



NOTES:

UNIT: II (poetry-iii)

YOUTH AND AGE BY S.T. Coleridge

About the poet: S.T. Coleridge (1772-1834) is one of the greatest of the English romantic poets. In association with William Wordsworth he published 'Lyrical Ballads', a collection of poems. His poems reveal a remarkable talent and strong imaginative faculty. In the later period of his life he suffered acute physical pain and used to take opium to be relieved. His 'The Ancient Mariner', 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel' are among the finest in English poetry.

The poem 'Youth and Age' is a lamentation of the poet that youth has disappeared from his life. But the poet is consoled that what is important is thought and hope.

Substance: In this poem, the poet, in his old age refuses to believe that his youth has left him. He is remembering how he used to enjoy life when he was young. Life seemed joyous and beautiful when he was young. Nature, hope and poetry were his passions. He was healthy, active and strong to do any work. He was blessed with liberty, love and friends. But when he realizes that his youth is no more with him, he feels very sorry. He is sick and weak now. But still he hardly believes that youth has left him and turned him into an old miserable man. He thinks that youth, the great masquerader has hidden him behind with the mask of an old man. He appears old but the freshness of youth in his lips and the warmth of sunshine in his tears are still with him. This shows that youth has not yet completely left him. He also thinks that what is important in life is how one thinks and to have hopes. When a person thinks that he is still young amidst all the difficulties of old age, he will forever be young. But the moment a person thinks that he is old, he will certainly become an old man and life becomes a great burden for him. For him old age seems like an unwanted guest who would not leave on his own nor could not be dismissed.

Word meanings :- verse-poetry breeze-gentle and pleasant movement of wind mid - in the midst of bolssoms- flowers a maying- joy and merriment straying-moving/blowing wildly cling- to stick to poesy-(archaic) poetry woeful- sorrowful

nature, hope and poesy- these were the passions of Coleridge and Wordsworth
breathing house- the poet's body twixt- between aery- eagle's nest which is built
high in the mountain tops skiffs- small, light boats ere- before fond conceit-
foolish idea vesper bell- evening bell rung in the church (figurative) parting bell
wert- were aye- always masker bold- bold masquerader, one that wears a mask,
and acts a part locks- locks of hair slips- strips of hair gait- manner of walking
altered size- to become small, change figure(body) taking leave- leave taking
nigh related- close relative.

Lines 1-7

Paraphrase- poetry is just like a breeze (which is very pleasant) that comes through a garden of sweet smelling flowers on which hope clings feeding the honey. Poetry and hope were for him when the poet was young. Nature, hope and poetry being his passion. But it is a matter of sorrow that he is no longer young. Many changes have come up with the words 'now' and 'then'.

Lines 8-17

Paraphrase- This breathing house (the poet's body) which has not been built with skill does him grievous wrong. He at one time used to move along like lightning over the cliffs of mountains where the eagles built their nests and down the glittering sandy sea shore. It can even be compared with beautiful looking trim small boats which were unknown in the olden days and which flashed along the winding lakes and wide rivers without any sail or oar and did not fear of any harms from the wind or tide. The poet's body also did not care of wind or tide or any situation that would come across him in the course of his life when he was young.

Lines 18-28

Paraphrase- Flowers are beautiful and lovely. Love is as sweet as flowers. Friendship is like a sheltering tree that gives shelter to the tired/ worried travellers. The blessing of friendship was really joyful. Love and liberty were with him when he was young. But now he is old and the word 'ere' sounds really painful for him as it realizes that he is no longer young. There were so many years of sweet experience the poet had with him(the poet's youth). The poet says that it will be a foolish idea to think that the youth has gone from him.

Lines 29-38

Paraphrase- The poet thinks that the parting bell of youth has not yet rung. The poet's youth was just like a masquerader who put on several disguises and he asks what strange disguise has put on him with that silvery locks, drooping gait and altered size, (meaning so as to become an old man). But he says that the freshness of spring flowers on his lips and tears like warmth sunshine are still with him. Life depends on what one thinks. The poet still thinks that youth and him are still housemates.

Lines 39-49

Paraphrase- Dew drops are described as the gems of morning. But the same dew drops are described as tears of the mournful evening. Where there is no hope, life is a warning that one will live a life of grief and misery when he become old. Old age without hope is just like a life which is merely waiting for death. Such a life is comparable to a nigh-related guest who cannot be rudely dismissed yet has over stayed one's welcome. Such a life is just like a dull joke where nobody laughs or cries.



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Government of Manipur