

**‘The Unknown Citizen’ by W. H. Auden**

The present poem "The Unknown Citizen" is written by W. H. Auden. He is an Anglo-American poet of the modern age. It is a satiric poem. It describes a common citizen in government controlled state. The citizen is 'unknown', it means, he is not known by many people. The famous players, politicians, scientists, rich are 'known' citizens. Whereas the unknown citizen is a faceless, featureless, nameless nobody. He has no individual identity except a number given by the government. This number JS/07/M/378, and not his name is carved on his Tombstone.

In the beginning of the poem, the poet considers the citizen as a Modern Saint. He followed all the rules of government without committing any mistake. He never went against the rules of government. On his record, there was not any complaint against him. In his life he did all for the sake of his Greater Community.

The citizen spends his whole life in a Motors Company. There he fulfilled all the demands of his employers, and never was dismissed. Whenever he was called to fight for his country, he went for that. According to Union reports, he joined with them in strikes and regularly paid the fees. He was also famous among his friends. He sometimes used to drink.

Daily he bought a newspaper. His responses to advertisement were normal. He had taken out insurance policies. He was once admitted to a hospital. But he was soon cured. His living standard was up to date. He took advantages of the instalment plan. He had all the modern things: a car, a radio, a fridge and a photograph. He never went against the opinions of the government. He married and bore five children. He also never interfered with the education of his children.

The last couplet is highly ironical. The poet says that the citizen had everything to be happy. So it is absurd to ask about his happiness and freedom. There is no record of his sorrow. So he was considered happy and free by the government. It is ironical to think that a person, who never broke any rule, is happy.

**‘Night of the Scorpion’ by Nissim Ezekiel**

Nissim Ezekiel is a post-modern Indian English writer. He writes poetry in direct and conversational tone. He speaks directly about religious philosophy. His present poem "Night of the Scorpion" is written in satirical and conversational tone.

'Night of the Scorpion' is a simple poem. It is about a mother's selfless love for her children. The poem has Indianness from top to bottom. It expresses a typical Indian village life and its superstitions. The speaker of the poem expresses an incident from his childhood. Once a Scorpion stung to his mother's toe.

It was a rainy night. The Scorpion came into the speaker's home. It hid behind a sack of rice. Unfortunately, it stung the mother and went out into the rain. Then the neighbours came to the speaker's home. They made a circle around the mother. Everybody was consoling the mother. They interpreted the incident as a holy one. They also looked for the Scorpion to kill it. They believed, the movement of the Scorpion would spread poison into the Mother's body.

The Neighbours believed, the sting of Scorpion might burn the sins of previous birth. They thought, the sting might decrease the misfortunes of next birth. This shows the superstitions and blind faith of Indian villagers. They also believed, the sting might balance Evil things against good ones. Therefore, the neighbours were calm and peaceful.

But the father of the speaker was restless as the bitten mother. He was a 'sceptic, rationalist'. He tried all the good and bad things to soothe the pain. He used 'powder, mixture, herb and hybrid' and also paraffin. But all became in vain. Even the incantation of the Holy man could not tame the pain. After 20 hours, the mother lost her pain.

The poem ends with an ironic but selfless remark. The mother said, 'Thank God, The Scorpion picked on me / And spared my children'.

### **'The Road Not Taken' by Robert Frost**

The poem 'The Road Not Taken' is written by Robert Frost. He is a famous American poet. He was awarded with the Pulitzer Prize for four times. The present poem was published in "Mountain Interval" (1916). He was a farmer. So he wrote about nature and men in nature. His poems seem simple, but they are highly symbolic and philosophic.

The poem 'The Road Not Taken' can be interpreted (read) at many levels. It is a simple incident of a traveller of choosing a road. But symbolically, choosing a road means taking a decision.

One day the speaker was walking through a wood. It was Autumn season. He came across a fork in the road. Both the ways were leading to two different sides of wood. The speaker was alone, so he could not travel both the ways. He stopped there and looked along the way. He thought for some time. Symbolically, two ways are two different careers / decisions in life. He must choose only one decision. But he cannot guess the final result of a decision taken.

The speaker then looked along the other way. Both of them looked just and fair. But the second way was a little grassy and wanted wear. Symbolically, the first way (decision/ career) was a common decision made by many people. It was easy to follow. The second way/ decision was grassy, means difficult. So it is not followed by many people. He took the second way.

The last stanza of the poem is very remarkable. Critics have many opinions about it. The speaker says that he took the decision before many years. Now the output of that decision has come out. He says, "I took the one less travelled by / And that has made all the difference."

The optimistic reader takes 'difference' as a happy result. The pessimistic reader takes it as a bad result.

In this way, the poet has presented the dilemma of decision making in life. For this he used four stanzas of five lines. He also used simple language to tell the truth in life. The rhyming scheme is ABAAB (ABAAB CDCCD EFEEF GHGGH).

## I, too by Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes is a famous Black American (Afro-American) poet. Slavery was abolished in America in 1865 by Abraham Lincoln. But many White people did not accept it. They treated Black people very badly. This was continue in 20th century. In such condition, Hughes wrote the present poem, "I, Too".

"I, Too" is a short lyric poem. It is written in free verse. It has 18 lines. It has neither rhyming and nor metre. It is about the experiences of the Blacks (people) in America. It also shows a hope for bright future. The speaker of the poem is a Black.

In the opening of the poem, the speaker speaks about his bad treatment (in America). The Blacks were not treated as humans. When the friends of the Whites come, the speaker is sent to kitchen. He is not permitted to eat with other Whites. But the speaker laughs at this. He ets well in the kitchen and grows strong.

In the second part of the poem, the speaker is hopeful. In future the Blacks will be treated as human. The Whites will treat them as their brothers. Then the Blacks will eat with them. They will see that the Blacks are also beautiful. They will be ashamed of their past-treatment. Finally, the speaker says he is also a true American, like the Whites.

Unit II

### The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood / Poetry

In the Victorian age, a group of poets came together. They formed a group named "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood" in 1848. It was headed by **Dante Rossetti**. Other members of the group were Christiana Rossetti, William Morris, A. C. Swinburne etc. Many of them were painters.

**The characteristics of Pre-Raphaelite poetry:**

#### 1) Visual Presentation:

These poets were **painters**. Their model in painting were the medieval Roman painters. Raphael was one of these painters. So they tried to bring the visual quality of painting to poetry.

They described the situations, objects and persons in detail. While reading their poetry, a series of pictures visualises in our mind. Dante Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel" is the best example of it.

### **2) Sound and Sense:**

The Pre-Raphaelite poetry appeals not only to our eyes, but also to our other senses. While reading it, we can listen to various sounds, taste various fruits, feel touch or cold or heat and smell sweet scents. The best example of it is Christina Rossetti's poem "Goblin Market".

### **3) Love poetry:**

Almost all the poets of the group wrote love poems. They were lyrics as well as long poems. A.C. Swinburne's "The Triumph of Time" is a love poem.

### **4) Medieval Outlook:**

The Pre-Raphaelite poets were influenced by the medieval ages and the medieval painters. So their poetry presents the medieval things like courtly love, bravery, myths, beliefs and the medieval lifestyle. Dante Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel", William Morris's "Earthly Paradise" etc. are its examples.

### **5) Kinship with Romantic Literature:**

The Pre-Raphaelite poets were also influenced by the Romantic writers. They used themes which were used by Coleridge, Scott, Shelley and Keats. In other words, their poetry was a continuation of Romantic literature.

### **6) Fleshly School of Poetry / Art for Art's Sake:**

Robert Buchanan condemned the Pre-Raphaelite poetry. He called it 'Fleshly School of poetry'. It is so because these poets have given more and unnecessary importance to body.

In this way, Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood showed its existence in the mid-Victorian era. This movement did not live long.

## **First World War Poets**

First World War came to England in 1914. War brought feelings of nationalism and heroism. At that time, poetry was inspired by the war. It presented idealistic view of war. But soon this view was changed by the real and sad experiences in war. More than 4,20,000 English young soldiers died in a single battle in the World War I. Many people were killed all over the Europe. It shattered the dream of England as a paradise.

Therefore, the poets of the First World War wrote in favour as well as against the war.

### **Poets in Favour of War:**

The early English poetry of this period is full of heroism and nationalism. The poets were soldiers. They wrote in favour of war. They praised war traditionally. They wished to die for their nation. This would make them martyr / immortal. Graves, Nichol and Rupert Brooke wrote poetry in favour of war. They faced horrible experiences in war; still they celebrated war in their poetry.

Brooke wrote many sonnets on war. His sonnet "The Soldier" is a masterpiece in favour of war. He writes, if he dies abroad, he will be buried there. Then the place will be an English place forever. It shows his mood of dedication to mother-land.

### **Poets against the War:**

The late poets of World War first wrote against war. They were S. Sassoon, Rosenberg and W. Owen. They were also soldiers. They faced traumatic (very shocking and bad) experiences in war. They wrote about the life in military camp and slaughter.

Sassoon wrote a poem named "Attack". Here he expressed a common man's feelings about war. Soldiers followed the order to attack. It resulted in the loss of life. The poem ends with the prayer to Jesus to stop the war.

Wilfred Owen died in war in 1918. He wrote a poem named "Strange Meeting". In this poem, two soldiers meet up in an imagined Hell. The poem is made of their dialogues. This is a satire on the people who organize war. The theme of Owen's poetry is "war and the pity of war". He influenced many poets like Auden, Spender etc. "Futility" and "Exposure" are other anti-war poems.

Thus, these poets were away from the experiments of modernism. They gave more importance to subject than the form/ structure of poem. Yet war poets helped prepare the way for change. They prepared the audience for the modernist movement.

## **The Poetry of World War II**

The World War II started in 1939. It stopped with America dropping bombs on two major cities in Japan in 1945. Almost all the nations were involved in it. Therefore, this war was more destructive than the First World War. It was the cruellest event recorded in history. Lacks of people died and others were affected by the war.

The poets of WW -I had no early experience of war destruction. So they wrote in favour of war. They praised war. But all the new poet-soldiers of the Second World War were highly educated and studied the history of WW-I. They had seen the destruction of the war. They saw the holocaust. They also witnessed sufferings of families of the dead soldiers, injured ex-servicemen. The war was a waste of human life and resources. They also knew the hypocrisy of the politicians who organise wars. So their poetry had no nationalism or heroism.

Sidney Keys was a major war-poet of WW-II. He was also a soldier. He wrote against war. Death is the central theme of his poetry. His famous poem is "War Poet".

Alun Levis was another famous war-poet. He was killed in war in 1944. He worked in India and Burma. He wrote about fear of death and boredom of a soldier. He also wrote about the people he met with. Death acts like a living person in his poems. His poems "The Soldier" and "my living Mr Death" are about the fear of death to a soldier.

Keith Douglas worked as a soldier in North Africa. His famous poem is "Time-Eating". He says, a snake can get its skin back, but a soldier cannot get his boyhood back.

Roy Fuller (served in Navy), Jarrel, Dickey etc are other poets.

The poetry of WW II was so famous. Most of the poems were about death, boredom, injuries, loss of lives, partitions, etc. Very few poems were published in favour of war. These poets aimed to be personal and public.

## Unit 4 Literary Terms

### 1. Free Verse:

It is a type of verse/poetry. It is neither poem nor prose. In it metre, rhyme and rhythm are not compulsory. Only the sound of words is poetic and melodious. Eg. "I, Too" by Langston Hughes & "The Night of the Scorpion" by Nissim Ezekiel.

### 2. Imagery:

Imagery refers to images or pictures. In literature persons, scenes and objects are described in detail. This description creates series of pictures in the mind of the reader. In other words, imagery is the pictures made out of words. Eg. "Father Returning Home" has many pictures made out of words.

### 3. Caesura:

In poetry, caesura is a stopping place. It is a small pause in a line of poetry. It comes near the middle of a line. Eg.

I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.

### 4. Blank Verse:

Blank verse is a type of verse. In it, lines of **iambic pentametre** are used. But they are **unrhymed**. Hence, it is called 'blank'. It is closest to the natural rhythm in English language. Milton, Shakespeare, Wordsworth etc used it.

### 5. Allusion:

Allusion is a figure of speech. It is an indirect reference to a person, thing, book or event. Allusions are used to make our subject easy.

"Where the Mind is without Fear" has allusions to outdated traditions and outcast system.

### 6. Surrealism:

## Unit III

### Heroic Couplet

Heroic couplet is made of two lines. These lines are of iambic pentameter. They rhyme with each other. So its rhyming is - a a, b b, c c and so on. It is the shortest form of stanza. This couplet is called heroic because of its regular use in heroic poetry. This metre was used in heroic poetry. Therefore, it is also called heroic metre. In English poetry, G. Chaucer introduced (first used) Heroic couplets. He is the first user of it in English. He used it for "The Canterbury Tales" and other poems.

Heroic couplet was used extensively in the Neo-Classical age. Alexander Pope and John Dryden brought perfection to it. They placed the caesura at the end of the first line. They also

placed full stop at the end of second line. An example of heroic couplet from “Mac-Flecknoe” by Dryden is:

The rest / to some/ faint mea/ning make/ pretence,  
But Shad/well ne'er /devi/ates in/to sense.

### **Terza Rima**

Tercet is a stanza of three lines. Terza Rima is also a tercet (stanza of three lines). But in terza rima, the rhyming is a series of inter-lockings. The example of rhyming is: a b a, b c b, c d c, d e d, etc.

Terza rima is first time used by Latin poet Dante. He used it for "The Divine Comedy". The best example of terza rima in English is "Ode to the West Wind" by P. B. Shelley. Terza Rima is used by Wyatt, Milton, Eliot, Browning, etc.

### **Rhyme Royal or Chaucerian stanza**

Rhyme Royal is a stanza form. It has seven lines. Iambic pentameter is used in it. The rhyming for this stanza is – a-b-a-b-b-c-c. It was first time used by Geoffrey Chaucer. He used it for "Troilus and Criseyde" and other poems. So it is also called **Chaucerian stanza**.

Later on, King James - I of Scotland used this stanza form. He used it for "The King's Book". He was from the royal family of king of Scotland. So the stanza form is called **Rhyme Royal**. Rhyme Royal is also used by Shakespeare and other poets.

### **Spenserian Stanza**

Edmund Spenser is one of the greatest poets in England. He lived in the age of Queen Elizabeth. He wrote the greatest Epic-Romance "The Faerie Queene" (Fairy Queen). For this poem, he invented nine line stanza. This stanza is named after the poet - Spenserian stanza. First eight lines in it are of iambic pentameter. And the last line is of iambic hexametre. The rhyming of the stanza is – a-b-a-b-b-c-b-c-c.

This is the longest stanza form in English poetry. This form is also used by John Keats, P. B. Shelley, Lord Alfred Tennyson etc

### **Ottava Rima**

**Ottava rima** is a rhyming stanza form. It has Italian origin. Latin poet Boccaccio used it first. Generally, it is used for long poems. Now it is used for writing of mock-heroic poems.

The ottava rima stanza has eight lines. They are usually of iambic pentameters. It has rhyming – A-B-A-B-A-B-C-C.

In English, Lord Byron used Ottava Rima in his “Don Juan”. It is the best example of ottava rima in English. P. B. Shelley, W. B. Yeats etc used it in English poetry.