

UNIT – I: DRAMA

CHAPTER-1

THE TEMPEST (ACTS III, IV & V)

—William Shakespeare



Introduction

'The Tempest' is a play written by William Shakespeare. The central theme of the play is to convey the importance of happiness in life. Shakespeare has hinted at many places that the best way to achieve happiness is not by taking revenge but by granting forgiveness to your enemies. The play revolves around Prospero, the Duke of Milan who suddenly starts getting interested in magic and philosophy. Due to his pre-occupation with the study of occult, he is easily overthrown by his evil brother Antonio. Prospero and his three year old daughter are deserted on a boat, but they luckily land on an uninhabited island. Years later, forced by Prospero's magic, Antonio along with his son and courtiers lands on the same island with their lives in the hands of Prospero. Prospero can now have his revenge, but he chooses a different path – the path of forgiveness.



Plot Summary

The Tempest contains one main plot and three sub-plots, all of which have been woven into the main plot.

The main plot has the story of Prospero's revenge on his enemies by using his magic powers. Prospero has been deprived of his dukedom by his brother, Antonio, with the support of Alonso, the King of Naples. Along with his young daughter, Miranda, he has been left at the mercy of the violent sea; but by the grace of God, he lands safely on an uninhabited island. He uses supernatural powers for taking revenge on his enemies. Prospero believes that the best revenge is forgiveness. But the evil-doers must not be forgiven too easily. They must be made to realise their guilt and they must be repentant. Through the agency of Ariel, Prospero succeeds in awakening the conscience of Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian. The play ends with a scene of repentance and reconciliation.

There is a sub-plot of conspiracy of Antonio and Sebastian to murder Alonso. Finding Alonso and other members of the group asleep, Antonio instigates Sebastian to murder his brother, Alonso. Sebastian agreed to this suggestion. The plot is ruined by Ariel. Just when these two are about to strike their possible victims, Ariel awakens the unsuspecting Gonzalo and Alonso. The sub-plot emphasizes the villainy of Sebastian and Antonio making Prospero's forgiveness nobler for these two. The sub-plot serves as an example of parallelism. Just like Antonio betrayed his brother Prospero, similarly Sebastian was betraying his brother, Alonso.

There is another comic sub-plot comprising Caliban's intrigue against Prospero. In spite of Prospero's efforts to civilize Caliban, the latter remains a beast. This monster tries to play mischief with Miranda. He curses Prospero. When he meets the drunken Stephano and Trinculo, he hatches a plan to murder Prospero. The plot is upset by Ariel and all of these conspirators are chased away by Prospero's spirits appearing in the form of dogs and hounds. Caliban's intrigue is not closely connected with the main plot. This sub-plot provides a comic relief to the play and relaxes the tension of the viewer caused by the conspiracy of Antonio and Sebastian against Alonso.

The third sub-plot is of love between Ferdinand and Miranda. This sub-plot is directly interconnected with the main plot. Miranda, the daughter of Prospero and Ferdinand, the son of Prospero's enemy, Alonso, fall in love with each other. Their love symbolises reconciliation, which is the main theme of the play. The union of Ferdinand and Miranda not only sets the seal of forgiveness upon Antonio and Alonso by Prospero but also binds Prospero and Alonso into a closer tie. Besides being an inseparable part of the main plot, this sub-plot also provides a romantic angle to the play.

Major Characters

PROSPERO

Prospero is the protagonist of the play. He is the prime agent, who manipulates the whole action of the play. He holds great control and influence over the other characters of the play. He is the one who brings the play to a cheerful ending.

At the outset of the play, he is shown to be a duke in exile who had ignored the affairs of the state in order to study philosophy and magic. His own brother abandons him and his little daughter on a small boat in the violent seas. It is his good fortune that the boat takes him to a deserted island.

He acts as a tyrant when he deals with Caliban and at times, even with his favourite spirit, Ariel. From this perspective, he is not a likeable person. He is a person of high prejudice. However, he is an affectionate father and dearly loves his daughter, Miranda.

He uses his magical powers to bring Ferdinand and Miranda closer. He feels happy when his plan to bring them together in love succeeds. When he realizes that the future of his daughter is secure, he is willing to retire to Milan.

Prospero thinks that he has tried to do well to others. He grants liberty to Ariel and makes a huge effort to civilize Caliban. He puts Ariel under his command and gets everything done through him.

Prospero has all reasons to take revenge upon his enemies. However, he chooses the path of forgiveness. He resolves to forgive his enemies if they are repentant of their past evil deeds.

Prospero is wise and extremely resourceful because he has magical powers. His wisdom makes him tolerant and charitable at the end of the play. However, he is unable to reconcile completely with his brother. He treats him with studied contempt and neglect. In retrospect, his pardon is just verbal and there is great anger inside him for his enemies under the garb of forgiveness.

On one side, he is a terrible sorcerer full of rage; and on the other side, he is a noble, kind and generous brother. He forgives all his enemies and does that in an abstract and impersonal manner. The best quality he has is that he does not act against his own noble deeds.

MIRANDA

Miranda is the daughter of Prospero. She is young and beautiful. Ferdinand considers her to be a goddess when he sees her for the first time.

She is sympathetic by nature. Having seen the shipwreck, she feels bad for the suffering of those who had been stranded. The cries of the passengers knock against her heart. Her pity is aroused upon seeing Ferdinand labouring under the burden of drudgery imposed upon him by Prospero. She pleads with her father on behalf of Ferdinand.

She is free of hypocrisy and deceit. She is not affected by the sophisticated civilization and her innocence does not allow her to conceal anything. She frankly declares her love for Ferdinand with no attempt at false modesty. Her smile comforts her father. When she learns from her father that she is a princess by birth, she does not regret at having lost the royal life. Quite surprisingly, she asks her father if there might be a blessing in their adversity. She falls in love with Ferdinand at the first sight. She is gladly willing to share Ferdinand's heavy work of carrying logs just to keep him company. Although she is highly devoted to her father, yet she is not prejudiced against Ferdinand by Prospero's distaste for him.

ALONSO

Alonso is a villainous character in the play. However, he is not as wicked as Antonio and Sebastian.

He is the King of Naples and is an imperial personality. He had sinned in the past in his plot with Antonio against Prospero. However, he is struck with deep remorse against Antonio and Sebastian, who remain unrepentant till the end.

Alonso dearly loves his only son, Ferdinand. When he thinks his son to have perished in the shipwreck, he cannot be consoled. He wanders about in the island in the only hope of finding him. However, he cannot find his son.

However, on finding his son alive later, his happiness knows no bounds. His depression over the marriage of his daughter, Claribel, with King of Tunis, and his irreparable grief over the expected loss of his son showcase his humane side. He is filled with remorse for his misdeeds of the past and atones before Prospero.

FERDINAND

Ferdinand is the son of Alonso, the King of Naples. He is the most charming character of the play. He appreciates the purity, innocence and beauty of Miranda. He is polite and respectful to Prospero in spite of the harsh treatment imposed by the latter. He is a perfect match for a girl like Miranda.

He is deeply in love with Miranda. He falls in love with her at the first sight. He treats a glimpse of Miranda as a compensation for all the harsh treatment and drudgery imposed by Prospero on him.

He is the hero of the romantic sub-plot of the play. He leaves a positive impression on the viewers from the beginning itself. During the shipwreck, he shows courage and presence of mind. He bravely fights against the fury sea waves. Later, he undergoes the hardships imposed by Prospero and proves himself to be a courageous and fearless young man. He acquires Miranda by worthily passing all the tests to be devised by Prospero.

He is a young man of spirit and decision. He boldly declares his love for Miranda in the presence of his father. His nobility overshadows the generosity of Prospero in many respects.

Ferdinand is deeply attached to his father and dearly loves him. He reciprocates the love of Alonso towards him. He grieves over the supposed loss of his father.

ARIEL

Ariel is a lovable and pleasant character. He has a distinct role in the play. He successfully completes all the tasks assigned to him by Prospero in the play. He is primarily the spirit of air but is comfortable working in the sea and with fire as well.

He is an admirable character. As an agent of Prospero, he manipulates several events and forces most of the characters according to his own way. He represents the principle of goodness. Since he is the spirit of air, he possesses all the qualities of the element. He is light, swift and fast in his movements. He loves freedom.

At times, he is mischievous and plays tricks on other characters. He indulges in mischief to torment the evil-doers. He derives pleasure in playing tricks on Alonso, Stephano and Trinculo. He also gets pleasure in tormenting Caliban.

He acts under the command of Prospero. However, sometimes, he acts on his own also. He leads Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano into a muddy pool in order to upset their plot against Prospero. The best quality that he possesses, is the feeling of pity. He feels pity for the sufferings of the enemies of Prospero. He remains invisible. He can penetrate anywhere and everywhere like air and fire.

CALIBAN

Caliban is the spirit of earth. He is a deformed creature. He is born as an illegitimate son of a witch, Sycorax. He is a savage beast working as a slave under the command of Prospero. He hates Prospero and curses him but has no choice other than to follow his commands. His attempt to outrage the modesty of innocent Miranda creates hatred and disgust in the minds of the readers.

He is a cunning conspirator and lays out a detailed plan with Trinculo and Stephano to kill Prospero on the first chance he gets. He is more active, efficient and eager than his companions.

Despite his vices, he has a natural liking for poetry. He loves the beauty and music of nature. He arouses the sympathy of the readers due to his oppressed and enslaved condition. He, like Ariel, constantly yearns for freedom.

His simplicity becomes apparent when he is taken in by the bravado of Stephano. But when Stephano and Trinculo get attracted by mere trumpery and become indifferent to the plan of murdering Prospero, his admiration for Stephano turns into disgust.

He realises his mistake in taking the drunkard as a God and worship him. He considers it better to serve Prospero than to serve Stephano.

ANTONIO

Antonio is the brother of Prospero. He is a crafty and a sneering person. He is arrogant as well as rude. He is hardly nervous when the ship on which he is travelling, is in danger of being wrecked. He abuses the boatswain when the latter addresses him in a discourteous manner.

Antonio is the main villain of the play. He is ambitious and conspires against his brother, Prospero, the Duke of Milan. In order to seize his dukedom, he joins hands with Alonso, the King of Naples and gets Prospero expelled from the dukedom. He casts him adrift with his three-year old daughter, Miranda in a broken-down boat. He thinks that the boat will upturn and Prospero will perish along with his daughter.

After committing this crime, he attempts another crime. He plots against Alonso, who supported him to oust Prospero. He prompts Sebastian, brother of Alonso, to kill the latter and become the King of Naples. He is a sinner, a deceiver and a traitor. His conscience appears to be dead. Even when maddened by Ariel, his conscience is not pricked. On the other hand, he is full of hatred and resentment. Instead of feeling repentance, he draws his sword to slaughter.

He is a hardened criminal. He is full of ingratitude, treachery and breach of trust. Even after being pardoned by Prospero, he does not feel redeemed. He does not speak of repentance or shows any of it.

He is devoid of feelings. He is not moved by Alonso's grief at the supposed death of his son. When Gonzalo tries to console Alonso, Antonio taunts him and makes fun of him. He is the villain without any conscience.

Minor Characters

GONZALO

Gonzalo was a Lord in the court of Alonso. He has a sympathetic nature and is loyal towards Alonso. Amidst the danger of being shipwrecked, he feels hopeful stating the boatswain has no drowning marks on him and the boatswain will die on land by hanging.

The sympathetic side of Gonzalo is revealed in the manner in which he tries to help Prospero at the time of his banishment. He supplies not only ample provisions on the boat but also a number of books which Prospero valued above his dukedom. He is too talkative and is capable of engaging anyone in long conversation.

SEBASTIAN

Sebastian is Alonso's brother. He conspires with Antonio to kill Alonso and becomes the King of Naples himself. When Gonzalo tries to console Alonso, when the latter was grieving over the supposed death of his son, he further intensifies Alonso's grief by putting the blame of every misfortune on Alonso himself.

Just like Antonio, he has no feeling of repentance over what he has done.

STEPHANO

Stephano is an attendant at the court of Alonso. He is always drunk. He worships the bottle and creates absurd situations. He walks through the island of magic with his bottle.

The encounter of Caliban with Stephano and Trinculo provides a comic relief to the viewers. The song sung by the drunken Stephano is highly amusing. When Stephano sees Caliban, he thinks that he is seeing a creature with four legs. However, it is two legs each of Caliban and Trinculo. When the three of them get fully drunk and move towards Prospero's cell to murder him, Ariel deceives them by his music. They are led to a stinking pot where Stephano loses his bottle full of wine and which creates a hilarious situation.

He agrees to be a part of Caliban's conspiracy to murder Prospero, but soon walks out of it. This shows that he has a casual attitude towards the plan of Caliban and is not a criminal at heart.

TRINCULO

Trinculo is a continuous drunken entertainer. He is the servant of Alonso and is brought ashore after the shipwreck. He is a dull fool and is incapable of providing any real action. However, he provides a comic relief to the viewers.

When he meets Caliban, he immediately dislikes him and showers insults on him. Still, he becomes a part of the Caliban's conspiracy to murder Prospero and to take over the island. However, Trinculo proves to be completely ineffective in this murder plot.

ADRIAN AND FRANCISCO

Adrian and Francisco are noblemen in the court of Alonso and his companions when the ship is wrecked. When Alonso is aggrieved over the supposed death of his son, Adrian tries to console him. Francisco also tries to be helpful to Alonso. The pair of Adrian and Francisco is cynically taunted by the pair of Sebastian and Antonio.

BOATSWAIN

The boatswain appears only in the first and the last scenes of the play. He angers the noblemen with his foul manners and words as well as rude remarks. However, he is competent and resourceful when the ship is facing the danger of being wrecked. He demands practical help rather than succumb to crying and praying.

MASTER OF SHIP AND MARINERS

The master of the ship and the mariners only appear in first scene of the first Act. When the ship is facing the danger of being wrecked, the master tries to hearten the sailors and get them to sail the boat through the storm. However, one of the spells cast by Ariel makes them lose their heart and abandon the ship. They are safely whisked away and taken back to Italy at the end of the play.

IRIS, CERES, JUNO, NYMPHS AND REAPERS

All these figures appear in Act IV of the play at the time of engagement masque for Miranda and Ferdinand. Iris, Ceres and Juno are Goddesses from Roman mythology – Iris is the Goddess of rainbow, Ceres is the Goddess of agriculture and Juno is the Queen of the Gods. All these parts are performed by spirits, while the part of Ceres is played by Ariel.

Act-III–Scene-I : Summary

At Prospero's cell, Ferdinand enters carrying a log, which he claims would be a detestable task except that he carries it to serve Miranda. His carrying of logs is a punishment but he willingly accepts because the thoughts of Miranda make the work effortless. When he is least occupied with his task, he is most busy in thoughts about Miranda.

As Ferdinand works and thinks of Miranda, she enters and after her, unseen by either of them, Prospero enters. Miranda tells Ferdinand to take a break from his work or to let her work for him, thinking that her father is away. Ferdinand refuses to let her work for him but takes a break from his work and asks Miranda her name. She gives her name as Miranda, saying at the same time that disclosure of her name would offend her father. Ferdinand, for his part, has known other beautiful women, but he admits having never known one as perfect as Miranda. He titles Miranda as an epitome of beauty and gentleness. Miranda confesses that she has known no other woman, nor any other man, except her father. Now, she would want no other man except Ferdinand.

At this, Miranda remembers that she has been instructed not to speak to the guest and momentarily falls silent. When Ferdinand declares that he would gladly serve her, Miranda asks if he loves her. Ferdinand calls heaven and earth to witness that he loves her truly and that he values and honours her beyond anything else in this world.

Hearing these words, Miranda begins to weep. When Ferdinand asks her why she is weeping, she replies that she is unworthy of him, but will marry him if he wants her. He quickly agrees saying that he would always remain her devoted lover and servant.

Finally, the couple touches each other's hand and pledges their love. Prospero has been silently listening to all this hiding from both of them. He acknowledges the natural match of Ferdinand and Miranda. He has some other plans also that need his immediate attention, so he turns to his books and other waiting business.

Act-III–Scene-II : Summary

Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano continue to drink and wander about the island. Stephano, already dreaming of the lordship of the island, declared Caliban to be his lieutenant. Caliban, helplessly muddled with drink, offers to lick his shoes. However, he never forgets the thought of taking revenge on Prospero. In the meantime, Caliban and Trinculo, each being unable to stand the other, fall out and Stephano has to intervene. Ariel enters invisibly when Caliban is telling the men that he is subject to a tyrant and a sorcerer thereby provoking Stephano against Prospero. Ariel begins to stir up trouble, calling out "Thou liest" meaning 'you lie'. None of them can see the invisible Ariel, so, Caliban thinks that Trinculo said these. He threatens Trinculo and Stephano tells Trinculo not to interrupt them. Trinculo protests that he said nothing. Drunkenly, they continue talking and Caliban tells them of his desire to get revenge against Prospero. Ariel continues to interrupt now and then with the same words. Ariel's ventriloquizing ultimately results in Stephano hitting Trinculo.

When Ariel looks on, Caliban plots against Prospero. He suggests to Stephano that in order to become the King of this island, he needs to put Prospero to death. Caliban says that originally, he used to be the owner of this island but that Prospero had subsequently deprived him of the ownership and had himself become the monarch here. Caliban further says that he has to serve Prospero who possesses supernatural powers and who commands everything on this island. Caliban offers to serve Stephano faithfully and devotedly in case Stephano manages to kill Prospero. Caliban then supplies some more information to Stephano in order to make it easier for Stephano to kill Prospero. He tells him that Prospero is in the habit of going to sleep in the afternoon and that Stephano should knock out Prospero's brains when Prospero lies asleep. But, first, Stephano must seize Prospero's books because without those books, Prospero would become utterly helpless. It is with the help of these books that Prospero is able to perform his magic and to command the service of the invisible spirits who dwell on this island.

Caliban then tempts Stephano by talking about the beauty of Prospero's daughter, Miranda whom Stephano can win as his wife after he has put Prospero to death. Stephano then declares that he would certainly kill Prospero and take his daughter as the Queen.

At this point, Ariel plays a tune on his flute and drum. Stephano and Trinculo wonder at this noise, but Caliban tells them it is nothing to be afraid of. Stephano relishes the thought of possessing this island Kingdom. Then the men decide to follow the music and later on to kill Prospero.

Act-III–Scene-III : Summary

Alonso, the King of Naples and his courtiers roam about on the island in search of Ferdinand. They all get tired. Gonzalo, the old courtier, gets tired first and request others to take some rest. All of them stop to take rest. Alonso has given up all hopes about the survival of Ferdinand, his son. Antonio and Sebastian feel happy and they whisper to each other that the others are so tired that they will not be alert and watchful. So, they plan to kill Alonso and Gonzalo later in the evening.

At that very time, they hear strange music, and then Prospero enters invisibly along with several spirits. They carry food, perform a graceful dance and invite them to have food. Then the spirits disappear. Everyone is surprised to see all this. But before they begin to eat, there is a clap of thunder, and Ariel enters in the form of a harpy. The banquet vanishes through some antiquated device. Ariel makes a speech which only Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio can hear. In his speech, he accuses these three men as sinners. They try to take out their swords against Ariel, but he tells them that they may use them against the wind or try to hit the waves, i.e. it will be of no use. They have to suffer for their evil deeds of driving out Prospero on the sea. Ariel says that Alonso's son is dead, and then disappears.

Prospero praises Ariel for doing a good job. Meanwhile these three courtiers are upset by this revelation and run away. Gonzalo feels that guilt has overtaken all the three of them and asks the remaining courtiers to stop them from doing anything rash.

Act-IV–Scene-I : Summary

Prospero, being satisfied with Ferdinand, who has well stood the test, formally engages his daughter with him. Prospero, warns him to be careful to preserve the sanctity of love until they are married. Ferdinand promises to comply. Prospero then calls Ariel and asks him to summon spirits to perform a masque for Ferdinand and Miranda. Soon, three spirits appear in the shapes of mythological figures of Iris (Juno's messenger and Goddess of Rainbow), Juno (Queen of the Gods) and Ceres (Goddess of Agriculture). This trio performs a masque celebrating the engagement of the lovers. First, Iris enters and asks Ceres to appear at Juno's wish, to celebrate a contract of the true love. Ceres appears and then Juno enters. Juno and Ceres together bless the couple, with Juno wishing them honour and riches and Ceres wishing them natural prosperity and abundance. Ferdinand is awed by the spectacle and says that he would like to live on the island forever with Prospero as his father and Miranda as his wife. Juno and Ceres send Iris to fetch some nymphs and reapers to perform a country dance. Just as this dance begins, however, Prospero startles suddenly and then sends the spirits away. Prospero seems to have forgotten about Caliban's plot against him and suddenly remembers that the hour has nearly come for Caliban and other conspirators to make an attempt on Prospero's life.

Prospero shows signs of anger that alarms Ferdinand and Miranda. However, Prospero assures the couple that his anxiety is mainly due to his age. He says that a walk will soothe him. Prospero makes a short speech about the masque, saying that the actors, who performed the various roles in this masque, were all spirits who have now melted into thin air. Prospero further says that in course of time, this whole world including the grand buildings, temples, palaces, and the great globe itself would melt away in the same manner, leaving not a trace behind. Then, Prospero says that for human beings such stuff can be only seen in dreams and their little life is rounded with a sleep. Prospero tells Ferdinand that he wants to be alone to calm himself. Ferdinand and Miranda leave Prospero to himself.

Prospero now summons Ariel who seems to have made a mistake by not reminding Prospero of Caliban's plot before the beginning of the masque. Prospero now asks Ariel to tell him again what the three conspirators are upto. Ariel tells him of the drunken men's scheme to steal Prospero's books and kill him. Ariel reports that he used his music to lead these men through rough and prickly paths and then into a filthy pond. Prospero thanks his trustworthy spirit and the two set up a trap for the three potential assassins. On a clothes line in Prospero's cell, Prospero and Ariel hang an array of fine apparel for the men to attempt to steal, after which they render themselves. Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano enter wet from the filthy pond. The fine clothing immediately distracts Stephano and Trinculo. They want to steal it. They pay no heed to the protests of Caliban who wants to stick to the plan and kill Prospero. They altogether ignore him. Soon after they touch the clothing, there is a noise of hunters. A pack of spirits in the shapes of hounds, set on by Ariel and Prospero, drive out the thieves.

Act-V–Scene-I : Summary

The last scene of the play opens with Ariel telling Prospero that Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio are remorseful and desperate. Gonzalo is worried and grief-stricken at his King's pain. Prospero reassures Ariel that he will be compassionate in dealing with his enemies and asks Ariel to bring the group to him. While he is waiting for the King and his party to appear, Prospero ponders over what he has accomplished with magic and at the end promises that he will now give up his magic, bury his magic staff and throw away his magic books in the sea.

Immediately after this, Ariel enters with the royal party who appear to be in a trance and places them within the magic circle that Prospero had earlier drawn. With a few enchanted words, the spell is removed. Prospero, clothed in the garments of Duke of Milan – his rightful position – appears before them. In a gesture of reconciliation, Prospero embraces Alonso, who is filled with remorse and immediately gives Prospero his dukedom. He also embraces Gonzalo and then Prospero turns to Sebastian and Antonio. Prospero tells them that he will not charge them as traitors. Antonio is forgiven and required to renounce his claims on Prospero's dukedom. Alonso continues to mourn the loss of his son. At this, Prospero declares that he too has lost his daughter. But, he means that he has lost her in marriage. He then pulls back a curtain to reveal Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess. Ferdinand explains to his father that he is engaged to Miranda and that this event occurred while he thought his father was dead. Alonso quickly welcomes Miranda and says he will be a second father to his son's love. At the sight of the couple, Gonzalo begins to cry and thanks God for having worked such a miracle.

Ariel enters with the master of the boat and the boatswain. They say that the ship lays in the harbor safely but fails to explain how any of this occurred. Alonso is also puzzled but Prospero tells him not to trouble his mind with such matters.

After this, Ariel leads in Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo. They are still drunk. Prospero explains that these men plotted to murder him. Caliban repents and promises to seek grace. These three conspirators started becoming sober and are sent to decorate the cell of Prospero. Prospero invites his guests to spend the night in his cell where he will tell them some adventures of his past twelve years of being on this island. Ariel's last duty to Prospero is to provide calm seas when they sail the next morning.

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UNIT – II: ECHOES: A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES

CHAPTER-1 FRITZ

—Satyajit Ray



Introduction

Satyajit Ray (1921-1992) was a Bengali motion picture director, writer and an illustrator who brought Indian cinema to world recognition with his debut film '*Pather Panchali*' (1955). It was based on a middle-class Bengali family. The film that won him eleven international awards. In his movies, he wrote stories, their screenplay, composed music and directed them to the minutest details.

As a director, Ray was noted for his humanism, versatility and detailed control over his films and their music. Considered as one of the greater filmmakers of the 20th century, his films spanned on an unusually wide gamut of mood, milieu, period and genres, treating all the classes of Bengali society during his period with numerous films to his account. His films, '*Devi*' and '*Charulata*' are acclaimed as two of the best art films ever made anywhere in the world.

Ray also established a parallel career in Bengali as a writer and an illustrator, making a significant contribution to children's literature. He revived the children's magazine '*Sandesh*', which was started by his grandfather in 1913, and edited until his death.

His detective stories and novels are particularly popular with teenage children. Ray created two of the most famous fictional characters ever in Bengali children's literature – Feulda, a sleuth in Holmesian tradition, and Profession Shonku, a genius scientist. His stories are unpretentious and entertaining.



Plot Summary

Satyajit Ray also wrote many short stories conjuring upon complex plots out of very ordinary situations. The stories centered on the thrill, horror, macabre and paranormal genres which were published as a collection of twelve stories.

'Fritz' (1971) is one such story. Set in a British-era rest house in a small town named Bundi in Rajasthan, the story grips the reader's attention till the last scene where it plunges him to cauldron of fear, confusion and chimera. First published in Bengali in 1971, this translation is by Gopa Majumdar.

The short-story is set in a circuit house, which is a dark bungalow generally used by senior government officers for short stays. It is situated in Bundi, a small town in Rajasthan. The story opens with the conversation between two friends named Shankar (author) and Jayanto. They have been childhood friends, and after so many trials, they had managed to visit Bundi and explore it, after decades. While having tea at the circuit house, Jayanto appears lost in some thoughts. On enquiring, he tells Shankar that the faint memories of his first visit to Bundi were rushing into his mind.

Though initially, Shankar was puzzled with Jayanto's keen interest in visiting Bundi, when visitors normally would prefer to visit places like Udaipur, Jaipur or Chittor in Rajasthan. Though on a personal level, he had no objections to visiting Bundi after having read Tagore's poem 'The Fort of Bundi', for he felt familiar with the name of the place and felt excited about the prospect of actually seeing the fort.

It was only during their journey by train to Bundi, that Shankar got to know the reason behind Jayanto's inclination towards visiting Bundi over other places. Jayanto's father, Animesh Das Gupta used to work in the Archeological Department, hence his work brought him to Rajasthan numerous times, for it's a repositories of India's ancient monuments. Jayanto as a child, hence, had visited Bundi earlier but the memory of the place had not quite faded from his mind. He had always wanted to return as a grown-up, to witness any changes that took place in Bundi.

Jayanto becomes nostalgic as he recollects the tall rooms, ventilators tethered to stings, the rose plants outside, etc. The magnificent buildings stood still there. A few pieces of furniture that excited even before they spoke about the timelessness of the place. The trees stood tall to provide shelter to the birds. Jayanto remembered all of these vividly.

The two friends go on a sight-seeing to the famous fort of Bundi standing amidst the hills. Time seemed to stand still in the fort's vicinity. Everything reflected the antiquities of the Rajputana era, except for the electric poles which were the only signs of the new age. The old golden age of Rajputana craftsmanship appeared to have come alive.

Jayanto had always been an emotional person. Ever since reaching Bundi, he had been unusually quiet and somewhat absent-minded. Perhaps the sights and sounds of Bundi had stirred a delicate chord in his heart. His palpable sadness didn't escape Shankar's notice. Jayanto reminisces about the large rooms and over-sized chairs of the circuit house which used to make him feel as if sitting on a throne, while sitting cross-legged. To his dismay, now everything seemed to have shrunk in size. Though, Shankar dispels his confusion by stating that he had grown in size over the years, hence that made him feel so.

After tea, the two went out for a stroll in the garden. After a while, Jayanto seemed struck by the memory of a Deodar tree that used to stand at the far end of the compound. He looked bewildered, trying to find the tree and ultimately turns excited on finally tracing it. His euphoria takes Shankar by surprise. Jayanto's eyes were fixed on the tree trunk, looking into it searchingly. He exclaimed that he had an encounter with a European near the Deodar tree as a child though he struggled to recollect the entire episode. While having dinner at the oval dining table in the circuit house, Jayanto seemed to be remembering events from his childhood as the faded memories began returning to him. He spoke about Dilawar, the place and also the 'European's' lowly; he recalled the whole episode about his doll.

It emerged that 'Fritz' was a doll which Jayanto's uncle had brought for him from Switzerland. It was a foot long figure of an old man dressed in traditional Swiss clothing. It wore a Swiss cap with a little yellow feather sticking out from it. It also wore a belt, buttons were on, had pockets, collars, socks and even had little buckles on the shoes. Apparently, Fritz was very lifelike and bore a smiling face. It was very flexible, hence could be bent and twisted at will.

He told Shankar how fancy he had grown of Fritz. Since, he was not enrolled in a school that time, he had all the time in the world for Fritz. Though, he mentions that his parents did warn him to not overdo things with a mere doll. Shankar was all ears to Jayanto's story. He questioned about the doll as to what happened to it. Jayanto revealed a shocking tragedy that befell Fritz in Bundi itself. On one occasion while playing with Fritz, he had spilled hot tea over himself. In the hurry to go inside and change his clothes, Jayanto had left Fritz on the floor only. On return he saw that a few stray dogs had destroyed Fritz's face completely. With great disbelief, Jayanto assumed it to be dead. Eventually, like one does it for a living being, Jayanto arranged for Fritz's funeral. He wanted to bury it in a coffin for it was a European, but Jayanto couldn't make arrangements of it and eventually buried him just like that under the deodar tree that he was searching for in the evening.

After the conversation, both Shankar and Jayanto retired to bed at around ten. But soon, Shankar woke up due to a slight noise. He found Jayanto awake with a look of anxiety on his face. Ignoring Shankar's query, he asked him if the bungalow was inhabited by rats and cat for he felt something walk over his chest and that was what had woken him up. He said that it was the second time that he woke up from sleep, earlier he woke up after hearing an unusual shuffling sound from near the window.

At this, Shankar looked around the room in search of the nocturnal intruder but all in vain. Suddenly Jayanto shouted out of fear and showed Shankar the tiny, brown circular marks on his quilt. Shankar felt Jayanto's anxiety and tried to soothe him with some reassuring words. After some coaxing, Shankar fell asleep. Next morning though, Shankar could notice that Jayanto had spent a troubled night with no proper sleep. He thought if need be, he would give Jayanto a tranquilizer to put him to sleep, so that he can get proper rest.

Soon after breakfast by 9 o'clock, they left for the fort for sight-seeing. Jayanto was again immersed in his old memories of the place, but this time, they did not concern his doll. He sounded excited at the sight of elephant statues, the real throne and the beds. But soon all his enthusiasm began to wane. He quietly slipped away to the terrace. On finding Jayanto, Shankar noticed that he was lost in old memories, not the cheerful ones, and stood absent-minded near a wall on the other side of the terrace. Jayanto expressed his wish to return to the circuit house. Though Shankar agreed to it considering his friend's anxiety, yet he personally wished to stay a little longer at the fort. Throughout their drive to the circuit house, Jayanto seemed restless and that worried Shankar.

After putting in some efforts, Shankar finally managed to know what went through Jayanto's mind. Jayanto said that it was Fritz, who had been to their room last night and it were his footprints on his quilt. Shankar felt annoyed at his friend's irrational behavior, but at the same time he got worried about his health too. He thought that Jayanto needed some nerve tonic to calm down his troubled mind. Furthermore, Shankar thought that in order to prevent Jayanto from turning mad, they should exhume Fritz's remains from under the deodar tree so that Jayanto witnesses the doll being destroyed and only then could Jayanto come to terms with reality.

The idea appealed to Jayanto, though he did not agree to the idea immediately. He went for a bath, had little food during lunch hour and then they decide to relax in the veranda. There was something eerie about the silence that afternoon. At about three in the afternoon, they noticed the gardener. On Jayanto's initiative, Shankar went forward to strike a deal with gardener. With an amount of rupees five in order to dig around the spot at the far-off deodar tree. Jayanto pointed at the ground about a yard from the tree trunk. He told the gardener to dig deep at less eight inches deep. Shankar shared a light moment with the gardener but Jayanto sweated even in the month of October. He stared at the ground without even blinking for once. Suddenly, he made a strong sound. With a trembling hand and a fearful voice, Jayanto pointed out at something under the soil. The gardener lost grip of the spade and Shankar too gaped in horror, amazement and disbelief. They gaped at a twelve inch long, pure white, perfect little human skeleton lying flat on its back, covered in dust. Disturbing as the sight was, the story ends on a mysterious, questioning tone if Fritz had always longed for Jayanto's company.

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CHAPTER-2 QUALITY

—John Galsworthy



Introduction

John Galsworthy (1867 – 1933), was a celebrated English novelist and playwright. Though a trained lawyer, he switched to writing. His works mainly dealt with the prevalent class divide during the age. Although he treated his characters with sympathy, yet he highlighted their narrow-minded snobbishness and suffocating moral values, hence projecting their acquisitive tendencies as morally incorrect. Simultaneously, he campaigned for various causes such as women's rights, animal protection, etc., through his writings.

John Galsworthy is best remembered for 'The Forsyte Saga'. His play 'Justice' led to prison reforms due to his highlighting the appalling conditions in the prison. He rejected the Knighthood in 1917; however, he later accepted the Order of Merit and a Nobel Prize in 1932.



Plot Summary

The author himself is the narrator of the story. The story begins with the author informing the readers about his acquaintance with the two brothers who were ace shoe-makers. They lived and worked in the two shops let into one, in an alley in the fashionable west-end area of London. The author knew them for many years, for the younger shoe-maker had been making shoes for his father for years, now and even his father patronized the shop for getting his bespoke shoes made. The tenement, their shop was distinctive in decor. It

bore no flashy signage, except for a board that read their names 'Gessler Brothers', and a pair of shoes placed in the window perhaps as a sign to help the public recognize it as a tiny shoe-making unit. The reason for it was that the two brothers only made customized footwear. They were not into making standard size shoes in bulk for the market. The shoe-maker was blessed with such finesse that he used to make every pair of shoes that was ordered, with his own hands and with such delicacy and care that they fitted the wearer's feet perfectly. He also made the slimmest pair of pumps using the finest leather; tall known riding shoes that served new even after years of having used them. Such rare artisanship was the hallmark of the shoe made by him. He seemed to be realizing the soul of every boot and then making the polite types, incarnating the very spirit of all the footweares.

In his young days, the author seldom gave any thought to the uniqueness of the shop and the creations made by these artisans. It was only by the age of fourteen that the author began to realize that it was no ordinary cobbler's shop, but was a workplace of two splendid craftsmen. The art of making such unique pair of footwear felt mysterious as well as wonderful.

Recalling one of his few conversations with the younger Mr. Gessler, the author says how he had specified the severity of the task. But to Mr. Gessler, it was an art; very dear to him. The younger Mr. Gessler had a yellow crinkly reddish face, had guttural and one-tone voice and had eyes which were gray blue in appearance which held depth in them. The elder brother too was alike except that he was paler in every way. For him just the look at the footwear made Mr. Gessler identify his work and also gave a comfortable reassurance to the person about still being his client.

Even if desired for, one could not possibly visit him often, reason being that the boots created by him lasted for years, hence leaving no excuse to visit him without purpose. Visiting their shop felt like visiting a church for it was so calm. Either he or his elder brother would tend to the clients demand while thoroughly engrossed in their work.

Once, the author expressed his wish of getting a pair of Russian leather boots made for him. Immediately Mr. Gessler rose and got with him a piece of gold-brown leather from inside the shop. Watching over the leather piece, Mr. Gessler couldn't help admiring its quality and so did the author. He committed to get the shoes ready by the next fortnight. No sooner had the author left the shop than Mr. Gessler returned to his 'dream of boots'. He was a dedicated shoe-maker, absolutely true to his work. In the cases wherein he had to build some new kind of footwear that he hadn't made yet, he would take careful measurements of the author's feet with nervous fingers and feel the requirements of the author.

The author recalls the day when he went over to Mr. Gessler and stated his concern that the pair of walking boots made by him had creaked. Mr. Gessler was taken aback for a while, expecting the author to either withdraw or qualify the statement. He couldn't come to terms that the shoes made by him were flawed. He enquired the author if the leather had torn before the shoes were worn but the author denied it. Hesitatingly, he asked him to bring back the shoes for examining. Though, the seriousness with which Mr. Gessler responded made the author uneasy. Next day after examining them, he said that some boots made by him carried defects from the beginning. Mr. Gessler promised the entire refund in the boots could not be fixed. This offer came after the boots had been already used for long. It spoke volumes about Mr. Gessler and the sincerity which he held towards his job.

Though the entire episode left author upset, he felt guilty of hurting Mr. Gessler for he was a completely dedicated person.

One another occasion, the author walked into Mr. Gessler's shop wearing a new pair of shoes which he had bought from a large firm in an emergency. The author walked into the shop wearing them, absentmindedly. It hurt Mr. Gessler to know that his customer was wearing shoes that were not made by him. He took the author's order without showing him any leather. With a critical look, he examined those boots and finally commented that the pair of shoes worn by him were not his craft. He could tell exactly where those boots hurt the author by merely touching those boots. Mr. Gessler's tone was neither of anger, nor of sorrow, nor of contempt, but it froze the blood within. The ready-made shoes of the author seemed to have struck a chord in Mr. Gessler's heart. As if in a monologue, he started deriding the large shoe-making firms for they didn't seem to value the quality of the product. Spontaneously, for the only time in-front of the author, he discussed the conditions and hardships of his trade. He loathed the practice of advertisement, sales promotion and all such means implemented by the big firms in order to entice the buyers at the cost of quality, and all this just continued him losing out his customers at the grand promotions made by these firms and this happened every year. The author felt sorry for Mr. Gessler and noticed displeasure and annoyance palpable in his face which was wrinkled due to years of toil in his trade. But of self-guilt he tried to relax his mood and tried to make him understand the circumstance under which he had purchased those ill-omen boots, but all in vain. As if to correct the wrong done, the author ordered for many pair of shoes from Mr. Gessler. But the idea didn't seem to be in the author's favour. Since they were Mr. Gessler's creation, they lasted the longest for the next two years, and he couldn't consciously visit Mr. Gessler with a purpose.

After two years, when the author went to the shop, he was surprised to see that one of the two windows of the old shop had a new name board and a signage too. The old familiar boots no more hung over the window. Even the interiors were changed. It was a brutal and shocking makeover for author. It eventually became apparent that another business had started operating from the premise for Gessler had rented out a part of the shop to curtail cost. The author developed a sentimental bonding with the Gessler's shop for that made him return to it quite often. Once, he ordered three pairs of shoes instead of two. Eventually, on one such visit, the author found out about the death of the elder brother of Mr. Gessler. Worries borne out of slack business and the resulting difficulties had forced the two brothers to give up one shop. The loss apparently drove the elder weak. The author again placed order for few more pairs of

shoes though, this time, the supplies came late. But they were better made than ever and the author wore them to great delight. Soon after, he went abroad.

It was only after a year that the author could return to London. He went to see his favourite shoe-maker but the encounter was not as pleasant as expected. Mr. Gessler had battled poor business, loss of his brother and despondency. The continuing distress had taken a toll on his physical and mental condition. He looked so haggard and broken. He seemed to have aged fifteen years in just one year of dull business.

The author started his conversation by heaping praises on the boots that the author had bought from the shoe-maker. Quite characteristically, his attention fell on the author's shoe. He felt them by his hands, lovingly, remembering the effort he had put in to make them. He was glad to get fresh orders for more pair of shoes from author. Eventually, the four pairs of new shoes arrived and were of perfect fit. Strangely though, Mr. Gessler continued to charge the same old rate as before. The author paid of the charged amount.

A week later, the author went to Gessler's shop to tell him how excellent the shoes were made. But what he discovered, devastated him. The name board was gone while the other items were still there. With a pounding heart, the author entered the shop only to find a new man and not Mr. Gessler. This man started to his usual business of selling shoes to the author. When the author expressed his wish to know about Gessler, the man disclosed that he was dead. It sent a chill down his spine. To add to the author's horror, the man disclosed that Gessler had starved himself to death. Towards his final days, orders came few and far between. Gessler found the going hard. When any order came, Gessler worked very hard without rest or food in order to deliver the orders on time. His body couldn't cope with the punishing schedule. Despite his failing strength, he poured his heart out to the shoes he made.

Mr. Gessler was a shoe-maker par excellence, but was poorly equipped to stand up to the commercial monster firms which dominated the shoe-making industry. With the demise of the man, the fine art of shoe-making was lost forever. The passing away of Mr. Gessler left a wound in the author's heart for he adorned the humble shoe-maker a lot.

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CHAPTER-3

THE STORY OF AN HOUR

—Kate Chopin



Introduction

Kate Chopin, born Katherine O' Flaherty, lived from February, 1850 to August, 1904. She is considered to be one of the first feminist authors of the 20th century. Married at a young age, the untimely death of her husband altered the course of her life.

She has written many novels and more than a hundred short stories. Talented and prolific, she was influenced by 'Guy de Maupassant's' works. Her novel 'The Awakening (1899)' was widely condemned initially, but the 1950's scholars and others recognized the novel as an insightful and moving work of fiction.

'The Story of An Hour' was first published in the year 1894 as, 'The Dream of an Hour' before being re-published under the current title in 1895. The title of the story refers to the time elapsed between the moments at which the protagonist hears that her husband is dead and when she discovers that he is alive after all. It's to be noted that the relations of protagonist and the circumstances of Kate's own life were a bit similar.



Plot Summary

The short-story 'The Story of An Hour', describes the series of emotions that Louise Mallard endures after hearing the death of her husband. Brently, who was reported to have died in a train accident, eventually turns up alive towards the end of the story.

Mrs. Mallard suffers from a heart condition, hence her sister Josephine and her husband's friend, Richard attempt to inform her of the fatal news of her husband's death in a gentle way, so as not to shock her too much. On hearing the news, Mrs. Mallard makes way to her room upstairs in order to mourn the loss of her husband. She sits down and looks out of the window.

Suddenly, she sees the new life outside and while locked inside, a weird feeling comes over her and confusion follows immediately. She begins to feel an unexpected sense of exhilaration and yells "Free! Body and soul free!"

She rejoices at the thought of all the springs and summers she can enjoy without her husband. She would live for herself, without any oppression or a forceful bending of will to be imposed upon her by her spouse. She acknowledges that many a time, she has loved her husband and also not loved him numerous times.

Her sudden rush of exhilaration is what she believes to be the brighter side of her husband's death. Along with all the excitement, Louise still grieves for her husband and knows that she will cry about it later. But at the moment, "She was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window."

Josephine comes up and begs her to open the door for she fears that Louise will become ill. Still in the triumphant mode, she opens the door to her sister and with the glitter in the eyes, she descends the stairs along with Josephine. Just then Brentley enters the house. He has been saved from any suffering for he was far away from the scene of accident. Moreover, he is not even aware of an accident to have taken place.

Just one look at Brentley, Louise utters a piercing cry. The doctor's verdict is that she died of the heart disease of joy that kills.



CHAPTER-4

THE SINGING LESSON

—Katherine Mansfield



Introduction

Kathleen Mansfield Murry (October 1888- January 1923), was a prominent modernist short-story writer, who wrote under the pen-name of Katherine Mansfield. Her brief life was a lesson in casting-off conventions. She embraced the ideology of risking everything. In the words of one of her biographers, her adventurous spirit, eagerness to grasp at experience and to succeed in her work marked her entire life.

Katherine revolutionised the 20th century English short-story. Her writings, mostly, were free of plots and endings and rather highlighted the expansiveness of the interior life, the poetry of feelings and the blurred edges of personality. Her prose offers lessons in entering the ordinary lives, that are vivid and strong, whereas her fiction retained the relevance through its open-endedness with the ability to raise discomfiting questions about identity, belonging and desire.

She succumbed to her illness of extra-pulmonary tuberculosis in 1923, at the age of only thirty-four.



Summary

'The Singing Lesson' is one of the short-stories from the collection "The Garden Party and Other Stories" (1922) by Katherine Mansfield. The story opens with the protagonist, Miss Meadows making her way to the music hall of the school. The very first line of the short-story tells us about the emotional state of Miss Meadows, who was filled 'with despair-cold, sharp despair'. Dressed in her usual academic attire, she headed to take up the first singing lesson of the day. Girls, of all ages passed her in the hall in their happy, jovial mood, but Miss Meadows was immune to their happiness because of her fiancé, Basil, who had called off the wedding for unknown reasons. For Miss Meadows, a simple singing teacher in an all-girls' school, life had suddenly turned cruel to her.

Walking down the hallway, she exchanged strange pleasantries with the Science Mistress whom she hated, more so for her sweetness that day. On reaching the class, she marched onto the stage looking down at the row of students before her, who were from the fourth, fifth and sixth forms. Unusual for her behavior, she gave two sharp taps with her baton for silence which irritated her students. She knew what they would be thinking of her but nonetheless it didn't matter to her that day. In her mind, she thought of the letter which her fiancé had written to her. In the letter, Basil had mentioned how strongly he felt about their marriage being a mistake. He wrote that the fault was in him for he was not a 'marrying man', hence Miss Meadows need not to feel guilty about the matter. She noticed in the letter how he had written 'disgust' initially and had later crossed it out and written 'regret' instead.

Drowned in her thoughts, Miss Meadows walked to the piano where Mary Beazley, her favourite pupil, was waiting to play the accompaniments. Mary tried to engage Miss Meadows in conversation and greeted her with a beautiful yellow chrysanthemum, which had become more of a ritual between the two. But Miss Meadows completely ignored Mary's gesture, leaving her in tears and announced for 'Page fourteen, A Lament'.

Fighting back her tears, Mary began to play. Addressing the class, Miss Meadows instructed them to sing without any expression and the result was indeed tragic. Miss Meadows led her students through the dreadful dirge all the while thinking of Basil. Each note played was a sigh, a sob and a crown of awful mournfulness. All throughout the session, Miss Meadows kept wondering the reason for Basil to write such a letter and trying to figure out as to what had prompted him to do so. Recalling their last conversation in the letter, Miss Meadows remembered how Basil had mentioned about buying a hat stand. Wondering, how could he have changed his mind so quickly, left her perplexed.

Once the song ended, Miss Meadows instructed the girls to use their imagination to find the meaning behind the words of the song and this time, to sing with expression. She sounded stoned and it happened to frighten the youngest student in the class. Once again, her thoughts began to flow with the flow of the song, as if setting its tone. Her inner turmoil began and she started contemplating the consequences of the wedding being called off. She concluded that in such circumstances, she would have to leave her job to avoid any disgrace and embarrassment. Initially too, people had expressed their surprise at her engagement with Basil for he was five years younger than her.

Her emotions reflected upon the speed of the music's flow. Beckoning with baton, the music sped up. The older girls were red in face while the younger ones began to cry. Miss Meadows was only physically present in the class, for in her mind, she was miles away begging Basil to love her or allow her to love him, for she felt that perhaps her love would be enough for both of them. All these pleas were useless. She had to disappear to save herself from any embarrassment. On this thought, the song ended and the voices of her students faded. Just at the moment a student entered the class, informing Miss Meadows about the headmistress wish to see her.

Miss Meadows instructed the girls to be soft in their conversations while she was away and she walked to the headmistress, Miss Wyatt's office. There, she was handed a telegram which read like;

"Pay no attention to the letter, must have been made, bought hat-stand today-Basil."

Miss Meadows was surprised and couldn't take her eyes off the telegram. Concerned Miss Wyatt enquired if all was good, to which Miss Meadows blushed and responded in affirmation. Miss Wyatt reminded Miss Meadows that only serious news of utmost emergency were allowed in school and that for a good news, it should wait until school hours.

Happy once again and flying on the wings of hope, love and joy, Miss Meadows hurried back to the class and asked the girls to refer to the song on page number thirty-two, **"We come here today ... to congratulate"**. She picked up the beautiful yellow chrysanthemum to hide her smile and with overlaid joy, she sang along with the girls, at the top of her voice which was high above all the other voices and reflected depth and was full of expression.

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CHAPTER-5

B. WORDSWORTH

—V.S. Naipaul



Introduction

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, born 17 August, 1932, is a Trinidadian Noble Prize Winner. A British writer of Indian Origin, Naipaul is known for his early comic novels, his bleaker later novels of the wider-world and his autobiographical chronicles of life and travel. He has published more than thirty books, both of fiction and non-fiction, over some fifty years. Naipaul was knighted in 1989.

Naipaul's earliest books are ironic and satirical accounts of life in the Caribbean. They were 'The Mystic Masseur' (1957), 'The Suffrage of Elvira' (1958) and 'Miguel Street' (1959). His fourth novel, 'A House for Mr. Biswas' (1961) won him major recognition. His subsequent novels continued to explore the personal and collective alienation experienced in new nations that were struggling to integrate their native and Western-colonial heritages. 'A Way in the World' (1994) is an essay-like novel examining how history forms an individual's character.

'B. Wordsworth' is a short-story published in V. S. Naipaul's collection of short stories 'Miguel Street', a semi-autobiographical novel, focusing on the characters living on Miguel streets, a poor neighbourhood set in wartime Port of Spain, Trinidad. The story is narrated by a precocious and keenly observant boy, who recounts the myriad lives of quirky inhabitants of his neighbourhood in a witty yet innocent way. Undertones of dark humour evoke a mood of sadness because of the tragic nature of the lives of most characters. B. Wordsworth is the story of one of these characters.



Summary

The short-story '**B. Wordsworth**' by Naipaul unfolds various events at its core through the eyes of an unnamed young boy, who is the narrator of the story. This boy lived in Miguel Street. As a child, he had observed beggars coming to his home and cry for money, food and many other things. One day, a small man named B. Wordsworth approached the boy to see the bees in his yards.

Initially, the boy is quizzical and enquires details about this strange man. It is at this point that the readers begin to learn B. Wordsworth's poetic and a possibly fantastic view on life. He told the young boy that 'B' in his name stood for 'Black' and that he had a brother named 'White Wordsworth' with whom he shared a heart. 'B' told the boy that he was one of the greatest poets of all time, yet he had never sold a poem. In fact, he even tried to sell a poem based on mothers to the boy's mother for four cents, but was shoved off. When 'B' leaves the boy's place, interestingly he wishes to see him again, hence giving a hint that the relationship between the boy and 'B' will continue to grow.

Soon enough, the young boy happened to spot 'B' on the Miguel street, just a week later. As their relationship continues, 'B' and the boy spend their time together, walking, talking, meandering around the seaboard, living as poets and life explorers. One day 'B' shared a story with the boy; a story of two poets, a boy and a girl and the death of the girl and the unborn baby poet that she carried.

B. also tells the boy about a poem. This poem, he exclaimed, wasn't any ordinary poem like something that he had earlier tried to sell for four cents. Rather he claims that it was '**... the greatest poem in the world.**' Sharing the details, he said that he had been working on the poem for five years, till date; one line a month at one time. He shared the previous month's line with the boy which read as; "**The Past is deep.**" The line enamored the young boy so much that he hung onto the hope for more.

But, no more lines come from 'B' although the boy was optimistic for B., as well as his poetry, yet B. himself wasn't an enthusiastic person. The story begins to trickle to its end, just as the boy witnessed 'B' nearing him. B had shrunk in shape. The two have one last meeting wherein they express their emotions with tears rolling down their cheeks. B. made the boy promise to never visit him again. To soothe the boy, B. narrates him a funny story which wasn't so funny after all. B. tells the boy that he had lied everything about the girl poet and the baby. He said that the story of him writing the greatest poem was a farce too.

With this revelation, B. sends the boy home. With a heavy heart, the boy left with a great memory of a great poet that he believed B. to be. About a year later, the boy walked along Alberto street but could find no sign of B.'s house. He realized that B.'s house had been pulled down and had been replaced by a big, two-story building. All the trees surrounding B.'s house had been cut down and there was wreck and concrete everywhere. Everything belonging to B. or anything that spoke of B.'s association had been erased, as though B. Wordsworth never existed.



UNIT – III: REVERIE: A COLLECTION OF POEMS

CHAPTER-1 THE DARKLING THRUSH

—Thomas Hardy



Introduction

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) was one of the most prolific English novelists and poets of the late 19th Century. With great novels to his credit Hardy's lyric poetry is, however, considered by far his best known. He rejected the Victorian belief of a benevolent God and much of his poetry reads as a sardonic lament on the bleakness of the human condition. His poetry explores a fatalistic outlook against the dark and rugged landscape of his native, Dorset. Hardy's style is highly original, combining a variety of meters and stanzaic forms, often combined with rough-hewn rhythms and colloquial diction.

'The Darkling Thrush' is a Nature Poem with the theme of hope. The poem begins with a bleak picture of despair and dejection with the poet referring to the dying of the old world at the turn of century. Saddened with little

cause for hope or joy around him, he happens to hear the song of a bird which spreads warmth and hope into the earlier desolate and dead landscape. The poet finds his spirit rising, with the realization that there is still hope and joy in the world.



Summary

Hardy's expression of his feeling about the world: Thomas Hardy wrote 'The Darkling Thrush' when the world was about to enter into the twentieth century. On the personal level too, Hardy was moving from novel writing to poetry after the criticism of his novel 'Jude the Obscure'. Hence in a gloomy tone, Hardy says that when the frost was ghostly-gray and the depressing winter landscape made the setting-sun seem lonely and abandoned, he leaned on a gate before a thicket of small trees. The twinning plants, rising high, were silhouetted against the sky like the strings of broken lyres. All the people, who lived nearby, were inside their homes, gathered around their household fire.

***Dead Countryside:** The countryside looked like a corpse, with cloudy sky as the roof of the corpse's crypt and wind as its song of death. The cycle of birth and rebirth seemed to have shrunk, with lack of happy spirits of the inhabitants of the earth. All seemed to be infected by the gloomy spirit of the poet.*

***Thrush's song comes as a relief to the ailing spirit of the poet:** It is the point when the poet is gloomy and entire happiness has drained from his spirit just at that very moment, he heard the joyful song of a bird, a frail old thrush, which was coming from the scrawny branches overhead. The song was a jubilant outpouring against the evening gloom.*

***A new hope lights-up the poet's spirit:** The dreary landscape gave the Thrush no reason to sing with such an overflowing happiness. The poet wondered if the Thrush was a harbinger of some new hope, of which he was unaware.*

Word Meanings

• **coppice**—Thicket of small trees • **specter-grey**—ghost like/haunted landscape • **dregs**—weak end of the day, setting-sun • **desolate**—to appear bleakly empty or lonely, abandoned • **eye of day**—sun • **tangled**—twisted together • **bine-stems**—stems of a shrub • **lyres**—stringed musical instrument similar to a harp • **haunted nigh**—lived nearby • **corpse**—dead body • **outleant**—lying down • **germ**—seed egg; bud • **fervourless**—lack of intensity in a feeling or belief, gloomy spirit • **bleak**—small, thin, fragile • **evensong**—song sung in the evening • **illimited**—unlimited • **caroling**—bird's singing • **ecstatic**—happy, joyful • **was writtenthings**—the bleak countryside revealed no cause for joyous singing • **where of**—about which



CHAPTER-2 BIRCHES

—Robert Frost



Introduction

Robert Frost (1874–1963) was an American poet, whose works were initially published in England before getting published in America. He is known for his realistic depictions in America. He is also acclaimed for his realistic depictions of rural life and his command of American colloquial speech, Frost frequently wrote about settings from the rural life in New England in the early twentieth century, using them to examine complex social and philosophical themes.

Frost was honoured frequently during his lifetime, receiving four Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry. He became one of America's rare "public literary figures, almost an artistic institution." He was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1960 for his poetic works. On July 22, 1961, Frost was named Poet Laureate of Vermont.

The poem *Birches* by Robert Frost was collected in his third collection of poetry "Mountain Interval" that was published in 1916. Consisting of 59 lines, it is one of Frost's most anthologized poems. The poem deals with the rural landscape and wildlife, depicting the childhood experience of swinging on birches which was a popular form of play for children in rural areas.



Historical Background

Birches originally titled 'Swinging on Birches' was one of Frost's early works published in 1916 right in the middle of World War I. Behind its simple charm, there is a world weariness that hints of the turmoil during that period, especially in lines "shattering and avalanching arching in the woods."

Perhaps, the poem was Frost's attempt to soothe in troubled times, telling the readers to embrace life's simple pleasure and find peace; escaping into transcendence.



Summary

The Playful Birches: There is something almost playful about the Birches, unlike their seemingly serious counterparts; "lines of straighter, darker trees," the birches do not conform and are rather scattered to left and right. Their odd angles trigger the poet's imagination and he fancies that a boy has been swinging about them. Though his rational mind suggests that the bending of the birches is not the aftermath of a boy's mischief but the outcome of the work of ice-storm. The Poet wants to live in imagination which gives him immense pleasure, but it doesn't lessen the beauty of the icy birches either.

The beauty of the birches in winters: The poet involves the readers in sharing their experiences when he says, " you must have seen them." The ice storm has created a silver thaw. Stirred by the breeze, the fragile ice makes clicking sound against each other. The birches seem to turn many-coloured as they refract the winter sunlight against its icy prism which appears to be its enamel.

Reality strikes hard: As the sun's warmth melts the ice, the birches release a shower of ice crystals on the hard snow crust like 'shattering and avalanching.' These snowy glasses seem to have broken down as if suggesting the falling of the inner dome of the heaven. It suggests that the factual world has crashed into his imaginary world and there exists an internal conflict as realism makes him shed his day dreams and reflections.

Endurance of life's struggles: The poet contemplates the suppleness of the birches, thinking about endurance in the face of life's struggles. Life can, at times, weigh heavy on our creative selves, forcing us closer to ground realities. Although bent so much, the birches do not break. Birches teach us the lesson of moulding ourselves timely as per our situation in this real world, but not to lose our identity, in the unpleasant situations, and remain strong from inside. Frost springs up with an aesthetic simile, wherein he compares the perennially bent birches with the young girls sunning out their wet hair. Frost expresses his rebellion by suggesting that though he may have to bow in front of the reality, just like the birch trees, he shall not be broken. He decides to bounce back by setting his artistic thoughts run wild.

Poet's reference to whims over reality: Although alternating between whim and reality, Frost here speaks of his willful choice on how he likes to perceive the world. The spunky boy of his imagination swings back into view. Out on an errand to bring back the cows, the boy still finds the time and inspiration for pleasure. Unaffected by anything, be it lack of playmates, seasons, circumstances, etc., the boy happily romps around the riches.

The tact of climbing the birch trees: Nostalgia fills the lines as the poet states the details about the boy's skill in climbing and swinging from the birches. The boy seems to ride down the tree over and over again till its branches begin to hang, losing its stiffness. He becomes wise with practice and learns about aiming high, testing boundaries, knowing how much to push, thus becoming worldly wise. He makes the most of what's at hand and learns the various lessons essential in life. Frost expresses his wish to relive those childhood memories and climb up the birches just like the imaginary boy did.

An escape to strengthen again and then return: Acknowledging his escapist tendencies, Frost says that many a times, life gets tough and becomes 'a pathless wood', with no guidance to ease the confusion or harshness along the way. It's in such moments that the poet feels the necessity of taking a break. Realizing the fact that he has numerous responsibilities to perform, hence, physically leaving might not be an option for him. Hence, he takes an instant vacation by drifting into his world of imagination, offering a relief to himself, before returning to tackle life's challenges.

Earth is the right place for love: The poet becomes wary of his wishful thinking. He doesn't want the fate to behave like a naughty sprite and snatch him into dream world with no point of return. Clarifying his stand, Frost says that the love on earth anchors him and that he cherishes the bonds that hold him here. Though, the birch trees seem to call out to the poet, tempting him to scale new heights of imagination towards the carefree bliss of imagination. Refreshed after touching this glorious high point, Frost wishes to return to where he had left from. The birches become the bridge between the two worlds, inviting to touch the sky yet keeping him rooted at the same time.

The essentiality of letting go to introspect: Frost concludes by suggesting the act of taking a break from the rigorous routine and give oneself a chance to unbend from life's harshness. An actual get-away or a drift into the imaginative world, it's important to have time to let go of ourselves, to introspect. The emphasis on 'both going and coming back' is important as 'going' offers one a chance to rejuvenate and the 'coming back' offers the relief of a lighter perspective to life.

Overall, the poem is about dealing with realities and still finding a happy place, even if it's in one's mind or as simple as swinging through the birches in a winter wonderland.

Word Meanings

- **birches**—a slender hard tree with thin peeling barks
- **withered**—dried
- **bracken**—a tall fern
- **subdued**—overpower
- **poise**—balance
- **swish**—with a rustling sound
- **weary**—tired



CHAPTER-3 THE DOLPHINS

—Matthew Arnold



Introduction

Dame Carol Ann Duffy (December 23, 1955) is a Scottish poet and playwright. A professor of contemporary poetry at Manchester Metropolitan University, Duffy was appointed Britain's Poet Laureate in May 2009. She is the first woman and the first Scot to hold the position.

Duffy's collections include 'Standing Female Nude' (1985) which won her the Scottish Arts Council Award, 'Selling Manhattan' (1987) which won her the Somerset Maugham Award and 'Mean Time' (1993) which won her Whitbread Poetry Award. 'Feminine Gospels' (2002) and 'Rapture' (2005) are her other accomplished works. Carol's poems have catered to various issues and themes, as well as various audiences.

The poem 'Dolphins' covers numerous themes regarding oppression and lack of freedom. It also speaks of the animal welfare and the treatment of animals. This poem takes us into the world of dolphins, which are an endangered species and suggests the reader to look at the world from their perspective. We are asked to understand how their imprisonment by humans affects them. The dolphin voices out her feelings by recalling her previous life of freedom in the ocean against the sense of constriction and confinement that it now feels in the aquarium. The poem appears as a dramatic monologue in dolphin's voice.



Summary

Confinement of dolphins in water: A dramatic monologue, the poem is written from the perspective of a dolphin which remembers its previous life of freedom and joy in the ocean and compares it with its present life of confinement and monotony in the restricted, artificial pool. 'World' to them means freely swimming and dancing. But in the current circumstances, despite being in water, they feel confined ... and restricted. The feeling of being shackled overpowers their sense of imprisonment even though they are in water, outside which they cannot breathe. They no longer experience freedom. It looks at another dolphin whose restricted movement, shape and thoughts are the same as its. Both the dolphins are distressed at the thought of how others control their lives. It further mentions about the man who makes them jump through the hoop, suggesting ways in which they are enslaved and demanded to perform on orders. Perhaps the trainer who makes them perform tricks against their will and traps them in a superficial, fake environment is struck with guilt, but the fact remains that the dolphins are living the life of slaves.

Sense of regret and distress within dolphins: Although the dolphins are extremely sentient creatures, the artificial pool fails to offer any truth, for it lacks the true essence of the sea. A dolphin's skin is extremely sensitive to the changes in its environment, but it feels lack of explanation which may guide them to the sense of this new world. Despite being distressed at their present condition, they try to adapt to their new abode, though it takes them days to do so. There is nothing new happening in their lives. They only tend to find dullness and monotony in the 'same space always'. Moreover, however freely the dolphins had once lived, they are now controlled by man.

One voice for all the dolphins: The struggle of the dolphins is addressed with a sense of collective voice and mutual feelings. A sense of understanding, companionship and commonness exists between the dolphins surviving together in the pool. They alleviate their

sufferings by collectively dealing with the situation and by being there for each other. They willingly find ways to help each other in their misery. Recollecting their memory of the sea, the dolphins suggest how the natural sunlight reflected off their skin producing a silvery appearance. But now, it seemed like a distant dream of 'somewhere else'. Recovering from nostalgia, the dolphin remembers that it has to continue to balance a coloured ball till the trainer retires to his place.

Submission to human dominance: The dolphins seem to be living a life in perennial darkness. The sense of hopelessness and desolation in the lives of dolphins has intensified. They live in such a dark and confined world where the moon seems to have disappeared. There's a sense of monotony and drabness as the dolphins just circle around the movement of the water on a 'single note'. Mourning the loss of freedom by another companion, fills its heart with despair and turns it into stone. They have accepted the hopelessness which has clouded their happy spirits and they continue performing their meaningless tricks. Restricted and controlled thoroughly by man, they seem to have come to the conclusion, accepting their fateful end in that very pool.



Word Meanings

• **In our element**—to be in a known and a happy situation • **Hoops**—a circular band • **Tremble**—Make an impact or affect



CHAPTER-4 JOHN BROWN

—Bob Dylan



Introduction

Bob Dylan, born Robert Allen Zimmerman (May 24, 1941) is an American songwriter, singer, artist and writer. He has been influential in popular music and culture for more than five decades. Much of his most celebrated work dates from 1960's, when his songs chronicled social unrest.

Dylan's lyrics incorporate a wide range of political, social, philosophical and literary influences. They defied existing pop music conventions and appealed to the burgeoning counter culture. His accomplishments as recording artist and performer have been central to his career, but song writing is considered his greatest contribution. In 2016, he won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

'John Brown' is an anti-war lyric. Written in October 1962, the song highlights the toll war takes on the young men who are blinded by the aura of heroism surrounding war, only to realize later that they were nothing but cannon fodder. The poem is a narrative about a young man named, John Brown, who becomes a soldier and heads off to Vietnam, only to return wounded and disabled.



Historical Background

'John Brown' is a song written in response to the Vietnam War which speaks in protest of wars. Between 1959-1963, the phase of the Vietnam War started after the North Vietnamese had made a firm decision to commit to a military intervention in the guerrilla war in the South Vietnam. A build-up phase began between the 1959 North Vietnamese decision and the Gulf of Tonkin Incident which led to major US escalation of its involvement. Vietnamese communist saw this as a second phase of their revolution, the US being substituted for the French.

It is stated that the influence of major powers especially France and the US, and to a lesser extent China and the Soviet Union, were as much an influence as any internal matters.



Summary

The pride in serving the country: Bob Dylan begins the song with establishing a story wherein an American mother sends her son John Brown to war on some foreign land. His mother was proud of the fact that he was going to serve his nation. On the final day, when John was supposed to leave for the war, he stood straight and tall, wearing his uniform, indicating how proud he personally had felt on being a soldier. His body language expressed his thoughts too obviously. His mother smiled as she bid him farewell.

The Mother fancies the heroism in war: Speaking to her son John Brown, the mother expresses her joy at looking at her son all clad up as a soldier. The very sight of him fills her up with a sense of gratitude for being his mother. Serving in armed forces is considered as one of the most dignified and noble professions in the world, hence she was happy that her son will be serving his nation. She tells him to sincerely follow the captain's directions and earn lots of medals for himself, so that when he'll return home from the war, she will put them up on the wall for display.

Here, the mother of John Brown is ignorant of the severe realities of war. She holds a firm belief that her son will return home unscathed from the war. She is too proud to realize that war is no game and there might be a possibility of him of never returning home at all.

A sense of boastfulness in the mother: As John Brown is going away to the war in an old train, his mother shouts out farewell to him. She is flaunting and boasting; expecting everyone to know that her son is a soldier and is going away to fight in the war. Though, her delight is not limited to this. She also boasts about her upbringing of her son whom she has raised into being a soldier, a brave boy who is off to fight for what she believes is a good cause.

Connected through the letters: John is now away for war and the mother waits to hear from him at home. She receives a letter from him once in a while and then breaks into smiles on reading them. She shows the letters to her next-door neighbours as well, and brags about her son. Wearing a uniform and having a gun are those great feats that her son has achieved. She brags about the good old-fashioned war as if it was some event. Clearly, she has no consciousness about the realities of war.

Sudden intimation of John's return: After a while, John's letters stop coming to his mother. For a long time, he didn't write to his mother, probably he was in action at the war-site or was incapable for holding correspondence. The mother received no letters for more than ten months. Though, suddenly she received the letter stating that her son was coming home from war and that she was needed to go down and receive him from the train.

The unforeseen awaited John's mother: On reading the letter, the mother went right down to the station to meet her son. She looked for him everywhere but couldn't find him amid the crowd of the station. Probably, she expected to see a refined soldier in her son as he returned home. When all the people passed, she finally found John. But when she saw him, she could hardly recognize him, for she had not foreseen what her eyes just saw.

The evils of the war unveiled to the mother: In appearance, John Brown's face was all shot up and one of his hands was blown-off. He had undergone a lot of physical pain and incurred disabilities in the war. His arm was amputated and his face bore the scars from bullet and grenade wounds. He wore a metal brace around his waist to support himself in walking. He seemed lucky enough to even be alive after receiving such injuries in the war.

But his torment was not limited to physical anguish, rather, he had also undergone mental trauma. While speaking, his voice was slow and unrecognizable, even to his own mother. He was so altered in his physical appearance that even his own mother failed to recognize him. Hence, marking the climax of the narrative, Dylan has stated both, the pains and the horrific experience in the war.

John's mother in a state of extreme distress: John Brown's mother is in utter disbelief after seeing the state in which her son had returned from war. She enquires the details about his state and is both shocked and concerned to see her son in such a broken state. John tries his best to make things clear to his mother but he is hardly able to move his mouth. His mother could not bear to look at her son's distress and eventually turns her head away.

Wars not noble in reality: John reminds his mother how passionate she was for him to join the armed forces and become a soldier. His mother thought that joining the army was the best thing he could do, but unfortunately, she was wrong. Personally, John didn't consider war to be a noble thing at all. While he was on the battlefield fighting in the war, back at home, his mother was feeling proud of her soldier son. All the illusions are now shattered. John is relieved and thankful to God that his mother wasn't present in the situation to watch the horrors of the war that he had witnessed.

The prevailing sense of futility of war amongst universal fraternity: Continuing to share his experience in the war, John said that when he was at the battlefield, he wondered, why was he even there. He felt that he was just trying to kill somebody in a do-or-die situation. He realized how chaotic, insane and irrational the war was. Explaining to his mother, John said that the things which scared him the most was when his enemy came, very close to him and he saw that it was just another human being. John said that he would wonder the reason as to why was he supposed to kill that person.

Here, Bob has spoken about the universal fraternity and how wars are just men trying to kill one another, hence resulting in the loss of human lives.

Wars : a mere puppet show: Amidst the chaos of war John felt that he was a mere puppet in the hands of warmongers who were playing with them. To them it just did not matter whether the soldiers survived the war or died in it. All that mattered to them were only victory and defeat.

Using an apt metaphor, Dylan compares the war with a puppet show. In John Brown's opinion, they were just made to follow the orders and kill people without the slightest consideration or remorse. However, his string of thought was broken as a cannonball came through the smoke and roar, and blew his eyes away.

Medals of war mere empty tokens of pride: After sharing the insight of the war with his mother, John turns around to walk. His mother is still in the state of shock after seeing the metal brace that helped him stand. When she had sent her son away at the war, he was a young, handsome dressed up in a soldier's uniform, but all that she could now see was a broken man who had returned to her in bits and pieces. Just as John turned to go, he called his mother close to him, who was still in a shock to realize her loss. John dropped his medal in his mother's hand.

This overwhelming scene of John Brown placing the medal on his mother's hand leaves us wondering if this medal, an empty token of pride, was really worth the sufferings he went through and the damage that he will carry throughout his life.



Word Meanings

- **Grin**—smile broadly • **bragged**—something said in a boastful manner • **Sting (here)**—the unpleasant smell of blood from the war-field



CHAPTER-5 DOVER BEACH

—Matthew Arnold



Introduction

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was an English poet and cultural critic, who worked as an inspector of schools. He has been characterized as a sage writer; a type of writer who chastises and instructs the reader on contemporary social issues.

Arnold is sometimes called the third great Victorian poet along with Alfred Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning. His works remain amongst the best known of 19th century English poetry. He wrote on a variety of subjects but is best known for his poems on nature, modern society and moral instructions.

The poem 'Dover Beach' was first published in 1867. It is a dramatic monologue which presents the ephemeral human feelings of sadness through the image of the sea. The poet expresses his view that the despair, hopelessness and frustration in the world is due to the decline of religious faith. The poem is marked by an elegiac tone.



Historical Background

In the poem 'Dover Beach', Matthew Arnold writes about the effect of science on religion. Not long before the publication of this poem, Charles Darwin had published his works '*On the Origin of Species*', in which he had documented his studies on evolution. Arnold's poem is read as a record of the clash between science and religion.

The poem is a kind of seismological record of the shock waves in the traditional religion brought out by the New Science in the mid-nineteenth century. The geology of Charles Lyell and others was forcing the Europeans and Americans to rethink how life began on the planet. Lyell's discoveries of fossils dating back more than one million years were making it increasingly difficult to accept the traditional notion in the book of Genesis that the world is the work of a creator, a mere six or seven thousand years ago.



Summary

The Naturalistic description of the Dover Beach: It is night hours and the sea is calm and filled with water at high-tide. The moon shines brightly upon the narrow English channel. Staring at the French coast at a far off distance, the poet sees the light gleaming on it. Later, as the light goes off, he concentrates on the English shore instead. The famous cliffs of Dover stand tall with their large wavering reflections in the quiet sea. The poet asks his lady to come to the window to enjoy the sunset and the night-air coming from where the sea meets the moonlit land of France.

He asks her to listen to the continuous and the irritating sound of the pebbles drawn by the waves. The waves are drawing the stones backwards to the sea and then again throw them back onto high shore on their return journey.

The sound of the waves begins, stops and then begins again. This trembling rhythm continues slowly. But now, it brings the eternal note of sadness. The monotonous rhythm of the waves makes the poet depressed, hence changing the tone of the poem from cheerful to melancholy.

The 'eternal note' of human misery: Continuing with the thought of 'eternal' human miseries and sadness, the poet is reminded of the ancient Greek play wright; Sophocles, who had also heard the sounds of the Aegean sea and then wrote tragedies on human misery. The images of human suffering surfaced like muddy water flowing in and out.

Similar to this, the poet has also found the feelings of sadness on hearing a similar sound beside the Northern sea, located far away from Sophocles, Aegean sea, hence emphasizing upon the universality of human grief and misery.

Fading away of 'Faith' from society: Herein, the poet laments the lack of faith in the modern society, comparing faith with the receding tides. Human faith, that exists in the religion and in the fellow beings, once covered the earth like the sea water. It was at its fullest as the tide is now. Faith covered the earth like the folds of a bright girdle folding well. It was the time when faith made everything easy, solved numerous problems, helped in uniting people and brought meaning to life.

However, the poet regrets that those days are now a thing of past. Faith is fading away from the society just like the waves from the shore. The poet, now, only hears the sorrowful roar of the retreating tides. It leaves behind the chill night-wind whistling over the desolate beach with dull edges of the cliffs and raw pebbles. The poet has, thus, created a fearful picture of the underlying nakedness of the colourful modern world.

The poet without much hope from the new world: Here, the poet urges his ladylove to 'be true to one another' as the new world, which appears to be so beautiful, does not evoke much hope in him. To him, this dreamy modern world is not really a source of joy, love, light, certainty, peace or a reliever of pain. Hence, this chaotic, artificial world does not induce much hope in him.

The poet compares the new modern world to a dark place wherein we are completely unaware of what we are doing. We are in a confused struggle as ignorant soldiers fight with each other in the darkness. Hence, the poet assesses the morally corrupted modern world, full of vanity.



Word Meanings

- **fair**—bright • **straits**—English channel • **gleams**—shine brightly, especially with reflected light • **cliffs**—steep rocks on the sea shore • **glimmering**—shine faintly with a wavering light • **tranquil bay**—quiet sea • **moon-blanching land**—moon-lit land • **grating**—irritating • **fling**—to throw • **strand**—shore • **tremulous**—trembling • **cadence**—modulation or inflection of voice • **Sophocles**—the name of an ancient Greek playwright • **Aegean**—Aegean sea • **turbid**—muddy water
- **distant**—far-of • **furled**—folding • **melancholy**—sad, sorrowful • **retreating**—declining • **breath (here)**—whistling of the night wind • **drear**—dull • **naked**—raw • **shingles**—pebbles • **land of dreams (here)**—dreamy modern world
- **certitude**—certainty • **darkling plain**—a dark unknown place • **armies**—soldiers

