

CHAPTER-I

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S POETICAL
AND PROSE WORKS

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1.1 Matthew Arnold's Poetical Works :

Matthew Arnold was a prolific and versatile writer who produced a large number of works both in verse and prose. He produced poetry of various types such as narrative, dramatic, lyric, elegiac and reflective. Joseph Carroll divides Arnold's career into four distinct phases. He writes:

There are four distinct phases in Arnold's career: The period of discontent represented by early poetry; the modernist Hellenism culminating in Culture and Anarchy; the eight year period of Biblical studies; and a final decade in which Arnold returned to his modernism but attempts to integrate the doctrines of critical reason with the reverential imagination of Romantic Poetry.¹

The following is a chronological survey of his poems.

i) Prize poems :

Arnold's poetic talent came to light first when he won the poetry prize at Rugby for his poem 'Alaric at Rome'.

Then, in 1843, Arnold won 'Newdigate prize' for his poem 'Cromwell'. 'Cromwell' was written in the old-fashioned heroic rhyme in accordance with the rules of the competition. That's why William Madden comments :

An early poem (Cromwell) is of interest mainly for the way in which it employs the theme of childhood - youth/manhood pattern of personal development.²

ii) **The strayed Reveller and other poems :**

The first volume of Arnold's poems was published in 1849 under the title 'The Strayed Reveller and other Poems', bearing the letter 'A' for the poet. It was a thin volume consisting of twenty-seven poems. It included the following poems namely, "The Strayed Reveller", 'To a Republican Friend', 'Sonnet to the Hungarian Nation', 'To a Friend', 'Religious Isolation', 'A Question : to Fausta', 'The Sick King of Bokhara', 'To a Gipsy Child by the Sea-Shore', 'The World and the Quietist', 'Mycerinus', 'Resignation', 'Shakespeare' and 'The Forsaken Merman'. John Drinkwater writes :

So little attention was paid to books that contained some of the love-liest poetry of a century, that their author successively withdraw each of them from a publication when a few copies had gone out, and they have become bibliographical treasures.³

iii) **Empedocles on Etna :**

In 1852, Arnold published another volume of his poems with the title 'Empedocles on Etna'. This volume contained two sequences of love poems, viz. 'Margurite poems in Switzerland, and The Faded Leaves', besides 'Empedocles on Etna', 'Tristram and Iseult', 'Lines Written in Kensington Gardens', 'Memorial Verses' and 'A Summer Night'.

Like the first volume, this volume didn't attract much attention of the public and not even fifty copies of the volume could be sold and like 'The strayed Reveller and other poems' it was withdrawn from the publication.

iv) Poems (1853) :

In 1853, Arnold published the third volume of his poems, which contained several of the poems published in earlier volumes and a few new poems such as "Sohrab and Rustum", 'Church of Brou', and 'The Scholar Gipsy'. This volume also contained a 'preface' in which he explained the reasons of his withdrawing of the volume 'Empedocles on Etna', and also expounded his views on the theory and practice of poetry. This volume brought him much fame and helped to establish his reputation as a poet of considerable merit and power. Thats why Carl Dawson Comments :

Indeed, after publication of the 1853 volume of poems, critics tended increasingly to scrutinize Arnold according to his own critical precepts, and if the judgments were not always commendatory, they were often no less so than Arnold's own severe critiques of his work.⁴

v) Merope (1858) :

Arnold had the ambition to write a drama and he tried to fulfil it by writing 'Merope'. It was published in 1858. It centres round Merope the daughter of Cypselus, wife

of Cresphontes, and mother of Aepytus. It deals with the revenge of Aepytus on Pholyphontes for his act of Killing the former's father Cresphontes. It was written in a Greek form and could ~~not~~^{be} proved a successful play. It was never staged in London. It was a failure because it lacked unity of action, dramatic situations and the tragic force which we find in Greek tragedies. Therefore, Kenneth and Miriam Allott comment :

In Merope we discover him attempting to write against the grain of the age and against the inclinations of a part of himself that he was seeking to suppress, and these works, widely as they differ in merit, and in consequence all shaded by an inevitable artificiality.⁵

vi) **New Poems (1867) :**

Nine-years after the publication of (Merope : 1858), Arnold published his last volume of poems in 1867; under the title 'New-poems'. It included the poems 'Empedocles on Etna' (now republished at the request of Browning), 'Thyrsis', 'Rugby Chapel', 'Heine's Grave', 'Progress of Poesy', 'A Southern Night', 'Dover Beach', 'Immortality', 'Obermann Once More', ' Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse', 'Haworth Churchyard', 'Stanzas from Carnac', and ad dozen sonnets. Most of these poems were reintroduced. Michael Thorpe explains :

Only in a strictly limited sense, then, could the 1867 poems be described as 'new' : newly dwindling store - for it is hard to believe that Arnold's better judgment would allowed him to publish all the twelve sonnets included, if he had not needed them to fill out the volume.⁶

The poem published in this volume are of unequal merit. 'The second edition of these poems was published in 1868.

vii) Poems (1869) :

Arnold arranged his verse in the categories, such as narrative and elegiac and Dramatic and Lyric for a two volume edition of poems in 1869. For the two volume new and complete edition of 1877, he grouped the poems as 'early poems', 'narrative poems and sonnets and lyric', 'dramatic and elegiac poems'. Writing to his mother about his poems, Arnold in his letter to his mother says :

My poems represent on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century, and thus they will probably have their day a people become conscious to themselves of what that movement of mind is, and interested in the literary productions which reflect it. It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigor and abundance than Browning : Yet because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two--- I am likely enough to have my turn, as they had their.⁷

viii) The Last Poems :

After 1867, the year of the publication of 'New poems' when Arnold was only 45, the muse deserted him, and

the stream of poetic genius dried up. He could write little except a few occasional pieces like 'New Rome' (1873) 'Westminster Abbey' (1882), 'Geist's Grave' and 'Kaiser Dead' (1887) and these too were pieces of inferior verse. The first collected edition of his poems was brought out in 1869. During the last twenty years of his life, Arnold chiefly wrote prose embodying his literary, social and religious criticism.

It may be said that the earlier half portion of his literary career is devoted exclusively to poetry and later half to prose. Therefore, his prose writing is equally important.

1.2 Matthew Arnold's Prose Works :

Arnold's poetical career came practically to an end in 1867 and he devoted ^{the} remaining twenty years of life to criticism. In the early course of his practice in criticism, he discussed ethics, politics, literature and arts, education, science, philosophy and even immortality of soul. Arnold wrote and published a large number of prose works and was acknowledged as a great critic as well as great poet. That's why John Bryson comments : "Matthew Arnold was a critic almost as soon as he was a poet and the critic outlived the poet".⁸

Arnold's works of prose-criticism are briefly discussed below under different categories they belong to.

a) **Literary Criticism :**

Under this category, we have Arnold's "preface to the 1853 volume of his poems, his essays in criticism in two series (1865 and 1869), and the group of lectures he delivered as the professor of poetry at Oxford, which were published in the form of three books - 'On Translating Homer (1886), 'On Translating Hommer : Last worlds' (1861), and 'On the study of Celtic Literature' (1867). Therefore, A Dwight Culler aptly remarks "The transition from poetry to prose was made by Arnold in the decade 1853 - 1863".⁹

i) **Preface to Poems (1853) :**

The 'preface to the 1853 volume of Arnold's poems is the first important prose work. It is a sort of his critical manifesto in which he puts forward his views on the subject matter, nature, function, and style of poetry. He had been dissatisfied with the two earlier volumes of poems and he had withdrawn them from circulation. The title poem of the second volume 'Empedocles on Etna' had been dropped on the grounds of a lack of action in it. He explained the reasons of his dislike and rejection of the poem in the preface.

Joseph Carroll explains the aspect :

The preface to his 1853 collection of poems represents his prose attempt to cope with the problems articulated by the poems.¹⁰

ii) Preface to Merope :

Arnold's tragedy 'Merope' was published in 1858. It contained a scholarly preface in which he explained his idea of good play, the nature of 'Merope' and the circumstances that led him to write it. Although it is not as important and popular as the preface to the 1853 volume, it is interesting to note how Arnold expounds his dramatic theory and defends his practice of it. He had intended to produce a play in imitation of the Greek plays both in matters of subject and form. However, he was not successful in fulfilling his aim, because even though he achieved the ideal of Greek austerity, he could not embody in it the unity of action and the element of tragedy found in the Greek plays.

iii) On Translation^{ng} Homer :

Arnold was a lover of the Greek classical writers like Homer and Sophocles and based his, critical ideals of poetry on a study of their works. On being appointed the professor of poetry at oxford, he delivered three lectures on the problems related to the translation of Hommer and pointed out weakness in the translators of his works, like Chapman,

Pope, Cowper and Newman. These lectures were widely acclaimed as pieces of discerning criticism. They were published in a book form, with the title 'On Translating Homer' in 1861, and 'On Translating Homer : Last words 1862. In his lectures he tried to appease Newman but chiefly expounded his concept of grand style. Arnold wrote "The grand style arises in poetry when the noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity and severity, a serious subject".¹¹

iv) **On the Study of Celtic Literature :**

Another series of lectures delivered by Arnold at Oxford in 1865-66, was published in a book form in 1867, under the title 'On the Study of Celtic Literature'. In it he made use of contemporary racial theories to plead for a proper assimilation of the German, the Norman and the Celtic Social and Cultural influences by British. He tried to revive the English peoples interest in the study of Celtic literature, which according to him was characterized by melancholy, vagueness and natural magic. He found these qualities in Shakespeare and Keats. Arnold didn't possess any direct knowledge of or contact with Celtic literature and the weakness of his statement lies in the fact that he didn't know, the Welsh, Irish or Celtic dialects. On the whole, the book does not testify Arnold's greatness as a critic.

v) **Essays in Criticism (First Series) :**

Besides delivering lectures at the Oxford university, Arnold also wrote critical article for various journals and critical introductions to Ward's selections from English poets. A selection of these miscellaneous articles was published in the book form as 'Essays in criticism' in two series.

It contained 'The function of criticism at the present time', the literary influence of Academies and the rest of the essays are concerned with non-English writers Haine, Guerin, Joubert, Spinoza and Marcus Aurelius.

vi) **Essays in Criticism (Second Series) :**

Some times before his death, Arnold himself prepared a collection of his essays for inclusion in the second series of 'Essays in criticism', but this collection could be published only after his death in 1889. This series contains nine essays. This collection of essays included 'The Study of Poetry', six essays on English poets, an essay on the Russian novelist Tolstoy and the last essay on the Swiss professor of moral philosophy, Henry Frederic Amiel. Because of his wide range of writing G.K.Chesterton comments : "He had a consciousness of Europe much fuller and firmer than that of any of the great men of his great epoch".¹²

b) Educational Writing :

Apart from literary criticism, Arnold's prose work include his writing on educational matters and his social and religious criticism. During his career as a inspector of school, he was asked to submit a report on the state of popular education in England. To perform his task, he visited various schools and universities in France, Germany and other countries. Arnold was sent twice i.e. in 1859 and 1865 on continental tours to report back about the educational systems in various countries. The reports of these tours were published under the title's "popular education in France, Holland and Switzerland (1861)" and "schools and universities and continent (1868)". Then there was a work of humorous fancy entitled "Friendships Garland" in which Arnold satirized the public school system in England. He also published his essay "French Eton (1864)". These works reveal Arnold's keen interest in the reforms of the educational system in England.

c) Social and Political Criticism :

Arnold regarded poetry to be a criticism of life and thought that the function of criticism is to promote culture. He himself set out to offer much social criticism in his poetry. Arnold was a severe critic of the contemporary

social and political situation as well as eminent critic of literature. His social and political criticism is contained in a pamphlet "England and the Italian Question (1859)". His book 'Culture and Anarchy (1869)' is an excellent essay in social and political criticism.

Arnold's social and political criticism is contained in some other works, especially in 'Mixed Essay' (1879), 'Irish Essays' (1882), 'Discourses in America' and 'civilization in the united states' (1888).

d) Religious and Theological Criticism :

During the 1870's Arnold diverted his attention to religious and theological questions and employed his energies in writing about them. The chief works are 'St. Paul and protestantism' (1870), 'Literature and Dogma' (1873), 'God and the Bible' (1875), and 'Last Essays on Church and Religion' (1877). These works contain Arnold's agnostic views.

In this way, Arnold was a prolific writer of prose who produced a large number of works on educational, literary, social political and religious subjects, especially of critical nature. Ward A.W. and Waller A.R. conclude Arnold's prose writing : "Matthew Arnold's prose writing, mainly, were the works of his middle and later years. They

deal with, practically the entire fabric of English civilization and culture in his day; and they are all directed by one clear and consistent critical purpose. That purpose was to cure the great vice of our intellect, manifesting itself in our incredible vagaries in literature, in art, in religion, in morals; namely that is fantastic and wants sanity".¹³

In this way Arnold played several roles, as it were upon various stages - a poet, a critic of letters, an essayist dealing with politics, society and religion but in all his roles high seriousness is consistent. Arnold's works serve to show what were his ^{prc}occupations, what were the themes upon which his mind was engaged. All his works had a great impact on contemporary thought as well as on future thinking in various fields. Wendell Stacy Johnson judges Arnold's greatness. He writes - "The position of Matthew Arnold as the most important critic of the second half of the 19th Century seems secure. His eminence is due ~~to~~ not only to his literary criticism but also to his standing as a poet and general critic of English society and civilization".¹⁴

Arnold's poetry and prose must be viewed in the light of the Victorian age because various issues of the age are reflected in his works.

2. THE VICTORIAN AGE

The period of the Romantic Revival in the history of English literature was followed by an equally great and productive period which is known as the Victorian age. The age began in 1832, with the year of Walter Scott's death and the passage of the first Reform Bill. It was an age of material prosperity. Political consciousness, democratic reforms, industrial and mechanical progress, scientific advancement, social unrest, educational expansion and religious uncertainty. It may be divided into three groups :

- i) The period before 1850
- ii) The period between 1850 and 1875
- iii) The period after 1875, up to the end of the nineteenth century.

Matthew Arnold's poetic career spreads roughly over the second or mid-Victorian period because his first volume was published in 1849 and the last in 1867. Matthew Arnold was a true Victorian poet. Tillotson remarks "Arnold's sense of nineteenth century was historically sound because he had lived in it and was still engaged in doing so".¹⁵

2.1 Historical Background :

The Victorian age was a period of great changes in all fields of life, - religious, social, scientific and literary. Barry supple rightly describes the Victorian scene. He writes :

The Victorian literature cannot be dissociated from the world in which it existed, not merely because of economic transformation of that world, but because the Industrial Revolution ultimately involved far-reaching changes in the institutions and ideas that governed it. We can see adaptation of Victorian political and social institutions to the demands of pressures of an industrializing society¹⁶

The sixty - four years of Queen Victoria constituted a period of peace and progress except the few colonial wars and the French Revolution.

2.2 Social Scene :

The Victorian age can be called an age of social changes as well as social reforms. There was a rapid increase in population and consequently increase in social problems. The Industrial Revolution was the major factor responsible for bringing up about great changes in the existing social set-up. People migrated to industrial towns to work in the factories and the urban area became over crowded. Material progress was there but the wealth was distributed unequally.

Labours and workers were living in a very poor condition. They were required to live in slum areas without any facilities of sanitation, education etc. Henry Charles Duffin describes the miserable condition of people living in Victorian England. He writes :

In the forties and fifties of the nineteenth century, England was not to an observer of wide sensibility, the pleasant place to live in that it afterwards became. The disgrace of ownership of slaves abroad was not yet forgotten, and at home, though the iniquitous penal code had been eased, it was still harsh and inhuman conditions of labour both child and adult had been but slightly ameliorated by the degree of poverty was wide spread.... Elementary education was scanty and was often administered in hideous and inadequate buildings. The result was the existence of a teeming populace of degraded habits and instincts, who in London and other larger town live by the grace of slum landlords, often in cellars and always without sanitation¹⁷.

Urbanization was the most spectacular feature of the nineteenth century social change. Carol Dyhouse explains the condition of Englishmen. He comments :

It was an era in which despair and optimism were often closely allied. Crisis, engendered by the loss of religious faith, found consolation in a kind of surrogate faith, a fervent belief in social duty¹⁸.

2.3 The Impact of Industrial Revolution : Material

Development :

The Industrial Revolution of the age transformed the agrarian economy of England to an Industrial economy.

Mills and factories were established at important centres. The Industrial Revolution created social and economic distress among masses. It also created semi-starved and ill-clad class of labours and factory workers who were thoroughly dissatisfied with their miserable lot. A new class of aristocracy and mill owners sprang up. Vernon Hall Jr. explains.

Matthew Arnold looked around at mid - nineteenth century England and didn't like what he saw. Industrial progress, there was but moral grandeur was lacking from cultural point of view. Most of the aristocrations were 'barbarians', 'the middle-class Phillistines' and people brutalized populace¹⁹

As workers were dissatisfied, a wave of social unrest swept over England and reaction of it was recorded by the writers like Dickens, Ruskin Carlyle and Arnold. Barry Supple explains :

The drama of industrialization consisted no so much in increase of economy as a whole, innovations in commodities, techniques and occupation; sweeping shifts in the national balance of economic activity; alteration in the very fabric of peoples lives. Never before had the world known such a massive application of new techniques and non-human power, such a sustained increase in the level of industrial output; such a growth in the sheer size of manufacturing operations. The changes that took place within a single life-time covered all areas economic activity. The production of textiles, coal, houses, ships and a host of other goods was transformed and increased. Canals, railways and steamboats appeared proliferated²⁰.

But Arnold's reaction to the Victorian age was very different. He writes :

Allow them! we admire with awe;
 the exulting, thunder of your race,
 you give the universe your law,
 you triumph over time and space!
 your pride of life, your tireless powers;
 we laud them, but they are not ours.

2.4 Political Background :

The growing importance of masses and large number of factory hands gave a spurt to 'Reform Bills' which heralded the democratic consciousness among the masses. Dowden comments : "By the late - nineteenth century, it was clear that the feudal and agrarian order of the past had been replaced by a democratic and industrial society"²¹. Democracy became the order of the day. The English people by and large could vindicate their personal liberty.

The British parliamentary system was what it had been when Edward I established it in 1275. The change brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the growth of factory districts didn't affect the electoral system soon, most of the Bills were passed and turned into acts; especially Reform Bill (1832), Child Labour Act (1833), Municipal Corporation Act, Health Reform Act, and the Second Reform Act, was passed in 1832. Rubinstein Annette T. comments :

The effect of the 'Reform Bill' of 1832 was of course to place political power in the hands of wealthy industrialists and their middle class followers and the working men, whose agitation had done so much to secure its passage found themselves in many ways worse off than before²².

These reforms laid down the structural foundations for a new kind of state in Britian.

2.4 Science and Religion :

In the Victorian age, the science was progressing day by day and people began to believe that with the help of science they were sure to advance towards an ideal state of society. The impact of advancement of science was far reaching, as it had not only added to material prosperity but brought a sea-change in the habits of thought and man's attitude to Christian faith. W.J.Long comments : "The Victorian age is especially remarkable because of its rapid progress in all arts and sciences and in mechanical and inventions"²³

In the Victorian age, there is development in all branches of sciences, such as Chemistry, Physics, Geology Botany, Zoology, Anthropology and Astronomy. Sir Charles Lyell determined important ages in the formation of earth's crust. Charles Darwin's 'The Origin of Sp^ecies' appeared in 1859. The publication of this disillusioned many who had

hither to possessed a faith which had taught him how to adjust his life with the 'Divine Order'. But in later-nineteenth century, this faith was shattered by the startling discoveries made by science. It was shown that Bible was not infalciable that the world was not created in four thousand B.C., and that man was not created in the Divine image but gradually evolved from the ape like ancestor. The result was that people were highly bewildered and doubt wretched their lives. J.W.Burrow explains :

These defections from the established church were the symptoms of crisis, during the middle years of the century, called in question both its doctrines and its institutional identity. Earnest Anglicans were obliged to take a stand, h often proved unfortunately precarious, on two central issues. First could the church of England be both an established church, subject to parliament, and a spiritual body, a branch of universal catholic church founded by Christ defining its own doctrines and enforcing them on its members? Second, could or should Anglican doctrine broadened to accommodate itself to the findings of modern Biblical scholarship and modern science. To the Tractarian leaders of Oxford Movement Edward Pushey, Hurrell, Frude, John Keble and Newman - the first was a Vehemently proclaimed necessity the second abhorrence. To their liberal appoints, these called churchmen of latter became the task to which their generation was particularly called, so that the church of England might became a truly national church encompassing all shades of Christian opinion²⁴

Thats why so amazing were the achievements of science that people began to think that science will not only supply their physical needs but will also answer those fundamental questions to which religion had given

unconvincing replies. In this way, with the rapid advancement of science, there was a slackening of the hold of religion and the church on the minds of the Victorian people. Arnold regrets this loss of faith in most of his poems. Lionell Trilling describes the situation during the lives of Thomas Arnold. He writes :

He saw, and was right in seeing, that the Church of England had lost influence with the large mass of people, that it had become aristocratic and exclusive and remote, quite unable to conceive and meet the new social conditions that had followed upon the Industrial Revolution. He projected a Church which should be truly national in the sense of including Protestant Christians of all sects, and which should take upon itself an ultimate social responsibility, seeing to the physical and intellectual as well as the spiritual and moral well-being of the people... In a day when religious matters were sure to be of immediate moment of all thinking people, the issues of politics and society were debated, and often brilliantly, in the context of religion. The terms of the debate, which are of course old in England, have left their mark on English social and political thought up to the present day, and evidence of them is every where to be found the writing of Thomas Arnold's son²⁵.

Thus, in the course of time, in the Victorian age religious values were declining due to scientific spirit. But people of the age didn't like to be dominated by one extreme view point. They sought a happy compromise.

2.5 Victorian Compromise :

~~Three~~ ^{There} were many contradictory and opposite forces working in England during the Victorian age. The result was

that an atmosphere of doubt and scepticism prevailed and people didn't know which way to turn to get faith, peace and commitment in life. They were not willing to be dominated by one extreme-view point, they sought a happy compromise. It was perceptible in three branches of life-political religious and in the matters connected with love' and sex.

In the political sphere, there was a compromise between democracy and aristocracy. While accepting the claims of rising masses of political equality, they defended the rights of aristocracy. While reposing their faith in progress in the political sphere, they were not prepared for revolutionary changes which might disturb the normal and settled order of life. They sought a compromise between aristocracy and democracy.

In the field of science and religion a satisfying compromise was affected. The Victorian age is at once an age of triumph of science and religion. The people of the age neither believed in the scientific inquiry nor in religion. They were bewildered and sought a midway. The impact of scientists on the contemporary thought was tremendous and yet religion had its sway and could not be completely crushed. The Bible so long regarded sacro-^{same}~~secto~~, came in for criticism. What to many was an article of faith became, to some medley of fact and fiction. The advances made by

sciences were accepted, but the claims of the old-religion were not ignored. The Victorians took up a compromising position between faith of religion and doubt created by science.

In the field of sex, the Victorians had their compromise. The Victorians permitted indulgence in sex but restricted its sphere to conjugal felicity and happy married life. They disfavoured physical passion and illegal gratification of sex impulse. They could not contemplate the possibility of any relation between man and woman other than conjugal. Jerome Hamilton Buckley remarks :

In its many sided concern with manner and morals, the Victorian era was not unlike the Elizabethan age when conduct books, pamphlets, plays, sermons, poems explored the problems of degree in an expanding economy²⁶.

2.6 Trends in Victorian Poetry :

Unlike much of the poetry of the Romantic Revival, the poetry of the Victorian age has a representative character, and amply reflects the spirit of the time - since no poet appeared for some years after the death of Byron in 1824, the poetic scene in the later part of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and early part of the second quarter (covering roughly 1825-1830) was dominated by some minor poets like Taylor, Glare, Eliot, Hood, Hartley, Coleridge, Knowels and Beddos. Some of the poems of this

period fore shadow the coming trends and events. It was however in the poetry of Tennyson and Arnold that the voice of the age found complete expression. That's why George Watson aptly remarks "Arnold's defiance of the Victorian tradition of poetry began in reaction against himself".²⁷

Unlike poetry of the Romantic age, Victorian poetry reflects the mood and atmosphere of the age, which are usually gloomy. Various trends of the Victorian age are reflected in Matthew Arnold's poetry and his poetry is a criticism of life in the Victorian age. Like the poetry of Tennyson it expresses the distrust of materialism and mechanical progress.

Victorian poetry is characterized by deep moral note. Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle and Ruskin were primarily interested in their ^emessage to their country men. The Victorians laid emphasis on conventional morality and social ideals of ^{domesticity} ~~modestieity~~ and respectability. Moral duty and social responsibility were regarded compulsory in Victorian life. There is an element moral earnestness and didacticism in Victorian poetry.

Another characteristic of the Victorian poetry i.e. the treatment of ideas; is also evident in Arnold's poetry which voices his criticism of contemporary life and

beliefs. For example the Greek idea about tragedy and perfection of form, Carlyle's idea of the hero have been taken up by Arnold and illustrated in his poems such as 'Sohram and Rustum'.

A note of Romanticism runs through Victorian poetry. Though Arnold was staunch supporter of classicism and even attempted to write some of his poems in accordance with the classical models, there runs an unmistakable strain of Romanticism and some of his poems are essentially Romantic in spirit. Romantic element is evident in his early poems. It is also obvious in 'The scholar Gipsy', 'Marguerite sequence'; 'Faded leaves' etc. That's why Bernard Richards comments :

The Victorian poets took their work seriously, and they were sufficiently Romantic at heart to work sufficiently Romantic at heart to value the integrity and privacy of poetic experience.²⁸

In this way, Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837 and she ruled England till her death in 1901. The beginning of her reign coincided with far reaching economic, social, scientific and literary change which not only transformed English social life but also had a far reaching impact on literature.

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