

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY : ARNOLD AS A POET

Matthew Arnold is a versatile genius. He is a learned personality of England in the Victorian Age. He is a poet, essayist, prose-writer and critic. A Summer Night in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann' indicates more or less completely the entire range and scope of Arnold's genius as a poet. Homer, Epictetus and Sophocles influences Arnold more than English poets. In theory of poetry, his confirmed classicism and supremacy of antique literature led him to believe that really great poetry is only impersonal poetry. There is a good deal of Arnold in Empedocles and speculates on the fate of the soul, after death. He misses the Scandinavian spirit as he has no real understanding of barbaric delight.

The Scholar Gipsy and Thyrsis are well-known for their pastoral and elegiac mood. These poems owe their success not to the ancient examples of Theocritus, Bion or Moschus but to Arnold's genuine love of Oxford countryside. The note of Wordsworth and Gray's Elegy predominates in Thyrsis. Arnold writes:

O easy access to the heaven's grace,
When Dorian Shepherd's song to Prosperin

The essence of classicism is found in Arnold's poetry. His elegiac mood is enshrined in the Grande Chartreuse Heine's Grave and Memorial verses. The subject of 'The Scholar Gipsy and Thyrsis' is the condition of modern life. In 'A Summer Night', he points out;

Grasping the rudder hard,
Still bent to make some port he knows not where.

He again says;

Physician of the iron age,
Goes he has done his pilgrimage.

Arnold refrains from showing the deformities of a claustrated virtue. He is inspired by a sense of duty. His agnosticism is the outcome of his intellectual sincerity.

In the preface to the poems of 1853, Arnold has given his theory of poetry and enunciated his poetic ideal in unmistakable terms. He thinks that the role of a poet is not only to add to the knowledge of man but also to add to the sustaining force of life. To Arnold as to ~~Wordsworth~~ Wordsworth "poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all

knowledge. Poetry should have for its treatment noble and excellent actions to be rendered in a noble and dignified language. It is not in language. It is the choice of action in dignified style. The noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. The noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. A great poet, he receives his distinctive character of superiority from the application to his subject of the ideas on man, nature and human life.

Arnold observes poetry as a bottom of criticism of life. The greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life. He penetrates into life, interprets it and colours it by his imagination.

The poetry of Arnold presents the growing craze of the age for the material self and power for riches and wealth. The growing conflict between science and poetry is disclosed in the Scholar Gipsy.

"Thou waitest for the spark from heaven and we
Light half-believer of our casual needs?"

The Scholar Gipsy is advised to run away from the hectic life of worldly minded people. The Scholar Gipsy tells Trilling is a passionate indictment of new dictatorship of newer resting intellect over the soul of modern man. It is tragedy of man switched by modernity. Being tired of the spirit of ugliness and materialism Scholar Gipsy seeks to retire to a monastery where he finds peace. He is attracted by the peace of monastery.

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound
Ye solemn seats of holy pain

The Scholar Gipsy rejects science
Most men in a brazen prison live
Their lives to some unmeaning task work give
Dreaming of naught beyond their prison wall.

In the Scholar Gipsy, Arnold opposes Democracy, he writes:

'Great qualities are trodden down,
And littleness united
Is becoming invincible.'

Arnold finds the same gross materialism in the domain of trade and industry. Wealth is obtained at the cost of health and happiness. So Gipsy is fed up with this strange disease of modern life. He remembers past,

O born in days when mists were fresh and clear
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames.

Thus, Arnold is a great poet who manifests sublime thought and sublime expression in the field of poetry. He holds a unique place among the representative writers of Victorian Age.