

**Subject: ENGLISH**

**Class: B.A. Part 1 Hons., Paper- 1**

**Topic: VICTORIAN POETRY**

**By:- Dr. Prabhat Ranjan Karn**

**Assoc. Prof., Dept. of English**

**Dr. L.K.V.D. College, Tajpur**

## VICTORIAN POETRY

Poetry written during the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901 is defined as Victorian poetry. The defining characteristics of the poetry of the age are its focus on sensory elements, its recurring themes of conflict between religion and science, and its interest in medieval fables and legends. The literature of the Victorian age could not completely break free from the spirit of Romanticism. It has been said that the Victorian literature was only continuation of Romantic ideals in theme, style and start as well. In many cases the themes of this poetry are identical with those treated by the poets of the Romantic age yet the climate of the age being quite different from that of the Romantics.

Lord Tennyson (1809-92) is held to be the representative poet of the Victorian age. He depicts the thought, feeling, and aspirations of the age more faithfully than any of his

contemporaries .His early poetry shows the influence of Keats,but he added to Keats's sensuousness something of accuracy of observation and preoccupations. His poetry is full of romanticism but themes mirror contemporary problems and concerns. In his "Poems Chiefly Lyrical"(1830) and the poems of 1842 he appears to be a Victorian Romantic poet. His "Princess" 1847 deals with the problems of the women of the day. This poem consists of fine songs and lyrics . He became the poet laureate. His "idylls of the king Arthur" are full of national sentiments which glorify the mythical king Arthur.He was extremely aggrieved with the premature death of his friend ,Arthur Hallam. His "In Memoriam" 1850 is a long elegy containing about a 150 lyrics dealing with poet's sorrow at the death of his close friend Hallam which changed the tone and spirit of poetry. The elegy also throws light on the problems of life and death, his religious anxieties and awareness of scientific and Darwinian ideas. "In Memoriam" proved to be the 'magnum opus' of the entire Victorian era . "Maud" , a monodrama appeared in 1855 is a series of musical lyrics of love affair .

Though Tennyson has been accused of being the mouthpiece of the Victorian compromise he has been praised as the poet of fine lyric and perfect phrasing.

Robert Browning (1812-89) produced his first poem "Pauline" under the influence of Shelley. It could not attract the reader, then he wrote a series of poems in which he evolved a new form of poetry ' dramatic monologue' which proved to be highly successful , those are "Dramatic Lyric" (1842) "Men and Women" (1855) "Dramatis Personae" (1864) .His "Pippa Passes" and "The Ring and the Road" are also praiseworthy poems .Browning's poetry is blamed of obscurity yet

he is praised by T.S.Eliot and Ezra Pound as the most modern of the Victorian poets.

Matthew Arnold (1822-88) was great scholar of classical and modern European literatures, French and German . By training he was a classicist but he was a romantic at heart so he tried to bring about a balance between two. From this viewpoint first he wrote “Sohrab and Rustam” and some other poems in classical manner which could not attract the readers.He,thereupon, tried to exhibit his romantic genius and produced some memorable poems as “the Scholar Gipsy”, “Dover Beach” , “Thyrsys”etc.

Arnold’s poetry is regarded as philosophy and criticism of life .We find a feeling of hesitation, regret ,doubt and melancholy in it .His poetry expresses the religious unrest of the time, “the sick , hurry and divided aims of life”. There is a quest of truth about the questions of life and death. His melancholy is best expressed in the following lines of “Dover Beach” :

“And we are here on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight  
Where ignorant armies clash by night”.

Later Victorian poets Thomas Hardy and George Meredith are described as the last of the Victorians and first of the moderns. Hardy seems to continue the tradition of Browning .He is famous for his epic drama about the Napoleonic wars , “the Dynasts” .Meredith wrote delightful and light lyrics of which the most remarkable is “Love in a Valley” .In his later poems he appears as an optimistic philosopher.

The chief characteristic of the Victorian poetry is intense desire to deal with the problems of life, death, religion, and philosophy through melodious songs and lyrics in which they succeed to the full extent .

---