perched strategically upon a junction of streets, facing the little Turkish shrine of some saint or warrior whose identity had vanished from the record, but whose stone tomb was still an object of veneration and pilgrimage for the faithful. It stood under a dusty and desiccated pepper tree, are one could always find an ex voto or two hanging beside it.

Beyond was a featureless empty field of nettles in which stood a couple of shacks full of disembodied pieces of machinery and huge heaps of uncut carob and olive, mingled with old railway sleepers and carcasses of buses which always turned up here at the end of the trail, as if to some Elephants' Graveyard, to be turned into fuel. Sabri's Empire was still in an embryonic stage, though it was clear that he was speculating wisely. A circular saw moaned and gnashed all day in one of the shacks under the ministrations of two handsome Turkish youths with green headbands and dilapidated clothes ; a machine for making cement blocks performed its slow but evolutions, accompanied by a seductive crunch.

Sabri could watch all these diverse activities from the darkness of his shop where he sat for the greater part of the day before a Turkish coffee unmoved, unmoving, but watchful. His desk was in the far corner against the wall, and to reach it one traversed a terrain vague, which resembled the basement of Maple's, so crowded, was it with armchairs, desks, prams, cooking-stoves, heaters, and all the impedimenta of gracious living.

The man himself was perhaps forty years of age, steadily built, and with a fine head on his shoulders. He had the sleepy good looks - a rare smile with perfect teeth, thoughtful brown eyes- that one sees sometimes in Turkish travel posters. But what was truly Turkish about him was the physical repose with which he confronted the world. No Greek can sit still without fidgeting, tapping a foot or a pencil, jerking a knee, or making popping noises with his tongue. The Turk has a monolithic poise, an air of reptilian concentration and silence. It is with just such an air that a chameleon can sit, hour after hour, upon a shrub, staring unwinkingly at the world living apparently in that state of suspended judgment which is summed up by the Arabic word *kayf*. I have seen Sabri loading logs, shouting at peasants, even running down a street; but never has he conveyed the slightest feeling of energy being expended. His actions and words had the smoothness of inevitability; they flowed from him like honey from a spoon.

On that first morning when I stepped into the shadows of his shop, the headquarters of the empire; he was sitting dreamily at his desk mending a faulty cigarette lighter. His good-morning was civil, though preoccupied and indifferent; but as I approached, he paused for one instant to snap finger and thumb and a chair materialised from the shadows behind him. I sat down. He abandoned his task and sat silent and unwinding before me. 'Mr. Sabri,' I said, 'I need your help. I have been making inquiries in Kyrenia and on all sides I am told that you are the most untrustworthy - of business in the place-in fact, the biggest rogue.'

He did not find the idea offensive so much as merely interesting. His shrewd eye sharpened a trifle; however, and he lowered his head to scan me more gravely. I went on. 'Now knowing the Levant as I do, I know that a reputation for being a rogue means one thing and one thing only. It means that one is cleverer than other people.' I accompanied this with the appropriate gesture-for cleverness in the hand, language is indicated by placing the forefinger of the right hand slowly and pretentiously upon the temple; tapping slightly, as one might tap a breakfast-egg. (Incidentally, one has to be careful, as if one turns the (finger in the manner of turning a bolt in a thread,

the significance is quite different. It means to be 'soft in the head or to have a screw loose'.) I tapped my skull softly. 'Cleverer than other people, I repeated, so clever that the stupid are envious of one.'

He did not assent or dissent from the proposition. He simply sat and considered me as one might a piece of machinery if one were uncertain, of its use. But the expression in his eyes shifted slightly in a manner suggesting the faintest, most tenuous admiration. I am here, I went on, convinced by this time that his English was good., for he had followed me unerringly so far, to judge by his face, I am here as a comparatively poor man to ask you a favour, not to make you a business proposition, There is no money to be made out of me. But I, want you to let me use (your brains and experience. I'm trying to find a cheap village house in which to settle for a year or two-perhaps forever if I like it enough here. I can see now that I was not wrong; far from being a rogue you are obviously a Turkish gentleman, and I feel I can confide myself entirely to your care-if you will accept such a thing. I have nothing to offer except gratitude and friendship. I ask you as a Turkish gentleman to assist me.'

Sabri's colour had changed slowly throughout this harangue and' when I ended he was blushing warmly. I could see that I had scored a diplomatic stroke in throwing myself completely upon the iron law of hospitality, which underpins all relations in the Levant. More than this, I think the magic word 'gentleman' turned the trick in my favour for it accorded him an unaccustomed place in the consideration of strangers, which he certainly merited, and which he thenceforward lived up to in his dealings with me. By a single tactful speech, I had made a true friend.

He leaned forward at his desk, smiling now, and patted my hand gently, confidently. 'But of course, my dear,' he said, 'of course'.

Then he suddenly threw up his chin and barked an order. A barefoot youth materialised from the shadows bearing Coca-Cola on a tray, apparently ordered by some invisible gesture awhile before. 'Drink,' he said quietly, 'and tell me what house you want.'

'A village house, not a modern villa.' 'How far away?'

'Not far. Among these hills.'

'Old houses need doing up.' 'If I can buy one cheaply I shall do it up.' 'How much can you spend?'

'Four hundred pounds.'

He looked grave at this and this was understandable, for the price of land had been soaring since the war, and indeed continued to soar until the time of my departure from the island when building plots in the centre of Nicosia cost roughly the same as those in Washington. 'My dear,' he said thoughtfully, and stroked his moustache. 'My dear.' Outside the darkness of his shop the spring sunshine glistened on trees loaded with cold tangerines; a cold wind touched the fronds of the palm-trees, quick with the taste of snow from the Taurus Mountains across the water. 'My dear,' repeated Sabri thoughtfully. 'Of course if you lived very far away it would be quite easy, but do you wish to be within reach of the capital?' I nodded. 'If I run out of money then I shall have to work, and there is nothing to be found out of Nicosia.' He nodded. 'Somewhere not too far from Kyrenia you want an arty old house.' That summed it up perfectly. Sabri took a thoughtful turn or two among the shadows and stubbed out his cigarette on the box. 'Honestly, my dear,' he said, 'it will be a matter of luck. I do bear of things, but it is a matter of luck. And it is very difficult to find one person to deal with. You are at once in a bloody family, my dear.' I did not then know what he meant. I was soon to learn.

'Do not be disappointed if you hear nothing from me for a while. What you ask is not easy, but I think I can do it. I will be working on it even if I am silent. Do you understand, my dear?' His handshake was warm.

I had hardly reached the main street on my way back to Pano's house when Renos the bootblack came out of a side street and took my arm. He was a tiny little wisp of a man with the sort of eyes one finds sewn on to rag dolls. 'My friend,' he said, 'you have been to see Sabri.' This is the favourite Mediterranean game, a tireless spying upon the movements of friends and acquaintances, and is common to all communities, which do not read, whose whole life is built up by oral tradition and common gossip. Yes, I said.

'Phew.' He went through a pantomime in the hand language, burning his fingers on hot coals and blowing upon them. This meant 'You will be stung.' I shrugged my shoulders. 'What to do?' I said

cheerfully. 'Aie aie,' said Renos, laying one hand to his cheek and rocking his head commiseratingly as if he had toothache. But he said no more.

By the time I got home Panos himself had been informed of my visit - doubtless by bush telegraph. You have been to see Sabri,' he said as I crossed the brilliant courtyard of the church and joined him on his balcony over the bewitching blueness of the spring sea. 'About a house?' I nodded. 'You have done well,' he said. 'Indeed I was going to suggest it.'

'Clito says he is a rogue.'

'Nonsense, as dealings with me have been perfectly honourable. He is a pretty sharp business man, of course, which is not usual among Turks who are always half asleep. But he is no more of a rogue than anyone else. In fact, Clito himself is a rogue, if it comes to that. He overcharged me for this bottle of Commanderia. Incidentally did you tell Sabri how much money you have?'

No, I told him less than I actually had.' Panos chuckled admiringly. 'I see. You understand business in these parts. Everything gets gossiped about, so that whatever price you would be prepared to pay would soon be known' to everyone. You did right to put it low.'

I accepted a glass of sweet Commanderia and a pickled pimento from the coloured china plate; the two children were doing a puzzle in the sunshine. The beadle crashed at the church bell in a sudden desultory burst of mania and then left the silence to echo round us in wing-beats of after sound.....

That evening it was I who recited the geography lesson while Panos stood behind me, nodding approvingly as I picked out the salient points of the Kyrenia range with a forefinger, travelling gently over the blue spines of the hills from the point where Myrtou lay invisible among its hazy farms and vineyards to where Akanthou (equally invisible) drowsed among its fields of yellow-green barley. In truth, by now I had memorized the lesson so well that the very name's of the places I had yet to visit communicated a sharp visual image of them. I could see the lemon-groves of Lapithos and feel the dense cool air of its orchards; hear the sullen thunder of the headspring as it gushed into the valley from the mountain's summit.

The great double-combed crown of Hilarion stood almost directly behind us with its castle taking the last lion-gold rays of the evening upon its tawny flanks. Over the saddle below it ran the main road to Nicosia, piercing the range at its lowest point. East of us loomed other peaks whose sulky magnificence echoed each other, mingling like the notes of a musical chord: Buffavento, seat of the winds, with the silent and graceful Gothic abbey of Bellapaix below it in the foothills; Pendedactyl whose five-fingered peak recalled the fingerprints of the hero Dighenis; fading all of them, and inclining slowly eastward into the mist like the proud sails of some Venetian argosy, to where Cape Andreas drowsed in spindrift at the end of the long stone handle of the Karpas. The place names chimed as one spoke them like a carillon, Greek Babylas and Myrtou, Turkish Kasaphani, Crusader Templos.... The mixture was a heady one.

'Very good,' said Panos at last, with a sigh of real pleasure. 'You really do know it. But now you must visit it.' I had intended to ere this, but my preoccupations about a house had quite consumed me, while problem of correspondence and the transport of luggage, money, etc., had made my mind too turbid for use. I had left it all - lying there, so to speak, multiplying itself in my imagination, until I should be ready to go out and meet it. Apart from a few short excursions around Kyrenia in search of spring flowers and mushrooms I had been nowhere; indeed I had done nothing except bathe and write letters. Life in an island, however rich, is circumscribed, and one does well to portion out one's experiences, for sooner or later one arrives at a point where all is known and staled by repetition. Taken leisurely, with all one's time at one's disposal Cyprus could, I calculate, afford one a minimum of two years reckoned in terms of novelty; hoarded as I intended to hoard it, it might last anything up to a decade.

That is why I wished to experience it through its people rather than its landscape, to enjoy the sensation of sharing a common life with the humble villagers of the place; and later to expand my field of investigation to its history - the lamp which illumines national character - in order to offer my live subjects a frame against which to set themselves. Alas! I was not to have time.

The month or so of spring weather with its promise of summer to follow proved fraudulent. One day we woke to a sky covered in ugly festoons of black cloud and saw drift upon drift of silver needles like arrows falling upon the ramparts of Kyrenia castle. Thunder clamoured and rolled, and the grape-blue semidarkness of the sea was bitten out in magnesium flashes as the lightning clawed at us from Turkey like a family of dragons. The stone floors turned damp and cold, the gutters brimmed and mumbled all day as they poured a cascade of rain into the street. Below us the sea dashed huge waves across the front where not a week ago we had been sitting in shorts and sandals, drinking coffee and ouzo, and making plans for the summer. It was a thrilling change, for one could feel the luxuriant grass fattening under the olives, and the spring-flowers unwrapping their delicate petals on the anemone-starred slopes below Clepini.

It was hardly a propitious moment for Sabri to arrive. But arrive he did one black afternoon, wearing as his only protection a spotted handkerchief over his head against the elements. He burst through Panos' front door between thunder-flashes like an apparition from the underworld, gasping: 'My dear.' His suit was liberally streaked with rain. 'I have something for you to see - but please' (in anguish almost) 'don't blame me if it is not suitable. I haven't seen it myself yet. But it may be. ..' He accepted a glass of wine in chilled fingers. 'It is in the village of Bellapaix, but too far from the road. Anyway, will you come? I have a taxi. The owner is a rogue of course. I can guarantee nothing.'

I could see that he was most anxious that I should not judge his professional skill by what might turn out to be a mistake. Together we galloped across the rain-echoing courtyard and down the long flight of stairs by the church to where Jamal and his ancient taxi waited. The handles were off all the doors and there ensued a brief 'knockabout scene from a Turkish shadow-play among the three of us which finally resulted in our breaking into the vehicle at a weak point in its defenses. (Jamal had to crawl through the boot, and half-way through the back seat, in order to unlatch for us.) Then we were off through a landscape blurred with rain and the total absence of windscreen wipers. Jamal drove with his head out of the window for

the sake of safety. Outside, the rain-blackened span of mountains glittered fitfully in the lightning-flashes.

Just outside Kyrenia a road turned to the right and led away across a verdant strip of olive and carob land towards the foothills where Bellapaix stood in rain and mist. 'Nevertheless,' said Sabri thoughtfully, 'it is a good day, for nobody will be out of doors. The cafe will be empty. We won't cause the gossips, my, dear.' He meant, I suppose, that in any argument over prices the influence of the village, wiseacres would seriously affect the owner's views. A sale needed privacy; if the village coffee shop undertook a general debate on a transaction there was no knowing what might happen.

I was prepared for something beautiful, and I already knew that the ruined monastery of Bellapaix was one of the loveliest Gothic survivals in the Levant, but I was not prepared for the breathtaking congruence of the little village, which surrounded and cradled it against the side of the mountain. Fronting the last rise, the road begins to wind through a landscape dense with orange and lemon trees, and noisy with running water. Almond and peach-blossom graze the road, as improbably precise as the decor to a Japanese play. The village comes down to the road for the last hundred yards or so with its grey old-fashioned houses with arched vaults and carved doors set in old-fashioned mouldings. Then abruptly one turns through an arc of 150 degrees under the Tree of Idleness and comes to a stop in the main square under the shadow of the Abbey itself. Young cypresses bent back against the sky as they took the wind; the broad flowerbeds were full of magnificent roses among the almond trees. Yet it all lay deserted in the rain.

The owner of the house was waiting for us in a doorway with a sack over his head. He was a rather dejected-looking man whom I had already noticed maundering about the streets of Kyrenia. He was a cobbler by trade. He did not seem very exuberant-perhaps it was the weather,-but almost, without a word spoken led us up the boulder-strewn main street, slipping and stumbling amongst the wet stones. Irrigation channels everywhere had burst their banks and Sabri, still clad in his handkerchief gazed gloomily about him as he picked his way among the compost heaps where the chickens

browsed. 'It's no good, my dear,' he said after we had covered about a hundred yards without arriving at the house. 'You could never get up here.' But still the guide led on, and curiosity made us follow him. The road had now become very steep indeed and resembled the bed of a torrent; down the centre poured a cascade of water. 'My God, like one. The three of us crept upwards, walking wherever possible on the facing-stones of the irrigation channel. 'I am terribly sorry,' said Sabri. 'You will have a cold and blame me.'

The atmosphere of the village was quite enthralling; its architecture was in the purest peasant tradition-domed Turkish privies in court-yards fanning out from great arched doors with peasant mouldings still bearing the faint traces of a Venetian influence; old Turkish screen-windows for ventilation. It had the purity and authenticity of a Cretan hamlet. And everywhere grew roses, and the pale clouds of almond and peach blossom; on the balconies grew herbs in window boxes made from old petrol tins; and crowning every courtyard like a messenger from my Indian childhood spread the luxuriant green fan of banana-leaves, rattling like parchment in the wind. From behind the closed door of the tavern came the mournful whining of a mandolin.

At the top of the slope where the village vanished and gave place to the scrubby outworks of the mountain behind, stood an old irrigation tank, and here our guide disappeared round a corner, drawing from his breast an iron key the size of a man's forearm. We scrambled after him and came upon the house, a large box-like house in the Turkish-Cypriot mode, with huge carved doors made for some forgotten race of giants and their oxen. 'Very arty, my dear,' said Sabri, noting the fine old windows with their carved screens, 'but what a place'; and then he kicked the wall in an expert way so that the plaster fell off and revealed the mysteries of its construction to his practiced eye. 'Mud brick with straw.' it was obviously most unsatisfactory. 'Never mind,' I said, stirred by a vague interior premonition which I could not put exactly into words. 'Never mind. Let's look now we're here.'

The owner swung himself almost off the ground in an effort

room, built on a bias, and empty of everything save a pair of shoes and a pile of tangerines. We returned to the balcony with its terrific panorama! The storm had begun to lift now and sun was struggling feebly to get out; the whole eastern prospect was suffused with the light which hovers over El Greco's Toledo.'

'But the balcony itself,' said Sabri with genuine regret, 'my dear, it will need concrete. "Why?" He smiled at me. 'I must tell you how the peasant house is built-the roof Come down.' We descended the narrow outside stair together, while he produced a notebook and pencil. 'First the beams are laid,' he said indicating the long series of magnificent beams, and at the same time scribbling in his book. 'Then some reed mats. Then packets of osiers to fill the airspace, or perhaps dried seaweed. Then Carmi earth, then gravel. Finally it all leaks and you spend the whole winter trying to stop the leaks.'

'But this house doesn't,' I said. 'Some do sooner than others.'

I pointed to the mason's signature upon the graven iron plaque, which adorned the main door. It bore the conventional Orthodox cross, embossed on it with the letters IE XR N (Jesus Christ Conquers) and the date 1897. Underneath, on the lower half of the plate, in the space reserved to record subsequent building or alteration was written only one date (9th September 1940), when presumably some restoration work had been undertaken. 'Yes, I know, my dear,' said Sabri patiently. 'But if you buy this house you will have to rebuild the balcony. You are my friend, and so I shall insist for your own good.'

We debated this in low tones on the way down the hill. Though the rain had slackened, the village street was empty save for the little corner shop, a grocery store, where a thickset young man sat alone, amid sacks of potatoes and dry packets of spaghetti, playing patience on a table. He shouted good afternoon.

In the main square Jamal sat uneasily under the Tree of idleness beneath an open umbrella, drinking coffee. I was about to engage the owner of the house in discussion as to the sort of price he had in mind for such a fine old relic when Sabri motioned me to silence. The coffee-house was gradually filling up with people and faces were turning curiously towards us. 'You will need time to think,' he

said. 'And I have told him you don't want to buy it at all, at any price. This will make the necessary despondence, my dear.' 'But I'd like to have an idea of the price.' 'My dear, he has no idea himself. Perhaps five hundred pounds, perhaps twenty pounds, perhaps ten shillings. He is completely vacant of ideas. In the bargaining, everything will get cleared. But we must take time. In the Cyprus time is everything' thinking deeply about the green winding ways to Kyrenia

retrospect than it had in actual fact. Meanwhile Sabri talked to me in knowledge-able fashion about the drawbacks to buying out there. 'You simply have not considered such problems,' he said, 'as water, for example. Have you?'

I had not, and I felt deeply ashamed of the fact. 'Give me two days,' said Sabri, and I will find out about the land and water-rights of the property. Then we will ask the man and his wife for the big price-conversation at my office. By God, you will see how tricky we are in Cyprus. And if you buy the house, I will send you to a friend of mine to do the rebuilding. He is a rogue, of course, but just the man. I only ask, give me time.'

That night when I told Panos that I had seen what might prove to him a suitable house for me at Bellapaix he was delighted, for he had lived there for several years, teaching at the local school. They are the laziest people in the world, he said; land the best-natured in Cyprus. And you have honey, and also in the valley behind the house nightingales, my friend'.

He did not mention silk, almonds and apricots: oranges, pomegranates, quince Perhaps he did not wish to influence me too, deeply.

Sabri meanwhile retired into silence and contemplation for nearly a week after this; I imagined him sharpening himself -for the coming contest of wills by long silent fasts-broken perhaps by a glass of sherbet-or perhaps even prayer for long stretches. The skies turned blue and hard again, and the orange-trees in the Bishopric put out their gleaming suns. The season was lengthening once more into summer, One felt; was stretching it self the days beginning to unfold more slowly, the twilights to linger. Once more, the little

harbour filled up with its crowds of chaffering fishermen darning their nets, and of yachtsmen dawdling over caulked seams and a final coat of paint.

Then at last, the summons came; I was to present myself at Sahri's office the next morning at eight. Panos brought me the message, smiling at my obvious anxiety, and telling me that Sabri was despondent because it now appeared that the house was owned not by the cobbler but by his Wife. It had been her dowry, and she herself was going to conduct the sale. 'With women,' said my friend, 'it is always a Calvary to argue. A Golgotha' Nevertheless Sabri had decided to go forward with the business. The intervening space of time had been valuable, however, because he had come into possession of a piece of vital information about the water' supply. Water is so scarce in Cyprus that it is sold in parcels. You are an hour here and an hour there from the owner of a spring-needless to say no quantity measure exists. The trouble lies here: that water-rights form part of property-titles of citizens and are divided up on the death of the owner among his dependants. This is true also of land and indeed of trees. Families being what they are, it is common for a single spring, to be owned by upwards of thirty people, or a single tree to be shared out among a dozen members of a family. The whole problem, then, is one of obtaining' common consent-usually one has to pay for the signatures of thirty people in order to achieve any agreement which is binding. Otherwise, one dissident nephew and niece can veto the whole transaction. In the case of some trees, for example, one man may own the produce of the tree, another the ground on which it, stands, a third the actual timber. As may be imagined the most elementary litigation assumes gigantic proportions, which explains why there are so many lawyers in Cyprus.

Now Sabri had got wind of the fact that the Government was planning to install the piped water supply to the village, which had been promised for so long; moreover that the plans were already being drawn up. The architect of the Public Works happened to be a friend of his so he casually dropped into his office and asked to see where the various water-points were to be placed. It was a stroke of genius, for he saw with delight that there was to be a public water-

point outside the very Front door of the old house. This more than offset the gloomy intelligence that the only water the cobbler owned was about an hour a month from the main spring-perhaps sixty gallons; whereas the average water consumption of an ordinary family is about forty gallons a day. This was a trump card, for the cobbler's water belonged in equal part to the rest of his wife's family-all eighteen of them, including the idiot boy Pipi whose signature was always difficult to obtain on a legal document

I found my friend, freshly shaven and spruce, seated in the gloom of his office, surrounded by prams, and absolutely motionless. Before him on the blotter lay the great key of the house, which he poked from time to time in a reproachful way. He put his finger to his lips with a conspiratorial air and motioned me to a chair. 'They are all here, my dear, he hissed, 'getting ready.' He pointed to the cafe across the road where the cobbler had gathered his family. They looked more like seconds." They sat on a semicircle of chairs, sipping coffee and arguing in low voices; a number of beards wagged, a number of heads nodded. They looked like a rugged scrum in an American film receiving last-minute instructions from their captain. Soon they would, fall upon us like a ton of bricks and gouge us. I began to feel rather alarmed. 'Now, whatever happens,' said Sabri in a low voice, tremulous with emotion, 'do not surprise. You must never surprise. And you don't want the house at all, set?'

I repeated the words like a catechism. 'I don't want the house. I absolutely don't want the house,' yet in my mind's eye I could see those great doors ('God,' Sabri had said, this is fine wood. From Anatolia. In the old days, they floated the great timbers over the water behind boats. This is Anatolian timber, it will last forever'). Yes, I could see those doors under a glossy coat of blue paint... 'I don't want the house,' I repeated under my breath, feverishly trying to put myself into the appropriate frame of mind.

Tell them we are ready,' said Sabri to the shadows and a barefooted youth flitted across the road to where our adversaries had gathered. They hummed like bees, and the cobbler's wife detached herself from the circle-or tried to, for many a hand clutched at her frock, detaining her for a last-minute consideration, which

was hissed at her secretly by the family elders. At last, she wrenched herself free and walked boldly across the road, entering Sabri's shrine with a loud 'Good morning' I spoken very confidently.

She was a formidable old faggot, with a handsome self-indulgent face, and a big erratic body. She wore the white headdress and dark skirt of the village woman, and her breasts were gathered into the traditional baggy bodice with a drawstring at the waist, which made it look like a loosely furled sail. She stood before us looking very tom-posed as she gave us good morning. Sabri cleared his throat, and picking up the great key very delicately between finger and thumb as if it were of the utmost fragility-put it down again on the edge of the desk nearest her with the air of a conjurer making his opening dispositions. 'We are speaking about your house,' he said softly, in a voice ever so faintly curdled with menace. 'Do you know that all the wood is...' he suddenly shouted the last word with such force that I nearly fell off my chair, 'rotten!' And picking up the key he banged it down to emphasize the point.

The woman threw up her head with contempt and taking up the key also banged it down in bet turn exclaiming: 'It is not.

'It is.' Sabri banged the key.

'It is not.' She banged it back.

'It is.' A bang.

'It is not.' A counter-bang.

All this was not on a very high intellectual level, and made me rather ill at ease. I also feared that the key itself would be banged out of shape so that finally none of us would be able to get into the house. But these were the opening chords, so to speak, the preliminary statement of theme.

The woman now took the key and held it up as if she were swearing by it. 'The house is a good house,' she cried. Then she put it back on the desk. Sabri took it up thoughtfully, blew into the end of it as if it were a six-shooter, aimed it and peered along it as if along a barrel. Then he put it down and fell into an abstraction. 'And suppose we wanted the house,' he said, 'which we don't, what would you ask for it?'

'Eight hundred pounds.'

Sabri gave a long and stagy laugh, wiping away imaginary tears and repeating 'Eight hundred pounds' as if it were the best joke in the world. He laughed at me and I laughed at him, a dreadful false laugh. He slapped his knee. I rolled about in my chair as if on the verge of acute gastritis. We laughed until we were exhausted. Then we grew serious again. Sabri was still fresh as a daisy, I could see that. He had put himself into the patient contemplative state of mind of a chess player.

'Take the key and go,' he snapped suddenly, and handing it to her, swirled round in his swivel chair to present her with his back; then as suddenly, he completed the circuit and swiveled round again. 'What I' he said with surprise. 'You haven't gone.' In truth, there had hardly been time for the woman to go. But she was somewhat slow-witted, though obstinate as a mule: that was clear. 'Right,' she now said in a ringing tone and picking up the key put it into her bosom and turned about. She walked off stage in a somewhat lingering fashion. 'Take no notice,' whispered Sabri and busied himself with his papers.

The woman stopped irresolutely outside the shop, and was here joined by her husband who began to talk to in a cringing voice, pleading with her. He took her by the sleeve and led her unwillingly back into the shop where we sat pointedly reading letters. 'Ah! It's you,' said Sabri with well-simulated surprise. 'She wishes to discuss some more,' explained the cobbler in a weak conciliatory voice. Sabri sighed.

'What is there to speak of? She takes me for a fool.' Then he suddenly turned to her and bellowed, 'Two hundred pounds and not a piaster more.'

It was her turn to have a paroxysm of false laughter, but this was rather spoiled by her husband who started plucking at her sleeve as if he were persuading her to be sensible. Sabri was not slow to notice this. You tell her, he said to the man. You are a man and these things are clear to you. She is only a woman and does not see the truth. Tell her what it is worth.

The cobbler, who quite clearly lacked spirit, turned once more to his wife and was about to say something to her, but in a sudden

swoop she produced the key and raised it above her head as if she intended to bring it down on his hairless dome. He backed away rapidly. 'Fool', she growled. 'Can't you see they are making a fool of you? Let me handle this.' She made another pass at him with the key and he tiptoed off to join the rest of her relations in the coffee shop opposite, completely crushed. She now turned to me and extended a wheedling hand, saying in Greek, 'Ah come along there, you an Englishman, striking a hard bargain with a woman. ...' But I had given no indication of speaking Greek so that it was easy to pretend not to understand her. She turned back to Sabri, staring balefully, and banging the key down once more shouted 'Six hundred,' while Sabri in the same breath bellowed 'Two hundred.' The noise was deafening.

They panted and glared at each other for a long moment of silence like boxers in a clinch waiting for the referee to part them. It was the perfect moment for Sabri to get in a quick one below the belt. 'Anyway your house is mortgaged,' he hissed, and she reeled under the punch. 'Sixty pounds and three piastres,' he added, screwing the glove a little to try and draw blood. She held her groin as if in very truth he had landed her a blow in it. Sabri followed up swiftly: 'I offer you two hundred pounds plus the mortgage.'

She let out a yell. 'No. Never,' and banged the key. 'Yes, I say,' bellowed Sabri giving a counter-bang. She grabbed the key (by now it had become, as it were, the very symbol of our contention. The house was forgotten. We were trying to buy this old rusty key, which looked like something fitter for Saint Peter's key ring, than my own). She grabbed the key, I say, and put it to her breast like a child as she said: 'Never in this life.' She rocked it back and forth, suckled it, and put it down again.

Sabri now became masterful and put it in his pocket. At this, she let out a yell and advanced on him shouting. 'You give me back my key and I shall leave you with the curses of all the saints upon you.' Sabri stood up like a showman and held the key high above his head, out of her reach, repeating inexorably. 'Two hundred. Two hundred. Two hundred.' She mapped and strained like a booked fish, exclaiming all the time: 'Saint Catherine defend me. No. No. Then quite suddenly the key on the desk and sat down, while she

subsided like a pan of boiling milk when it is lifted off the fire. 'I shall consult,' she said briefly in another voice and leaving the key where it was she took herself off across the road to where her seconds waited with towels and sponges. The first round was a draw, though Sabri had nude one or two good points.

What happens now?' I said, and he chuckled. 'Just time for a coffee. I think, you know, my dear, he added, I that we will have to pay another hundred. I feel it.' He was like a countryman who can tell what the weather will be like from small signs invisible to the ordinary towns-man. It was an enthralling spectacle, this long-drawn out pantomime, and I was now prepared for the negotiations to go on for a week. 'They don't know about the water,' said Sabri. 'They will let us have the house cheap and then try and sting us for the water-rights. We must pretend to forget about the water and buy the house cheaper. Do you see?' I saw the full splendour of his plan as it unfolded before us. 'But,' he said, 'everything must be done today, now, for if she goes back to the village and makes the gossips nothing will be consummated.' It seemed to me that she was already making the gossips in the cafe opposite, for a furious altercation had broken out. She was accusing her husband of something and he was replying waspishly and waving his arms.

After a while, Sabri whispered: Here she comes again, and here she came, rolling along with sails spread and full the cargo of her misfortunes. She had changed her course. She now gave us a long list of her family troubles, hoping to soften us up; but by now, I felt as if my teeth had been sharpened into points. It was clear that she was weakening. It was a matter of time before we could start winding her in. It was, in fact, the psychological moment to let out the line, and this Sabri Tahir now did by offering her another hundred ('a whole hundred,' he repeated juicily in a honeyed voice) if she would clinch the deal there and then. 'Your husband is a fool,' he added, and your family ignorant. You will never find a buyer if you do not take this gentleman. Look at him. Already he is weakening. He will go elsewhere. Just look at his face.' I tried to compose my face in a suitable manner to play my full part in the pantomime. She stared at me in the manner of a hungry peasant assessing a turnip and suddenly

sat herself down for the first time, bursting as she did so into heartrending sobs. Sabri was delighted and gave me a wink.

She drew her wimple round her face and went into convulsions, repeating audibly: 'O Jesus, what are they doing to me? Destruction has overtaken my house and my line. My issue has been murdered, my good name dragged in the dust.' Sabri was in a high good humour by this time. He leaned forward and began to talk to her in the voice of Mephistopheles himself, filling the interstices between her sentences with his insinuations. I could hear him droning on 'Mortgage ... two hundred ... husband a fool ... never get such an opportunity.' Meanwhile she rocked and moaned like an Arab, thoroughly enjoying her-self. From time to time she cast a furtive glance at our faces to see how we were taking it, she could not have drawn much consolation from Sabri's for he was full of a triumphant concentration now; in the looming shadows he reminded me of some great killer shark-the flash of a white belly as it turned over on its back to take her. 'We have not spoken of the water as yet,' he said, and among her diminishing sobs she was still able to gasp out, 'That will be another hundred.'

'We are speaking only of the house,' insisted Sabri, and at this, a look of cunning came over her face. 'Afterwards we will speak of the water.' The tone in which he said this indicated subtly that lie had now moved over on to her side. The foreigner, who spoke no Greek, could not possibly understand that without water rights the house itself was useless. She shot a glance at me and then looked back at him, the look of cunning being replaced by a look almost of triumph. Had Sabri, in fact, changed sides? Was he perhaps also planning to make a killing, and once the house was bought.... She smiled now and stopped sobbing.

'All this can only be done immediately,' said Sabri quietly. 'Look. We will go to the widow and get the mortgage paper. We will pay her mortgage before you at the Land Registry.

Then we will pay you before witnesses for the house.' Then he added in a low voice: 'After that the gentleman will discuss the water. Have you the papers?'

We were moving rather too swiftly for her. Conflicting feelings

beset her; ignorance and doubt flitted across her face. 'An occasional involuntary sob shook her-like pre-ignition in an over-heated engine which has already been switched off, My grand-father has the title-deeds.'

Get said Sabri curtly.

She rose, still deeply preoccupied, and went back across the street where a furious agreement broke out among her seconds. The white-bearded old man waved a stick and perorated. Her husband spread his hands and waggled them'. Sabri watched at this with a critical eye. 'There is only one danger-she must not get back to the village.' How right he was; for if her relations could make all this noise about the deed of sale, what could the village coffee shop not do? Such little concentration as she could muster would be totally scattered by conflicting counsels. The whole thing would probably end in a riot followed by an island-wide strike....

I gazed admiringly at my friend. What a diplomat he would make! Here she comes again.' he said in a low voice, and here she came to place the roll of tide-deeds on the table beside the key. Sabri did not look at them. 'Have you discussed?' he said sternly. She groaned. 'My grandfather will not let me do it. He says you are making a fool of me.' Sabri snorted wildly.

'Is the house yours?'

Yes, sir.

'Do you want the money?'

'Yes.'

'Do you want it today?'

'Yes.'

My friend leaned back in his chair and gazed up at the cobwebs in the roof 'Think of it,' he said, his voice full of the 'try of commerce. This gentleman will cut you a cheque. You will go to the Bank. There they will look with respect at it, for it will bear his name. They will open the safe. ... 'His voice trembled and she gazed thirstily at him, entranced by the storybook voice he had put on. 'They will take from it notes, thick no', as thick as a honeycomb, as thick as salami' (here they both involuntarily licked their lips and I myself began to feel him hungry at the thought of so much edible

money). 'One ... two ... three,' counted Sabri in his mesmeric voice full of animal magnetism. 'Twenty ... sixty... , a hundred' gradually getting louder and louder until he ended at 'three hundred'. Throughout this recital, she behaved like a chicken with her beak upon a chalk line. As he ended, she gave a sigh of rapture and shook herself, as if to throw off the spell. 'The mortgage will have them paid. The widow Anthi will be full of joy and respect for you. You and your husband will have three hundred pounds.' He blew out his breath and mopped his head with a red handkerchief. 'All you have to do is to agree. Or take your key.'

He handed her the key and once more swivelled round, to remain facing the wall for a full ten seconds before completing the circle.

'Well?' he said. She was hovering on the edge of tears again. 'And my grandfather?' she asked tremulously. Sabri spread his hands. 'What can I do about your grandfather? Bury him?' he asked indignantly. 'But act quickly, for the gentleman is going.' At a signal from him, I rose and stretched and said, 'Well, I think I....'

'Quick. Quick. Speak or he will be gone, said Sabri. A look of intense agony came over her face. 'O Saint Matthew and Saint Luke,' she exclaimed aloud, tortured beyond endurance by her doubts. It seemed a queer moment to take refuge in her religion, but obviously, the decision weighed heavily upon her. 'O Luke, O Mark,' she rasped, with one hand extended towards me to prevent me from leaving.

Sabri was now like a great psychologist who divines that a difficult transference is at hand. 'She will come,' he whispered to me, and putting his fingers to mouth blew a shrill blast, which alerted everybody. At once with a rumble Jamal, who had apparently been lurking down a side street in his car, grated to the door in a cloud of dust. 'Lay hold of her,' Sabri said and grabbed the woman by the left elbow. Following instructions, I grabbed the other arm. She did not actually resist but she definitely rested on her oars and it was something of an effort to roll her across the floor to the taxi. Apparently, speed was necessary in this coup de main for he shouted: 'Get her inside' and put his shoulder to her back as we propelled her into the back of the car and climbed in on top of her.

She now began to moan and scream as if she were being abducted -doubtless for the benefit of the grandfather-and to make dumb appeals for help through the windows. Her supporters poured out into the road, headed by a nonagenarian waving a plate and her husband who also seemed in tears. 'Stop. You can't do that,' they cried, alerting the whole street. Two children screamed: 'They are taking mummy away,' and burst into tears.

'Don't pay any attention,' said Sabri now, looking like Napoleon on the eye of Wagram. 'Drive, Jamal, drive. We set off with a roar, scattering pedestrians who were, making their way to the scene of the drama, convinced perhaps that a shot-gun wedding was in progress. 'Where are we going?' I said.

'Lapithos-the widow Anthi,' said Sabri curtly. 'Drive, Jamal, drive.'

As we turned the corner, I noticed with horror that the cobbler and his family had stopped another taxi and were piling into it with every intention of following us. The whole thing was turning into a film sequence. 'Don't worry,' said Sabri, 'the second taxi is Jamal's brother and he will have a puncture. I have thought of everything.'

In the brilliant sunshine, we rumbled down the Lapithos road. The woman looked about her with interest, pointing out familiar landmarks with great good-humour. She had completely recovered her composure now and smiled upon us both. It was obviously some time since she had had a car ride and she enjoyed every moment of it.

We burst into the house of the widow Anthi like a bomb and demanded the mortgage papers; but the widow herself was out and they were locked in a cupboard. More drama. Finally, Sabri and the cobbler's wife forced the door of the cupboard with a flatiron and we straggled back into the sunshine and climbed aboard again. There was no sign of the second taxi as we set off among the fragrant lemon- groves towards Kyrenia, but we soon came upon them all clustered about a derelict taxi with a puncture. A huge shout went up as they saw us, and some attempt was made to block the road but Jamal, who had entered into the spirit of the thing, now increased speed and we bore down upon them. I was alarmed about the safety of the grand- father, for he stood' in the middle of the road waving

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his stick until the very last moment, and I feared he would not jump out of the way in time. I closed my eyes and breathed deeply through my nose: so did Sabri, for Jamal had only one eye and was unused to speeds greater than twenty miles an hour. But all was well. The old man must have been fairly spry for when I turned round to look out of the back window of the car I saw him spread-eagled in the ditch, but quite all right if one could judge by the language he was using.

The clerks in the Registry Office were a bit shaken by our appearance for by this time the cobbler's wife had decided to start crying again. I cannot for the life of me imagine why there was nobody left to impress; perhaps she wanted to extract every ounce of drama from the situation. Then we found she could not write-Grandfather was the only one who could write, and she must wait for him. 'My God, if he comes, all is lost again, my dear,' said Sabri. We had to forcibly secure her thumbprint to the article of sale, which sounds easy, but in fact ended by us all being liberally coated with fingerprint ink.

She only subsided into normality when the ratified papers were handed to Sabri; and when I made out her cheque she positively beamed and somewhat to my 'surprise insisted on shaking hands with me, saying as she did so, 'You are a good man, may you be blessed in the house.'

It was in the most amiable manner that the three of us now sauntered out into the sunlight under the pepper trees. On the main road, a dusty taxi had drawn up and was steadily disgorging the disgruntled remains of the defeated army. Catching sight of her, they shouted vociferously and advanced in open order, waving sticks and gesticulating. The cobbler's wife gave a shriek and fell into her grandfather's arms, sobbing as if overtaken by irremediable tragedy. The old man, somewhat tousled by his expedition, and with grass in his eyebrows, growled protectively at her and thundered: 'You done it?' She sobbed louder and nodded, as if overcome. The air was rent with execrations, but Sabri was quite unmoved. All this was purely gratuitous drama and could be taken lightly. With an expressive gesture, he ordered Coca-Cola all round, which a small boy brought from a barrow. This had the double effect of soothing them and at

the same time standing as a symbolic drink upon the closing of a bargain- shrewdly calculated, as were all his strokes. They cursed us weakly as they seized the bottles but they drank thirstily. Indeed the drive to Lapithos is a somewhat dusty one.

'Anyway,' said the cobbler at last when they had all simmered down a bit, 'we still have the water-rights. We have not yet discussed those with the gentleman.' But the gentleman was feeling somewhat exhausted by now, and replete with all the new sensations of ownership. I possessed a house! Sabri nodded quietly. 'Later on,' he said, waving an expressive hand to Jamal, who was also drinking a well-earned Coca-Cola under a pepper tree. 'Now we will rest.' The family now saw us off with the greatest good humour, as if I were a bridegroom, leaning into the taxi to shake my hand and utter blessings. 'It was a canonical price,' said the old greybeard, as a parting blessing. One could not say fairer than that.

'And now,' said Sabri, 'I will take you to a special place of mine to taste the meltemi wind-what is the time? Yes, in half an hour.' High upon the bastions of Kyrenia castle was a narrow balcony, which served the police officers as a mess. Sabri, I discovered later, was a sergeant in the specials. Here, gazing across the radiant harbour-bar towards the Carpathian mountains, we sat ourselves down in solitude and space like a couple of emperors while a bewildering succession of cold beers found their way out on to the table-cloth, backed up by various saucers full of delicious Cypriot comestibles. And here Sabri's wind punctually arrived-the faintest breath of coolness, stirring across the waters of the harbour, ruffling them. 'You see?' he said quietly, raising his cheek to it like a sail. He was obviously endowed with that wonderful Moslem quality which is called kayf-the contemplation which comes of silence and ease. It is not meditation or reverie, which presupposes a conscious mind relaxing: it is something deeper, a fathomless repose of the will, which does not even pose to itself the question: 'Am I happy or unhappy?'

He had been jotting on a slip of paper and now he handed it to me, saying: 'Now your troubles begin, for you will have to alter the house. Here, I have costed it for you. A bathroom will cost you so

much. The balcony, at so much a cubic foot, should cost you so much. If you sell the beams they fetch three pounds each, and there are eighty-you should have so much in hand. This is only for your private information, as a check, my dear.' He lit a cigarette and snarled gently. 'Now the man you want to build for you is Andreas Kallergis. He is good and honest-though of course he is a rogue like me! But he will do you a solid job-for much can go wrong, you know. You will find the cost of cement brick there, and rendering per cubic metre.'

I tried to express my gratitude but he waved his hand. 'My dear Durrell,' he said, 'when one is warm to me, I am warm to him back. You are my friend now and I shall never change even if you do.'

We drank deeply and in silence. 'I was sent to you by a Greek,' I said and now the Turk sends me back to a Greek.'

He laughed aloud. 'Cyprus is small,' he said, 'and we are all friends though very different. This is Cyprus, my dear.'

It seemed in that warm honey-gold afternoon a delectable island in which to spend some years of one's life.

ABOUT THE ESSAY :

'How to Buy a House' is an extract from Durrell's autobiographical narrative 'Bitter Lemons'. Though apparently the essay deals with the author's 'adventure' of searching a house of moderate price tag amidst the beauteous hills and trees of Cyprus, yet it focuses in-depth upon human nature and the worth of human values like friendship in the modern world.

The whole chapter is abundant with comic scenes - the most ludicrous being the 'Kidnapping' of the cobbler's wife who instead of protesting and screaming seem to enjoy the car ride. However, it is Sabri Tahir, who is the center of attraction. It is he who dictates the course of action. Though very shrewd in finalizing his deals and clever in manipulating others, yet he is one who values friendship above anything else. Another feature of the essay is the Biblical allusions. They have been used mainly to give us a feeling about the cobbler's wife. Basically, they serve to heighten the comic sense in the character of cobbler's wife. The essay can be taken as an insight into the inner recesses of the human mind and soul.

WORD NOTES :

- Proliferate*: develop, grow
Veneration: regard
Dilapidated: in bad shape
Evacuations: make empty
Terrain vague: unused land
Maple: a store in London
Impedimenta: necessities
Reptilian concentration: very grave
Kayf: contemplation in Arabic
Portentously: mysteriously
Tenuous: unsubstantial, slender
Harangue: long speech in a tone as if scolding
Barked: shouted, in this context
Tangerine: a variety of orange
Fronde: leaves
Wisp: small bunch
Sewn: stitch
Commiserating: having a feeling
Commanderia: a variety of wine
Desultory: lacking any purpose
Argosy: a ship with valuable goods
Carillon: bells in a tower which can be used as musical instruments
Festoons: chains of flowers, ribbons etc. usually used for decorative purposes.
Wiseacres: a dull persons who pretends to know much
Maundering: moving around in a disinterested manner
Parchment: dried animal skins used for writing
Fretted: decorated
Heifer: a young cow
Quirk: habit or action peculiar to somebody
Osiers: the twigs of this variety of willow used in weaving handicrafts
Chaffering: enjoying a good humour

Catechism: instruction

Mortgage: an agreement where land is given as security for debt

Nonagenarian: one in his nineties

Wagram: The place where Napoleon overpowered the Austrians

★ QUESTIONS ★

1. Give a character sketch of Sabri Tahir. [GU 2007]
2. Narrate after Durrell, the drama of the deal leading to the author's buying of the village house. Assess the woman house - owner and her significance in the essay.
3. '....we are all friends though very different'. Elucidate.
4. Would you describe Sabri Tahir as well versed in human psyche? Give reasons for your answer.



DHARAPUR, GUWAHATI-781133

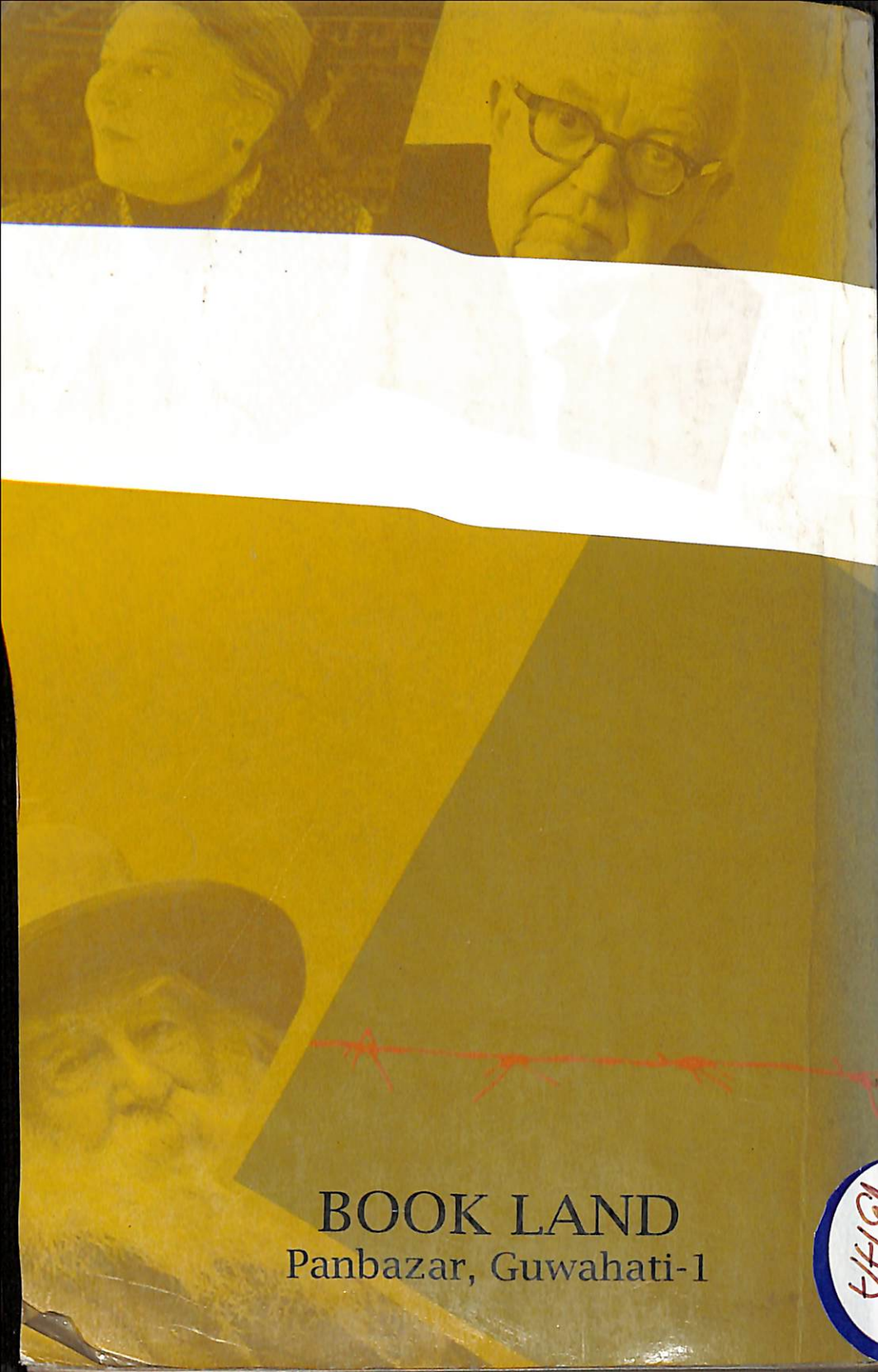


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