



Research Paper

# Loneliness and Despair in the Selected Poems of Matthew Arnold

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## Abstract

This Research paper is an attempt to elaborate the elements of loneliness and despair in the selected poetry of Matthew Arnold. The terms loneliness and despair are crucial in the paper as loneliness reflect a state of mind in which a person feels left alone, whereas despair is devoid of possibility or hope. The aim of the research paper is to unearth and elaborate on the elements of loneliness and despair in the selected poems of a poet and a critic Matthew Arnold particularly in the poems- 'Dover Beach', 'The Buried Life' and 'The Scholar Gipsy'. Also to highlight how he portrays the invention of science and technology in the Victorian age as a curse rather than a blessing through his various poems. Also to work upon his quote:

"Mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us."

**Keywords:** Crucial, Loneliness, Despair, Interpret and Sustain

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The research paper is an attempt to explore the elements of despair and loneliness in the poetry of a poet and a critic Matthew Arnold and its justification in the poetry itself. As Arnold tries to put forward the picture of Victorian era as Victorians saw their world undergoing into a rapid change especially Britain transformed from a agricultural society into an urban industrial one moreover, the working class, women and the other people started demanding for right to vote as they became more rational and intellect as the world was experiencing a great change which also influenced the various poets of his time to write.

Matthew Arnold is considered as a great poet of the mid- Victorian era as he produced a huge collection of poetry and essays. Matthew Arnold [1882-88] was a great poet and a critic born on 24 December 1822. He was a professor of poetry at Oxford in 1857 which one can take as a proof of his expertise in the field of poetry. Arnold known as the great Victorian poet along with Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning as he wrote various poems out of his best poetic capabilities such as 'Dover Beach', 'The Buried life', 'The Scholar Gipsy', 'Sohrab and Rustum', 'The Forsaken Merman' and 'Consolation' etc. No doubt Victorian age was the age of materialism, skepticism and agnosticism, and men did not find comfort and happiness in Arid world so Arnold represent his reaction towards the spiritual distress, loneliness and despair through his poems 'Dover Beach', 'The Buried Life' and 'The Scholar Gipsy'.

**ARNOLD AS A PROTO-MODERNIST-** Matthew Arnold considered as a hallmark of the age in one way or another, he was a modern man to a great extent who never witness the Romantic belief but violently point out towards its loss in faith and so his poetry left inquisitive legacy to the future generations of poets as he had the habit of highlighting the melancholy, loneliness and even hopelessness of his age in his poetry. He is also known as the poet of Victorian unrest as the Victorian age marked by new scientific thoughts, intellectual and rational thinking due to which the religious beliefs were disappeared as Arnold mentioned about the religious disbelief of Victorian age in his poem 'Dover beach' as in the Victorian age, the religious belief has come to an

end and the disbelief of the world have thrown back the faith from the shared world and now according to him “the world is a coast on which bole pebbles lie, world seems like a barren and a dry land”, the idea much similar to the poem ‘The Waste Land’ by a critic and a poet T.S. Eliot .

No doubt, Victorian age was the age of growth and some elements of modernism and of the consolidation of the powers of England but it was also the time when loneliness and despair were the main themes of the poems due to the progress marked in this age. As Matthew Arnold succeeded his enormous master William Wordsworth who was of the view that “the grand universal principle of pleasure, in which we live and move and have our being” but in a modified way as the joy and tragedy also improves the taste of the readers.

#### **ELEMENTS OF LONELINESS AND DESPAIR IN THE POEM DOVER BEACH**

Arnold in the poem ‘Dover Beach’ use extensive imagery and symbolism of the ocean’s waves to represent the destruction of hope and faith in human nature to give way to distress in life. In Arnold’s ‘Dover Beach’, we can witness the poem as an unique and a nature loving poem as ‘sea is calm...sweet is the night air’ which creates the picture of hopefulness and hinted at the world as beautiful but suddenly Arnold brings into the idea that it was the last ray of hope and begins with some serious thoughts of sadness as the ‘unpleasant roar of the waves’ and this unpleasant sound made by the sea waves, left the poet into a deep grief by which the poet had a reminder of Sophocles , a great poet who saw flow of waves of Aegean sea which brought a great misery to human life. Similar to the idea that once the people’s mind in the Victorian age were full of religious beliefs but now the people were confused between the religious beliefs and the disbeliefs which brings in the idea of loneliness , melancholy despair and dissatisfaction within the poem.

As a critic Arnold brings out the criticism of the contemporary life through his poem as J.D Jump said “as far as it is possible for the single short lyrics to do, it represents the main movement of the mind about the last quarter of the century.”

The scholar Harold Bloom had fairly lucid “Tintern Abbey” by William Wordsworth as a great source for the poem Dover Beach which echoes the stress of the poem’s “still, sad music of humanity.”

#### **ELEMENTS OF LONELINESS AND DESPAIR IN THE POEM THE BURIED LIFE**

The research paper also incorporates the elements of loneliness and despair in one of the poem by Matthew Arnold that is ‘The buried life’. In the poem ‘The Buried Life’ by Matthew Arnold, he expresses his complex feelings of his own personal life and how he entered in his own buried life moreover, how he was struggling with his bulk of complex emotions. The poem highlights the feeling of sadness and loneliness in the conversation between the speaker and his lover that the words of his lover are hard to hear that they made the poet’s eyes wet as some disturbing element presented between the two of them which creates a great restlessness in the whole poem as the poem express the melancholy of their inner lives.

As Arnold’s poetic power was so immense that his purpose was both extended and beneath as Arnold’s poetry is ambassador of the Victorian mess of faith so Arnold serves himself as a teacher, a moralist and a physician of his age. The poem ‘The Buried Life’ comply the feelings and empirical crest of the poet’s dialectical quest for self love. The poem’s focal point is on the way that we don’t grant ourselves to be original , the folk profess generally to be someone else as the people feel more convenient in that way. Also people tend to be distraught by the exterior world too much that they keep themselves away from being our real-selves and this feeling goes on and on until and unless people found that someone special whom they love and who allow them to be their real-selves. The association that a relationship makes pervade through us, so that in lieu of diversely feelings dead inside and we feel alive in every aspect of the world.

#### **ELEMENTS OF LONELINESS AND DESPAIR IN THE POEM THE SCHOLAR GIPSY**

Poem ‘The Scholar Gipsy’ considered as one of the most popular poem by Matthew Arnold .The story of the poem is based upon a fabled character Joseph Glanvil’s book named as The Vanity of Dogmatizing [1661].The poem has a pastoral setting and talks about a scholar in 17<sup>th</sup> century Oxford. It also unfolds the story of a poor yet intelligent boy who once a part of Oxford but now left it to join the group of Gypsies. Gypsies are a group of people who are far away from the modern world and on a journey of self discovery by their own experiences in life which Oxford never gave him.

In the poem ‘The Scholar Gipsy’ Arnold again deals with his signature theme that he criticizes the modern life in which the world was entering so as the narrator experienced both the lives that one is of oxford towns and another is of Gypsies so as a whole Arnold represents his internal conflict of measure up a new life which according to him is uninspired and hinted at spiritual distress. It was according to him was “criticism of life” as he was of the view that a poem should reflect the realities of life. The main idea is that the one who lives a modern life is more prone to depression, shocks and distress which is very much evident even today.

## II. CONCLUSION

No doubt Matthew Arnold uses various types of imagery, metaphor and symbolism to highlight the theme of loneliness and despair in his poems 'Dover beach', 'The Buried life' and 'The Scholar Gipsy'. In the poem 'Dover beach' he comments on the outlook of human beings towards life and as once in the romantic age the people were filled with religious faith and beliefs but as resulted by progress they lost their faith and moved towards complete barrenness in life which he beautifully represented by using the various imagery of sea, land and a dark place where people are fighting for no reason and where people forgot their purpose and aim of life and at the end of the poem Arnold has left their readers in a complete hopeless situation which he and his generation was facing.

If we talk about his other poem 'The Buried life' where Arnold deals with the sadness and the conflict from within or the inner self of a person and highlighting the restlessness of a person at the same time as the name suggest the buried life so Arnold focuses on the buried concept of life and where he adopted the conflict of consciousness and got influenced by his feelings to write such piece of writing. As a whole in his poem Arnold criticizes the modern life in which the world was undergoing and tries to open up the path for self learning. As the poem the buried life written just after Dover Beach so one can easily draw a between both the poems which greatly deals with the melancholic view point of Arnold towards life or he tries to put forward the picture of mid Victorian era for his readers and also left a great impact on the future generation of writers and poets as well as On the English Literature.

The sole thing that makes "The Scholar Gipsy" so powerful is that the narrator isn't the only who wants to escape modern life; many others desire to do the same. Most crucially, he is willing to utterly dispute a shared society in the sake of transcendent, eager to enjoy true uniqueness while remaining a member of society, despite the fact that such thought has a gloomy underpinning.

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