

# **E-Notes**

on

## **Select Poems and Essays**

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## A Short Introduction to the Romantic Poetry in English Literature

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“Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility”

### ■ William Wordsworth, “Preface” to the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800

“What is a Poet? He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them.”

### ■ William Wordsworth, “Preface” to the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800

“The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language....”

### ■ William Wordsworth, “Preface” to the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800

“What allies six great poets (Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Keats) so different in their reactions to the common theme of Imagination is a quality of passion and largeness, in speech and in response to life. All of them knew increasingly well . . . that the theory of poetry is the theory of life. As they would not yield the first to historical convention, so they could not surrender the second to religion or philosophy or the tired resignations of society. They failed of their temporal prophecy, but they failed as the Titans did, massive in ruin and more human than their successors.”

### ■ Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company*

“According to the central tradition hitherto, poetry departs from fact principally because it reflects a nature which has been reassembled to make a composite beauty, or filtered to reveal a central form or the common denominator of a type, or in some fashion culled and ornamented for the greater delight of the reader. To the romantic critic, on the other hand, though poetry may be ideal, what marks it off from fact is, primarily, that it incorporates objects of sense which have already been acted on and transformed by the feelings of the poet.”

### ■ M H Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*

- **Romantic poetry is called so less because of the fact that it deals with the “romantic” or “amorous” or “love-related” human relationships, although that also forms one of the core themes of this kind of a poetry, but chiefly because it deals with “romances” or stories of adventures, imaginative, marvelous and sometimes, supernatural, written in provincial languages or dialects other than Latin.**

- **Duration of the Romantic Period in English Literature:**

**Beginning:** 1785 (the death of Samuel Johnson/ One year before the Robert Burns’ *Poems, Chiefly in Scottish Dialect*), or sometimes, 1789 (Outbreak of the French Revolution), or chiefly, 1798, the publication of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads*.

**Conclusion:** 1832 (the passage of the first Reform Bill).

- **Influences of Major Historical Events:**

- ✓ **Publication of the book *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) by Adam Smith:**

This is a factor in the gradually shift of socio-economic condition towards capitalism, industrialism, urbanism and democracy, and thus in the making of a romantic mind, either by addressing the issues of the common people or escaping from a world that became harsher than ever before. In this book, Adam Smith, who is called the Father of Modern Economics and the Free Market Economy, proposed the idea of least or nil governmental control on the production and circulation of the private sphere of economy, thus paved the way for the private capitalist and corporate enterprises in future. He believed that every individual economic enterprise taking care of itself in a competitive environment finally should result in the economic prosperity of the society and the nation. This theory of ‘absolute advantage’ along ‘division of labour’ is made universal by the aid of concept of the ‘invisible hand’, a force that guides every individual economic enterprise towards facilitating an overall prosperity of the society and the nation. This gradually resulted in the withdrawal of the social securities of a welfare nation, and paved way for the future revolutions with democratic-socialist demands.

✓ **The American Revolution (1775-1783)**

This revolution, also known as the American War of Independence, primarily fought between the Great Britain and the thirteen colonies in America, resulted in the end of British domination over America. In Britain, the aftermath of the surrender of Charles Cornwallis, the British Commander, to George Washington-led Americans in 1781, gave more moral and political validity to the democratic Whigs, who were against any offences on the Americans, than to the royalist and pro-war Tories. This gave rise to a more liberal politics in Britain that favored the ideals of freedom and equality, easing the path towards romanticism.

✓ **The Irish Rebellion (1798)**

The Irish Rebellion of 1798, fought basically by a rebellion group called The United Irishmen against the British, was influenced by the American and the French Revolutions. This event, although was brutally suppressed by the British Crown, claimed as many as fifty thousand lives, according to a contemporary estimate, and gave rise to major humanitarian concerns that could also possibly influence the making of a romantic mindset.

✓ **The French Revolution (1789-1799)**

The French Revolution was the single-most influence on the English Romantic Movement as some of the poets, like Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, were directly or indirectly attached with the event. The ideals of “Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité” or “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” along with Freedom, of the revolution heavily influenced the British romantic poets. The democratic tendency in the romantic poetry was also a result of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s philosophical ‘theory of social contract’ in *The Social Contract* (1762) that strongly professes for individual freedom, observing “man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains.” Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey”, Coleridge’s “Destruction of the Bastille” and Shelley’s “Queen Mab” allude to the French Revolution.

➤ **Philosophical Theories:**

✓ **Neo-Platonism:**

The concept of the world as an expression of Ideas elaborated the significance of the attempt to conceive this universe through the unfolding of the Spirit or Mind (the German *Geist*).

✓ **Pantheism:**

That Nature was governed by a Mighty Power, an immanent God, whose presence is manifest and could be felt by meditation and close observation in every animate and inanimate object of this universe, thus giving it a soul of its own.

✓ **German Idealism:**

Schelling, in particular, considered Nature as something alive that shares man's own feelings because they both are driven by the same animating principle.

✓ **Pantisocracy:**

Pantisocracy, equal or level government by/for all, was a utopian scheme conceived chiefly by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey for the formation of an egalitarian community. It is a system of government where all the stakeholders rule with equal partnership. Although the project collapsed in reality, the virtual and intellectual effect of this philosophically charged scheme influenced the Romantics considerably.

➤ **Characteristics of Romantic Poetry:**

✓ **Ordinary Experience of Common People:**

The Romantic poets, especially as proposed by Wordsworth, stressed on making the ordinary experiences of the common mass, the "humble and rustic life", the subjects of his poetry. So, this kind of poetry deals with commonplace subjects expressed in the language "really used by men".

✓ **Subjectivity:**

The idea of individual freedom, along with the centrality of poet in transforming experiences through his/her emotions, imagination, knowledge and empathy, has painted the romantic poetry with the color of subjectivity (quality of being based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions).

✓ **Imagination:**

Creating art/poetry as a 'thing of beauty' or an aesthetic whole was one of the prime goals of the romantic poets. For achieving that, they increasingly relied on the power of imagination as a transcendental and moral force to know the truth of nature. Imagination was also important to transform the ordinary personal experiences into universal and morally uplifting narratives.

✓ **The Sublime:**

Romantic poetry, like many other literary movements, is a place where oppositional traits and ideas get united to form an organic whole. The sublime, which pitches for the extra-ordinary, the transcendental, takes its flight from the ordinary, and transforms the romantic poetry substantially to make it a superior experience.

✓ **Love for Nature:**

The anti-renaissance, anti-modern and anti-urban tendency in the romantics had naturally transformed them into nature lovers and worshippers. Almost the whole body of the romantic poetry is full of dedication to nature, especially as the romantic poets, under the influence of pantheism, treated Nature as not only a living being but a grand, superior and universal Self capable of nurturing and transforming the humanity for better. Naturally, "Let nature be your teacher" has been the central slogan for the romantics, as they really believed that

"One impulse from a vernal wood

May teach you more of man,

Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.” (William Wordsworth, “The Tables Turned”)

✓ **Pessimism:**

The romantics were, by and large, going against the spirit of the age, which was gradually getting dominated by industrial modernity. Romanticism can largely be seen as the counter-movement of such a modernity though has sprung from that only. On the top of that, many romantic poets, like Shelley and Keats, have suffered a lot mentally and physically and also have died untimely. The misfortune and escapism have resulted in pessimism in a large body of romantic poems.

✓ **Use of Classical Mythology and Supernaturalism:**

The use of classical mythology, like the Greek or Hellenic elements by Keats, has served to be a tool for sublimation, transportation and transformation for many of the romantic poets. Eerie supernaturalism is also such a tool in this kind of poetry.

## Critical Appreciation of the Poem: “Three Years She Grew”

or

### “The Education of Nature” by William Wordsworth

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“Three Years She Grew” is a lyric (a short musical poem) and also an elegy (a poem written in memory of a deceased person) written by William Wordsworth (1770–1850), one of the forerunners of the Romantic Movement in British poetry. This poem is also known as “The Education of Nature”, as the poet wants the personified Nature to be the teacher and the nurturer. This is a part of a series of five poems composed between 1798 and 1801, known as ‘Lucy Poems’, which deal with the idealized character of Lucy, a small girl, who is often supposed to be either as symbolized Nature herself or as the closest companion to Her. This particular poem was composed between 6 October and 28 December, 1798, and was published in 1800 in the *Lyrical Ballads*, in collaboration with Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

In this poem, the Nature adopts Lucy with the intention of making her ‘a lady of her own’. This why the little girl lives in close companionship of the natural objects like the rocks, the earth, the glades, the heaven, the mountains, the clouds, the trees and the storms. But, the last stanza reveals that she is dead before she could become the ideal representation of Nature. This might inspire the readers to think over if the poet is addressing, although indirectly, the issue of opposition of the nature and the culture or the human civilization, the latter overpowering the former. It is important to take note, at this point, that the Romantics had always been critical of the post-renaissance industrial civilization booming at the cost of nature.

In the first stanza, the Nature identifies Lucy as somebody very special: “A lovelier flower on earth was never sown”; and takes the pledge to make her an ideal lady following her own spirit. As per Nature’s plan, the second stanza elaborates that she will guide the child through her agents like ‘rock’, ‘plain’, ‘earth’, ‘glade’, and ‘bower’. Nature will teach her both “law and impulse” to enable Lucy judicious enough to “kindle or restrain”.

The third stanza paints the little girl with spontaneous and gleeful motion filled with as vital energy as could be that of a fawn or a mountain spring. It also shows how her equally

natural calmness and meditative power could enable her to establish communion with even the 'mute' and 'insensate' things of the Nature.

The fourth stanza is a statement of how this power to strike a balance between the motion and the calm, to act fast and to restrain to meditate, will develop into the rare virtue of "Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form/ By silent sympathy".

The fifth stanza describes the development of vital senses for realizing the aesthetic of the Nature hidden in the secret crevices of it, like "Where rivulets dance their wayward round,/ And beauty born of murmuring sound". This rare beauty will finally be reflected in the face of Lucy.

The sixth stanza is an expression of Lucy being blessed with the most important energy of life, 'delight' that "Shall rear her form to stately height" as she grows up and "Her virgin bosom swell". The final and seventh stanza is full of mourning as it declares the sad untimely demise of Lucy leaving the Nature alone only with their sweet passage of time spent together: "The memory of what has been,/ And never more will be."

The poem can be interpreted in several ways. The separation of nature and human civilization might be the starting point. The post-industrial civilization in the Western world was already started taking a toll as artificiality, social instability, gap between classes, loss of imagination, emotion and bonding, the emptying of the villages for migration to the cities and other symptoms of modernity were changing the way life was traditionally lived in close proximity of flora and fauna. The little girl may be taken as the symbol of industrial human civilization taking a course further from nature in a mode of denial, and when the Nature adopts it to nurture in her own spirit, it dies early. Thus, this poem may be a visionary warning to the human civilization of its imminent death if it deviates too much from the natural course of life.

In an alternative way, the poem may be read as the "the universal truth of the nature of the life, that is, we are from nature, we sustain by the nature, we have to return to nature and there is no loss of human life after death. It is a loss only to the living. This big but bitter truth must be accepted." (K N Sharma) The demise of Lucy is a loss to the materiality of the humans, thus the tone is elegiac or of that of mourning. The same might be celebratory for the Nature, as departure from this human life also indicates a permanent bonding or marriage with the Nature. So, for the Nature, the poem is epithalamic (a song sung in marriage).

The poem is divided into seven stanzas, each having a rhyme scheme of 'aabccb'. Following the characteristic scheme of romantic poem, the language of the poem is simple, almost using 'the real language of men'. The flight of imagination makes it a perfect romantic poem. The poem has two narrators: a frame narrator and an embedded narrator. While the latter narrates the poem almost in its entirety until the last stanza, the former, who observes from outside and knows everything (omniscient) declares the demise of Lucy in the last stanza.

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## **A critical appreciation on “One Word is too Often Profaned”**

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The poem “One Word is too Often Profaned” or “Love” was written by romantic poet, P.B. Shelly in the year 1822 in memory of his beloved friend Jane Williams. This was included in an anthology called *Posthumous Poems* by Percy Bysshe Shelly published by the poet’s friend Leigh Hunt in the year 1824 from London after the death of the poet. The Williams couple, Jane and Edward had a special friendship with the poet, and he has dedicated several of his poems, which are often called as “Love Poems to Jane”.

In the first stanza of the poem the poet is referring to his feelings and emotions for Jane. He ponders over how the word “Love” has often been made cheap and thus, “profaned” by its usages. In course of physical terms or fanciful context so he does not want to use the word “love” to relate his deep and respectful relationship with Mrs Williams. The feelings of respect and dedication especially in context of traditional love poems has very often been neglected and disdained. The poet feels that even if he openly expresses these feelings in his poems he will not be in danger of further criticism. The poet feels a rebellious compulsion in expressing his feelings because he holds no major distinction between hopes and his despair, and he thinks that the difference in these two feelings cannot be done on rational terms. In place of what is romantically called as “love” he prays for the feeling of “pity” from his lady love.

In the second stanza he redefines love and in the way of doing it, he expresses or urges his lady love to accept his heartfelt feelings of worship for her. He hopes as there is nothing immoral in his love, God ill never forbid. He finally concludes that his feeling is something which can be

called as extra terrestrial or transcendental, like “the desire of the moth for the star” or “of the night for the morrow”.

The poet’s mind is expressed through the paradox used in the poem like, “one hope is too like despair” etc. Finally the imageries of “the moth for the star” or “of the night for the morrow” expressed the transcendental nature of his feelings, which go beyond the feeling that is traditionally called love in crudest scene. The metrical feet used in the poem are a mixture of anabesed and lambs . The first time of each couplet contains three accents and the second line contains two.

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## A Short Introduction to Victorian Poetry

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“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

### ■ Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

“It was a time of rapid and wrenching economic and social changes that had no parallel in earlier history—changes that made England, in the course of the nineteenth century, the leading industrial power, with an empire that occupied more than a quarter of the earth's surface. The pace and depth of such developments, while they fostered a mood of nationalist pride and optimism about future progress, also produced social stresses, turbulence, and widespread anxiety about the ability of the nation and the individual to cope, socially, politically, and psychologically, with the cumulative problems of the age.”

### ■ M H Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*

#### ➤ Duration of the Victorian Period:

**Beginning:** 1832 (the passage of the first Reform Bill) or sometimes as 1837 (the accession of Queen Victoria).

**Conclusion:** The death of Victoria in 1901.

(W. J. Long and M. H. Abrams consider the period stretches between 1850 and 1900)

#### ➤ Major Historical Developments:

- ✓ **The Great Reform Act: 1832**
- ✓ **The Factory Act (Prohibition of Child Labor below the Age of Nine in Factories): 1833**
- ✓ **Abolition of Slavery in Britain: 1834**
- ✓ **Sending of the First Electric Telegraph: 1837**
- ✓ **People's Charter: 1838**

- ✓ **The Opening of the First Modern Railroad Line, the London-Birmingham Railway: 1838**
- ✓ **Beginning of Official Sell of ‘Penny Black’, the First Postage Stamp, sold for One Penny: 1840**
- ✓ **The Mines Act (Prohibition of Child Labor below the Age of Ten in Mines and Collieries): 1842**
- ✓ **The Irish Potato Famine: 1845-52**
- ✓ **Publication of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: 1848**
- ✓ **Women First Attend the University of London: 1848**
- ✓ **The First Great Exhibition (London): 1851**
- ✓ **The Vaccination Act for Small Pox: 1853**
- ✓ **The Crimean War: 1853-56**
- ✓ **Bessemer Blast Furnace Patenting (Mass and cheap production of steel): 1855**
- ✓ **The Big Ben (The Great Clock of Westminster Implying Establishment of National Time): 1858**
- ✓ **Dissolution of the East India Company and Transfer of Control of India to the Crown Following The First War of Indian Independence (The Sepoy Mutiny): 1857**
- ✓ **The First Transatlantic Cable/ Trans-Continental Telegraph: 1858**
- ✓ **Publication of *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin: 1859**
- ✓ **The Irish Reforms, Establishment of Elementary Education and Secret Paper Ballot Voting: 1868**
- ✓ **Patenting Telephone and Making of the First Telephone Call by Alexander Graham Bell: 1876**
- ✓ **First Serial Killing of Five Prostitutes by Jack the Ripper in London: 1888**
- ✓ **Death of Queen Victoria: 1901**

➤ **Major Themes:**

- ✓ **The Industrial Revolution**
- ✓ **Population growth and migration**
- ✓ **Social Reforms**
- ✓ **The Rise of Middle Class**
- ✓ **The Growth of Democracy**
- ✓ **Electoral Reforms**
- ✓ **Expansion of the Empire**
- ✓ **Idealization of Family and Moral Conducts**
- ✓ **Stringency in the Legal System**
- ✓ **Growth of Leisure Pursuits**

➤ **Characteristics of Victorian Poetry:**

✓ **Realism:**

The Victorian poets were more focused on the real socio-political issues and developments taking place in the nation and the world. Very often the poetry of this age reflects the historical issues and themes mentioned above, directly or indirectly.

✓ **Moral Purpose:**

The poetry of this age left the Romantic idealism of “Art for Art’s Sake” as its purpose for teaching people to be morally and ethically correct in conduct and thinking. This seems to be an antidote of the rapid and major socio-economic shifts taken place due to industrial reforms and other reforms, for example, changes in traditional life as an aftermath of intra and inter-national migration and of changing pattern of human labor.

✓ **Juxtaposition of Idealism and Practicality:**

While the Victorian poets could not afford to completely take an eye off the trials and tribulations taking place in the society, politics and culture, they also understood well the basic function of poetry to be providing hope and relief. The use of medieval myths and folklore in the poetry of this age can be related to the poets’ realization of providing essential relief. So, their poems often juxtapose idealism and practicality. They foreground the tension and contradiction arising out of living in a strife-stricken society and also fostering the indomitable spirit for the welfare of the greater humanity.

✓ **Science versus God:**

A major theme of the poetry of this age is the tension between the empirically and rationally driven scientific attitude, and the age-old belief system coupled with the

formal religious establishments, like the Church. This became more obvious after the publication of *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin in the second half of the nineteenth century.

✓ **Poetry of Urbanity:**

The development of the cities gradually as the metropolitan centers inspired the poets of this age to make them as the locales for their poetry. Major poets chiefly living in the big cities like London also made it a factor that they were writing more about cities.

✓ **Poetry of Masses:**

The Victorian poets were writing at a time when the popular democracy was on the rise. The industrial revolution had already created a *nouveau riche* class (suddenly and newly emerged rich class as opposed to the traditional rich class represented by landlords, big farmers, farmhouse owners etc.), who started employing people on a mass scale in factories and in domestic spaces as 'workers'. This new salaried working class gradually gave birth to the middle class and its spectrum of moral codes and conducts. They, along with the development of prose, became more and more the subjects of Victorian poetry.

✓ **Pessimism:**

Industrial revolution and advancement in science and technology, coupled with social-economic-political reforms, also brought about a spike in the urban population resulting in poverty, unemployment, corruption, diseases and death, apart from deserted villages with aged people struggling to survive, environmental and existential crises. These factors brought pessimism in the poetry of this period, which was more or less focused on realism.

➤ **Major Victorian Poets and Their Works:**

- ✓ **Alfred Tennyson: My Last Duchess, Men and Women, A Death to the Desert, The Last Ride Together**
- ✓ **Robert Browning: The Princess, The May Queen, Crossing the Bar,**
- ✓ **Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Prometheus Bound, Aurora Leigh**
- ✓ **Matthew Arnold: Rugby Chapel, Thyrsis, Scholar Gypsy, Dover Beach, Soharab and Rustom**
- ✓ **A. H. Clough: The City of Dreadful Night**
- ✓ **Edward Fitzgerald: Rubaiyat of Umar Khayyam**
- ✓ **Gerard Manley Hopkins: Pied Beauty, The Windhover**
- ✓ **Oscar Wilde: Endymion, The Grave of Keats, Impressions**
- ✓ **D. G. Rossetti: Aspecta Medusa, Autumn Song, The Cloud Confines**
- ✓ **Christina Rossetti: Goblin Market, The Prince's Progress**
- ✓ **Thomas Hardy: 'According to the Mighty Working', A Broken Appointment, The Darkling Thrush**

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## Critical Appreciation of the Poem “The Darkling Thrush” by Thomas Hardy

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“The Darkling Thrush” is one of those characteristic poems of the late Victorian Age, which not only represent the various threads of tension and dilemma faced by a sensitive British contemporary but also show how poetry, in general, was gradually drifting towards the complex and myriad tendencies of modernism. It was probably composed towards the end of the concluding year of the nineteenth century, i.e. 1899, and was initially published with the title “By the Century’s Deathbed” on 29 December, 1900 in *The Graphic*. Later, it appeared in the *London Times* on the New Year’s Day of 1900, and finally, was anthologized in the *Poems of the Past and the Present* in 1901. Although Hardy had been a devout novelist almost throughout his life, by the time this particular poem was written, he stopped writing novel altogether after receiving harsh criticisms on his last novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1894-95), by the contemporary critics, and concentrated on writing poetry exclusively.

The poem is an elegy (a poem written in memory of a deceased) ending with a note of hope in the form of a ballad (a poem or song narrating a story in short stanzas). It personifies (attributing human characteristics to) the Nineteenth Century and mourns her passing as if somebody who was very close to the poet and whose life had been full of upheavals. The poem can be read at least on two different levels, one is more immediate describing the snow-covered landscape outside, and the other is metaphoric, describing the plight of the departing Century by comparing it with a corpse. The poem is composed of four octet or four stanzas of eight lines each developing on the sensory impressions of the poet about the topography around the poet’s house in a chilly snow-clad December evening in a remote place far away from the urban civilization. The tones change with the shift of moods in each of the stanza: deep sense of desolation, desperation and lament finally culminating in ecstasy, following the standard of the Victorian poetry’s characteristic movement from pessimism to optimism.

The first stanza describes that the poet examines the snow-clad landscape outside as snowfall in the form of the personified ‘Winter’s dregs’ continues to keep the place desolate. It is evening time, and that has been indicated with the personified metaphor of day that has got too

tired to keep her eyes open. The time-scheme is complicated in the next four lines, as the simile of “strings of broken lyres” compared directly with the “bine-stems” look onto the sky to invoke the bygone days of traditional, organic and rhythmic village-life against the depression, detachment and un-fulfillment prevalent in the present time. The mankind that used to ‘haunt’ the nights by gathering on community-level for celebration of provincial festivities around fires lit-up outside in some common spaces, has now taken refuge to the feeble and artificial warmth of household stoves. These imageries not only vividly comment upon the present scenario but may also allude to the historical tragedies like the breaking of traditional societies and customs, the mass migration to cities, especially of the young population, and consequent desolation of villages left out only with old people facing gerontological concerns. The present stanza, in the spirit of a modernist poem, through using such metaphors as ‘spectre-grey’ and ‘haunt’, evokes a life-in-death and death-in-life situation where the distinction between humans and ghosts seems to be erased. The instances of personification of Frost, day and Winter magnifies the effect by giving life to the inanimate entities while the humans seem to be lying lifeless. Likewise, ‘coppice gate’ may also be read as a metaphor of a liminal existence canceling out the demarcation of outside and inside, and signaling to the transitions of times (the turn of the century) and spaces (the shift from rural to urban).

The eerie spectrality of the first stanza is carried forward in the second stanza the Century has directly been compared with a dead-body lying covered with a white sheet, with the contours of the immobile body-parts peeping out beneath the sheet, which resembles the snow-clad uneven landscape stretched outside the poet’s house. The first part of the stanza creates a concrete imagery of a funeral just before the burial, as the body of dead person is put in the vault: “His crypt the cloudy canopy,/ The wind his death-lament”. The next part writes a counter-narrative to the traditional and universal cycle of birth-death-birth, so popular in religious and folk beliefs and rituals. The poet fears almost a break in the cycle as he sees the “ancient spirit” is “shrunk hard and dry” with the least possibility of regeneration. He sees hopelessness in “every spirit on earth” one again the indicating to a possible existence between life and death. The spirit, “hard and dry” as of now is yet to die a complete death, and nevertheless, reserves the eternal possibility of re-germination.

Suddenly, there is a shift of mood in the third stanza on hearing a voice, a “full-hearted evensong/ Of joy illimited”, arising out of the bleak twigs above. This voice starkly contrasts with the broken lyre alluded to in the first stanza. While the lyre, a symbol of traditional festivity and communion, could no longer produce a fulfilling music with its broken strings, the voice ecstatically allures the poet with a more complete, compelling and rhythmical music. Probably, the poet has used the word ‘unlimited’ unconventionally with a twist of alliteration (repeated use of a consonant to create a musical effect; use of ‘l’ in ‘illimited’, in this case) to reflect upon the extent of the effect of musicality of the voice in his heart. The voice is of a small aged bird, called thrush that is braving the extremity of the climate and the pitiful condition as a result. It has become thin and weak, and is somehow sticking to the twigs of the tree. The use of the phrase “to fling his soul” instead of a body, shows the extent of unnatural distress on its body: as if the thrush exists only in spirit and not physically. The thrush may well be compared to the condition of the century: strife-stricken, full of dilemma and dereliction, dead in humanitarian spirit and existing mechanically, yet emanating the hope of resurgence of humanity, yet promising a resurrection. The Century may be dead, but not without a hope that the legacy of life will continue in future. In the title of the poem, the thrush has been described as a ‘darkling’ or as a small slice of the great darkness that has engulfed the landscape and also the dehumanizing darkness that the century has gone through. But, the thrush also symbolizes light, hope, assurance and regeneration.

The last stanza concludes the poem by reiterating the statement of ecstasy of the previous stanza. In this stanza, the bird’s music has been referred to as ‘carolings’ or small pieces of the Christmas carols, invoking the theological imagery of the resurrection of the Christ with the assurance that humanity is still alive and it is saved from destruction. This theological undertone may also be symbolic of the re-establishment of old order of tradition and faith. The conclusion personifies ‘Hope’ as a universal order that has been embodied by the thrush in this poem. When there was no reason left on earth for a positive aspiration to prevail, it was the thrush that kept the spirit of life going amidst the “growing gloom”.

# **“RING OUT, WILD BELLS”**

**BY ALFRED TENNYSON**

## **CHAPTER NOTES**

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### **CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF “RING OUT, WILD BELLS”:**

LORD ALFRED TENNYSON IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT POETS OF THE VICTORIAN ERA. HIS POEMS CHARACTERISTICALLY PORTRAY THE TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS THAT PREVAIL DURING THIS ERA/AGE.

“RING OUT WILD BELLS” IS ONE OF SUCH TESTIMONIALS OF VICTORIAN LITERATURE WHEREIN THE ISSUES LIKE SOCIAL REALISM, POLITICAL TURMOIL , CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MAN & THE NATURE AND THE FACTORS LIKE GROWING GAP BETWEEN THE POOR AND THE RICH , PARTY - POLITICAL CLASHES, DEHUMANIZATION OF THE SOCIETY AND GROWING MATERIALISTIC AND TECHNOCRATIC ATTITUDE ARE ADEQUATELY ADDRESSED.

THIS POEM WAS WRITTEN IN 1850, THE YEAR TENNYSON WAS APPOINTED AS THE POET LAUREATE. THE POET IS PART OF THE ANTHOLOGY OF THE POEMS CALLED ‘IN MEMORIAM’ WHICH WAS WRITTEN IN THE MEMORY OF TENNYSON’S CLOSE FRIEND AND THE FIANCÉ OF HIS SISTER ARTHUR HALLAM THE FIANCÉ OF HIS SISTER WHO DIED AT THE AGE OF TWENTY TWO.

THIS POEM THUS ADDRESSES ISSUES AND THEMES AT THREE DIFFERENT LEVELS.

THE FIRST LEVEL IS CONCERNED WITH THE SUPERFICIALITY OF THE DETAILS THAT OCCUR IN THE POEM. FOR E.G., TENNYSON IS DESCRIBING A WINDY AND CHILLY LATE NIGHT TOWARDS THE END OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER WHEN IT WAS PRESENT IN THE NEARBY AREA OF WALTHAM ABBEY CHURCH. AS A PART OF THE TRADITIONAL RITUALS, THE FULL CIRCLE IN THIS ENGLISH BELL WERE BEING RUNG IN THE CHURCHES TO BEAT A FAREWELL TO THE PASSING YEAR AND TO WELCOME THE NEW YEAR. AT THIS LEVEL THE POET WANTS THE PREVIOUS YEAR TO TAKE AWAY ALL THE PAINS AND NEGATIVITIES ALONG WITH IT. LIKEWISE, HE ALSO WANTS TO WELCOME WHATSOEVER IS GOOD FOR HUMAN KIND TO ACCOMPANY THE NEW YEAR.

AT THE SECOND LEVEL HE WANTS TO FORGET ALL HIS PERSONAL AND FAMILIAR GRIEF AT THE DEATH OF ARTHUR HALLAM . WHILE THE OLD YEAR IS PASSING BY, HE WANTS TO LIVE WITH RENEWED ENERGY AND HOPE AS THE NEW YEAR ARRIVES.

AT THE THIRD LEVEL, THE CANVAS OF THE POEM IS MUCH MORE EXPANDED AS IT STARTS COMMENTING ON THE TIME AND THE SPACE IN WHICH IT WAS WRITTEN. HERE THE SUPERFICIAL MARKERS LIKE THE DESCRIPTION OF THE ATMOSPHERE THROUGH ‘THE FLYING

CLOUD', THE FROSTY LIGHT', 'WILD BELLS', 'THE DEATH OF THE YEAR', 'THE MOURNFUL RHYMES ETC. NO MORE REMAIN SKETCHY ONLY, RATHER PARTAES THE ROLE OF A COMMENTATOR COMMENTING UPON THE TURBULENT VICTORIAN TIMES AND THE TURMOIL

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AND THE TRIALS THROUGH WHICH ENGLAND AND THE EUROPE IN GENERAL, WERE GOING THROUGH.

SO, WITH RINGING OUT OF THE BELLS, HE WANTS THE MODERN PROPAGANDA AS HE CALLS IT 'THE FALLS' SHOULD GO AWAY. SIMILARLY, THE AGE-OLD SPIRITUAL AND HUMANISTIC FAITH IN THE VALUE OF THE TRUTH SHOULD ALSO COME BACK WITH THE RECURRENT MOTIFS OF 'RING IN' AND 'RING OUT' OF THE BELLS. THE POET WISHES TO ADDRESS SUCH CONTEMPORARY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES AS 'THE FEUD OF RICH AND POOR', 'ANCIENT FORMS OF PARTY STRIFE', 'FAITHLESS COLDNESS OF THE TIME', 'CIVIC SLANDER AND THE SPITE', 'THE NARROWING LAST OF GOLD', 'THE THOUSAND WARD OF COLD' AND 'THE DARKNESS OF THE LAND'. INSTEAD OF ALL THESE NEGATIVITIES OF THE VICTORIAN TIMES AND SPACES, THE POET WANTS 'THE REDRESS TO ALL MAN KIND SHOULD TAKE PLACE BY WELCOMING 'THE NOBLER MODES OF LIFE', 'SWEETER MANNERS', 'PURER LAWS' 'THE LOVE OF TRUTH AND RIGHT', 'THE COMMON LOVE OF GOOD', 'THE LARGER HEART', 'THE KINDLIER HAND', 'THE VALIENT MAN AND FREE' AND 'THE THOUSAND YEARS OF PEACE'. THE POEM HAS SOME MARVELLOUS IMAGERIES CREATED WITH OUT OF CHILLY DECEMBER NIGHTS. THE RECURRENT MOTIFS OF 'RINGING IN' AND 'RINGING OUT' OF THE BELLS HELP THE POET ACHIEVE ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN COMMENTING UPON THE CONTEMPORARY ISSUES. THE MYTHOLOGICAL ALLUSION OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE CHRIST CONCLUDES THE POEM WITH AN OPTIMISTIC MODE, WHICH IS IN KEEPING WITH THE SPIRIT OF ANY GOOD PIECE OF VICTORIAN POETRY.

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## **Critical Appreciation of the Essay “India: Our Motherland” by Swami Vivekananda**

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In the essay, “India our Motherland” by Swami Vivekananda is trying to visualise the basis of future and free India as a nation. He is of the opinion that it is better to keep the soul of the nation in religion instead of in social or political independence. We should know that the essay in discussion refers to the First War of Independence or The Sepoy mutiny, as the essay mentions about it, that took place in 1857. So, the current essay must have been written after that event, when India was still under the British rule and the political and intellectual leadership was searching for a way how future free India would look like as an independent nation. Till that time, only one model of nation would be available to the world was that of the Western countries. Mostly, this model followed the ideal of “One Nation means One Language one Culture and one Ethnicity.” But Indian intellectuals like Swamiji conceived that in such a multi-lingual, multi-cultured and multi-ethnic India would not have survived had it followed the European model of nationhood. So, religion based on a wide version of spiritualism and humanism, became an alternative vision of Indian nationhood to Swami Vivekananda.

At this point, it is important to clarify how Swamiji conceived the notion of religion. He has made it clear in the essay that he is against the “duality of lust and luxury as the male and female deities with money as its priest.” Swamiji insists that the negative evil practices that are carried out in the name of religion like fraud, force and competition cannot be considered as religion proper. Rather he preaches us that a true religion is that which is rooted in the humanist and spiritual traditions and virtues. He is also against that version of religion which is excessively centred around, unnecessary ceremonies or religion which he calls “magic memories” or about excessive showbiz, which he calls “charlatanism”.

Rather, his religion is based on the good qualities and virtues of humanism and spiritualism. These qualities are moral perfection, soft behaviour, sympathy or empathy for others' idealities. In addition, he opines, “the national ideal of India RENUNCIATION and SERVICE.” He wants the future India to forget “Hateful malice, that dog-like bickering barking at one another.” He wants to treat jealousy as a cause for national prospect. Rather he wants to be united as a nation. He says “expansion is life and contraction is death. Love is life and hatred is death.”

He adds the philosophy of *Karmayoga* to his notion of religion as the basis for the future Indian nation. His philosophy of *Karmayoga* teaches us to meditate through our work. He is against the tradition of excessive thinking and deliberation without actions on ground. He wants us to practice yoga through work only. He understands that excessive thinking or laziness for physical labour is the root cause of Indian lagging behind the European Nations. On the top of it, we have an ignorant and negative attitude towards work and people of working class . He says unless and until we work hard and we respect the people who at the ground level work the most for our survival ,we cannot excel as a nation. He dreams of a New India coming out of the peasants cottage , grasping the plough ,out of the hearts of fishermen the cobbler and the sweeper”. This statement it may also be taken as his strong stand against caste discrimination.

He has his complete faith on the younger generation of India. He calls the youth to procure the leadership quality and to lead the country from the front fearing of nothing. He calls them to be brave

and self reliant. He preaches us that it is the quality that matters not the quantity and the handful of quality youth can win over thousand untrained.

To conclude he calls the younger generation to “work onto death” and to “feel for the poor, ignorant and downtrodden.”

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## **Critical Appreciation of the Essay “WORK BRINGS SOLACE”**

**by Dr A P J Abdul Kalam**

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Dr APJ Abdul Kalam has been one of the leading scientist in the field of rocketry science in the history of India. The essay, “ Work Brings Solace” is one of the masterpieces by Dr Kalam that discusses his interaction with Dr. Wernher von Braun and his own experiences while working on the project SLV-3.

The essay can thematically be divided into two parts. The first part introduces Dr Braun and his achievements and the lessons learnt by Dr Kalam from his conversation with the American scientist .The second part describes Dr Kalam's experiences in the SLV-3 project and basically elaborates two concepts, 'commitment' and 'flow' which play an instrumental role in getting peace out of hard work.

The first thematic part gives an elaborate account of who Dr von Braun is and and what his achievements are. We learnt from this part that Dr Braun is one of the stanwarts in the field of rocketry science and was at that point in time, working with the the NASA in USA. His first major achievement was to develop lethal V2 missile that devastated London in World War 2. While working for the the US army , Dr von Braun also produced the landmark JUPITER missile, which was the first IRBM with 3000 km range. We learnt that V2 missile which was successfully tested on on 16 August 1942 ,became the first missile to exceed the speed of sound. His phenomenal achievement in the field of rocketry science was the development of the rocket called SATURN that launched the first man on the moon during the mission APOLLO.

These two scientists were travelling in a flight from Chennai to Mumbai in Thiruvananthapuram, Dr Kalam asked Dr von Braun whether India would get any support from the US in its rocketry science projects. Dr Braun advised Dr Kalam to move forward on the basis of ISRO's own strength. He suggested Dr. Kalam that initially troubles might occur but “one doesn't just build on successes , but also on failures”. He also insightfully suggested that one must have a vision if he/ she had to build something sustainable for a long time period. His most important suggestion was not to make “rocketry your profession or your livelihood- make it your religion, your mission”.

In the second thematic part, Dr Kalam discusses the concept of ‘commitment’/ while sharing with us his own experiences in working on the SLV project. He is of the opinion that if one is happy in working hard, he/she should<sup>29</sup>not be called , 'workholics', because, working

sincerely is never an illness, rather a virtue. He write that although during this period, he worked quite hard without much break and also gave up entertainment , recreation and interactions with family and friends other than that those involved in the project. He would only feel happy as he was able to work with his optimum capacity. He writes, “total commitment is the common denominator among all successful men and women.” He also opines that for becoming successful one must need good health, strength and boundless energy.

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The next concept that he elaborates is that of 'flow'. If commitment comes from the worker, flow is a resultant internal mechanism of the work itself. During flow, "action follows action according to an internal logic". There seems to be no need conscious intervention on the part of the worker." When there is flow , the worker feels immense confidence in himself/herself and is in complete control over any project. But for achieving flow in the work, one must perform two things : first, " work as hard as you can at something that presents a challenge" and devote "a significant span of uninterrupted time".

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**A Critical Appreciation of**  
**“Women’s Role in the National Movement”**  
**by Subhash Chandra Bose**

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The current essay is actually an excerpt from an address delivered by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose on July 12, 1943 to the women’s section of the Indian Independence League (IIL). In this address, Netaji is specifically sharing his opinion on the massive role women may play in the ongoing struggles for the Indian independence. The essay is specifically important as it gives an insight into the changing or changed pattern of the participation of women in the said struggles, especially since the regeneration of the Indian National Congress in 1921 under Mahatma Gandhi’s leadership.

The address may be divided into three significant topical parts : firstly, the dual role of women in the second third and fourth decades of the twentieth century; secondly, an analysis of the global political situation in those times; thirdly, the value of sacrifice and suffering for the cause of the independence. The essay ends with formal thanksgivings to the audience and also with the reiteration of the formation of the Azad Hind Army and a prior hint of the formation of The Jhansi Rani Regiment , the women’s regiment.

As Netaji addresses the mammoth meeting held opposite the Tokku Petsu-shi buildings in Singapore, he emphasizes how the women’s role has altered in his contemporary times. Women are no more indirectly serving as the reinforcements only in the Indian independence struggles. Rather, they are now actively and vigorously taking part in the public life. Crossing the barriers of the comparatively more tender participation in the activities of the Congress and in the struggles like Civil Disobedience, they are coming out to engage themselves on the more hazardous battlefronts and secret revolutionary movements. They are doing a wonder by never lagging behind anybody in going from village to village, campaigning without food and water ,

addressing meeting after meetings, facing lathicharge by the British police, and putting up with the privations of prison life, torture and humiliations. What is even more wonderful about them is that inspite of their significant participation in the public life, they have never forgotten to take good care of their homes and children.

Netaji also predicts that the time is ripe for giving a final blow to the British Empire, especially in India, and to liberate the country. He sees that such a perfect opportunity might not come in another hundred years. Referring to the ongoing process of the liberation of the erstwhile colonies, especially in the south-east Asia, in the thirties and forties of the previous century, he is giving the Clarion call to fight vigorously against the Axis Powers in the Second World War and to seize the freedom for India. He also refers to the support that is coming from within The Great Britain, and also smells that this support will also help in accelerating the cause of Indian independence.

He is also aware that for achieving independence, one imperative is that the Indians unite themselves across the classes, the castes, the genders and the age groups. He also emphasizes that without direct struggle and a devotion to that cause, any freedom will be meaningless. Negotiations with the rulers , he believes, can never boost the national pride and hence, can never sustain the quality of independence for long. So, he calls for a spiritual and enthusiastic active participation of all Indians, especially the women, in the revolutionary struggles of Indian independence.

## Critical Appreciation of the Essay

### “Man and Nature in India: The Ecological Balance” by Salim Ali

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In the essay entitled “Man and Nature in India: the Ecological Balance”, the famous bird lover, watcher and conservator and a leading zoologist of India, Dr. Salim Ali has elaborated the harmful effects of the destruction of wildlife and natural resources in India. He has also given the clarion call to understand the fact that human ecology is an integral part of nature conservation and the future of human civilization cannot be considered separately from the future of nature in India. He has opined that since the human race has become an agriculturist and husbandman, the human activities on the earth have largely remained disastrous, especially for the vegetation and the animal kingdom. He gives us the examples of how the ancient civilizations like Egypt, the kingdoms of West Asia, Carthage and the Indus Valley civilization have either become extinct or have converted into deserts. He discusses the basic problem of natural erosion as the resultant effect of the unregulated behavior and plunder of natural resources. He shockingly mourns that, “We in India have been living prodigally of an abundant capital”

Salim Ali gives examples of how the prodigal behavior of human beings towards the nature in the next section of the essay. He cites the discussions made by M.S. Randhawa in the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society. In this regard he discusses how the “luxuriant forests turned into a semi- desert” type of vegetation in the Mathura region of the Uttar Pradesh. While this region earlier had received 2000 mm of rainfall, now it receives only 600 mm of that.

He also discusses how the Great Indian Rhinoceros has disappeared from a vast region spanning from Peshawar to the Middle Eastern region of India, and has got restricted to exclusively to the Eastern and north-eastern regions of India. The pinheaded duck, which used to reside on the ground has become an extinct species. The distribution and count of lions in India has also changed for the worse. All these changes have taken place because of reasons like disappearance of forests, paucity of land for animals, because of more and more civilization and ever increasing human population and its habitats. He says, “It is indeed a tragic situation”.

He also deliberates upon how the agricultural economy has destroyed the ecological balance existing among the natural predators. Using pesticides, carrying on businesses related to animals and also in some cases superstitious prejudices have led to immense harm to the animal world. The population of the land crabs, which is harmful for the apiculture, has increased due to the frog trade. Birds like owls and other diurnal birds of prey have become less in numbers because of the superstitious behavior of the human beings.

He also opines that even the use of advanced technology for the betterment of mankind has paradoxically brought dangers to wildlife and environment. Introduction of chemical pesticides and herbicides, has led to a massive scale of pollution in water, earth and air. Although in recent years some stop-gap conservation measures have been taken, they cannot offer any permanent solution to this.

He has detected the undisciplined behavior of the human race as the central cause for ecological disasters. Indiscriminate growth of human population, and the need and greed of serving that has put the natural ecology at stake. The breaking down of the ecological balance, the writer fears, actually, will bring disaster to the human species and civilization one day.