



মণিগোবিন্দোৎ আওঁ নক্সাংমল (আওঁ)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (S)

Government of Manipur

CLASS X

ADDITIONAL ENGLISH

CHAPTER 5 - A PSALM OF LIFE

H.W. LONGFELLOW

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807 – 1882) was a famous American poet and educator. He taught at Bowdoin College and Harvard University. After retiring from work, he devoted himself completely to writing. His well – known poems are “Evangeline”, “The Wreck of the Hesperus”, “A Psalm of life”, etc. “Hyperion “ a prose romance is among his well – known prose works.

A Psalm is a religious or sacred song or hymn. But here the meaning of “A Psalm of Life” is a song of life, where the poet glorifies life and its possibilities. It is an invocation to mankind to follow the path of righteousness, the right way to live this life. This poem is didactic in tone.

SUMMARY

This poem is the response of a young man as a Psalmist to the Biblical teachings that this human life is not important and that we are made of dust and eventually return to dust. So we may take it as a psalm in response to a psalm. H.W Longfellow sees life from an optimistic outlook. One should not sorrowfully say that life is an empty, meaningless dream. He believes that a soul that wastes its time sleeping is inactive and does not contribute to the welfare of society. To him, life is real and serious. Death or grave is not life’s goal. With death only our body ends and not our soul. Enjoyment and sorrow are not the destined end or



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way of living. Our aim in life should be to act wisely each day so that we can create a better future. We should utilize our limited time span to the fullest instead of wasting it in the thought of death. The poet compares world to a vast battlefield and we must act like a hero and not be led like dumb cattle with no particular aim or direction. We should let go of our past, live and act in the present and never trust our future however pleasant it might be. We should place our faith completely in god. That way we can make our life sublime and leave our marks on the infinite flow of time through our good work so that later generations would follow our way. The poet wants to do things courageously without thinking about the consequences of the actions. We should continue to pursue and achieve goals, learn to work hard and to wait for the rewards patiently.

This poem consists of nine stanzas of four lines. The poem is also lyrical in nature. The rhyme scheme is *abab* where the last words of first and third lines and alternately the second and fourth lines rhyme in each stanza. It uses a didactic tone to talk about life.



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