

Block- 3

Unit 1 : Victorian Poetry: Background

**Unit 2 : Robert Browning: “An Epistle Containing the
Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the
Arab Physician”**

Unit 3 : G. M. Hopkins: “God’s Grandeur”

Unit 4 : G.M. Hopkins

Unit 1 : Victorian Poetry: Background

Unit Structure:

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Socio-historical Context
- 1.4 Writers and Their Preoccupations
- 1.5 Poetic Concerns
- 1.6 Summing Up
- 1.7 References and Suggested Readings

1.1 Objectives

In this unit an attempt has been made to acquaint you with the background of Victorian writing. Your knowledge of the chief trends and movements of the age will help you to contextualize the prose and poetry within the larger scenario. By the end of this unit, you will be able to-

- *sketch* the trends and main impulses that went into Victorian attitudes and culture
- *locate and identify* the various socio-historical forces that shaped the fiction and the poetry.

1.2 Introduction

The literature produced during the long reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) presents features natural in an era of tremendous social change and intellectual advancement. Never before had there been such rapid and sweeping changes in the social fabric of England. The period witnessed rapid technological, political and socio-economic changes due to the effects of the Industrial Revolution mainly. It was an epoch in which science advanced and long-standing religious ideas and institutions were challenged and even attacked. Much of the writing of the period addressed the pressing issues of the day; never before had literature been so closely in league with, or so openly in war with the forces of social change.

Awareness of human limitation was at the forefront of the consciousness of Victorian writers as much as an almost opposing perception of the almost limitless boundaries of empire and technological development. Thus the Victorian era was a period of intense struggles and a frequent preoccupation with the mortality of the human race characterizes the period. These paradoxes led Charles Dickens to write in 1859 in the opening of *A Tale of Two Cities*, lines that resonated with contemporary readership: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” (*A Tale of Two Cities* 1). In spite of the vast changes—political, economic, scientific and religious—the poetic temper of the Victorian Age was not drastically different from that of the early nineteenth century. In its individualism, play of imagination, love of the picturesque and interest in nature and the past, Victorian poetry continued the Romantic tradition. But the sense of wonder and joy that illuminated Romantic poetry is missing in Victorian poetry. Much of Victorian poetry depends for its effect on impressiveness of manner and tone and expresses a generally wistful and elegiac tone.

The Victorian age had its own share of philosophers and thinkers, creating conflict in belief. Books like John Stuart Mill’s *Logic*, Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital*, and F.H. Bradley’s *Ethical Studies and Appearance and Reality* articulated doubts regarding old beliefs and thus opened up hitherto uncharted intellectual territories for the writers of the age. The sweeping spiritual and scientific changes and the atmosphere of a different age gave the Victorian writer new dimensions which imparted to Victorian poetry a distinctive character of its own.

1.3 Socio-historical Context

One of the chief factors accounting for change was the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832, which, by placing political power in the hands of the middle-class, paved the way for a new democracy. The development of practical arts, applied science and machine production led not only to increased comforts of living but also to a deep-seated materialism. Discoveries in science gave rise to revolutionary concepts, which unsettled many of the old bases of religious belief. Epoch-making discoveries in geological and biological studies disturbed profoundly traditional views of man’s creation and of the length of his history on this planet. The Wordsworthian meaning of ‘Nature’ as something more than ‘the material world’, as indeed the very language of God — was increasingly both banished and relegated to the backwaters of the countryside. Wordsworth’s model of memory and feeling—the growth of the human mind

from childhood onwards in an ennobling interchange with the sacredly natural world—was displaced and damaged wholly if not lost.

One view of the Victorian age shows that besides other forms of social strife a growing current of feeling raised the dilemmas of religious faith in the face of secular beliefs. John Henry Newman described this feeling, of seeing “no reflexion of its Creator” (in *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 1864) in the mirror of the busy, material world. Yet publication of religious books during the years between 1836 to 1863, was of a significant number. We should also remember that Hopkins’s poetry, which was utterly steeped in a high religious faith, was not published. Whether God could be apprehended in the creation of the world became a question open to the intelligent mind to respond to. In the words of Matthew Arnold, the mid-century generation of John Stuart Mill found itself “Wandering between two worlds, one dead / The other powerless to be born” (“Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse”). Thus we can conclusively say that religious doubt is a hallmark of the age and that simply nothing could be taken to be in eternity.

It was not surprising, then, that the Church of England came under the shadow of expanding enfranchisement through the provisions of the Great Reform Bill of 1832. A movement recalling the sixteenth-century Reformation seemed to be playing itself out and thus between 1830 and 1850 we see “a second great, and perhaps final, crisis for the Western conscience.” (P.Davis) Within the schisms in the Church of England, by the middle of the century, can be seen the Evangelical Movement. This movement had the support of more than a third of clergymen in England in 1851 and directed its energies at spreading the Evangel or the Gospel, to renew the ‘vital simplicities’ of the puritans of the Reformation, purify the faith of all adornments such as ceremonies and sacraments, drawn from Roman Catholicism. Its wide appeal lay partly in its assertion of individual ‘adult conversion’ in place of the formal rites of infant baptism.

The movement emphasized the corruption of human nature in terms of the theory of the Fall and attempted to establish direct faith in Christ and his grace. G. M Hopkins’ poetry throws light upon this aspect of Evangelical assumptions that thus hopes to establish unadulterated faith in art and religion. He idealized Nature as a Scripture and paid tribute to the glory of the Creator and His creation. In *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo*, for instance, he insists on the restoration of faith in Beauty and innocence and offers tribute to the omnipotent God,

“Resign them, sign them, seal them, send them, motion them with breath,
And with sighs soaring sighs deliver
Them; beauty –in-the- ghost, deliver it, early now long before death
Give Beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God , beauty’s self
and beauty’s giver.”

The crisis in the Church of England did get more deeply advanced with the other important movement, the Oxford Movement or Tractarianism which was led from Oriel college, Oxford, by John Keble, Edward Bouverie Pusey and John Henry Newman. The *Tracts for the Times* issuing from this movement aimed at raising the awareness of the clergy to the critical state of the Church of England. Like the Evangelicals, Tractarianism stressed the fallenness of man and conducted the argument on the basis of theology. This was essentially its difference from the Broad Church Movement of Benjamin Jowett.

Stop to Consider

The Oxford Movement

The Oxford Movement or Tractarianism originated in July 1833 following upon Keble’s famous Assize Sermon against a secularized parliament’s interference in spiritual matters in the Church. The movement was led by the three intellectuals coming from Oriel College – John Keble, Edward Bouverie Pusey and Henry Newman, all three questioning the omnipresence of the Church who wanted to revive the sacramental value of the Church. They believed in the spiritual essence of things which can be realized only through experience of the divine and it is a doctrine hidden in language. Both Evangelicalism and the Oxford Movement shared contempt for the primacy of human reason and established faith in the ethics of the Fall of man. A theological change took place during mid-Victorianism with the coming of Newman, Froude and Arnold.

The Romantic poets had found reality in a religion of Nature. In contrast, perhaps, scientific rationalism destroyed the beliefs of the Victorians. The Wordsworthian religion of Nature could not supply the same meanings for most of them. Tennyson saw in Nature what his acute senses and scientific knowledge imparted. To Browning, nature was an occasional backdrop for love, death and heroic striving. It was Arnold who came closest to the Wordsworthian attitude but even he could not find complete solace in Nature.

The new skepticism destroyed for the Victorians the sense of wonder and awe that Nature inspired in the Romantics and they mostly observed and described nature with scientific accuracy. The development of the physical sciences, Darwin's evolutionary theory, German thinkers like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche painted a new world-picture where God seemed unnecessary and man insignificant. As misconceptions in religion and life were slowly removed, it was natural for the sensitive poets to be beset with doubts. An age-long belief in a providential order changed into a meaningless universe of chaos. Poets like Edward Fitzgerald, Arthur Hugh Clough, and Matthew Arnold gave way to the despair they felt at the ebbing sea of faith. "Honest doubt" persuaded Tennyson in his poetic enterprise while Browning asserted: "We fail here to succeed hereafter".

Within a span of seventy years of the nineteenth century new social functions necessitated by new industrial conditions marked the age as much emphasis was given to 'self-help' that showed aversion to conventional government laws both political and social. Everyone felt the ugliness and distortion of time and space and the world appeared to be too much with them. The changes on the economic front, Evangelicalism and subsequent ecclesiastical reforms resulted in social reform. The reformed parliament of 1833 took steps against the unequal distribution of clerical wealth and after that followed a great deal of religious activities.

Stop to Consider:

Here we can refer to Trollope's "Barchester Tower" where Trollope has depicted the ecclesiastical picture of the church of the 'fifties and 'sixties through comedy and satire. We can also refer to Lewis Carroll's "Looking-glass" world-view where he predicts the vision of a consumer world where things and words are all in random motion. His famous *Through the Looking Glass and what Alice found there* is a parody of Victorian Progress and Materialism.

The growing tide of intellectualism and liberalism popularized by representative university men and professionals such as John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, T.H.Huxley, Matthew Arnold and George Eliot contributed in the spread of democracy, bureaucracy, just as a wider belief in collectivism shaped the literature of the time. The Municipal Reform Act of 1835, the Local Government Act of 1888 propounded the scheme of self-government.

A good many writers including John Henry Newman, F.D.Maurice, Charles Kingsley contributed to the intellectual upsurge of the era. The Evangelical movement marked a potent influence on the ecclesiastical orders of the age. It preached the religion of the heart as a reaction against the effects of the Age of Reason.

Stop to Consider:

Evangelicalism

The movement had its origin in the second half of the eighteenth century that showed its reaction against the religion of reason. It was a fundamentalist Protestant movement that looked back to the eighteenth-century John Wesley's Methodist revival. The Movement emphasized the corruption of the human at the ecclesiastical level and established direct faith in Christ's grace and omnipresence. Negating institutional knowledge and religion, the movement assigned faith in the word of Holy Scriptures and held man responsible for his Fall who is born to suffer and hence damnation is inevitable. Further it laid stress upon faith in the inward experience of an individual who must seek salvation by God's grace.

Chartism

It was a working-class movement for reform which resulted from two major economic causes — problem of high unemployment and high bread prices followed by trade depression and harvest failures. And the second factor was the loss of human labour due to the use of machinery. Chartism claimed a permanent political remedy and the charter demanded universal male suffrage, annual parliament, vote by ballot, payment of members of parliaments, the end of property qualification and equal electoral district. In fact Chartism gave confident expression to the radical working-class voice.

The Catholic emancipation of 1829, the parliamentary reform of 1832, the abolition of slavery act of 1833 (which was applicable to many parts of the British Empire with a few exceptions), and the Chartist movement can now seem to have indicated social progress and religious renaissance. As religious institutionalism collapsed, anarchy gripped the conscience of the people. In this respect the contributions made by the rising middle-class cannot be ignored. Carlyle observed that men were grown mechanical in head, heart

as well as in hand and he termed the age as the 'Mechanical age'. The time is marked by growth of population and expansion of new colonial territory followed by spread of trade and commerce. From one English city - London - the number of cities grew to nine by 1851. "It was a whole new order or disorder, a vortex which pulled into the cities' factories and workshops the surrounding population for both labour and consumption." (P.Davis)

In his essay of 1839, *Chartism*, Carlyle observed that England was confronting the second stage of its role in world history; the first had been to conquer most parts of the planet for human use, "the grand Industrial task". In the first stage, was the physical and material revolution enabled by the inventions of Watt, Arkwright, and Brindley — the success of steam, the factory and the canal in the spinning of cotton, the steam-engine, the forging of iron, "railwaying, commercing and careering". With the change in the economy, developments of communication, the increasing number of immigrants became a matter of concern. The second stage of England's great task in world history now consisted of "the grand Constitutional task of sharing, in some pacific enduring manner, the fruit of said conquest, and showing all people how it might be done" (in *Chartism*). In other words, society had to move to a new model of negotiation and consensus, from the older model of command and conquest. It is no surprise then that social consciousness at all levels of society flared up in intermittent waves.

For better job-opportunities people began to shift from countryside to town and city for its promise of livelihood. London, between 1820 and 1850, became the largest city in the world. This information itself is based on the Victorian penchant for facts, especially statistics that revealed quantities. The Statistical Society of London was also founded in 1834. Fact-seeking travel literature too flourished in this measure-loving age. The great displacement of the population from the rural countryside to the urban city is described by Alexis de Tocqueville (in his *Journey to England*): portraying the river Irwell through Manchester, he wrote: "From this foul drain the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilise the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish; here civilization works its miracles, and civilized man is turned back almost into a savage." And this experience of displacement finds its expression in the writings of Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy.

Space for Learner

Stop to Consider

Pre- Raphaelitism

Pre- Raphaelitism was a complex moral phenomenon that attempted to break with the classical tradition of Reynolds. Envisaging a sort of escapism, Pre- Raphaelitism shared an affinity with the Oxford Movement which preached medievalist aesthetics. The spirit of the Pre-Raphaelites was essentially romantic which marked its release from the conventional didacticism and pessimism. Though originating in painting, pre- Raphaelitism left a positive impact on the literary scenario of the time in its attempt to restore simplicity and naturalness.

SAQ

Which major movements of the Victorian age can be seen as articulating Tennysonian “honest doubt”? (80 words)

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1.4 writers and their Pre-occupations

The Victorian age presents a multiplicity of events and activities and they find their expression in the literary writings of the period. Literary writing could not remain unaffected by contemporary discourses as can be seen in the writings of Tennyson and Browning, Dickens and Thackeray. We should note two features of those times which explain the nature of Victorian writing: the involvement of literary writing in contemporary issues; and the nature of the issues. Cardinal Newman in *The Idea of a University* saw the period’s controversies in these terms: “It is one great advantage of an age in which unbelief speaks out, that Faith can speak out too; that, if falsehood assails truth, truth can assail falsehood.” Belief, unbelief, and debate characterised the times. So did the involvement of writers in these debates. Carlyle saw the role of writers as akin to priests, with literary writing as a new kind of creed. Here we must refer to the advent of new ideas in the world of science, religion and politics. Darwin’s evolutionary theory, the invention of the steam- engine, the construction of railways, the spread of education — all brought about radical changes in the social scenario. The all-encompassing tide of Darwinism

led people to rethink, reconsider their ideas and values. Andrew Sanders sums up the tendencies of the time in the following words,

“A great deal of Victorian intellectual effort was spent in trying to hold together a universe which was exploding. It was an age of conflicting explanations and theories of scientific and economic confidence and of social and spiritual pessimism, of a sharpened awareness of the inevitability of progress and of deep disquiet as to the nature of the present.”

Space for Learner

SAQ

How would you connect the political and the economic, with the religious and the philosophical changes in the period? Do you find any such connection between the varieties of disturbances in the Victorian era?
(60 + 80 words)

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The turmoil produced by scientific and intellectual achievements, industrialism, and technological achievements left a conspicuous impact on Victorian poetry. The poets of the age felt a sense of urgency to represent the sensibility/ spirit of their time. Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Clough, Morris and many others are counted among the powerful and representative poets of the time who made an effort to establish poetic faith amidst Victorian unrest and skepticism. In terms of pattern and spirit, Victorian poetry shares in common with Romantic tendencies. However a shift can be noticed in terms of subject-matter: from Nature to Man. The romantic vigour, sensuousness and splendour is still there in Victorian poetry with the lyrical flow in the works of Tennyson, Swinburne, Rossetti and Arnold.

The self-consciousness of being “Victorian” can be traced back to the title given to E.C.Stedman’s volume of 1875, *Victorian Poets*. But what we see as “Victorian” today is the view of the post-Victorian period and not something that the representative figures of Victorianism thought of or labelled. Much of that “Victorianism”, to us, seems to be represented by names like Arnold, Dickens and Ruskin. But it is ironical that these were the very people who were critical of contemporary attitudes. As Davis sums up: “Many of the leading Victorian writers were of course, in some sense, anti-Victorian— or alternatively could be said to be *most* Victorian— in being deeply critical of the so-called Victorian attitudes of their own age:Matthew Arnold against

complacent materialist philistinism, or Charles Dickens in exposure of religious hypocrisy, or Ruskin on the unfeelingness and uncreativity of his times. But the adverse reaction against the ‘Victorians’, which begins after Victoria’s death, goes on to include within the term figures such as Arnold, Dickens, and Ruskin themselves.” Many of these paradoxes and ironies can be traced in Tennyson’s (1809-1892) and Robert Browning’s (1812-1889) poetry. Their poetry is marked by the main movements of their time such as the Victorian dilemma and social unrest. Tennyson’s famous ‘*In Memoriam*’ represents the very Victorian controversy between faith and doubt and speculates over life and death. .

SAQ

Attempt to define the word, ‘Victorian’ in terms of a unique world-view. (70 words)

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Among the minor poets of the age Elizabeth Barrett Browning occupies a special place who showed her concern over the problem of child labour in her poem “The Cry of the Children”. The romance of her love life is well expressed in her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850). Her *Aurora Leigh* (1856) is about a young social reformer and it emphasizes her moral and social ideals.

The artistic excellence of writers like D.G Rossetti (1828-1882), William Morris (1834- 96) and Swinburne (1837- 1909) with his haunting melody and metrical excellence provided a kind of romantic escape from the growing industrial and commercial world. In their artistic model, specially in the poetry of John Clare (1793- 1864) and Coventry Patmore (1823-96) we identify a philosophic speculation of romanticism. Along with that, other Victorian poets including James Thomson (1834- 1882), and Edward Fitzgerald (1803- 89), George Meredith (1828- 1909) aroused intellectual curiosity. Rossetti’s “The Blessed Damozel” is an important specimen of Pre-Raphaelite art who was a major contributor to the Pre-Raphaelite periodical ‘*The Germ*’, and William Morris (1834-96) who showed intense medievalism and whose socialist faith is echoed in “The Pilgrim of Hope” .

Matthew Arnold (1822-88) moved to restore faith in poetic ideals and his poetry, as in “Dover Beach” considered by most to voice the sense of

profound horror and anxiety of the Victorian age, attempted to bring back the ‘high seriousness’ he so strongly advocated:

“And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms
Of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.”

In the poem, the poet’s melancholy synchronizes with the tranquil motion of the sea waves. The poet is optimistic about his age and is waiting for a divine spark which will cure them all of the ‘strange disease of modern life’ and he believes that amidst the Victorian crisis and unrest, poetry can work as a substitute through its ‘criticism of life’.

Arnold’s prose writings such as *Culture and Anarchy*, “The Study of Poetry”, “Literature and Dogma” throw light upon the nature of poetry and its function in the restoration of culture. A classical endeavour marks his writings and he set high seriousness as a critical norm for judging poetry. His important writings include *Poems and Ballads* (1866), “Atlanta in Calydon” (1865) and “Songs before Sunrise”.

Arnold was against dogmatism and rational prejudice. In *The Study of Poetry*, he envisages a high role for poetry:

“More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.”

SAQ:

What were Arnold’s arguments for the exaltation of poetry? Do you think there was any religious influence in this argument? (70+60 words)

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A great deal of Victorian literature was concerned with the worldliness and skepticism and social unrest of the age. The fact of restless and destabilizing transitions shaped the very impulses of Victorian writing. Poets, novelists and

essayists were influenced by the changing phase of the nineteenth century and showed their strong, positive as well as negative, reactions. Such reactions follow upon a refutation of inadequate notions of man and his society.

Social consciousness was affected by the industrial upheavals and changes were evident in the field of trade and commerce. The spread of economic changes, democracy, individualism and liberalism found expression in the writings of these poets and novelists. It was a time of revolution and reorganization. Charles Dickens, A. Trollope, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin showed their reaction against the spiritual vulgarity and degradation of moral values. The grotesque in Dickens' novels can be termed as a necessary reaction against and an outcome of the state of confusion and loss of the 'natural' as evident in *Oliver Twist* and *Pickwick Papers*. The incongruous playfulness and comedy draw attention to the underlying confusion and horror. Deirdre David considers Victorian novels to be ambitious, formless, generous, entertaining while the gothic and the sensational addressed the taboos associated with excess and the irrational. Along with social realism, in late Victorian writings, one can perceive a change of taste from social issues to experimentation with style and form.

Subsequently the late Victorian tendencies marked a shift from faithful representation of social process to a kind of self-conscious impressionism. In fact if one ideological function of the Victorian novel was to provide knowledge, another was to 'construct rules for the management of gender and sexuality'. (David, 12) Thus it was a time of revival that encouraged re-reading and retrieval, anticipating a change in the social system. This intellectual era was sustained by novelists like George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Dickens, Carlyle, Thackeray and Ruskin. As John Kucich argues, Victorian intellectual debates, both literary and non-literary, concerned science and religion as their objects of analysis and this debate was nourished by a growing humanitarianism and optimism about social reforms of the age, the evangelical movement and the spirit of cultural relativism. And we have the subversive fictions of William Thackeray and Anthony Trollope which sought consolation in picaresque and Romantic philosophy even while their reaction was mainly in the form of positivist naturalism.

W. M Thackeray, besides being a realist and a satirist, was an artist and a moralist and his novels preached the beauty of virtue and the ugliness of vice. His *Vanity Fair* (1847-1848) is a social document where shams, deceptions and vanities are at play. The novel is subtitled 'a novel without a hero'. *Vanity Fair* shares the writer's notion of Victorian life with all its

hypocrisy and snobbery. The novel is without a plot and the events develop through contrasts and confrontations.

Ruskin in his “*Unto This Last*” (1862) showed concern over the production of more unfeeling, and less human, beings in the industrial age. As Carlyle perceived, the problems of the age were mental, spiritual, political and even economic which distorted both space and time. The literature of the age shared a connection with the socio-historical events of the age and these writings claimed a humanitarian alternative and revival of religious order. Because of the interest of the middle-class in general enlightenment the question of education gained attention in the late Victorian period. Accordingly, an Education Committee of the Privy Council was set up with a system of inspection of the state-aided schools. It was only after the Reform Act of 1867 which enfranchised the working-class that the politicians gave importance to the spread of education. Dr. Thomas Arnold, Headmaster of Rugby , father of the Victorian cultural prophet, Matthew Arnold, was the great educational reformer of the ‘thirties who made contributions in popularizing public school life .In these schools much importance was given to the study of the classics setting high ideals of literary culture anticipating the advent of new journalism. It was a transitional phase of history – from aristocracy to democracy, from authority to mass-judgment. A tremendous influence was provided by John Stuart Mill’s “*On Liberty*” (1859) and *The Subjection of Women* (1869).

Space for Learner

Check Your Progress:

1. Consider the major preoccupations of Victorian writing in its involvement with contemporary crises.(150 words)

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2. Outline Victorian attitudes towards phenomena in the natural world in major works of Victorian literature.
(150 words)

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1.5 Poetic Concerns

We may discern a connection between Tractarianism and Victorian poetry. Poems by Newman, Keble's *Christian Year*, and some hymns by John Mason Neale, Isaac Williams, and F.W.Faber stand as their contribution to English poetry. However, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sister, Christina Rossetti, was certainly influenced by them. Tennyson's conception of the religious life of the Middle Ages was, broadly speaking, derived from the ideas of the Movement. So was the mood of the early poetry and the painting of the Pre-Raphaelites.

Victorian poetry marked, in many ways, a continuation of Romantic poetry in its spirit, splendour, and sensuousness. A characteristic melancholy marks their poetry which was an outcome of the literary decline, disintegration of moral values that characterized the age. The spirit of the age was essentially didactic / moralistic which insisted that poets avoid the directness of romantic poetry but a great deal of cultural activities were taking place in the age in the field of scientific, historical and philosophical innovations.

Stop to Consider

We should observe that issues of common, public concern were debated through published treatises and other writings. One such issue of overwhelming importance, the theory of evolution, can be traced through its progress in the writings of Erasmus Darwin, and then others. His *Zoönomia* (1794-96) combined science and philosophy. His poem, *The Temple of Nature* was brought out posthumously. The work of Chevalier de Lamarck (from around 1802 to 1809) can be seen against Sir Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830). Charles Darwin, in fact, studied this monumental work on his voyage on the *Beagle*. Darwin's own *The Origin of Species* followed only three decades later, in 1859. Interspersed in between we have the works of William Buckland and Philip Henry Gosse. *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* by Robert Chambers in 1844 was greeted by outcries from scientific circles. Herbert Spencer's thoughts were brought out as *The Development Hypothesis* in 1852 and *Progress: Its Law and Cause* in 1857. *The Origin of Species* "did not immediately excite opposition. That the first small edition was exhausted on the day of publication was probably due to the interest of theologians and scientists who were already aware of evolutionary speculation. Many older scientists were reluctant to accept Darwin's

conclusions....But when Darwin published *The Descent of Man* (1871), though Pusey and Gladstone attacked it, there was no general excitement.” We can note that T.H.Huxley’s *Man’s Place in Nature* (1863) in which the theory was explicitly applied to “the human animal” (an expression which was now, significantly, becoming current), occasioned a new outcry.”

Space for Learner

A great deal of literary activity took place in the form of biography, autobiography, children’s books or periodical journals.

Nonsense-writers like Lewis Carroll, and Edward Lear established faith in fantasy, absurdity, nothingness and comedy.

It is significant to mention here that by the end of the nineteenth century, a transition took place in terms of the reaction shown towards middle-class values. An anti-Victorian aestheticism grasped the general intelligentsia to make a gesture of independence from and resistance to the pressures and tensions of the time. Reference can be made to Walter Pater’s *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) where emphasis was given to ‘experience’, not the fruit of experience. Like the poets, the novelists of the period were also inspired to the task of tremendous literary strengthening and infusing it with a new vision to suit the activities of the time and they sought humanism to strengthen the feeling of human solidarity at the time of disintegration and moral crisis. The threat of unbelief is experienced by the people and it appeared that a literary faith was gradually replacing the dogmatic faith. Against the solidarity of the external world, the inner world appeared to be non-existent.

As it has been shown already the writers of the Age were inspired by the tendencies of the Victorian age and they felt a sense of urgency to reflect the spirit of the age through their writings. It was an age of Realism and the major writings of the age offered multiple responses to the warring and changing trends of the time. Perhaps the most prominent theme that finds its expression in those writings is the Victorian crisis of faith and Doubt. The material growth and the subsequent degradation of moral values is brought under scrutiny in these writings. Tennyson and Dickens offered the representative ‘voices’ and portrayed the Victorian world with all its crisis and imbalance. A melancholic strain runs through their narrative and this is followed by a wave of pessimism. Now, amidst Victorian dilemma of faith and doubt, a literary faith made attempts to replace traditional dogmatic faith. And this is reflected in the writings of

Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, Thomas Hardy and G. M Hopkins — a faith in love’s immortality, a faith in the divine spark and a faith in verse.

It has been said earlier that Victorian poetry is, in many ways, a continuation of the nineteenth-century Romanticism and with the advent of the Pre- Raphaelites and the Evangelicals a wave of aestheticism marked its appearance. This finds its echo in the writings of Walter Pater, Swinburne and the Rossettis.

Stop to Consider

Aestheticism

Several names and different speculative strands are associated with the Aesthetic Movement. Walter Horatio Pater (1839 - 1894) is considered to have led this movement: “At Oxford in the eighteen-sixties the Hegelian evaluation of the various kinds of human experience was expounded by Thomas Hill Green.... and was of primary importance for the determination of Walter Pater’s point of view. At just this time Swinburne, following Gautier and Baudelaire, was controverting the Utilitarian criticism which demanded of art a moral emphasis and declaring that art should serve no religious, moral, or social end, nor any end save itself. Rossetti, while avoiding precept and controversy, was a strong and disturbing example of the artist wholly dedicated to his art. By seeking to make the social order comely, Ruskin, even while insisting upon moral values in art, prepared the way for Pater’s doctrine of the comeliness of the individual life as a criterion of right conduct. Behind these and other expressions of dissatisfaction with the dominant Utilitarian creed was the pessimism of the mid-century which was a further stimulus towards hedonism.”

Check Your Progress

Assess the validity of the comment that the Victorian age was one “often searching for stable frameworks of understanding”. Support your answer with references to any major Victorian work you have studied.(200 words)

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Justify the view that Victorian literature frequently stages “Victorianism’s own struggle between old and new”. Illustrate your points with textual examples. (200 words)

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Space for Learner

1.6 Summing Up

Much of the literature in the Victorian era revolved around the rapidly changing notions of morality and the society heading towards a more scientific time-period. Like other forms of literature, poetry too was influenced by the changing norms of the society and as such revolved around themes of social justice, loss of innocence, etc. Victorian poetry can be clubbed under two main groups- the high-Victorian poetry and the Pre-Raphaelites. The three main kinds of Victorian poetry include lyrical, narrative and dramatic poetry. From the rich imageries to the deep exploration of the loss of faith and religious crisis, Victorian poetry still continues to amaze and influence the readers even in the present times.

1.7 References and Suggested Readings

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Unit 2 : Robert Browning: “An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician”

Unit Structure :

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introducing the Poet
- 2.3 An Overview of His Works
- 2.4 Browning’s ‘Dramatic Monologue’
- 2.5 Context of the Poem
- 2.6 Reading the Poem
- 2.7 Summing up
- 2.8 References and Suggested Readings

2.1 Objectives

This unit introduces you to a preeminent figure of Victorian poetry, Robert Browning, who was also the artist of the ‘dramatic monologue’. Attempts have been made to familiarize you with the poet’s background, some of his personal details, the period he lived in and the several literary concerns that shaped his life and career. Thus this unit has been structured to help you to

- *place* the poet in his proper historical context
- *identify* the nature of his literary preoccupations
- *understand* the significance of the ‘dramatic monologue’
- *explore* the nuances of the poem and
- *articulate* your own critical response

2.2 Introducing the Poet

Browning’s fame as a poet is closely involved with his reputation as a philosopher of optimism. His genius is robust and vigorous. He has such hopefulness and belief in human nature that it shrinks from no man, however clothed and cloaked in evil and however miry with failings. His investigations

of evil are profoundly consistent with an indomitable optimism. One can say “All’s right with the world,” when one looks at the smiling face of things.

Browning was an erudite scholar and one of the most prolific writers of the Victorian era, but with little formal education. After the age of fourteen, Browning had no regular education, but in the library at home, he read widely and acquired the taste for out-of-the way books which was to furnish him with his vast but undisciplined erudition. “Ossian” and Byron were his first masters, but in 1826 he came across the poems of Shelley and became an avowed disciple of the “Sun-treader”. Attendance at the theatres roused his ambition to be a “maker of plays”; but first he conceived the idea of writing a poem, an opera, and a novel, each to appear under a different pseudonym. Nothing could be said of the opera and the novel, but the poem was “Pauline” which came out anonymously in 1833.

Stop to Consider:

Love for books was nurtured in Browning by his well-to-do parents. The Brownings resided near Dulwich and the gallery there was one of the favourite haunts of the young Robert Browning. His father shared with him a passion for old tales of intrigue and violence, and the two followed together the latest crime-stories in the newspapers. In the light of Browning’s subsequent predilection for criminal types and morally wrapped characters, this early shaping influence upon his imagination requires emphasis. For the austere atmosphere of worship in the religion of Evangelical dissent in which his mother instructed him he retained a reverence which long afterwards he expressed in his poetry.

Between 1841 and 1846 Browning published eight little pamphlets entitled *Bells and Pomegranates*. The first of these was “Pippa Passes” which was later on to become one of Browning’s most popular poems. *Bells* also contained dramas; *A Blot on the ‘Scutcheon’* was the cause of a bitter quarrel with Macready. After writing *A Soul’s Tragedy* Browning abandoned his long effort to write for the stage. He had found in the dramatic monologue the medium ideally suited to his genius. Of poems in this form, *Dramatic Lyrics* contained among other things, “My Last Duchess” and “Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister”. *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* included, with much else on a somewhat lower level, the lastingly popular “How they Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix”, “The Flight of the Duchess”, the first nine sections

of “Saul”, and that masterpiece of historical and psychological insight, “The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed’s Church”.

In 1844, Elizabeth Barrett published her *Poems* in one of which Browning read a commendation of himself whereupon he addressed her a letter of admiration which led at once to friendship and soon to love. On September 12, 1846, the lovers eloped and settled in Italy which was their home from 1847 till Mrs. Browning’s death in 1861. To Mrs. Browning, Italy meant mainly contemporary politics; to him, painting, music, history, landscape and the complex temperament of a fascinating people. He observed disapprovingly the elaborate ritual of Catholic worship, contrasted it with the simple piety of English dissent, and from his reading of Strauss’s *Leben Jesu* drew out the further contrast between faith and rationalism. The Brownings visited London in 1855 and *Men and Women*, a collection of poems got published. The enthusiasm of Rossetti and his circle increased the immediate sale of this new work. But this soon dropped off and though reviews were generally favorable few readers seem to have discerned the surpassing excellence of many of these poems. Carlyle had long been Browning’s admirer; Landor ranked him with Chaucer and Ruskin praised him in his *Modern Painters*.

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Stop to Consider

In 1860, Browning discovered on a Florentine bookstall an “Old Yellow Book” containing a collection of records of a murder trial at Rome and the execution of the murderer in 1698. Only gradually did the poet realize that this was the material precisely suited to his interest in psychology, in the criminal mind, and in Italian social history, and to the technique of the dramatic monologue. Meanwhile, his wife’s health was declining; she was overwrought when Italian hopes languished after the Peace of Villafranca; and she died in 1861. Life in Florence was henceforth impossible for Browning and he left the city never to return; and with his son made London his home with occasional sojourns in France. *Dramatis Personae* (1864) shows a shift of interest from Italian to English themes and an alert attention to such vital issues of the day as the Darwinian hypothesis.

Browning’s masterpiece *The Ring and the Book*, was published in four installments (1868-1869) and received with almost universal acclaim. In popular estimation Browning was henceforth second only to Tennyson among living poets and by many he was accorded the first place.

Balaustion's Adventure (1871) is his first extended incursion into the field of classical mythology which he was now for some years to cultivate diligently. To 1872 belongs *Fifine at the Fair* which involved fascinating study in erotic psychology. The fascination which crime and the mentality of criminals had for Browning, led him to write *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* (1873). It concerns an actual contemporary French trial involving a contested will and a suspected suicide. Another psychological study of villainy is *The Inn Album* (1875) founded upon the case of a card-sharper in *The Greville Memoirs*.

Browning's enthusiasm for life, his vitality, his insistence on strenuous endeavor did much to stem the tide of moral pessimism which infected so much of the European literature of the century. Browning's was a philosophy of imperfection. As he wrote in "Abt Vogler":

"the evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound...

on the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven the perfect round."

It was the striving toward perfection rather than the attainment that mattered most to him; the onward going rather than the goal itself. Browning's determined optimism found expression in poem after poem. In "Abt Vogler", Browning reiterates that "all we have willed or hoped or dreamt of good shall exist". Browning did not share with Tennyson the contemporary doubts and crisis. While Tennyson wrote "The woods decay, the woods decay and fall" (Tithonus), Browning chose to write on the incorrigible Pied Piper of Hamilton. His robust "Prospice" contrasts sharply with Tennyson's quiet acceptance of death in "Crossing the Bar".

Stop to Consider

There were many misconceptions about Browning's robust and hearty confidence. Some opinions which has put into the mouths of his characters for dramatic purposes have often been misconstrued as his own. Even eminent scholars like Welleck and Warren have pronounced: "The oracular sayings of Victorian poets such as Browning which have struck many readers as revelatory often turn out to be mere portable versions of primeval truths." Statements like:

God's in his heaven,

All's right with the world!

may appear very inadequate today. Browning did not merely glorify men, women, love and adventurous energy but he also explored the psyche of

many twisted and damaged soul that dwelt beyond the usual Victorian horizon but the essence of the charge against him remains.

Browning's vivid hope and trust in man is bound up with a strong and strenuous faith in God. As Arthur Symons says, "Browning's Christianity is wider than our creeds, and it is all the more vitally Christian in that it never sinks into pietism." Browning is never didactic, but his faith is the root of his art, and transforms and transfigures it. As a dramatic poet he is so impartial and can express all creeds with such ease that it is possible to prove him (as Shakespeare has been proved) a believer in everything and a disbeliever in anything.

In 1889, Browning chanced to come across the pages of Edward FitzGerald's newly published *Letters* wherein he wrote in a passage: "Mrs. Browning's death is rather a relief to me, I must say: no more *Aurora Leighs*, thank God!" This was supposedly addressed to a private correspondent and should not have been published; but agitated and enraged, Browning wrote the scathing verses *To Edward FitzGerald who Thanked God My Wife was Dead*. The painful episode is of biographical importance because it shows the passionate tenderness with which he cherished the memories of his dead wife and also because this bitter episode hastened his end. Browning wrote prolifically but all his works are not of the same standard. His last collection of poems *Asolando: Fancies and Facts* was published just before his death in 1889 and was a collection of love lyrics, versified anecdotes and philosophical pronouncements. To a twenty-first century mind, many of his pronouncements of love, religion, and faith have become obsolete. However, his exuberant vitality can still be very attractive.

2.3 An Overview of his Works

In this section, I shall briefly give you an idea some of the works from Browning's literary oeuvre.

***Pippa Passes*:** *Pippa Passes* was published in 1841 as the first of a series of eight pamphlets under the general title *Bells and Pomegranates*. The poet's father bore the printing cost for the entire series. *Pippa Passes* is a product of Browning's first visit to Italy in 1838. The poem is set in Asolo, near Venice, where the poet was collecting materials for *Sordello* (1840). Pippa is a silk-winder who spends her holiday wandering through the small Italian town of Alonzo, singing songs and thinking of the local people whom

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she considers the most blessed. But in reality, the lives of these people are totally different from the innocent imaginings of Pippa.

The other pamphlets in the series of eight include *King Victor and King Charles* (1842), *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), *The Return of the Druses* (1843), *Colombe's Birthday* (1844) *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845), *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy* (1846)

Sordello: Written in 1840, *Sordello* was received with severe criticism on account of the charges of obscurity of style and allusion. The poem provides a comprehensive view of the poet's mind and art in his early phase. The historical setting of *Sordello* is the strife between two rival factions, the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, in northern Italy in the thirteenth century. The protagonist is *Sordello*, a troubadour, praised by Dante but otherwise obscure. Arthur Symons' characterization of the poem as a 'psychological epic' is apt, for the focus is the developing conflict within the hero between egoism and sympathy, art and society, contemplation and action – that finally proves fatal to him.

Men and Women: This collection of poems was published in 1855. Browning himself felt that the contents showed him writing "lyrics with more music and painting than before, so as to get the people ear and see" and the volume was the first of his works to achieve some measure of popular success. Apart from "Love Among the Ruins", the enigmatic "Childe Roland to The Dark Tower Came" and "A Toccata of Galuppi's", it included several mature examples of the dramatic monologue: *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, *Andrea Del Sarto*, "Saul" and "Cleon".

Andrea Del Sarto contrasts markedly with the exuberance of *Fra Lippo Lippi* (prescribed for the course) in that it is a classic study of moral and aesthetic failure. In this poem, Browning links up *Andrea's* artistic failures to flaws in character.

Dramatis Personae: This is a collection of poems by Browning, published in 1864 and the first collection to appear after the death of Elizabeth Barrett Browning in 1861. Some of the most celebrated poems included in this volume are *Abt Vogler*, "Prospice", "Rabbi Ben Ezra" and longer poems like "A Death in the Desert", "Mr. Sludge", "The Medium" "Caliban upon Setebos" etc.

"Caliban Upon Setebos" has been the most widely admired poem of *Dramatis Personae* (1864). Though occasioned by the intellectual convulsion resulting from the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, Browning's *Caliban* has little to do Darwinian Theory. Rather, Browning's subject is man's inveterate tendency to create God in his own image. Several commentators

have argued that Browning's satiric target in this poem is orthodox Calvinism, which regarded man as corrupt and God as supreme whose will and justice are inscrutable.

In "Rabbi Ben Ezra", the conflict between soul and flesh is condemned. This poem is an imaginative exercise, an attempt to express an ideal by a dramatic representation of a man, who has reached extreme old age without finding it necessary to despair. It is, as Stopford Brooke says, "a poem which only Browning could have written. . . ." When the Rabbi in the quest of old age considers what his life has been and how God has wrought it for eternity, Browning repeatedly affirms the nobility and superiority of man:

"Rejoice, we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive"

The poem is not didactic but there is a sustained glow in which ethical passion and its splendour blend superbly.

The Ring and the Book: *The Ring and the Book*, an epic-length poem in twelve books and Browning's acknowledged masterpiece was published in four instalments, 1868-69. Despite its enormous length (22,000 lines), this work was a notable success. It is based on an infamous triple murder that took place in Rome in 1698—a case that roused much excitement in its times, but, a century and a half later, was merely relegated to a chapter in the history of Roman judiciary. It was, as Carlyle is said to have told Browning, "an old Bailey story that might have been told in ten lines, and only wants forgetting". Browning daringly chose to tell his "Roman murder story" ten times over from as many distinct points of view. The risk of boredom through repetition was minimized by having each character emphasize, suppress, and distort various elements of the case according to his own interests and motives.

Among the Victorian poets, Browning was one who wrote prolifically. It is difficult to discuss all of his poems within this limited space. Therefore, in this section I have given a very brief account of his works which could further arouse your interest in reading his other poems.

Stop to Consider

A dramatic monologue is a literary form of writing in which a character, often a fictional persona created by the poet, speaks directly to the

audience or an implied listener. The character reveals their thoughts, feelings, and experiences through a single, uninterrupted speech. It allows the reader or listener to gain insight into the character’s personality, motivations, and perspectives. A dramatic monologue is usually presented from the perspective of a single character. The character recounts events, tells a story, or reflects upon a past experience.

2.4 Browning’s ‘Dramatic Monologue’

For example, let us have a look at the following lines:

“That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf’s hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will’t please you sit and look at her?”

Some of you must be familiar with these lines from Browning’s *My Last Duchess*. These lines immediately tell us that a particular character is speaking out his feelings in front of an audience. The monologue is usually directed toward an audience who is present and listening but whose voice we do not hear, with the speaker’s words influenced by a critical situation. In the above lines, it is the Duke of Ferrara, speaking to an emissary about his dead Duchess whose painting is now hung on the wall.

SAQ

Critics have noted that any lyric poem is always “overheard”. Does the ‘listener’ (or the reader) in the dramatic monologue “overhear” or “hear” the poem? (70 words)

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

Influences on the dramatic monologue are both general and specific. In a general way, the dramatic tradition as a whole may have influenced the style of the monologue. Indeed, the style of the dramatic monologue, which attempts to evoke an entire story through representing part of it, may be called an endeavour to turn into poetry some features of drama.

Victorian poetry saw the high flowering of dramatic monologues with

names like those of Tennyson's, Arnold's and Browning's associated with the genre. Of the trio, it is Browning who is usually credited with perfecting the form. When discussing the poetic form of the dramatic monologue, it is rare for it not to be associated with Robert Browning. Browning has been regarded as the master of the dramatic monologue. Some critics are skeptical of his invention of the form, for dramatic monologue is evidenced in poetry preceding Browning; it is believed that his extensive and varied use of the dramatic monologue has significantly contributed to the form and has had an enormous impact on modern poetry. As Preminger and Brogan argue, "The dramatic monologues of Robert Browning represent the most significant use of the form in post-Romantic poetry".

Browning always wanted to be a successful dramatist. He found in the dramatic monologue, a poem in which a single speaker speaks to an imaginary listener, his true medium. Browning is like Shakespeare in the absolute centering of his interest in humanity and in his understanding of the fallibility of mankind. In the regular dramas, the inquiry into motive is sacrificed to interest in the plot. What men aspire to be and are not is a proper subject for discussion; but the plot demands action. Consequently he found his medium in the dramatic monologue, where a subject's case could be presented from the inside. The characters of his dramatic monologues are often men and women caught at moments of anxiety and obsession. They are troubled with psychological and moral problems and hence their lasting appeal. Browning was more fascinated with negative characters (for instance, the brutal and egocentric Duke in *My Last Duchess*) because he felt that good characters gave few problems. Apart from *My Last Duchess*, other poems which can be cited as benchmarks in 'dramatic monologue' are *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *Caliban upon Setebos*, *Porphyria's Lover* as well as the other poems in *Men and Women*.

Stop to Consider:

The Persona/Speaker and the Listener in Browning's 'Dramatic Monologues'

The personae/speakers in Browning's poems are mainly known historical figures. Significantly, most of them are connoisseurs, artists, musicians, thinkers, or even manipulators. But even when the soliloquizers are not known historical figures, he establishes a physical context through carefully selected details, references, or objects. Each of the speaking voices is given an individual articulation, a turn of phrase, an emphasis, a

pause, a reiteration, or an idiolect which serves to give them a particular trait. The distinguishing characteristic of Browning's dramatic monologues is that they make new demands on the reader. The dramatic monologues of Browning are characterized by certain identifiable traits which, according to Landow, are that, "The reader takes the part of the silent listener; the speaker uses a case-making argumentative tone; the reader completes the dramatic scene from within, by means of inference and imagination". Critics have interpreted the third requirement, the reader's interpretation and conclusion, as a suspension of the reader/listener between sympathy and judgment. The reader has a choice regarding the intent of the speaker, but he/she must remain removed until the speaker is done making his argument. Glenn Everett believes the role of the listener is one of discovery which engages the imagination, but the listener must remain detached and abstain from passing judgment until the work is known as a whole. Wagner and Lawlor urge that the role of the listener is passive; he/she "cannot help but hear". The position of the listener is exactly "a passive receptor of a verbal *tour de force* that leaves him no opportunity for response". On the other hand the typical Browning speaker is an "eloquent rhetorician" whose "dramatic situation itself is obviously only created by the presence of the other" (Wagner-Lawlor), the other is identified as the silent listener. The speaker characteristically uses strongly rhetorical language which distinguishes the dramatic monologue from the soliloquy. Both *Fra Lippo Lippi* and *A Grammarian's Funeral* are dramatic monologues. The agenda of each speaker is quite different, as is the tone. Application of the three principles that characterize Browning's dramatic monologues, as pointed out by Landow, could help the modern reader understand the unique intent of each poem more fully.

2.5 Context of the Poem: "An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician"

Robert Browning's poem "An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician" belongs to his poetry collection titled *Men and Women* which was first published in 1855. There are fifty-one poems in this collection divided into two volumes. All the poems in this collection are monologues spoken by different narrators. The collection was not very

popular during the time of publication but it came to be admired by the audience years later.

This poem is a dramatic monologue. It is written in the form of a letter where Karshish, the speaker, writes a letter to Abib, the audience of the monologue about his experiences of the miracles of Jesus Christ when He raised Lazarus from the dead. Karshish witnesses Lazarus' revival and in this poem, he attempts to reflect on the profound impact the event had on him, both medically and spiritually.

2.6 Reading the Poem “An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician”

The speaker of the poem is Karshish and since the poem is in the form of a letter, the recipient of the letter is Abib. The letter is written in the form of a conversation happening between two people in real time. Abib is a mentor to Karshish and they are both physicians. This letter to Abib contains the story of Karshish's encounter with Lazarus. Lazarus is a Biblical character who was restored to life four days after his death by Jesus Christ. The poem has seven stanzas in total and it is written in blank verse.

The first stanza begins with salutations and greetings. Karshish refers to himself as “vagrant scholar” and to Abib as “his Sage”. Karshish writes that he sends his greetings to Abib through this letter. Karshish also praises Abib as “all-sagacious in our art” (Line 7). He mentions how both of them are much alike in their curiosity about the human body.

“The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home

Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace).” (Lines 15-16)

Karshish, in the first stanza, also brings a reference to God and talks about how God is the creator of mankind. He describes in detail how man is created by God. This stanza ends with Karshish enclosing information regarding some local medicines to Abib.

The second stanza begins with Karshish updating Abib on everything that has happened to him since his last letter written from Jericho. Jericho is a Palestinian city. Here he talks about the first Roman-Jewish war that took place around the year 66 AD. Because the country at that time was in a political turmoil, his life and journey were full of dangers. Karshish mentions the rumours flying around regarding the arrival of Vespasian, the Roman General who worked hard to restore law and order in Rome after the Civil War.

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Karshish mentions his plight and says that he was taken as a spy on his visit and was also attacked by wild animals and robbers.

“Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
And once a town declared me for a spy;” (Lines 32-33)

But finally, his journey through Jericho ends and Karshish reaches Bethany and Jerusalem. Even though his journey was full of hardships, he is happy that he got to learn many new things during the journey. He specifically mentions getting to learn about a certain species of spider that can be used to treat epilepsy and other diseases.

In the third stanza, Karshish mentions his main purpose of writing the letter. He wants to narrate the story of a man named Lazarus. Karshish says that probably Lazarus’ story is not worth writing about but he doesn’t deny the fact that he was indeed amazed by the story too.

“I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
What set me off a-writing first of all” (Lines 64-65)

Stanza four focuses on Karshish’s encounter with Lazarus. He says he believes that Lazarus’ case was a case of mania influenced by epilepsy. Lazarus goes into a sort of trance for about three days. However, he is also cured of his ailments and Karshish finds it difficult to know how.

“When, by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art
Unknown to me and which ‘twere well to know,
The evil thing out-breaking all at once

Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,-” (Lines 82-86)

Karshish mistakes Jesus Christ for “a Nazarene physician” who heals Lazarus of his bad health. To Karshish, Lazarus’ ailment and cure is a subject of science and medicine and he is yet to understand that Lazarus’ case has a touch of mystical element to it. Lazarus appears to Karshish as a man “fifty years of age” (Line 109). Lazarus appears to have had a strange experience during his trance-like state where he seems to have died and restored to life again. Lazarus himself adds no account of his personal experience but he appears to be optimistic about it. Lazarus, however, appears to be affected by it in some way. It is as if seeing the other side of life and being restored back to health again has brought a change in him. Karshish observes that being at the receiving end of a divine experience has made Lazarus unbothered about earthly happenings. Karshish, in one instance, tries asking Lazarus if he

was worried about the invasion of the Romans in his city to which Lazarus appeared as being unbothered. The divine treatment seems to have changed Lazarus for the better because Karshish mentions that Lazarus started preaching about cheerfulness, hope, and love towards everyone, humans, birds and beasts alike. Even though Karshish witnesses the entire event, he is sceptical about it and tries to give a scientific explanation to it while writing to Abib.

In stanza five, we have Karshish telling Abib about how he inquired about Jesus Christ. He knows Jesus as the one who cured Lazarus and brought him back from the dead. In the process, Karshish learns that Jesus had been executed many years ago. He says Abib must be wondering as to why Karshish didn't seek out Jesus himself. Throughout the letter Karshish keeps on thinking as to whether he should believe Lazarus' story or not. And Karshish proclaims that Lazarus probably was mad to have believed Jesus was God himself who saved his life and had come to earth as a man. This is evident from the lines,

“And after all, our patient Lazarus

Is stark mad; should we count on what he says?” (Lines 245-246)

In the sixth stanza, Karshish apologizes to Abib for taking his time by writing such a farcical story. He says, “Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,/ which, now that I review it, needs must seem/ Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!” (Lines 263-264) Even though Karshish finds it difficult to believe the story, yet he also admits that he is unable to forget it or take it out of his mind. “And awe indeed this man has touched me with” (Lines 288). He also keeps on saying throughout this stanza that by writing this letter and sending it to Abib, he is wasting both his time and Abib's as well. “For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine;/ Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!” (Lines 302-303).

In the seventh and final stanza, Karshish asks Abib to consider the possibility of the presence of an “All-Loving God” (Line 305) who according to Lazarus, not only created humans with hearts to love one another and also love God, but who also sent the Son of God to earth to reunite humans with God and who died for the sins committed by us. Till the end, Karshish claims that Lazarus is a madman for believing in such a story but he himself couldn't stop thinking about it and being fascinated by it.

So, we see that, Robert Browning skilfully uses the form of dramatic monologue to explore themes like faith and doubt, and the limitations of human understanding. He tactfully deals with the conflict between reason and belief, and human beings' struggle to understand miracles. Karshish, as the speaker,

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represents a rational, scientific mind who is trained in medicine. His encounter with Lazarus brings him face to face with the supernatural that he finds difficult to comprehend. Throughout the poem he is seen to struggle with his understanding of the event as he narrates it to Abib. Browning, in this poem, also explores the role of storytelling and communication in understanding experiences that tend to challenge one's beliefs and knowledge. Karshish, through the narration, wrestles with his understanding of the event and tries to share his insights with Abib.

SAQ

What biblical character does Karshish allude to? And what strange medical experience does Karshish recount? (30 words)

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.....
.....

How does Karshish initially react to Lazarus's revival? (20 words)

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.....
.....

What is the purpose of the dramatic monologue in the poem? (70 words)

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.....

How does Karshish, the narrator, grapple with his own doubts and scepticism throughout the poem? (150 words)

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.....
.....

2.7 Summing Up

In this unit you have been given, by and large, an idea of the poet that Browning is; an account of his works; the techniques that were incorporated in his poems and the concerns that shaped them. There is a blending of thought and feeling that goes into the making of his poems. There is no doubt that, like the novelist Dickens, who wrote prolifically, Browning is also one of the most

prolific writers of the Victorian age. Browning is today, perhaps, honoured more as a pioneer in the difficult art — the art of psychological portraiture in verse. His main achievement as a poet is the unprecedented range of his work. In the midst of the storms of doubt and disbelief, of mockery and denial in religion, he stood unshaken by the controversies. The impression that we get from the works of Browning is that of a poet with a robust personality. The poet in him is made up of many men. He is a dramatist, humorist, lyricist, painter, musician, philosopher and scholar, each in full measure, and he includes and dominates them all.

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Unit 3 : G. M. Hopkins: “God’s Grandeur”

Unit Structure:

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introducing the poet
- 3.3 Critical Reception
- 3.4 Context of the Poem
- 3.5 Reading the Poem
- 3.6 Summing Up
- 3.7 References and Suggested Readings

3.1 Objectives

Hopkins’ poetry sounds unconventional, experimental and unique. He was a technically complex poet, an ordained priest whose Catholic theological principles combined a debt to Duns Scotus’ philosophy in his poetic achievements. This unit brings to you the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins who is remembered for the beautifully expressive poetry of religious wonder and faith in a world filled with the manifestation of divine energy. By the end of the unit you should be able to

- *explain* the poetry of Hopkins
- *identify* his technical innovations
- *relate* Hopkins’ poetry to the reputation he was accorded in the twentieth century

3.2 Introducing the Poet

Born at Stratford, Essex in 1844, Gerald Manley Hopkins belonged to a middle-class high Anglican family who marked a transition in English poetic taste. Though he is remembered as a late Victorian, his poetry marks a transition from ‘Victorian’ to ‘Modern’. He hailed from an artistic family and his father himself published poetry. His diaries and letters show that he had a passion for natural landscape. In many ways a most extraordinary Victorian, virtually unknown in his life time, an aesthete who had a keen appetite for detail, he took interest in music when he was in Highgate School in 1854. He coloured his note-books with different sketches. He had a pantheist’s eye for the concrete

and the sensuous and his poetry was characterized by startling musicality. He studied theology in Welsh college and his poetry reflects his theological endeavour. Being an ascetic, he followed the Jesuit order in 1868, at the age of twenty-four and that brought a transformation in his life. Poems like “Easter Communion” (1865) and “Easter” (1866) reflect his ascetic strain of thought. He remained a preacher at the Jesuit Farm Street Church in London and after that he went to Mount St. Marys’ College, Chesterfield to become its sub-minister. For a year he preached in Oxford at St. Aloysius.

When he was at school he published *A Vision of the Mermaids* and that is considered to be the most characteristic of his early poetry. The influence of John Keats and Spenser can easily be perceived in his poetry in his depiction of the sensuous quality. His sensuous apprehension of the world finds its expression in the loaded, packed words and embedded sentences. They carry Hopkins’ aesthetic and ascetic temperament. He met Robert Bridges at Oxford and that was an important event in Hopkins’ life and their friendship left a lasting influence upon his poetry. It is significant to mention here that Hopkins’ poetry was not published in his lifetime and it was Robert Bridges who published his poems after his death, in 1918, twenty-nine years after his death. He left for Oxford in 1863.

Now it is pertinent to mention here the major change that came in the ‘sixties. The tension between the spirit of Romanticism and the renaissance of Tractarianism swept Oxford. Besides, the essence of the aesthetic movement and the Pre-Raphaelites influenced the artistic and literary taste of the time. Ruskin, Swinburne, Walter Pater showed great aesthetic endeavour through their writings. His poetry marks a difference from the Pre-Raphaelites insofar as its religious endeavour is concerned. Art and religion are blended together in Hopkins. While Matthew Arnold showed his reaction against religion and dogma in his poetry, Hopkins tried his poetry with a religious ardour. Again, the Tractarian movement in 1833 coloured his later poetry. Hopkins was influenced by the terms and the tide of the age and that is well reflected in his poetry.

The concepts ‘instress’ and ‘inscape’ are crucial to Hopkins’ poetic aesthetics and spiritual growth. And the medieval philosopher Duns Scotus and his theory of knowledge coloured the spirit of Hopkins’ poetry. As Scotus’ theory reveals, knowledge has its roots or source in the senses. Hopkins perceives a unity in variety wherein lie ‘dappled’, contradictory and opposing forces together.

Stop to Consider

“Star of Balliol”

“Hopkins won the poetry prize at the Highgate grammar school and in 1863 was awarded a grant to study at Balliol College, Oxford, where he continued writing poetry while studying classics. In 1866, in the prevailing atmosphere of the Oxford Movement, which renewed interest in the relationships between Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism, he was received into the Roman Catholic Church by John Henry (later Cardinal) Newman. The following year, he left Oxford with such a distinguished academic record that Benjamin Jowett, then a Balliol lecturer and later master of the college, called him “the star of Balliol.” Hopkins decided to become a priest. He entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1868 and burned his youthful verses, determining “to write no more, as not belonging to my profession.”

Though he lived in late Victorian times, Hopkins is considered to be a modern poet in the sense that he marked a break from the Victorian tradition insofar as his technical approaches are concerned. He renovated the Anglo-Saxon metrical pattern and rediscovered “sprung rhythm” in his poetry. The use of this rhythm is to be seen in his *The Wreck of the Deutschland* (1875) which stood as a prelude to his whole work.

A.S. Collins writes that Hopkins’ poetry had a special appeal for the post-war world that revealed a sense of spiritual tension and frustration. It can also be said that Hopkins, through his poetry, tried to establish a poetic truth that would unite the concrete and the abstract world together. His poetry is a search for truth exploring newer possibilities. Discussing Hopkins’ poetry, Herbert McLuhan observes that Hopkins was neither a nature mystic, nor a religious mystic, but an analogist. In his words, “His is a sacramental view of the world since what of God is there he does not perceive nor experience but takes in faith.” (McLuhan, 82). Herbert calls it a ‘mirror mechanism’ applied by Hopkins to show the analogical significance.

Stop to Consider

Sprung Rhythm

In terms of technical innovations, Hopkins revived a meter named “Sprung Rhythm” which he first experimented with in his poem ‘The

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Wreck of the Deutschland” written in 1875. It appropriated the rhythm of prose and is very much akin to the natural speech in contrast to traditional prosody. It does not consist of a fixed number of syllables. He maintained flexibility in meter and insisted on the rhythmical pattern of poetry. It consists of strong stressed syllables followed by an irregular number of unstressed syllables. The stressed syllables contain strong thoughts and emotions.

In 1879, Hopkins wrote to Robert Bridges that the poetical language of an age should be the current language heightened to any degree.

Walter J. Ong, the critic of oral traditions, rightly says that Hopkins succeeded in reaching to the very ‘inscape’ of his medium of verse. In his analysis, Hopkins was a true successor of Spenser, Donne and Shakespeare that further influenced modern poets like Eliot, Auden, Dylan Thomas.

Inscape and Instress

The term ‘inscape’ is coined by Hopkins to designate the principle of beauty in things. He applied the term to refer to the distinctiveness in a natural thing. It is originally a Scotist concept of Haecceitas or ‘thisness’ that asserts its uniqueness. In one of his letters to Robert Bridges, he referred to inscape as the very soul of Art. He wrote to Bridges,

“No doubt my poetry errs on the side of oddness... But as air , melody, is what strikes me most of all in music and design in painting, so design, pattern or what I am in the habit of calling ‘inscape’ is what above all I aim at in poetry. Now it is the virtue of design or pattern, or inscape to be distinctive and it is the vice of distinctiveness to become queer. This vice cannot have escaped.”

Instress is the very force of perceiving inscape that is attached to the intensity of feelings. It is the very unifying force (visionary) that involves a network of associations. It is the very essence of artistic creations.

SAQ

The words, “sacramental”, “analogical” and “mirror mechanism” all show one aspect of Hopkins’ religious faith which is to be found in his poetry. Would it be correct to say that this means that his use of images aims to

show the symbols of God's presence? Give textual extracts. (50 + 50 words)

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3.3 Critical Reception

Hopkins has become a test case for modern poetry. Hopkins' poems were first published in 1918 and it is probably inevitable that the modern poets should have considered him as one of their contemporaries. John Wain even makes an important observation that Hopkins' poetry satisfies the two chief modern poetic principles – irreducibility and simultaneity. Discussing Hopkins' poetry Herbert McLuhan observes that Hopkins is neither a nature mystic, nor a religious mystic, but an analogist whose poetic faith allows him to analyze through meditation.

Hopkins' experimental vocabulary, language and rhythm have drawn the attention of modern critics like I. A Richards, William Empson, F. R Leavis and J. Hillis Miller. They regard Hopkins as a classic example of modern poets. On the other hand, critics like William Butler Yeats is of the opinion that Hopkins had been a decadent poet whose style heralded a transition in nineteenth century poetry. F. O. Matthiessen terms Hopkins' experimental language as a Romantic revolt against 'poetic diction'. Readers often seem to encounter difficulties while going through Hopkins' poetry which is largely due to its complex diction and vocabulary. Hence his poems tend to be obscure. However, critics like F. R. Leavis identify a positive use for this ambiguity and consider that the sense of difficulty, tension, resistance is an essential part of the poetic effect. Hopkins' strength mainly lies in the fact that he brought poetic language closer to living speech. F. R Leavis pointed to the contemporary significance of Hopkins' poetry saying that "a technique so much concerned with inner division, friction and psychological complexities in general has a special bearing on the problems of contemporary poetry."

3.4 Context of the poem

Being a Jesuit Priest himself, Hopkins' poetry is undoubtedly marked by an intense sense of religiosity. Critics argue that he becomes the great meeting point of humanity with God. In "God's Grandeur", Hopkins dwells on the

paradox of God's persistent concern for humanity, despite humanity's obliviousness to spiritual values. The poem is considered to have been written against the backdrop of the second Industrial Revolution in 1877 when humanity seemed to have lost sight of the close connections between God and nature. The poem is an attempt on Hopkins' part to retrieve the lost connection between humanity and God by emphasizing the 'grandeur' of God's creation. The massive changes swept in during the second Industrial Revolution with the advancement of technology had a deep impact on the natural world created by God. The destruction of the natural landscape, mining processes, pollutions generated by the changing waves of modernity is being lamented by Hopkins in the poem. The poem exposes Victorian society's disruption of the natural world through anthropogenic activities. In this regard, Hopkins connects the loss of 'nature' to the loss of spirituality, thereby calling attention to a narrative of renewal of both the natural world as well as the spiritual crisis.

Stop to Consider

Hopkins was deeply pained by the mutual impoverishment of man and nature. His consciousness for nature aligns him with the sentiments of his predecessors such as Wordsworth whose "The world is too much with us" echoes similar concern as Hopkins' opening move "The world is charged, as grandeur flows from God". At a time when Hopkins wrote this poem, "farmland and meadow are disappearing under encroaching slag heaps and the blighting smudge of foundry smoke" (*A Reader's Guide to Gerard Manley Hopkins* 65)

Outside the beauty of the valley in which the poem was written, "Wales itself had numerous areas blighted by mines and smelters" (65).

Stop to Consider

The compound words used by Hopkins such as 'wring world', 'lionlimb', 'darksome devouring' are a reflection of the binary epithet commonly used in ancient Greek poetry, which Hopkins taught at the university college at Dublin.

In his article "The Culture of the Ancient Epithet: Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Translation of Imagination" Jack Mitchell states, "Hopkins' epithets are comparable to Timotheus' for their innovativeness; unlike

Timotheus, however, Hopkins was innovating in a tradition of a traditionality, in which vividness and specificity are meant to provoke reactions on the part of the reader” (150, Mitchell).

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3.5 Reading the Poem “God’s Grandeur”

Hopkins’ “God’s Grandeur” is also written in the Petrarchan sonnet format with a conventional abba abba c d c d rhyme scheme. The sonnet essentially consists of iambic pentameter, except for the third line where Hopkins slightly diverts from the traditional Petrarchan sonnet sequence by adding an extra foot. The unusual and elated diction of Hopkins’ poetry ostensibly marks its difference from the poetics of other nineteenth-century writers. The specificity of Hopkins’ poetry lies in his powerful execution of metaphors, and this is beautifully deployed in “God’s Grandeur”. For instance, the initial metaphor used in the sonnet is surprisingly, that of God’s Grandeur as an electric force. Hopkins is a master of the juxtaposition of form and content to create effective meanings, and his unique syntactical structure makes his poetry all the more appealing. This distinctive feature of his poetry is evident in “God’s Grandeur”, “Generations have trod, and trod,”. This first line of the second quatrain of the Octave shows how Hopkins uses the syntactical technique of repetition to emphasize how men are continuously involved in activities that eventually distance them from the grace and grandeur of nature. According to Paul Mariani, the very first line of the poem, “the world is charged with the/grandeur of God” sets the moral imperative of the poem. This ‘single unified declarative statement’ expresses the main theme of the poem. By drawing a comparison between ‘the grandeur of God’ to an electric force that ‘charges’ the world, Hopkins presents the idea of God as an essence in nature who has regenerative powers.

Stop to Consider

The Sonnet “God’s Grandeur can also be seen as a narrative of the evils of modern life within the Biblical context of the Fall 12, set forth by the ‘Profession of Faith’ in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, where, in the octave, following his fall, man is shown as ‘radically and irrevocably (rejecting) God and his reign, whilst in the sestet, Man was shown not to be abandoned by God, but, on the contrary, “God calls him and in a mysterious way heralds the coming victory over evil and his restoration from his fall” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, *Profession of Faith*, chapter 1 para 392).

The powerful words ‘charged’ and ‘flame out’ in the beginning lines point to the energy which draws an essential connection between God in Nature and the industrial world of the nineteenth century. Hopkins’ unique mastery in poetic diction demands extra attention from the readers to comprehend his levels of interpretations. For instance, in the second line, “It will flame out, like shining from shook foil”, the phrase ‘a piece of foil’ is not easily intelligible. But as evident from Hopkins’ letter to Robert Bridges, the ‘foil’ refers to gold foil, and the simile ‘like shook foil’ is suggestive of God’s grandeur with a lightning-like quality. The following lines, “it gathers to a grandeur, like the ooze of oil,/ crushed. . .” refers to grandeur as surging in power and gathering momentum. The richness and energy of this power are expressed through the simile “like the ooze of oil”. Thus, if a drop of oil is ‘crushed’ (Hopkins is referring to the gathering of oil from the crushing of olives as indicated from his *Letters*) the force is transmitted to its entire surface. Likewise, God’s diffusive power is also manifested in nature and the entire world.

Now, the question which troubles the speaker is the fact that if God’s presence is manifested in the world of Nature, why do men fail to pay attention (‘reck’) to his authority?

Why do men then now not reckon his rod?

The immediate answer is given by the speaker in the next couple of lines, where he considers the repetitive activities of men, his preoccupation with industry and commerce as the reasons behind the emerging gulf between humanity and God/Nature. The conscious use of words such as ‘reckless’ and ‘mind-less’ showcase humanity’s inability to recognize the presence of God. Furthermore, the word ‘care-less’ indicates the uncaring aspect of human beings towards God and Nature as evident through the persistent anthropogenic activities of the Victorian world. Such destructive attitude of Man often resulting from commercial greediness further expands the physical proximity between Nature/God and man.

... nor can foot feel,
being shod”

The Sestet begins with a shift in its tone, “And for all this, nature is never spent”. Here, the phrase, ‘and for all’ gives the sense of ‘despite’ wherein Hopkins states that despite all the sufferings at the hand of humanity, Nature can never be ‘exhausted’, and it still invigorates ‘freshness’. In the concluding part of the Sonnet, Hopkins, by juxtaposing the images of ‘night’ and ‘day’ shows how there is still a possibility for a renewed hope in a seemingly lifeless world.

And after the last lights off the black West sky has gone
springs the morning. ...

The poem thus ends with a note of optimism where 'hope' still pervades if one recognizes the grandeur of God in the things around him. The religious allusions indicating the 'rebirth' of Christ, essentially posits a world where the 'sins' of the industrial world would be washed away for a new 'rising'.

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Check Your Progress

Read the poem against the backdrop of nineteenth-century Industrial world. (150 words)

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Examine the influence of Hopkins' Jesuit ecclesiastical life in the prescribed Sonnet. (150 words)

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3.6 Summing Up

You would have seen from the discussion above that Hopkins' poetry is a reaction to the spiritual crisis and unrest of his time. He regrets human failure to establish faith in self and knowledge. The self in Hopkins is constantly struggling with resistance and power. The internal conflict is mirrored through the miniature of a landscape. Through poetic endeavour he is restoring faith in the new order. The awareness of the holy pattern (the one Spirit that governs the world) consoles his frustrated heart and allows him to gratify the Creator and His creation. His poetry is not only significant for its technical experiments, but also for the philosophical conflict that they represent. His faith in creative power and its 'dappled' manifestations is a necessary reaction to his crisis ridden period. Nature and the landscape appear to him a vast scripture and within it he mirrors the physical, moral and the divine. Sparing little room for traditional language and prosody Hopkins makes use of alliteration, assonance, internal rhymes, and repetitions in a flexible way to give language its distinctive touch. It is natural that Hopkins must be charged for his ambiguous and obscure use of language. F. R. Leavis discusses that Hopkins makes positive uses of ambiguity and expects from the reader repeated intellectual effort. Leavis is

of the opinion that Hopkins is the only influential poet of the Victorian age. A. S. Collins writes that Hopkins' poetry (through a combination of powerful intellect and sensuousness) made special appeal to the post-World War I world. Hopkins' poetry is a plea against the changing pattern of an industrialised world and the crisis of Christian faith. As J. Hillis Miller writes, Hopkins treats poetry as the exploration and exploitation of the possibilities of sound-patterns. Within a democratic set up Hopkins perceives the world in its totality and like a craftsman he interweaves the internal with the external. His original handling of language and the compressed imagery makes the verse original and complex.

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Unit 4 : G.M. Hopkins: “God’s Grandeur”

Supplementary Unit

Unit Structure:

- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Understanding Hopkins as a ‘remarkable innovator’.
- 4.3 Religious Influence in Hopkins’ Poetry.
- 4.4 Hopkins’ other poems related to “God’s Grandeur”
- 4.5 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers.
- 4.6 Important works on Hopkins.
- 4.7 Summing Up
- 4.8 References and Suggested Readings

4.1 Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Appreciate G.M.Hopkins’s contribution to modern poetry
- Learn about some of the poems by Hopkins
- Explore various dimensions of Hopkins’s poetry
- Answer important questions relating to his poems

4.2 Understanding Hopkins as a ‘remarkable innovator’

One of the commonest approaches to studying poetry is elucidating the physical and/or technical aspects of a poem in an objective way. In other words, the central question which occurs while examining any poetry is: how is the ‘meaning’ of a poem conveyed to the readers? ‘Meaning’ in a ‘modern’ sense, however, does not essentially confine to the thematic essence of a poem, but it also contains the various technical devices such as imageries, symbolism, and other syntactical structures employed by a poet to communicate with his/her readers. So far as G. M Hopkins is concerned, his innovative experiment in poetic technique accords him a place among modern poets. F. R Leavis considers Hopkins as ‘one of the most remarkable technical inventors who, ever wrote’ poetry. At times he is accused of obscurity but he is a remarkable innovator and his experiments with language won him the sobriquet of being modern. To understand Hopkins’s poetry, therefore, readers have to

familiarize themselves with the technical nuances of his poetry. Hopkins' poetry needs to be approached with regard to his use of language, symbols and imageries, complexities of structures, and his marked differentiation from other poets of his era.

One of the innovations of Hopkins lies in his attempt to recreate literary ways of expression through the deployment of what her terms as 'Inscape', 'Instress' 'Sprung Rhythm' and his use of remarkable stylistic devices. Inscapè refers to the unique design or pattern of every individual thing in the world. "All the world is full of inscaped," wrote G M Hopkins in his journal. The theological belief behind this was that God never repeats himself. Hopkins tries to perceive the unique patterns, order of things in the world of nature and to express the experience through his language. The intricate relationship between human experience and human language is key to understanding Hopkins' poetry. The Ascetic years of Jesuit training in Hopkins' life allowed him to enjoy rural peace which sharpened his senses to acquire or revealing the world in terms of its minute detailing like colour, shape, design, odour, and energy. He wrote to Dixon, "unless you refresh the mind from time to time, you cannot always remember or believe how deep the inscaped of a thing is". Hopkins used to experience and observe nature very closely with a child's eye. It is, therefore, very interesting to notice how Hopkins perceives the minute details and the uniqueness of patterns in nature and expresses them with a feeling of novelty. Hopkins is interested in, to put in the words of W. A M Peters 'the relation between the parts of the thing to each other, and again of the parts to the whole. As he writes in one of his Journals "I thought how sadly the beauty of inscaped was unknown and buried away from simple people and yet how near at hand it was if only they had eyes to see it and it could be called out everywhere again" (quoted in Gardener 12). 'There lives the dearest freshness deep down things', Hopkins writes in "God's Grandeur". The 'freshness' is the distinctiveness of things (inscaped) which is often invisible to the common eye. The inscaped of beauty finds true reflection in Hopkins' "Pied Beauty" where every object found in nature from the 'brinded-cow' to 'spotted landscape' is rendered a particular, unique and distinct quality. The force which determines an inscaped or rather holds it, is termed as 'Instress' by Hopkins. It is the unifying force in the object which actualizes the inscaped in the mind of the perceiver. According to Gardener, "Instress is the sensation of inscaped - a quasi-mystical illumination, a sudden perception of that deeper pattern, order, and unity which gives meaning to external forms"(12). Hopkins equates the 'Instress' with God's sustaining love and power which holds the individuality

(inscape) of every object of nature. Hopkins' aim of poetry is, however, not only to produce 'physical inscapes in external nature but also to produce inscape of speech-sound. Poetry for Hopkins lies between prose and music; prose says things by making logical statements, whereas, music says things by making pure patter of sound. It is this musical end which Hopkins aspires constantly, "speech framed to be heard for its own sake and interest even over, and above, the interest of music".

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Stop to Consider

Hopkins' concepts of 'Inscape', 'Instress', 'selving' are uniquely applicable to impart a completely distinctive moment in time via poetry. Everything in the universe was characterized by what he called 'Inscape': the distinctive design that constitutes individual identity. This identity is not static but dynamic. Each being in the universe 'selves, that is, enacts its identity... the human being... recognizes the inscape of other beings in an act that Hopkins calls 'Instress'.

Logical verbal meaning for Hopkins is secondary to the 'shape' The 'shape' in a poem is the total sound pattern imposed onto it by the poet which is being received by the listener's ear and perceived by their mind. However, Hopkins did not exclude logical verbal meaning entirely. He said, "some matter or meaning is essential to it, but only as an element necessary to support and employ the shape, which is contemplated for its own sake" (quoted in Wimsatt). This remark by Hopkins can be taken as the key to understanding his poetry. To attain this 'Inscape' of language in 'shapes' he uses devices of rhythm and sound and alludes to Old English alliterative verse, Norse and Icelandic poetry, and classical meters of Pindar's odes and the chorus rhythm. Hopkins' sonnet "God's Grandeur" is a production of the time when Hopkins was mastering this Welsh technique.

SAQ

Hopkins' Poetry needs to be approached with regard to his stylistic variations. Do you agree? Explain with examples. (100 words)

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Hopkins is also praised by modern critics for his onomatopoeic skills. His use of vowels for the onomatopoeic effect finds beautiful expression in “God’s Grandeur”:

“Seared with trade;
bleared smeared with toil;
And wears man’s smudge and
Shares man’s smell” . . . (“God’s Grandeur”).

Hopkins’ use of alliterative patterns comes from Old English verse possessing three alliterations per line. Sprung Rhythm is another innovation in meter by Hopkins which allows him freedom from the normally fixed quantity of syllables. In Sprung rhythm, the poet has no limit on the total number of syllables; giving flexibility to speech. The idea of sprung rhythm was already visible in the nursery rhymes and lullabies for children but it was Hopkins’ poetry where this form was heightened from its ‘natural cadence’. When it comes to Hopkins’ use of syntax; it is also unique, not usually accepted and understood by grammarians. His organization of words to create the meaningful structure of language is a distinctive quality of his works. It is very important to analyze his structures and patterns to understand his poetry properly. He uses poetry as a medium to express what he senses or feels. A reader needs to delve deep beyond the surface level to decipher Hopkins’ poetry.

4.3 Religious Influence in Hopkins’ Poetry

Born to devout Anglican parents, Hopkins was committed to religion quite from an early age. Pertaining to the major religious controversies fermenting within the Anglican Church during the Victorian era, Hopkins deserted his ancestral religion and converted to Catholicism. Naturally, the subject matter of most of Hopkins’ poetry is religious. The power of God’s creation becomes the central crux of his poems. In “God’s Grandeur”, the landscape in its natural state itself, reflects the all-pervading grace of God. The use of Biblical allusions in “Carrion Comfort” showcases how Hopkins wins ‘hope’ against ‘despair’ and seeks comfort in the almighty by leaving his rotten (carrion) despair behind:

... Thy wing-world right
foot rock? lay a
lionlimb against me? Scan
with darksome devouring
eyes my bruised bones?

Critics opine that there are many strains of Hopkins' religious poetry. As Joseph J Feenay argues, "Hopkins is a religious poet of great religious variety: of piety, sin, and guilt, of escape from and love of the world, of Christ and the Trinity, of the Eucharist, scripture, and the sacraments, of morality and the spiritual life" ("Hopkins: A Religious and a Secular Poet" 4). While poems such as "Carrion Comfort", "Thou art Indeed Lord", and "I wake and feel" attempt to provide solace to God-seeking Hopkins, other poems such as "God's Grandeur", "Pied Beauty", "The Windhover" expresses religious piety and glory of the Lord.

Typically described as a religious poet Hopkins' works give off "a white heat of spirituality" and his "sensuous appreciation of the outer life" mingles with "a vein of ethical and divine interpretation" (Feenay 4). Hopkins' poetry, therefore, can be addressed by considering his 'Christian', 'Anglican', 'evangelical', 'Jesuit', 'Catholic', or 'sacramental' stance in view. Such a nuanced understanding would help in deciphering the various Biblical allusions employed by Hopkins in his poetry. Having said that, it has to be mentioned that, despite being a religious poet Hopkins is, and should be read, enjoyed, and studied in countless ways. As discussed earlier, Hopkins' innovation in rhythms, sounds, and forms earned him the status of a 'secular' modern poet. His poetry also to put in the words of Feenay, "deserves a suspension of 'belief' and prejudice to be read with sympathy and understanding. Hopkins' works also, therefore, need to be assessed through diverse approaches be it biographical, linguistic, and/or 'modern'. A balanced approach to his works would undoubtedly render a fruitful reading.

Stop to Consider

"Hopkins's poetry has always been recognized as unorthodox to some degree. All readers, from the first to the latest, whether they have responded positively to the poems or negatively, have recognized that they are unusual...."

The English Jesuit journal *The Month* had been prepared to accept the 'Deutschland' provided that 'it rhymed and scanned and construed and did not make nonsense or bad morality, and their eventual refusal to publish it can be taken as acknowledgment of its unorthodoxy...

Robert Bridges's Preface to the 1918 edition of the Poems described Oddity and Obscurity as detriments, while the eminent critic I.A. Richards in the late 1920s called the same oddities deliberate virtues" (White 140).

4.4 Hopkins' other poems related to "God's Grandeur"

Hopkins' "Spring", "In the valley of Elwy", "The Sea and the Skylark" and "The Windhover" were written around the same time that he wrote "God's Grandeur" in 1877. The aforementioned poems share similar traits with "God's Grandeur" with regard to both theme and style. Through these Sonnets, Hopkins valorizes Nature as a manifestation of God and shows his concern for the gradual destruction of Nature by Man. Written in the Petrarchan Sonnet sequence as "God's Grandeur", Hopkins in his "Spring" gives a joyful description of the spring season by drawing on various images from the natural world in the octave. In the sestet, Hopkins puts forward his questions to Christ and asks him to save the children from the sin of the world. Much like "God's Grandeur" the "Spring" is also set against Hopkins' religious backdrop wherein he uses Biblical allusions to address his queries to God. The use of phrases like 'little hands' and 'thrust eggs' clearly alludes to Christ.

Hopkins' unique style and thematic concerns of "God's Grandeur" are also evident in "The Windhover". Considered as one of the best poems of Hopkins, "The Windhover" also addresses Christ as suggested by the subtitle 'To Christ our Lord'. This Sonnet follows the same pattern of thought as "God's Grandeur" and "Spring" where the speaker describes the flawless creation of God in the octave and draws on spiritual equivalents in the Sestet to illuminate the existence of God. While employing the poetic technique of 'Inscap' to express the distinctiveness of each object of Nature, Hopkins considers God as the unifying force who holds such an 'inscape'; a world charged with God's grandeur in "God's Grandeur" and the 'billion times told lovelier God in "The Windhover". Similarly, in "The Sea and the Skylark" Hopkins gives a vivid description of joyful singing of the Skylark in Nature in the octave followed by a grim picture of the destruction of Nature by human beings in the sestet.

It has already been stated how Hopkins experienced alienation and depression during his Dublin years. Many critics consider his vocation as Jesuit Priest as the sole reason for his estrangement. The poems he wrote after his conversion to Catholicism differ considerably from his earlier creations. His 'sufferings' were reflected in the "Terrible Sonnets" which comprised seven sonnets. The group of Sonnet includes "To Seem the Stranger", "I Wake and Feel", "No Worst", "Carrion Comfort", "Patience", "Hard Thing", and "My Own Heart". The sense of alienation that forms the crux of "Carrion Comfort" also finds reflection in "To Seem the Stranger":

“To Seem the stranger lies my lot, my life
Among strangers”.

Similarly, in ‘No Worst’ Hopkins uses striking Image to convey the terror of the depressive self, falling over the edge into insanity:

“O the mind, mind has mountains;
Cliffs of fall”
Frightful, sheer, no man-fathomed.
Hold them cheap
May who ne’er hung there...”

Hopkins’ dark mood is reflected in his use of phrases like ‘what word/wisest my heart breeds’ and ‘dark heavens baffling ban’ in the Sonnet “To Seem a Stranger” much like “Carrion Comfort”.

Stop to Consider:

“On December 8, 1875, Hopkins read the newspaper’s account of a shipwreck off the coast of Kent. The Deutschland, a steamer carrying emigrants from Bremen to New York, had run aground in a storm, and more than fifty of its passengers and crew were drowned. Hopkins, who was in Wales studying theology as part of his nine-year training to become a Jesuit priest, was especially struck by the detail that five of the dead were Franciscan nuns—exiles from imperial Germany, where Bismarck was prosecuting his Kulturkampf against the Catholic Church.”

“The shrieks and sobbing of women and children are described by the survivors as agonizing.” Hopkins “was affected by the account,” he told a friend years later, “and happening to say so to my rector he said that he wished someone would write a poem on the subject. On this hint, I set to work and, though my hand was out at first, produced one.”

Source: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/05/11/back-to-basics-2>

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4.5 Probable Questions and Suggested Answers

Q1: Reflect on Hopkins’ attitude towards the scientific and technological advancements of the Victorian era as represented in the poem “God’s Grandeur”.

Ans: Victorian era is significantly marked by the Industrial Revolution, which

brought about a great change in the lifestyles, thought processes, and morality of the people. The rapid advancement in scientific, technological, and medical fields undoubtedly brought about changes and improvements in economy, trade, and communications all over England, often blurring the lines of class divisions and resulting in social mobility. But Hopkins was critical of the technological progressions in the society, as he was much concerned about the negative impacts of such advancements on the natural world and humanity. Hopkins' position as a Jesuit Priest made him consider the natural world as an integral part of God himself. Therefore, he was deeply pained to see the mutual impoverishment of 'man' and 'nature'. The 'reckless' destruction of Nature through anthropogenic activities shattered Hopkins, who possesses a keen eye and love for the world of nature. For Hopkins, God manifests himself through every creation of the living Nature.

Hopkins' "God's Grandeur" can be understood against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution and its sabotage of the Natural world.

"... Generations have trode,
have trode"

The first line of the second quatrain of the octave shows Hopkins' concern over Men's mindless activities. His repeated use of the word 'trode' highlights how such incessant activities by Man is eventually distancing them from the power and grandeur of God and Nature. In the pursuit of materialistic gain, Humanity is unmindful of their activities which is slowly deteriorating their relationship with God and the natural world.

"...the soil is bare now,
nor can feet feel, being shod"

The 'bare' soil in the above line indicates the intensity of destruction caused by human beings. The shoes of the humans (being shod) which are indicative of the Industrial world symbolically act as a barrier between humanity and the natural world. The 'foot' possesses the power to connect with the earth, but after being shod with materiality it has lost its sensitivity to stay connected to Nature and God.

However, towards the end of the poem, Hopkins affirms that the grandeur of Nature can never be exhausted, "...nature is never spent". After the darkness of each night, a new day begins with freshness. Similarly, God acts as a rejuvenating force in Nature who holds the power to renew the world afresh.

Q2: Analyse “Carrion Comfort” as a representation of Hopkins’ inner conflict and personal anguish.

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Ans: The discussion on Hopkins’ life and poetry makes it evident that his conversion to Catholicism impacted his life and creativity to a greater extent. Hopkins’ decision to become a Jesuit Priest entails a life of commanding ascetism. Consequently, his preoccupation with the extreme form of Catholicism separated him from his family and country and brought about a sense of dislocation to him. The years of Hopkins’ stay in Dublin are characterized by a sense of ‘despair’ and desolation as demonstrated through his various letters to his friends. In one of his letters to his friend Robert Bridges, Hopkins seems to be talking about his growing traits of depression, weakness, lack of energy to do anything. He wrote to Bridges, “I think my fits of sadness, although they do not affect my judgment; resemble madness”. (*A Readers Guide*). Some critics commented on Hopkins’ vocation as Jesuit Priest as the reason behind his mental problems. His sufferings and personal anguish find particular expression in his “Terrible Sonnets”. “Carrion Comfort” is one such sonnet that presents his inner turmoil and his refusal to give up to ‘despair’:

“Not, I’ll not, carrion comfort,
Despair, not feast on thee”.

The above lines evoke Hopkins’ firm refusal to succumb to the darkness of depression. Hopkins’ desolate self was in much need of some consolation and validation from God. Involving himself in a series of questions, Hopkins asks God the reason behind God’s decision to bequeath a life of suffering to him. Although Hopkins doesn’t come to a resolution as to why or what God is doing to him, but he discovers his ‘self’ or one of his stronger ‘selves’ which can which could sustain any form of ‘despair’ by having strong faith in God. The sonnet, therefore, showcases Hopkins’ dwindling state between ‘despair’ and ‘faith’ in God.

... “Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod,
Hand rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, cheer”.

Despite the ‘toil’ and ‘coil’ brought about by the tempests of his life, Hopkins, nevertheless, finds resurgence in God’s optimism and his ‘heart lo!’ directly and joyfully experiences the ‘cheer’ around him. The dwindling faith of Hopkins, then, recuperates towards the end of the sonnet, giving solace to his otherwise anguished mind.

Q3: Write a note on the use of Biblical allusions in Hopkins's Poems the prescribed poem.

Ans: Biblical allusion makes brief and direct references to Biblical events, characters, places within a literary work. Hopkins' poetry has abundant Biblical allusions owing to his religious background. His active involvement with Christianity paved the way for him to creatively employ such allusions in his works. The title of the Sonnet "God's Grandeur" itself is a reference to the magnificence of God (The Christ). Furthermore, the word 'charged' in the first line of the poem refers to the 'Creation story' where the world was created with a spark of life, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1.3). While the 'light' pervades the universe, the speaker is saddened by the deteriorating condition of the Industrialized world. However, despite the pervading darkness, Hopkins is hopeful of the arrival of Christ to redeem humanity from the 'black sky'.

“...And after the last lights off the black west sky has gone
springs the morning, at the brown brink eastward,”

The above lines figuratively refer to the arrival of Christ to the rescue of humanity and the renewal of the degenerative Victorian world. The advent of the Holy Ghost can be analyzed to the Biblical event of the Resurrection of Christ. "Carrion Comfort" is also representative of Hopkins' take on Christian religiosity. Hopkins always maintains his connection with Christ and it beautifully gets manifested in his writings. In the process of showing his discontent with life and his struggle with despair, Hopkins uses various Biblical allusions to vividly portray his inner anguish.

“...But ah, but O thou terrible,
Why wouldst thou rude on me
Thy wing-world right foot rock?
lay a lionlimb against me...”

The above lines give the idea of the speaker being threatened by a predatory animal- suggestively a lion. Also in the sestet, the poet 'twens' into an animal, 'lapping strength'. The 'lion' according to Biblical allusion, is often identified with Jesus; it is the lion who would purify- the apocalyptic as the lion of Judah (Revelation 5:5). The phrase 'O thou terrible' is then, a reference to Christ, who like the lion is majestic and all-powerful. Hopkins also suggests Biblical allusions in the sestet:

“Why? That my chaff might fly,
my grain lie, sheer and clear”

Here, the 'grain' symbolizes 'the bread of life in Christian doctrine. His disturbing thoughts are as momentary as the 'chaff' which would fly off, but his faith in God is resolute and firm as the 'grain' of Christ.

The Biblical allusions in Hopkins's poetry, therefore, not only uphold his beliefs and morals but also blends aesthetic intentions with deep symbolism.

Q4: Examine Hopkins as a modernist poet with reference to the prescribed poem.

Ans: Hopkins with his unconventional, experimental, complex technical styles of writing, marks a transition in English poetic culture from 'Victorian' to 'Modern'. He lived in late Victorian times, but so far, his writings are concerned, Hopkins marks a clear departure from the typical Victorian style of 'sentimentality'. He was very much attracted by the Anglo-Saxon sentence structure, words, and metrical forms which he later on renovated and rediscovered in his poetic techniques. Hopkins' search for 'newer possibilities' in his poetry paved way for modern poetry. Most of the anthologies of Modern Poetry, therefore begin with Hopkins, although chronologically he doesn't fit in the modern context. What makes Hopkins essentially modern, is his novelty of style and techniques in poetry. Critics observe that the poetry of Hopkins is characterized by a sense of 'tension', and 'complexity. F.R Leavis, a critic of the modern age finds contemporary relevance in Hopkin's poetry. To put in the words of Leavis, "a technique so much concerned with inner division, friction, and psychological complexities in general has a special bearing on the problems of contemporary poetry". Aligning with the characteristics of modern poetry, Hopkins' poetry also characterizes inner conflicts, anguish and addresses the complexities of human existence.

In the sonnet "God's Grandeur", Hopkins expresses his concern for the deteriorating relationship between humans and God; how human beings are drifting away from the divine power and flowing into the world of exploitation and destruction for materialistic gains. Such ethos runs parallel to the modern spiritual crisis of degenerative values, where the loss of connection between Humanity and God leads to chaos and anarchy. However, Hopkins ends his poetry with an optimistic note, for he finds hope in the existence of God despite the 'darkness' permeating the world.

The swift changes of life in the modern era 'cripple' the modern Man with a sense of isolation. Most of Modern poetry reflects this sense of alienation and isolation. Hopkins' poetry is also marked by a sense of questioning the existence of 'being'. "Carrion Comfort" is one such poem in which Hopkins

questions the purpose of his 'existence' amidst the sorrow pervading his life. The question of the 'self' which is central to modern Man, finds reflection in "Carrion Comfort" when he contemplates the reason behind his suffering. Is it God who is causing him trouble with the sorrows or is it his own 'self' who increases his suffering through his thought process? Such queries posit psychological complexities which have relevance to modern poetry. Through a series of dialogues, Hopkins asserts his sense of isolation which is again reflective of the modernist concept of the struggle for individual identity and purpose in life. Hopkins's religious undertones can undoubtedly be found in his poems owing to his Jesuit convictions. However, as seen from the above discussions on his innovations in poetic forms, Hopkins' poetry lines up with modern facets of poetry concerning both the technical and thematic aspects.

Q5: Write a note on Hopkins' Innovative poetic techniques of 'Inscape' and 'Instress'.

Ans: The theological belief, 'God never repeats himself' denotes that every creation of this world, be it landscape, person, or any other natural element possesses its peculiar characteristics which enables them to differentiate from one another. In short, every creation has its individuality. This pattern and design of individual things are termed as 'Inscape' by Hopkins. 'Instress' is a related term to 'Inscape' which refers to the actual experiences a beholder has of 'Inscape': how is it received into the sight, memory, and imagination of the perceiver. In providing readers with 'Instress', the task of the poets is to find perfect images which will help in capturing the 'Inscape' of things for the readers and will give them the scope for getting along with the poet's point of view.

The 'Inscape' or uniqueness is understood or perceived by a person through his observation. This idea was already found in the writings of the medieval theologian, Duns Scotus, and in the poetry of the Romantic poets. However, Hopkins reworked the idea and later coined the terms 'Inscape' and 'Instress'. By acquainting oneself with such techniques a reader can understand Hopkins' nature of poetic creations based on his experiences. While Hopkins had not given any precise critical theory of 'Inscape' and 'Instress', the understanding of the term can be gathered from Hopkins' use of it in various Journals and Letters. As Graham Storey notes, "the word 'Inscape' is first used in the journal of Swiss trees, on a Continental walking-tour of July 1868; 'Instress' of the beauty of Giotto; inspired by a visit to the Natural Gallery shortly before". Hopkins felt it was the artists' job to perceive and express the 'Inscape' (the uniqueness) either in art or in words. Inscap

is a soul of art; to Hopkins, it doesn't simply consist in the surface-level observation or a visible scene. He believes that 'Inscapè' reveals their creator just as the inner 'self' of the bluebell manifests the divine. And 'Instress' for him is the energy that holds the 'inscape' together. It refers to the impression of individual objects or men. Hopkins notes how the philosophy of Scotus influenced him to see the distinctiveness of things., "when I look in any 'Inscapè' of the sky or the sea I thought of Scotus". Hopkins' idea of 'Inscapè' and 'Instress' therefore harmonizes with Scotus' theory of 'Individuating Principal'. In the words of Alison G Sulloway, the commonality between Hopkins and Scotus is, "God created each living thing with its specific peculiarities that would never be recapitulated in another thing". In Hopkins' poetry, however, he not only produces 'Inscapè of things' but also consciously produces or creates 'Inscapè' of speech sounds. He defines poetry in his Journal as 'speech framed to be heard for its own sake and interest even over and above the interest of meaning'.

4.6 Important works on Hopkins

- ❖ *The Enclosure of an Open Mystery: Sacrament and Incarnation in the Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins, David Jones and Less Murray* by Stephen McInerney.
- ❖ *Selected Poetry* by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Oxford World's Classics.
- ❖ *The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Survey and Commentary* by Elsie Elizabeth Phare.
- ❖ *The Contemplative Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, by Maria R Lichtmann.
- ❖ *A Readers Guide to Gerard Manley Hopkins* by Norman H Mackenzie.
- ❖ "Hopkin's God's Grandeur" by Todd K. Bender, *The Explicator*. Vol 21. No 7.
- ❖ "The Grandeur in Hopkins' 'God's Grandeur'" by Roger L Slakey, *Victorian Poetry*. Vol 7. No. 2.
- ❖ "Hopkins' 'Carrion Comfort': The Artful Disorder of Prayer" by Alan M. Rose. *Victorian Poetry*. Vol 15. No 3.
- ❖ "Gerard Manley Hopkins and the poetry of Inscapè" by W.H Gardner. *Theoria*. No 33.

4.7 Summing Up

Gerard Manley Hopkins is considered one of the greatest poets of the Victorian Era. He is widely known for his innovation of the sprung rhythm. His use of vivid imageries in praise of God and nature highlights his religious and spiritual devotion for both God and the natural world. His theories of inscape and instess added new dimension to his poetic endeavours. Hopkins is known widely as a poet of religion, nature and melancholy.

4.8 References and Suggested Readings

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