



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

## DSC 11 History of English Literature-III

### Unit -1 THE VICTORIAN AGE

#### Historical Perspective of the Victorian Period

**Introduction:** The Victorian Era is an age of British history spanning the 64-year reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). It is one of the longest reigns in the history of England. In the year 1837, Queen Victoria succeeded William the IV on the throne of Great Britain and Ireland. The period is marked by many important social and historical changes that altered the nation in many ways. The population got nearly doubled and the British Empire expanded. The period saw the British Empire grow to become the first global industrial power, producing much of the world's coal, iron, steel and textiles. By this time the role of the monarch was to reign, rather than rule.

**Historical Perspective of the Victorian Period:** The period is known for economic progress, poverty and exploitation. The gap between the rich and the poor grew wide and with drive for material and commercial success there appeared a kind of a moral decay in the society. The Victorian era saw a wild growth of industries and factories. One very important factor of the age was its stress on morality. A feminine code of conduct was imposed on them which described every aspect of their being from the proper apparels to how to converse, everything had rules. The role of the women was mostly that of being angels of the house and restricted to domestic confines. They were financially dependent on their husbands and fathers and it led to a commercialization of the institution of marriage.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VICTORIANISM

**Characteristics of the Victorianism:** - The discoveries of science have particular effects upon the literature of the Victorian Age. It is simple to mark the following four general characteristics:

1. **Realism:** Literature of this age comes closer to daily life which reflects its practical problems and interests. It becomes a powerful instrument for human progress.
2. **Moral Purpose:** The Victorian literature seems to assert its moral purpose. Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle, Ruskin-all were the teachers of England with the faith in their moral message to instruct the world.
3. **Doubts or Contradictory faiths and philosophies:** It is often considered as an age of doubt and contradictory faiths and philosophies. The influence of science is felt here. Browning the optimist and Hardy the pessimist are regarded as most popular writers of the age. There is realistic literature with Pre-Raphaelite poetry that believes in "art for art's sake".



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

4. **Idealism:** Though, the age is characterized as practical and materialistic, most of the writers suggest a purely ideal life. It is an idealistic age where the great ideals like truth, justice, love, brotherhood are emphasized by poets, essayists and novelists of the age.

**Growth of Victorian Age:** After the romantic revival, the literature of the Victorian age entered in a new period. The literature of this period expresses the fusion of romanticism to Realism. The Victorian age is rich in literature. It produced two great poets like Tennyson and Browning; dramatists like Shaw and Galsworthy; novelists like Charles Dickens and Hardy; and essayists like Carlyle and Stevenson. The age is remarkable for the excellence of its literature.

**Victorian Prose:** Victorian age produced two great essayists like Carlyle and Stevenson. Carlyle's major works include *The French Revolution* in 3 vols. (1837), *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841). His prose style differs from other prose writers. He writes about people and events of the past. He has his own philosophy. He accounts great men as heroes. Whereas Stevenson writes famous essays in this period: *A Night among the Pines*, *Walking Tours*, *An Apology for Idlers*, *A Plea for Gas lamps*, *El Dorado*, *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* and *Crabbed Age and Youth*.

Stevenson's essays are an attempt in the direction of human welfare. He wishes to remove all that creates an obstacle in human progress and happiness. For example in his famous essay *An Apology for Idlers* he points out the importance of direct education based on self-observation and self-learning. He puts stress on the quality of being happy for personal sake as well as social sake.

**Victorian Poetry:** It produced three great poets- Tennyson, Browning and Arnold. Tennyson is the most representative poet of the age. He represents Victorian conflict and compromise. He is a great lyric poet. His lyricism is deep rooted and dominates all of his poems. It makes his poetry sweet and smooth. His lyric can be divided into many parts like personal, dramatic, patriotic and musical lyrics or songs. Among Tennyson's personal lyrics "In Memoriam" is very important. It is a collection of lyrics composed on the death of his bosom friend Arthur Hallam. Tennyson's dramatic lyrics are in the form of dramatic monologues. Tennyson is admired as a pictorial artist. His description of nature is highly sensuous. Robert Browning is known for his dramatic monologues and philosophy of hope. Browning is the greatest writer of dramatic monologues. All of his monologues deal with different aspects of love. Matthew Arnold is regarded as the greatest elegiac poet of Victorian age. He contributes a number of elegies but the following five are of great merit:

- 1) *Thyrsis*
- 2) *Rugby Chapel*
- 3) *The Scholar Gipsy*
- 4) *A Southern Night*



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

## 5) West Minister Abbey

Victorian Drama: It produced two great dramatists like Shaw and Galsworthy. Shaw is Doubtlessly the greatest of all dramatists of this period. He contributed anti romantic plays of Ideas like Candida and Apple Cart. Saint Joan won Nobel Prize for him. Galsworthy is also a great dramatist. He is a problem play writer. He has a deep sympathy for the weaker section Of society. In his dramas, he presents their problems to attract the attention of all the people of the society. It appeals more to head than to heart. The basic purpose of his plays is not to Entertain but to make people conscious of others people's sufferings caused by imperfection of law and society. His famous plays are: The Silver Box, Strife and Justice.

Victorian Novel: It produced two great novelists like Charles Dickens and Hardy. The spirit Of revolt is much more intense in the fiction than the poetry of this period. The most Prominent novelists of the period are Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy. Dickens is the Great novelist. He makes the minute study of the whole mankind. He presents lively picture of human society. Dickens, "David Copperfield" is a representative novel in the sense that it throws light on the prevailing conditions of Victorian society. It is a social document that brings to light miserable condition of boarding-houses, women education, child labor and social injustice. Dickens is a social thinker working in the line of a social reformer. Hardy's best novel is Tess of the d'Urbervilles. Thomas Hardy published this novel in 1891 with subtitle-a pure woman. Tess of the d'Urbervilles is a young girl, who is raped by Alec D'Urbervilles. She gets pregnant, but the baby dies. It raises a question how such a woman may be called a pure woman. But Hardy proves it. She later falls in love with Angel Clare, but he deserts her. Alec assures her that Angel would not come back. Her family starves and She becomes a mistress to Alec. But Angel comes back and Tess murders Alec and spends a few moments of love with Angel before she is arrested to be hanged.

**Pre-Raphaelite poetry Or Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood:** The Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood is also known as the Ore-Raphaelites. It was a group of English painters, poets and critics, founded in 1848 by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who reacted against the artificiality of the art of the period. They wanted to return to the purity and simplicity of the Italian art of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century (before Raphael). There were seven members in this "brotherhood". The Pre-raphaelite defined themselves as a reform-movement. They were influenced by the ideas of The art critic John Ruskin, who considered art as a way to react to the ugliness of modern, Urban life. The main characteristics were: fidelity to nature, sensuality, use of non-industrial materials, re-evaluation of medieval religion and legends. The main representatives were: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. William Morris created the Arts and Crafts Movement, which designed and manufactured a great variety of objects for interiors (stained



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

glass, wallpapers, tapestries, rugs etc...). They used handicraft and simple decoration in reaction to industrial machinery. The Pre-Raphaelite movement Influenced the Aesthetic Movement. It originated in France, following the ideas of Theophile Gautier; it was a reaction against the materialism and the strict moral code of the Bourgeoisie. Aesthetes were not interested in political and social matters but isolated themselves in a world of beauty and art. Their motto was “art for art’s sake”, which means that art doesn’t have any moral aim but it’s an end in itself. The followers of Aesthetics led an unconventional life, full of sensations and excess (they wanted to be different from the working masses and they also rejected the Victorian moral values). The main representative In Britain was Oscar Wilde.

Naughty Nineties: The last decade of the nineteenth century is characterized by “naughtiness”. “Victorianism” is a complex collection of several values, and the revolt of the Nineties against Victorianism is also quite complex. This revolt has three points. First, it repeats the old revolutionary formula of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, in a new setting. Secondly, it worships power than beauty. And thirdly, it challenges the older values of art and Life. In the literature of the nineties two distinct tendencies are exposed: the pessimistic tendency and Continental tendency. In the poetry of the nineties, we consider Robert Bridges and Hardy as representatives poets. The most prominent novelist of the period is Thomas Hardy. The last years of 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a dramatic revival. The most vigorous drama of the age was concerned with social and domestic problems and was considerably influenced by Ibsen. Oscar Wilde’s plays have the tone of social criticism. Shaw is doubtlessly, the greatest of all the dramatists of this period.

### **Victorian Compromise in Tennyson:**

Victorian compromise is a combination of the positive and negative aspects of the contemporary issues of Victorian era. The Victorian era is well-known for its enrichment of knowledge in science, expansion of empire and growth of economy, conflict between the science and religion, conflict between aristocracy and democracy etc. All Victorian writers, in some way or other, give expression to this conflicts and Consequents. Some of the Victorians clung to the old faith and condemned the ‘new-fangled Opinions’, others went over to the side of science, and still some others tried to draw some Sort of compromise between the two conflicting forces. Tennyson can be classed with the third group, the one which stood for what is often called “The Victorian Compromise”. The problems of the day are wonderfully depicted in the writing of the poets of this era. Poets like Arnold of nineteenth century started to hold a very pessimistic view about the Victorian crisis; he seems to express only a negative attitude toward his contemporary age. But we see a quite dissimilar attitude in Alfred Lord Tennyson. Unlike Arnold, he expressed a Compromising attitude to his age and its intricate problems. We find in his Ulysses, The Lotos Eaters, The Charge of the Light Brigade, holds such a sort of view which is supposed to find a middle ground. He is neither too melancholic like Arnold nor too optimistic like Robert



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

Browning. He tries to portray in his poems a real and Clear picture of the problems of contemporary age in an implicit way. In fact the poem , “The Charge of the Light Brigade” which is based upon the Crimean war describes the marvelous courage of the British soldiers and pays homage to them. In his political opinions Tennyson shared the views of an average Victorian who believed in The golden mean, a compromise between democracy and aristocracy. He believed in slow progress and shunned revolution.

In the Victorian age, there was a huge conflict occurred especially because of Darwin’s Theory between science and religion. Darwin suggested that humans are actually originated from the apes. This struck the Orthodox, and moved the faith of people in religion what was contemporarily coming forward by the writings of then thinker. But Tennyson himself was too greatly affected by the development of science to remain an orthodox Christian yet still was not so much affected as to turn an unqualified agnostic. Because of the quality to look for a middle ground, Tennyson is considered as a compromising craftsman who does neither yield to the crisis of his age nor possess a carefree attitude towards the problems, rather keeps compromising and finding a solution.

- **Alfred Lord Tennyson:**

Born on August 6, 1809, in Somersby, Lincolnshire, England, Alfred, Lord Tennyson is one of the most well-loved Victorian poets. Tennyson, the fourth of twelve children, showed an early talent for writing. At the age of twelve he wrote a 6,000-line epic poem. His father, the Reverend George Tennyson, tutored his sons in classical and modern languages. In the 1820s, however, Tennyson’s father began to suffer frequent mental breakdowns that were exacerbated by alcoholism. One of Tennyson’s brothers had violent quarrels with his father, a second was later confined to an insane asylum, and another became an opium addict.

Tennyson escaped home in 1827 to attend Trinity College, Cambridge. In that same year, he and his brother Charles published *Poems by Two Brothers*. Although the poems in the book were mostly juvenilia, they attracted the attention of the “Apostles,” an undergraduate literary club led by Arthur Henry Hallam. The “Apostles” provided Tennyson, who was tremendously shy, with much needed friendship and confidence as a poet. Hallam and Tennyson became the best of friends; they toured Europe together in 1830 and again in 1832. Hallam’s sudden death in 1833 greatly affected the young poet. The long elegy “In Memoriam” and many of Tennyson’s other poems are tributes to Hallam.

In 1830, Tennyson published *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* and in 1832 he published a second volume entitled simply *Poems*. Some reviewers condemned these books as “affected” and “obscure.” Tennyson, stung by the reviews, would not publish another book for nine years. In 1836, he became engaged to Emily Sellwood. When he lost his inheritance on a bad investment in 1840, Sellwood’s family called off the engagement. In 1842, however, Tennyson’s *Poems* in two





# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

volumes was a tremendous critical and popular success. In 1850, with the publication of “In Memoriam,” Tennyson became one of Britain’s most popular poets. He was selected as poet laureate in succession to William Wordsworth. In that same year, he married Emily Sellwood. They had two sons, Hallam and Lionel.

At the age of forty-one, Tennyson had established himself as the most popular poet of the Victorian era. The money from his poetry (at times exceeding ten thousand pounds per year) allowed him to purchase a house in the country and to write in relative seclusion. His appearance—a large and bearded man who regularly wore a cloak and a broad-brimmed hat—enhanced his notoriety. He read his poetry with a booming voice, a habit later adopted by Dylan Thomas. In 1859, Tennyson published the first poems of “Idylls of the Kings,” which sold more than ten thousand copies in one month. In 1884, he accepted a peerage, becoming Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

Tennyson died on October 6, 1892, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

- **Charles Dickens**

Charles Dickens was a nineteenth-century British author and editor who wrote novels, short stories, comics, and novellas. He produced some of the most famous books of his time, including *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *A Christmas Carol*. Dickens started his career writing humorous sketches and comics for periodicals, some of which he published himself. He is known for his stark portraits of the underclass in Victorian-era London, highlighting the wealth gap and making his readers more socially aware. His work continues to influence literature and pop culture, with many of his works taught to young readers.

Charles Dickens’s legacy lives on in his literature, influencing countless writers, including Margaret Atwood and Salman Rushdie. Stories like *A Christmas Carol* remain popular thanks to numerous TV, film, and theatrical adaptations. Dickens often drew inspiration from his own life:

**Early life:** Charles John Huffam Dickens was born in 1812 in Portsmouth, a coastal town in England. When he was 10, the Dickens family moved to Camden Town, a working-class suburb of London. At 12, Dickens dropped out of school to work at a boot-blackening factory when his father, who previously held a well-paying job at the Navy pay office, went to debtors’ prison. Dickens looked back at this time as his “loss of innocence.”

**First literary job:** At 15, Dickens landed a job as an office boy, which led to a freelance court reporting job. Within a few years, he was working for two major London newspapers. Dickens began submitting humorous sketches to local newspapers under the pseudonym Boz. These he compiled into his first book, *Sketches by Boz*, in 1836, shortly after he married his first wife, Catherine Hogarth, with whom he fathered ten children.



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

Midlife and literary career: Dickens published his first novel, *Oliver Twist*, in 1838. (It first appeared in serialized installments in his self-published periodical *Bentley's Miscellany*.) After *Oliver Twist*, Dickens published fifteen novels and several novellas over the course of his life, a few of which also appeared in monthly or weekly installments. He edited several magazines, including *Household Words*, and founded his own, *All The Year Round*. In 1842, Dickens toured the United States, giving public readings and speaking against slavery. He wrote the travelogue *American Notes* based on this experience. Dickens began a relationship with actress Ellen Ternan in 1857.

Death and legacy: Dickens died at his country home, Gad's Hill Place near Chatham in Kent, of a stroke in 1870, at the age of 58. His grave is in Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. Today, fans of Dickens's work celebrate his legacy at the annual Rochester Dickens Festival.

- **Thomas Carlyle:**

British essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle was one of the most important social critics of his era and a leading moral force in Victorian literature. Among his chief works are *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34), *The French Revolution* (1837), *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841), *Life and Letters of Oliver Cromwell* (1845), and *Frederick the Great* (1858–65).

Carlyle was born in the Scottish village of Ecclefechan on Dec. 4, 1795. He was first educated at home, then at the grammar school of Annan nearby. At the age of 14 he went to Edinburgh University, where he studied many subjects. After leaving Edinburgh he taught school for several years, but teaching did not suit him and he soon abandoned it.

When he was still in his 20s he began to suffer from a stomach ailment, and for the rest of his life he was almost constantly in pain. During this period he suffered in spirit as well, as he tried to find meaning in his life. He eventually developed a philosophy that he later wrote about in *Sartor Resartus*. He also became interested in German literature and philosophy at this time. In 1826 he married Jane Welsh after a five-year courtship.

In the early years of their marriage the Carlyles lived mostly in Scotland. Carlyle contributed articles to journals and worked on *Sartor Resartus*, a work that is now considered by some to be his masterpiece. An eccentric piece of philosophical fiction, *Sartor Resartus* is supposedly part book review and part biography. The Latin title means "the tailor patched." The writer said that he patched it together from another book, *The History of Clothes, Their Origin and Influence*, and from the life of its supposed author, Herr Diogenes Teufelsdröckh. Both the German professor and his book existed only in Carlyle's imagination, however. Teufelsdröckh's spiritual struggles, loves, and hates—all detailed at length in *Sartor Resartus*—were Carlyle's own. The book is written in a rhapsodic, broken style that has since been called "Carlylese."



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

In 1834 the Carlyles moved to London, where they spent their remaining years. Through his friend John Stuart Mill, the English philosopher, Carlyle became interested in the French Revolution and set to work on a monumental history. After five months of difficult work on this project, Carlyle completed the first volume and left it with Mill for criticism. While in Mill's possession, the manuscript was accidentally burned by a maid lighting a fire. Despite this setback, The French Revolution was finally published in 1837. The book was immediately successful. The days of struggle were over, and Carlyle took his place as a leading English writer. His other books followed one another at intervals of two to five years.

Carlyle was profoundly shaken by the sudden death of his wife in 1866. After this time he wrote very little. His physical strength gradually failed, and he died on Feb. 5, 1881.

Carlyle had a few "messages" that he continually repeated. He affirmed that work of all kinds is dignified and sacred. He also believed that the world must be governed by "heroes"—strong, just men; consequently he felt that the people should put their faith in such heroes and not in democracy. In his own day Carlyle exerted a strong influence on other writers, but today few people read Carlyle for what he had to say. They read his books for their majestic style and revealing flashes of his highly individual personality. An excellent biography of Carlyle, which is also considered one of the greatest English biographies, is James A. Froude's Thomas Carlyle: a History of His Life in London 1834–1881. It was originally printed in four volumes from 1882 to 1884.

- **John Ruskin:**

John Ruskin (1819–1900) was one of the greatest prose writers and social thinkers of Victorian England. Born in London to a prosperous family, he was educated at Oxford, where he developed a deep love for art, literature, and nature. His career began as an art critic when he published *Modern Painters* (1843), a work defending the artist J.M.W. Turner. This book made him famous and established him as a strong voice in art criticism.

Ruskin's career continued with *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53), where he connected art and architecture with moral and social values. He believed that true art came from honesty, simplicity, and respect for nature. His career, however, was not limited to art criticism. He also became a great social reformer. In *Unto This Last* (1860), he criticized the economic system of his time and argued for justice, fairness, and human welfare.

Among his other important works are *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), which discussed the roles of men and women in society and the importance of reading; *Fors Clavigera* (1871–84), a series of letters to the working people of England; and *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), which focused on work, traffic, and war.





# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

Ruskin's career was marked by his effort to connect beauty, morality, and social responsibility. His works influenced not only artists and writers but also social leaders and reformers around the world. He spent his later years in seclusion due to ill health, but his writings continue to inspire students, thinkers, and reformers even today.

ENGLISH



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

## Unit-2 The Birth of Modern Literature

### Historical background and literary features of the age

The birth of Modern English literature is closely connected with the great historical and social changes that took place in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This was a period of transformation in England. The Industrial Revolution changed the economic and social life of the people. The growth of cities, the rise of the working class, and problems of poverty and inequality created new subjects for writers. At the same time, political revolutions in America (1776) and France (1789) inspired ideas of liberty, equality, and democracy. Science and technology also advanced rapidly, while religion and morality were being questioned. These historical developments provided the background for a new kind of literature that was realistic, human-centered, and socially engaged.

### Literary Features of the Age

**Rise of the Novel** – The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the beginnings of the modern novel with writers like Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the novel became the dominant form of literature. Writers such as Charles Dickens, George Eliot, the Brontë sisters, and Thomas Hardy used fiction to reflect the struggles, hopes, and moral dilemmas of ordinary life.

**Romantic Movement** – At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, poets like William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, P.B. Shelley, and John Keats emphasized imagination, nature, emotions, and individual freedom. Romanticism broke away from strict classical rules and celebrated personal experience.

**Victorian Literature** – During Queen Victoria's reign (1837–1901), literature reflected the spirit of progress, morality, and social concern. Prose writers like Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and Matthew Arnold wrote on culture and society, while novelists like Dickens and Eliot portrayed the realities of industrial and urban life.

**Realism and Social Criticism** – Modern English literature showed a deep concern for social problems such as class conflict, poverty, child labor, and women's rights. Literature became a mirror of society and a tool for reform.

**Development of Prose** – Prose writing flourished in essays, criticism, and journalism. Writers like Ruskin, Carlyle, and later George Bernard Shaw used prose not only for art but also to spread ideas and challenge society.

### Conclusion

Thus, the birth of Modern English literature was not sudden but the result of great social, political, and cultural changes in Europe. It combined imagination with realism, beauty with truth, and art with social purpose. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, English literature had entered a new modern phase, shaping the thoughts and values of future generations.

- T.S.Eliot:



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis on September 26, 1888, and lived there during the first eighteen years of his life. He attended Harvard University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in three years and contributed several poems to the Harvard Advocate. From 1910–11, he studied at the Sorbonne, then returned to Harvard to pursue a doctorate in philosophy. After graduating, he moved back to Europe and settled in England in 1914. The following year, he married Vivienne Haigh-Wood and began working in London, first as a teacher, and later for Lloyd's Bank.

It was in London that Eliot came under the influence of his contemporary Ezra Pound, who recognized his poetic genius at once, and assisted in the publication of his work in a number of magazines, most notably "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," which appeared in Poetry magazine in 1915. Eliot's first book of poems, Prufrock and Other Observations, was published in London in 1917 by The Egoist, and immediately established him as a leading poet of the avant-garde. With the publication of The Waste Land (Boni & Liveright) in 1922, now considered by many to be the single most influential poetic work of the twentieth century, Eliot's reputation began to grow to nearly mythic proportions. By 1930, and for the next thirty years, he was the most dominant figure in poetry and literary criticism in the English-speaking world.

As a poet, Eliot transmuted his affinity for the English metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century (notably, John Donne) and the nineteenth-century French Symbolist poets (including Charles Baudelaire and Jules Laforgue) into radical innovations in poetic technique and subject matter. His poems, in many respects, articulated the disillusionment of a younger post-World War I generation with the values and conventions—both literary and social—of the Victorian era. As a critic, he had an enormous impact on contemporary literary taste, propounding views that, after his conversion to orthodox Christianity in the late 1930s, were increasingly based in social and religious conservatism. His major later poetry publications include Four Quartets (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943) and Ash Wednesday (Faber & Faber, 1930). His books of literary and social criticism include Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949); After Strange Gods (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934); The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1933); and The Sacred Wood (Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1920). Eliot was also an important playwright, whose verse dramas include the comedy The Cocktail Party (Faber & Faber, 1950); The Family Reunion (Faber & Faber, 1939), a drama written partly in blank verse and influenced by Greek tragedy; and Murder in the Cathedral (Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1935).

Eliot became a British citizen in 1927. In 1948, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. Long associated with the publishing house of Faber & Faber, he published many younger poets, and eventually became director of the firm. After a notoriously unhappy first marriage, Eliot separated from his first wife in 1933 and married Valerie Fletcher in 1956.

T. S. Eliot died in London on January 4, 1965.

- **G. B. Show:**

George Bernard Shaw was born on July 26 1856 in Dublin Ireland the son of a civil servant. Although he was best known for drama, he was also proficient in the areas of journalism, music and literary criticism.



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

He began his literary career as a novelist. Shaw's works concerned themselves mostly with prevailing social problems, specifically with what he saw as the exploitation of the working middle class. Shaw attended various schools throughout his youth but always harboured an animosity towards schools and teachers. He is quoted as saying that "Schools and schoolmasters, as we have them today, are not popular as places of education and teachers, but rather prisons and turnkeys in which children are kept to prevent them disturbing and chaperoning their parents".

In his personal life, Shaw was an avid Socialist and a member of the Fabian society. In 1898 he married fellow Fabian member and Irish heiress Charlotte Payne-Townsend. He was the first person to be awarded the Nobel prize for Literature as well as an Oscar (for his work on *Pygmalion*, which was an adaptation of his play of the same name). He wrote 60 plays, most of which deal with social themes such as marriage, religion, class government and health care. Two of his greatest influences were Henrik Ibsen and Henry Fielding. Ibsen's plays and Fielding's expulsion from playwriting inspired him to write his own plays on the social injustices of the world around him, including the late nineteenth century censorship of plays, continued from Prime Minister Walpole's rein in the mid 1740s. The Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of Plays especially irked him:

"A gentleman who robs, insults, and suppresses me as irresistibly as if he were the Tsar of Russia and I the meanest of his subjects... But I must submit [my play] in order to obtain from him an insolent and insufferable document, which I cannot read without boiling of the blood, certifying that in his opinion — his opinion! — my play 'does not in its general tendency contain anything immoral or otherwise improper for the stage,' and that the Lord Chamberlain therefore 'allows' its performance (confound his impudence!)."

George Bernard Shaw died at the age of 94 due to injuries incurred from falling while pruning a tree.

- **W.B. Yeats:**

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) was one of the greatest poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and a central figure of the Irish Literary Revival. Born in Dublin, Ireland, he belonged to an artistic family; his father was a painter, and this environment influenced his love for art and literature from an early age. Though he spent part of his childhood in London, his heart remained tied to Irish myths, folklore, and culture, which later became a major source of inspiration in his poetry.

Yeats was educated at the Godolphin School in London and later at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin. While studying, he developed an interest in Irish legends, mysticism, and the occult. These themes strongly shaped his early works.

His literary career began with romantic and mystical poems, influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite poets and Irish folklore. Collections such as *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889) revealed his fascination with legend and imagination. As he matured, Yeats became actively involved in the Irish Literary Revival, working with Lady Gregory and others to promote Irish theatre and drama. He co-founded the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1904, which became a national platform for Irish drama.

Yeats's later poetry reflected a change in style and vision. Moving from dreamy romanticism to modernist clarity, he expressed strong political, personal, and philosophical themes. His major works include *The*



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

Tower (1928), The Winding Stair (1933), and poems such as The Second Coming, Easter 1916, and Sailing to Byzantium. His poetry combined symbolism, mythology, and a deep sense of Irish identity with universal questions of life and death.

Yeats's greatest contribution was his ability to bridge tradition and modernity. He gave Irish literature an international voice while also shaping modern English poetry with his symbolic and modernist techniques. In recognition of his literary achievements, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1923.

He spent his final years in France, where he died in 1939. Yet, his works continue to inspire readers worldwide with their richness of thought, beauty of language, and deep connection to history and culture.

- **Henry James:**

Henry James (1843–1916) was one of the greatest novelists and critics of modern English literature, known for his psychological insight, artistic prose, and exploration of human consciousness. He was born on 15 April 1843 in New York City into a wealthy and cultured family. His father, Henry James Sr., was a philosopher and theologian, and his brother William James later became a famous psychologist and philosopher. Growing up in such an intellectual environment shaped Henry James's interest in literature, art, and philosophy.

James received much of his early education in both America and Europe, as his family traveled extensively. He studied at schools in Geneva, London, Paris, and Bonn, and later attended Harvard Law School, though he never completed his law studies. Instead, he turned towards writing, finding in literature a way to express his keen observation of people and society.

His literary career began with short stories and reviews, which were published in American magazines. Gradually, he developed into a novelist of international reputation. His early works, such as Roderick Hudson (1875) and The American (1877), dealt with the theme of Americans in Europe and the clash between the innocence of the New World and the sophistication of the Old World. This "international theme" became one of the hallmarks of his fiction.

Among his most famous novels are The Portrait of a Lady (1881), which portrays the struggles of Isabel Archer, a young woman seeking independence; The Wings of the Dove (1902); The Ambassadors (1903); and The Golden Bowl (1904). These later works, often referred to as his "major phase," show James's mastery of psychological depth, complex narrative techniques, and refined prose style. In addition to novels, he wrote important short stories like The Turn of the Screw (1898), which remains a classic example of psychological horror, and essays on art and criticism.

Henry James's main contribution to literature lies in his development of the modern psychological novel. He explored the inner life of characters with subtlety and precision, focusing on consciousness, motives, and moral dilemmas rather than external action. He also experimented with narrative point of view and interior monologue, paving the way for later modernist writers like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

Though born American, James spent much of his life in Europe and finally settled in England, where he became a British citizen in 1915. He died in London on 28 February 1916. Today, Henry James is





# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

remembered as a writer who transformed the English novel by making it an instrument of psychological and artistic depth.

- **Virginia Woolf:**

Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) was one of the most remarkable modernist writers of the twentieth century, known for her innovative narrative style, psychological depth, and contributions to feminist thought. She was born on 25 January 1882 in London into a highly intellectual family. Her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, was a literary critic and historian, and her mother, Julia Stephen, was a model associated with the Pre-Raphaelite circle. Growing up in such an environment exposed her to literature and art from an early age. However, the early loss of her parents and recurring mental health struggles deeply affected her life and writings.

Woolf did not receive a formal university education like her brothers but was largely educated at home in her father's library. She read widely in English classics, Greek literature, and history. This self-directed education gave her a strong foundation for her later literary career.

Her career began as a reviewer and essayist for newspapers and journals, but she soon emerged as a novelist of great originality. She married Leonard Woolf in 1912, and together they founded the Hogarth Press in 1917, which published many important modernist writers, including T. S. Eliot and Sigmund Freud, as well as Virginia's own works.

Woolf's novels broke away from traditional storytelling and focused on the inner workings of the human mind. She is best known for her use of stream of consciousness, a narrative technique that presents the flow of thoughts and feelings as they occur. Her major works include *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), which portrays a single day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway; *To the Lighthouse* (1927), often considered her masterpiece, which explores time, memory, and family relationships; and *Orlando* (1928), a playful, imaginative novel that experiments with gender and identity. Another important work, *The Waves* (1931), pushes modernist experimentation to its height with its poetic, lyrical style.

Apart from fiction, Woolf was also a significant essayist and critic. Her essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929) became a foundational text of feminist literary criticism, arguing that women need financial independence and personal space to create literature. She also wrote *Three Guineas* (1938), in which she linked the oppression of women with broader social and political issues.

Virginia Woolf's main contribution lies in her transformation of the modern novel. She shifted attention from external action to the inner life of characters, capturing the complexities of consciousness, time, and memory. At the same time, her feminist ideas gave women a stronger place in literature and society.

Despite her literary achievements, Woolf struggled with depression throughout her life. On 28 March 1941, during the Second World War, she ended her life by drowning in the River Ouse. Yet, her works remain timeless, influencing modern fiction, feminist criticism, and narrative art across the world.



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

## Unit -3 Appreciating Poetry

### Poem: Break, Break, Break by Alfred Lord Tennyson

#### Summary :

The poem Break, Break, Break expresses the poet's deep sorrow over the death of his close friend, Arthur Hallam. Tennyson begins by describing the sea waves breaking endlessly on the cold, gray stones, which becomes a symbol of his own restless grief. He contrasts the painful stillness of his heart with the lively scenes around him. Children are playing joyfully by the shore, a fisherman's boy shouts with cheer, and a sailor's son sings with carefree happiness. These images of simple, innocent life highlight the poet's inner emptiness.

Despite the beauty of the natural world and the joy of others, the poet feels no comfort because he longs for the voice and presence of his lost friend, which he knows will never return. The waves keep breaking again and again, just as his grief remains constant and unending.

Thus, the poem captures the universal experience of mourning: while the world moves on with life and activity, the bereaved are left with an unhealed wound of loss.

Thus, the poem captures the universal experience of mourning: while the world moves on with life and activity, the bereaved are left with an unhealed wound of loss.

#### Analysis of the poem:

The poem Break, Break, Break is a short but powerful lyric in which Tennyson expresses his grief over the untimely death of his close friend, Arthur Hallam. The breaking waves on the shore serve as the central image and symbol of his sorrow. Just as the waves crash endlessly against the rocks, the poet's grief is continuous, restless, and without resolution.

The contrast in the poem is very striking. While the poet is consumed by sadness, the world around him is full of activity and joy. Children play by the seaside, a fisherman's boy shouts with delight, and a sailor's boy sings happily. These simple images of daily life remind the poet that life goes on, but they also deepen his own sense of loneliness because he cannot share in that joy.

The most painful part of the poem comes when Tennyson admits that he longs for "the touch of a vanished hand" and "the sound of a voice that is still." These lines convey the heart of the poem—his deep yearning for his friend, whose presence can never return. The permanence of loss contrasts with the repetitive but living motion of the sea.

Structurally, the poem is written in short quatrains (four-line stanzas) with a musical rhythm that echoes the rise and fall of the sea waves. This rhythm reinforces the theme of repetition and continuity—life and nature go on endlessly, but human loss feels permanent.

Overall, the poem is an exploration of grief, memory, and the unchanging reality of death. It shows how nature can reflect human emotions, but at the same time, it also highlights the indifference of the external world to personal sorrow. For Tennyson, the sea becomes both a mirror of his pain and a reminder of the eternal cycle of life, against which human suffering feels small but deeply personal.



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

## Theme and Style :

The poem deals with the universal theme of grief and loss. Tennyson pours out his sorrow over the death of his beloved friend Arthur Hallam. The breaking waves symbolize his restless and continuous pain, just as the sea never stops breaking on the shore. Another important theme is the contrast between individual sorrow and the continuity of life: while the poet mourns, children laugh and sailors sing, showing that life goes on despite personal tragedy. The poem also highlights the permanence of death—the poet yearns for his friend's presence, but he knows it can never return. Thus, the poem expresses both the personal depth of grief and its universal reality.

Tennyson's style in this lyric is marked by simplicity, music, and symbolism. The repetition of the word "Break" at the beginning imitates the rhythm of the waves and creates a mournful effect. The short quatrains (four-line stanzas) make the poem sharp and striking, like the repeated sound of the sea. The poem uses contrast effectively—the cheerful images of children and sailors stand against the poet's sorrow, making his grief more intense. The tone is melancholic, reflective, and tender, and the imagery is vivid but not complicated. The sea becomes a metaphor for time, eternity, and the endlessness of human sorrow.

## Poem: The Last Duchess by Robert Browning

### Summary of the poem

The poem My Last Duchess is a dramatic monologue in which the Duke of Ferrara speaks to the emissary of a Count whose daughter he plans to marry. While showing the emissary a portrait of his late wife, the Duke reveals much about his character and his past.

He describes the portrait of his former Duchess, painted by the famous artist Fra Pandolf, and remarks on how lifelike her expression is. As he continues, the Duke's words unintentionally expose his jealousy and pride. He complains that the Duchess was too easily pleased, smiling not only for him but also for everyone—for instance, she appreciated small courtesies, simple gifts, and even the beauty of nature as much as his "nine-hundred-years-old name."

The Duke resented her warmth and generosity, which he saw as a failure to give him the exclusive respect he deserved. Rather than addressing his concerns openly with her, he hints darkly that he "gave commands," and afterward "all smiles stopped together," strongly suggesting that he had her killed. After this chilling revelation, the Duke turns back to the practical matter of arranging his next marriage, treating it as a business deal, and as they move along, he proudly points to another artwork—a statue of Neptune taming a sea-horse.

### Analysis of the poem:

Robert Browning's My Last Duchess is one of the best examples of the dramatic monologue, a form in which the speaker unintentionally reveals his own character while addressing someone else. The poem presents the Duke of Ferrara, who, while showing a portrait of his late Duchess to a marriage emissary, exposes his arrogance, jealousy, and cruelty.

The central theme of the poem is power, pride, and control in relationships. The Duke sees his wife not as a partner but as a possession. He is offended that she valued others' simple gestures as much as the honor



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

of his aristocratic name. Instead of communicating with her, he chose to assert his authority with “commands” that ended her life, suggesting tyranny and inhuman pride.

Stylistically, Browning’s use of dramatic irony is remarkable. The Duke intends to show himself as a refined nobleman, but his words reveal him to be a cold, authoritarian, and possibly murderous man. The reader realizes more than the Duke himself admits.

The poem also reflects Victorian concerns with art, morality, and power. The Duchess’s portrait symbolizes how the Duke objectifies people—he prefers her as a controlled image rather than as a living, independent woman. The closing reference to the statue of Neptune taming a sea-horse reinforces the theme of domination and control.

In terms of form, the poem is written in rhyming couplets (heroic couplets) but with a conversational rhythm that mimics natural speech. This blending of strict form with free-flowing conversation gives the poem both discipline and dramatic realism.

In short, *My Last Duchess* is admired for its psychological depth, irony, and mastery of the dramatic monologue. Browning turns a simple conversation into a revelation of character, making the Duke both fascinating and terrifying. The poem remains a powerful study of pride, authority, and the darker sides of human nature.



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

## Unit-4 Appreciating Poetry

### Poem: The Darkling Thrush by Thomas Hardy

#### Summary of the poem:

The poem describes a winter evening at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The speaker stands by a gate and looks at the dark and gloomy landscape. Everything around him appears lifeless — the trees are bare, the land is frozen, and the sky is cloudy and dull. The atmosphere feels like death, as if the old century is dying and leaving behind only despair and hopelessness for the future.

In the middle of this sadness, the speaker suddenly hears the joyful song of an old thrush. The bird is weak and frail, yet it sings with a powerful voice full of happiness and hope. This surprises the poet because he cannot find any reason in the environment for such cheerfulness. While he himself sees only darkness and despair, the bird seems to express faith in something beyond human understanding.

#### Analysis of the poem:

Thomas Hardy's The Darkling Thrush was written at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and captures the mood of uncertainty as one century ended and a new one began. The poem is both a reflection of the poet's personal pessimism and a symbolic picture of a changing world.

The main theme of the poem is despair versus hope. At the start, Hardy presents a bleak, wintry landscape: the frozen ground, the gray sky, and the leafless trees all symbolize death, decay, and the end of an era. For Hardy, this represents not only the season but also the spiritual and cultural decline of the age. He feels a sense of emptiness and hopelessness about the future.

Against this background of gloom, the sudden song of a weak, old thrush introduces a sharp contrast. The bird, though fragile and near death, sings joyfully, as if it possesses some hidden faith or hope that the poet and mankind cannot yet see. This moment suggests the possibility of renewal, optimism, or divine grace even in the darkest times.

Stylistically, the poem is admired for its powerful imagery and symbolism. The winter landscape mirrors the poet's despondent mood, while the thrush symbolizes unexpected hope. Hardy's language is rich in metaphors: for example, the sky is compared to the "crypt" of the century, giving the sense of a funeral for the old era. The tone of the poem is mostly mournful, but it softens when the thrush appears.

Critically, the poem reflects Hardy's characteristic pessimism but also shows his openness to moments of unexpected inspiration. It is a fine example of late Victorian poetry, blending natural description with deep emotional and philosophical meaning.

In short, The Darkling Thrush is valued in English literature for its symbolic representation of human despair at the turn of the century, balanced by the possibility of hidden hope. Hardy's use of contrast, imagery, and symbolism makes the poem both a personal meditation and a universal reflection on human life.

### Poem: Unknown Citizen by W. H. Auden

#### Summary of the poem:





# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

The poem *The Unknown Citizen* is written as if it were an official report or a monument inscription dedicated to an unnamed man. It describes the life of an ordinary citizen who lived according to all the expectations of society and the government.

The “unknown citizen” is praised for being a model member of the community. He worked faithfully for a company until retirement, paid his taxes regularly, and never caused trouble. Reports from different departments show that he was always loyal to the government, satisfied with his job, and obedient to the rules. He was a good consumer who bought the products advertised, and he was socially active in ways that were considered normal. The man is also said to have had the right number of children, followed the public opinion of his time, and behaved exactly as society expected. However, the poem ends with an ironic question: was he truly free or happy? The records say nothing about that, and the system never cared to ask.

### **Analysis of the poem:**

W. H. Auden’s *The Unknown Citizen* is a satirical poem that criticizes the modern bureaucratic state and the way it measures a person’s life. Written in the form of an official report or monument inscription, the poem describes a man only through statistics and social records. He is praised for being a perfect citizen—loyal to the government, obedient to rules, regular in paying taxes, hardworking in his job, and a responsible family man. Yet, the irony of the poem lies in what is left out: his individuality, freedom, and personal happiness.

The main theme of the poem is the loss of individuality in modern society. Auden shows how the state reduces people to numbers, reports, and official records. A man may appear perfect according to government statistics, but those facts tell us nothing about his inner life, his desires, or his emotions. The ending lines—“Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd”—expose the dehumanizing effect of bureaucracy, where human values like happiness and freedom are considered irrelevant.

Stylistically, the poem uses irony and satire. The tone is impersonal, as if written by a government official, but through this cold and factual language, Auden reveals the absurdity of a system that celebrates conformity while ignoring individuality. The title itself—*The Unknown Citizen*—echoes the idea of the “Unknown Soldier,” suggesting that in modern life, ordinary people become nameless and faceless.

In a broader sense, the poem reflects the anxieties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when industrialization, war, and bureaucracy were increasingly shaping human lives. It warns against a society where people are valued only for their usefulness, not for their uniqueness.



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

## Unit -5 Riders to the Sea- a play in One act by J. M. Synge.

### Summary :

Riders to the Sea is a one-act play set in the Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland. It deals with the struggles of a poor peasant family against the relentless power of the sea, which has taken the lives of many of their men.

The play opens in the cottage of an old woman, Maurya, who has already lost her husband, father-in-law, and four of her sons to the sea. Her two remaining sons are Michael and Bartley. Michael has been missing for nine days, and the family fears that he too is dead. Cathleen, one of Maurya's daughters, and Nora, the younger daughter, bring home a bundle of clothes given to them by a neighboring village to help identify whether they belong to Michael's drowned body.

Maurya is deeply distressed. As she prays for Michael, she worries about Bartley, the only son left with her. Bartley insists on going to the mainland to sell a horse at the fair, despite the bad weather. Maurya pleads with him not to go, but he refuses, saying that they need money.

After Bartley leaves, Cathleen and Nora confirm from the bundle of clothes that Michael is truly dead. Maurya is heartbroken. She goes to give Bartley some bread for his journey, but when she returns, she tells her daughters that she saw a terrible vision: Michael riding on a horse, followed by Bartley on another horse. She interprets this as a bad omen.

Soon after, villagers arrive carrying Bartley's dead body. He has been thrown into the sea while trying to ride his horse onto the boat. Now Maurya has lost all her sons to the sea.

In the final moments, Maurya, though broken, accepts her fate with dignity and resignation. She says that now she has nothing more to lose—the sea cannot take anything from her anymore. She blesses Bartley's soul and prays for all her dead sons, finding peace in surrendering to God's will.

In short, Riders to the Sea is a tragic play showing the helpless struggle of human beings against the powerful and destructive forces of nature. It highlights themes of fate, suffering, loss, and acceptance, making it one of the most moving plays of modern Irish literature.

### Theme of the play:

The central **theme of Riders to the Sea is the helpless struggle of human beings against the powerful forces of nature.** The play shows how the sea, which provides livelihood to the poor islanders, also becomes their greatest enemy, taking away their lives one by one. Maurya, the old mother, loses her husband, father-in-law, and all six sons to the sea. The play becomes a tragic symbol of man's powerlessness before fate and nature.

Another important **theme is suffering and resignation.** Maurya represents the universal mother who suffers endless grief, yet in the end accepts her losses with dignity. When Bartley dies, she realizes that she has nothing more to lose. Her acceptance of fate reflects the human ability to endure tragedy with courage.

The play also explores **the theme of life and death.** For the islanders, death is always near, because every sea journey may be the last. The sea thus symbolizes both life (livelihood) and death (destruction).



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

There is also **the theme of religion and faith**. Maurya's prayers and blessings show her deep reliance on God. Even when completely broken, she finds peace in surrendering to divine will, believing that God has given rest to her sons' souls.

Finally, the play emphasizes the theme of the eternal cycle of loss. Just as the sea continues to take lives, human beings continue to endure suffering, yet life goes on with strength, courage, and acceptance.

## **Characters of the play:**

### **Maurya**

She is the central figure of the play—a poor old mother who loses her husband and six sons to the sea. At first, she is anxious and bitter, but by the end, she becomes a symbol of universal motherhood, enduring grief with dignity and resignation. Her character shows the transformation from despair to acceptance of fate.

### **Bartley**

Maurya's last surviving son. He is practical, dutiful, and determined to provide for the family. Despite the danger, he goes to the fair to sell a horse, showing courage and responsibility. His death represents the final triumph of fate and the sea over human life.

### **Cathleen and Nora**

Maurya's daughters. They represent the younger generation, caught between fear and duty. They bring the news of Michael's death and help reveal the tragic reality to Maurya. They also symbolize the continuity of life—though the men die, the women endure.

### **Michael (Absent character)**

Though dead before the play begins, Michael is important as his drowned body sets the tragic tone. His absence is deeply felt, making him a silent presence in the play.

### **The Sea (Symbolic character)**

The sea is not a person, but it functions like one. It is both a giver (livelihood) and a destroyer (death). Throughout the play, it is the most powerful force, shaping the destiny of every character.

## **Critical analysis and Style of the play:**

Riders to the Sea is not only a simple story of an Irish peasant family but also a symbolic tragedy of human life itself. Synge shows how man, despite all courage and effort, is powerless before nature and fate. The sea in the play is not just water but a symbol of destiny, an uncontrollable force that gives livelihood yet takes lives mercilessly.

The play also raises questions about suffering and acceptance. Maurya suffers extreme loss, yet in the end, she attains peace through resignation. This reflects a universal truth—that human life is marked by loss, but dignity comes through endurance. Synge seems to suggest that true strength lies not in conquering nature but in accepting its power with courage and faith.

At a deeper level, the play highlights the condition of the poor Irish peasants, dependent on fishing and farming, who lived close to death every day. It becomes both a national tragedy and a universal one.

Synge's style in Riders to the Sea is simple, poetic, and realistic. He uses the local Irish dialect, which gives authenticity to the speech of the characters, yet raises it to the level of poetry. The language is filled with biblical rhythms, blessings, and prayers, giving the play a religious and tragic tone.



# Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

[ Affiliated to Saurashtra University & GTU ]

( Vaishali nagar 2 & 3, Near Amrapali Railway Crossing, Rajkot. )

The play is short (a one-act play) but extremely powerful. The action is limited, but the atmosphere of tragedy builds gradually through symbols: the bundle of clothes, the vision of the horses, and finally Bartley's dead body. The sea itself is the silent character throughout the play, ever-present in the background.

The structure is tightly woven: beginning with anxiety about Michael, moving through Bartley's decision, and ending with Maurya's acceptance. Synge's economy of words, symbolic imagery, and poetic rhythm make the play timeless.

ENGLISH