CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Verse - Tale: Its Definition, Scope and History
An instinct for narration in human heart laid the seeds of Narrative poetry. This instinct has been narrative from the very beginning according to the simple form of the earliest civilization, and the complex form of the modern civilization. This narrative instinct proved to be a great source of recreation and entertainment during the social evolution when individuals were formed into groups and groups into societies. The story teller in prose or verse who could compose a song himself or sing a traditional song snatched the attention of the audience, on festive occasions - religious feasts or social festivals. In this way narrative poetry, came into being and the bard or the poet became an important figure. Narrative poetry, later on, was divided into two forms - first the subjective, in which the poet or bard narrates his own thoughts, experiences, ideas or actions, and other objective in which he narrates the experiences of other people.

Narrative poetry in its infancy was seen first in the form of 'lay' - a short story in verse often musical narrating the deeds of valour, love and sacrifice with dramatic vigour and action. Passing through generation to generation, the lays were transformed into a more elaborate and dignified form of narrative poetry - the epic i.e. a story of the great deeds of great men written in a grand style. Romance is another form of narrative poetry which belongs to the age of chivalry, the later centuries of
medieval times while epic belongs to the heroic age of a nation, normally the earlier centuries of the medieval times. The epic, representing classicism, deals with men and women inspired by a lofty purpose in life while romance, representing romanticism, deals with handsome men and women inspired by the motive of love and chivalry, and flying in the imaginative world of fairy land and mysterious world.

Beowulf, an Anglo Saxon epic, laid the foundation of English narrative poetry. The tradition was carried further by medieval romances like Gawain and the Green Knight. Chaucer wrote Canterbury Tales, a story in verse in 14th century. Spenser followed Chaucer with his Faerie Queen and was in turn followed by Shakespeare in his splendid tales, Venus and Adonis and Lucrece. After that Milton wrote Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, the greatest epics that England has ever produced. The Fables of Dryden was another step in this direction. In 18th century Pope, Gray, Collins, Thomson wrote classical cum romantic tales, and in the 19th century Wordsworth, Scott, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Tennyson enriched the field of narrative poetry.

Verse-Tale defined:

The term 'tale in verse' strictly taken includes the entire field of English poetry narrative or epic in kind. The tale in its present form is 'told', but the telling is after the same fashion as the talk of Shakespeare's men and women. A satirical tale like Absalom and Achitophel, or a
burlesque like the *Rape of the Lock*, or an allegory like the *Faery Queen* are less pure forms of the tale than simple narratives.

The aim of the verse tales is not to teach a moral through satire or burlesque but to entertain us with a narrative where the events and individuals, whether ordinary or extra-ordinary are yet in the scale of common life. In order to understand the nature of a verse-tale, we describe here the essentials of it. It stirs the imagination of the readers and appease their love of beauty, romance, adventure, chivalry and heroism. A pure verse tale is clear, straightforward and smooth in flow. It has clear comprehension of events. It mostly narrates a brave and noble deed. "The story is the most important factor, and the story should be clear. The ideal poem ----is that which tells a fine story finely, sets forth a brave tale in stirring words".

Generally the poets express themselves through lyric and drama, and so therefore we have only few perfect narrative pieces inspite of being the poetical museum so full of narrative poems. In lyric and drama the impulse of expression is inherent rather than acquired. While a storyteller should have a special creative attitude. Like a poet

3- Percival Christopher Wren, *Story Poems for Composition*, Introduction, p.XII.
or a dramatist, a story teller cannot sing his life of cares
or express his feelings and experiences through characters
and events respectively. He has to stay impersonal like
reporter and present himself with the audience.

It is quite difficult to find in a writer both the
imaginative and impersonal attitude or in a poet both the
inherent and acquired impulses of expression and that's why
"to tell the story of a whole people, and transpose it from
the human to the heroic scale, is a task for a giant, and
not all poets are giants".

Origin and development of the Verse-tale:-

The tale in verse was born with the coming of the
Anglo-Saxons who sang folk songs concerned with war deeds,
and sagas of the past. Much of this heathen poetry has been
lost because it was not written and passed on from mouth to
mouth. Only little of it was preserved by the Christian
anthologists and editors.

In the extant story literature of the Anglo-Saxons, the
Germatic qualities of strength, tenderness, and fidelity in
which both the tragic contradictions and the humorous
dissonances of life get grip and strike root. The
contribution of it upon subsequent history of the tale is
very little because " the Anglo-Saxon story-telling is an
isolated and detached province of the English tale, limited

in a range of topic, strongly mannered in speech and buried
in all but complete oblivion for centuries after its day of
limited renown".

Another group of story-tellers comprising priests and
monks of the Roman Church, and deriving their stories from
the Bible and lives of the saints, emerged in England after
a hundred and fifty years of the settling down of the
Saxons. Thus religious and secular literature circulated
through the continent. From the day of its birth to our
modern times, there has been hardly any great English work,
in verse or prose, that has not been influenced by such
religious and secular trends.

After this a war took place between the Saxons and
Celts; and Celts were defeated and they took shelter in the
western part of the island. In order to inspire and
encourage the people to win back their lost native land, the
exiled Britons sang the stories of the deeds of bravery of
their great heroes full of wild poetic beauty, delicate
fancy and love for beauty. In the course of time, an
obscure celtic leader King Arthur (6th Century) became the
immortal hero and there grew about him many cycles of
stories such as - King Arthur and The Round Table and the
Defender of Western Britous, etc. The legend of King Arthur
had fired the imagination of the English writers and the
public down to the present day.

1- C.H. Herford, English Tales in Verse, p.XVI.
No English verse-tale was written for about three centuries after the *Song of Maldon*. For a long time the travelling Saxon leemen, after the victory of the Normans in 1066, sang old Saxon stories of fierce fighting, of horrors, monsters and terrors and their great heroes who stood the onslaughts of Norman conquerors. Anglo-Saxon poetry, in general, was Pagan in origin and fatalistic in outlook.

Later on Saxons with their heroic stories and Norman minstrels with their romances joined hands together and adopted each other's style, and the result was that a new race of singers and story tellers came in forefront and had a remarkable hold upon the middle ages' verse tales.

The minstrels, first of all, sang to the common folk the romances that they used to sing in the court and castle halls but fiercing that they would not appeal to the common people being above their understanding, they made them fast moving full of valour, bravery and comic effect.

The Norman poets enriched the middle English poetic tales with these jewels—the romantic note, knight hood gallantry, courtly gallantry, rewards of love, delightful naturalistic scenery and such others. With the result England began to sing of bright laughing moods and her intellectual life became witty and rich and her culture now became continental, international. They took the material for these tales from different sources. First, the matter
of Britain (the tales of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table); Secondly, the matter of France (the tales of Charlemagne and his twelve pears); Thirdly, the matter of Rome (the tales of classical times and of more mysterious races – the story of Troy, the conquests of Alexander, and the marvels of orient).

Many romances in English were written before the end of the 13th century, the famous among them were "Sir Gawayne", "The Greene Knight" 'Guy of Warwick', 'Bevis of Hampton' and 'King Horn', the last three contained English scenery and English heroes.

France gave to Europe-romantic tales, humorous - satirical tales and the narrative tales. In England before Chaucer the romantic and humorous-realistic types of stories predominated. These stories were classified according to the class for which they were meant. In castles and palaces, the tales of romance specially of Arthur, adventure, heroism and fidelity were popular while in tavern and market places versified jests and anecdotes were popular, famous among them was the antifeudal satire of Renard the Fox and his thirty thousand verses. Then there grew two kinds of tale structure – first, the long complicated tale full of different incidents; second, the short story or 'novella' which is simple and concerned

mainly with a single incident.

Among these different types of tales the romances had some of the best story material in the world, as in *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Guy of Warwick*. The future of the English verse tale depended more on fresh realism than on fabulae. The English poets found it easy to describe the facts but lacked imaginative power. They were at home while writing with the help of their all perceiving senses and native wit. Some English story-tellers tried their hands on fableau but could not succeed. Later on in 1292 the university of Oxford censured fableau on grounds of immorality as many tales of 'cognate character' had sprung up in the 13th century.

Some animal tales like *Fox and Wolf* came into existence during this period. Some of these animal tales were of animal nature, and some of them had animals acting as mouthorgans for men i.e the allegory.

In short, these were the types and modes of tales prevalent in England when the greatest of all narrative poets *Chaucer* began to write.

The two basic types of verse-tale are epic and ballad. Metrical romance is also considered partly as a third basic type of verse-tale. Both epic and ballad existed as oral literature for a long time.
"Story telling in verse form is sometimes thought to have its beginning in the chanting of myth relating to rituals. Vestiges of this earlier mythic connection of narrative poetry can be seen in:

(i) the very fact that the story is told in verse, not in prose, for the rhythms of verse are associated with magic effectiveness,

(ii) the pervasiveness of alliterative and assonatal techniques in epic, which are also associated with incantation,

(iii) the structure of myths,

(iv) the association of the singing of epic with religious festivals".

The question arises as to why a story should be told in verse, the reason seems that the story in verse is easier to remember than in prose and that's why both epic and ballad were originally sung.

Rome entrusted to us the first historical epic 'Ngevius Bellum Punicum and Ennius's Annales Virgil"s Aeneid which presented us with a wide panorama of Roman history. Virgil"s Aeneid and Ovid's Metamorphoses were the most catching and influential of the narrative poems of the Augustan period in Rome. In the middle of the 6th century,

2- Perminger, Alex, Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics, p. 542.
Masacus wrote *Hero and Leander*, the last of classical Greek narrative poems. The verse tales which were written from the 3rd century B.C. to the 6th century of our era, were generally based on theme of the ancient Pagan myths and legends.

Narrative poetry did not cease to exist after the classical period. At the end of the 5th century Dracontius wrote *'In Praise of God'* and in the 6th century, Arator wrote a poem on *Acts*. Thus the tradition continued in the form of Christian narrative poetry, in the literacy tradition of Virgil and in dactylic hexameters.

From the earliest times, the nature of the story was accorded by the audiences for which it was composed. *The Book of Easter* was written for the Jews to celebrate their release after a long term captivity. Modern stories in verse such as John Mansfield's *Reynard the Fox* attracts the attention of the readers while they wait for trains on railway platforms.

In the 14th century, a different type of narrative poem appeared in England which was neither epic nor romance. One of them, the *Vision of Piers the Plowman*, is an allegory.

We are concerned here with the 14th century English poetry when English literature, for the first time, touched the feet of glory. By this time, the French literary culture and the native Anglo-Saxon culture had already
collaborated together. The result of this combination was that a new English language, promising to show itself in some of the most beautiful literary forms and techniques of the Middle Ages, grew up and a new English literature appeared.

There were two types of English audiences in the Middle Ages: the one belonging to literary class which was noble and cultured, and the other belonging to the common class was somewhat rough, sturdy and vigorous. The upper class audiences were fascinated by the romances of courtly love and tales of adventure while the middle and lower classes loved to hear those tales concerned with their lives. Both enjoyed the poetry of each other but the second type of poetry was more responsible for the origin of the earliest form of narrative verse i.e. the popular ballad. These ballads were written down many centuries later "It was not until Dr. Thomas Percy; in the 18th century gathered together a large number of old ballads and published them as Reliques of Ancient English Poetry that poets and scholars came to know the medieval ballads at first hand". In the early 19th century Sir Walter Scott and at the end of 19th century prof. F.J. Child collected a number of early English ballads.

1- C.H. Herford, English Tales in Verse, p.45 (Herford remarks in this connection, "The turning point in the history of verse tales came with the appearance in 1765 of Percy's Reliques of English Poetry").
Ballads which were founders of the verse-tales evoked the feeling always dear to people's heart though concerned with all types of subjects. The popular examples of tragedy and comedy were "Edward and Barbara Allen" and "Get-up the Bar Door" respectively. They show the taste of the people for the supernatural. Adventures and death of Robin Hood were the popular themes in which the common people could enjoy imaginatively the victory of the poor hero over his rich and powerful oppressor. These popular ballads gave an insight into the lives of the poor people.

Geoffrey Chaucer was the first great poet who satisfied the taste of both the classes of audience. His *Canterbury Tales* is a beautiful collection of narrative tales of different themes and a galaxy of characters concerned with real life. In this poem, the tales are told by a group of pilgrims who are going to Canterbury to pay homage to the shrine of St. Thomas-a-Becket. The characters like worthy Knight, the wife of Bath, the shrewd Reeve, the devoted Parson and others are representatives of 14th century England. During the journey, the pilgrims narrate the stories one by one. The Knight describes a romance of country love while the Miller and the Reeve narrate vulgar tales of lowly lives. Some stories inter-mingled with monologues and epilogues were sad and some humorous and threw light on the character and nature of the tellers, and made us aware of the incidents and events which took place.
during the journey. The prioress describes a very moving story of a little Christian boy persecuted by the Jews while the Nun tells a tale of a Cock and Hen full of comedy. The poems ends with a long sermon by the Parson.

Describing the narrative art of Chaucer, Henry Newbolt says "Chaucer is, of course, the supreme example of this art in our own language. His tales are not only told with perfect skill, they are enriched with a wonderful study of English character and they have in a high degree the poetical merit of revealing to us Chaucer himself in his humour and philosophy as he lived". Uptil now we do not have individual characters in the ballads but in Canterbury Tales we find for the first time actual persons living and moving. The characters in the tales are so clearly and vividly described that we can easily identify them with the persons of the 14th century. In the Miller's tale the poet has given the description of Absolom so accurately that one is sure he had a definite small town 'slicker' in mind. Besides this, this poem paved the way for a fresh and vigorous realism. To men of this temper, the piquant stories of everyday society were naturally congenial.

Chaucer's conception of romance may be estimated from the admirable parody of Sir Thopas and another Knight's Tale which is a thoroughly romantic story. Chaucer was the first great humorist who wrote tales of frank and joyous humour

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1- Henry newbolt, English Narrative Poems, p.4.
in which the mastery of Chaucer is more consummate. In this way Chaucer employed nearly all the narrative devices known to the medieval English poets. Chaucer was the founder of character development in English poetry and this art has never reached greater perfection. "Chaucer's magic died with him and Henryson and Lydgate are quite affected with the humanistic movement, that tended to accumulate obstacles to the recovery of Chaucer's art". English narrative poetry after that did nothing except following the patterns well established. John Lydgate made the translation of Baccacio's De Cassibus Vivorum Illustrium in his The fall of Princess. English once more became a rude tongue with brocaded ceremonial stateliness of the Latin style. In Italy, this is century not only of Dante but also of Petrarch and Boccacio's metrical romance Filostrato, and the story of Troilus and Cresseda, which influenced Chaucer in his narrative of Troilus and Cresseida.

A new spirit of Renaissance captured completely the culture of Europe between the 14th and the late 16th century. Men travelled from one place to another and the commerce and trade established between nations. The reading of the Greek and Latin classics was revived and new colleges were founded at Oxford and Cambridge to spread education. The invention of the printing press by Caxton in the middle of the 15th century helped in the spread of Greco-

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Roman culture by making the books available to the readers. The forms of narrative poetry gradually changed to meet the demands of this audience for now, for the first time, there was a reading rather than a listening public. Another result was that the verse romance and the tale which formerly had been read aloud began to disappear as men and women cultivated an interest in personal reading. This change, possibly, took place because prose seemed more realistic than poetry and also because of the prose stories of King Arthur and His knights by Malory which appealed to the people most. The 16th and 17th century romance writers also started writing romances in prose, the examples being Lyly's Eupheus and Sydney's Arcadia.

However, the old ballads did exert an influence on the narrative poetry written by the lyric poets. Spenser showed in his tales what was the loftiest and the most original in the English romances. He enthusiastically followed Chaucer in tales like the Oak and the Briar in the Sheperd's Calender or The Tale of Mother Hubbard. Spenser published The Faerie Queen with a medieval look in 1596 which showed the influence of Malory and the earlier romance writers in describing the deeds of armoured knights fighting for their ladies. It showed the influence of ancient heroic poets in its use of classical story material such as the thoughts of Plato on love and beauty, the virtues of Aristotle and the countless allusions to Greek and Roman mythology.
After Spenser's *Fairie Queen*, the 17th century saw the outcome of its greatest narrative poem i.e. John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Structurally, this poem follows the models of classical epic as it is based on a heroic theme containing twelve books. Like Homer and Virgil, Milton too evokes the Muse to implore inspiration and strength. He has enriched his epic with classical similes, epithets and hundreds of classical allusions. The character sketches of many of the figures present as types and many of others as individuals. In short "The 17th century is dominated by Milton and his *Paradise Lost*. Milton went back to the well springs of epic for his subject, to religious myths, to the theme of creation and the war of the gods. He thought to fashion a new hero in Adam, and thus misjudged the traditions of the heroic. Yet his magnificent poem stands out as perhaps the last great epic in Western literature". Though drama and satire were more popular in this century, some narrative poems were written. But they were in the form of the translation of great classics. While John Dryden made the translation of works of Ovid, Virgil, Chaucer and Boccaccio; Alexander Pope and William Cowper of the Homeric poems, the best of them was that of George Chapman.

Then in the 18th century 'The age of Reason' came when narrative poetry took a satirical mode. John Dryden, the

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greatest poet of this era wrote a satirical narrative poem Absalom and Achitophel in which the story of the Duke of Monmouth and the Earl of Shaftesbury was described to attack Shaftesbury imprisoned at that time for political reasons. Dryden tried to maintain glory of verse tales but could not check its steady decline. In spite of the brilliance of Pope, and of the admirable case of swift and geniality of Gay, the verse tale was in respect of all higher literary qualities and the power of story telling confined to narrow limits of topic and mood. The only kind of verse tale which thrived was that in which verse is not a symptom of poetry, but only an adjunct to wit.

After Dryden, Pope also wrote satirical narratives but they were occasionally marked by great humour. Thus in the field of the romance and tales told in verse, the 18th century did little. The tradition of the poetic narrative was at least kept alive by two of the great poets of the age.

The works of Burns and Scott showed the influence of ballad on narrative poetry. Burns was more a lyric poet but some of his such as Tam O’ Shanter were written with the ballad spirit. Narration was more serious a matter with Sir Walter Scott. “Scott’s instinct for story telling, is a true narrative instinct, expressed itself more genuinely perhaps in his novels, the real successors of epic. Scott is a more veritable follower of the narrative genius in
Western literature than many other, for the story interests him above all". He wrote a number of verse tales e.g. 'The Lady of the Lake', 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border' etc. At the end of the 18th century, the romantic age came in which the romantic poets wrote in the ballad form. The romantic tales written by the romantic poets showed their deep interest in the marvellous and the unknown, in exploits and fantastic adventures. Wordsworth and coleridge were fascinated by the ballad revival, by the vigour of the narrative, directness and simplicity of the diction, and Coleridge specially by the dramatic appeal of the supernatural. Many pseudo medieval elements like love for chivalry, the medieval baron's castle, the mystical, the caprices of the supernatural etc. were abundantly used by the romantic poets. Gray's The bard, Scott's The lay of the last Minstrel, and coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Christabel are the fine examples of romantic medieval poetry.

William Wordsworth was the poet of common people and he told stories of local events as in Goody Blake and Harry Gill. Michael is more sentimental than the popular ballads. Prelude is a narrative but the use of first person in it is contrary to the objectivity of the traditional story poetry.

The 18th century saw a revival of interest in the

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1- Perminger Alex, Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics, p.549.
popular ballad that made an important contribution in the development of romantic trends in literature and which being full of passion appealed to heart rather than to mind, to feeling rather than to reason. It increased interest in the past, the remote and the supernatural. Though the Rime of Ancient Mariner was written by Coleridge in the manner and spirit of the ballad, it is infinitely more than a ballad. It is surely one of the best known narrative poems of this period. His poetry is cast in the ballad and heroic metre. His ballad poetry has not the fire of Scott but it exhibits an artistic sense of and feeling for the ballad situation and an ability to present weird tales. Coleridge’s Christabel, an incomplete neo-medieval romance, reflects a nostalgic longing for Gothic castles and adventures that might take place in them.

An atmosphere of mystery was also cast in their verse tales by the romantic story tellers from Horace Walpole down to Sir Walter Scott. They took the material for the mystery making from the middle ages which was full of wealth of superstition and the robuster excitements of stirring adventures.

The Chariot of verse tales was carried on by later Romantics, the chief among them was Lord Byron. In his oriental tales for example in the Giour, we have story-telling for its own pleasure. Beppo is a good narrative used for satirical purpose, a genre of which Romans were
past masters. Don Juan and Childe Harold's Pilgrimage are other verse-tales written by Lord Byron.

John Keats is objective enough to be a master of the narrative, and his perfection of style serves the narrative rather than that the narrative serves the style. This is quite evident from The Eve of St. Agnes and Lamia.

The 19th century narrative poets wrote for the audience which reads rather than which listens. It is an intellectual audience quite different from the audience for whom the 14th and 16th century poets made their verse. With them the story was of first importance.

With the greatly enlarged audiences which read their poetry to themselves and seldom listened to it aloud, the poets of the 19th century were able to centre their attention more on subtleties of character and psychological processes.

In 19th century verse tales we find a revival of classical spirit in reaction to the prevalent romanticism of the age. There we find the influence of romanticism much weaker than before, the classical spirit more marked, but especially notable is the strong humanitarianism.

In the early victorian age, Robert Stephen Hawker wrote in the ballad form. His ballad poetry bears the impress of the rugged scenery of the west, and is infused with old
celtic legends and superstitions. In The Quest of the Sangraal (1863) the mystical side of legendary lore attracted him; and he proved himself as a poet of considerable vigour and originality. Besides Hawker, other story tellers were Macaulay, Aytoun and Percy. Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome" (1842) and "English Ballads", and Aytoun's "Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers" (1848) are in direct descent from Scott and from Percy's Reliques, and while they lack the poignancy and warmth of imagination that fire the best of these, are of their kind admirable. The historical spirit, expressed in clear, vigorous, spirited verse, serve as a summing up of Macaulay's work, whether as a singer of English glory or of Roman renown. Aytoun's verses are rich in national sentiment, and are worthy contributions to the poetry of chivalry.

The 19th century verse tellers were affected by social, political, religious and literary background of that era. The verse stories were the vehicles in the hands of the poets to express social problems, democratic ideals, religious and spiritual scepticism, philosophic and scientific problems, the Pre-Raphaelitism with its emphasis upon aestheticism and the connection between poetry, painting and the plastic arts; and the romantic note that ushered in the century by the study of medievalism and by Hellenic sympathies. Rossetti delves in the folklore and diablerie of the Middle Ages; Morris busies himself in its
legends and sagas. The most representative victorian makers of verse tales Tennyson, and Robert Browning, though lack the fire and air of the Romantic verse tellers, excel them in breadth of outlook and variety of method. If in keeping close to the earth, their Muses occasionally soil their wings, they do not at any rate lose themselves in the sky.

One of the flowers of the 19th century poetic garden who contributed in the field of story telling was Morris who was a master in narrative method. He wrote verse-tales as one of many media for expressing his innate sense of beauty. The chief interest of his first volume of verse, *The Defence of Guenevere and other poems* lies in the vigour and insight with which he treats some old world story, whether one of Arthurian inspiration, in the *Defence of Guenevere*, or some other tale of mediaeval passion, as in *The Haystack in the Floods* with its poignant horrors, or *Rapunzel* with its pictorial beauty. Morris wrote some other narrative poems like *Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise* and while he excelled them in emotional fire when he wrote *Sigurd*, he never surpassed these poems in fluent sweetness and gracious charm. The familiarity of the *Tason* story accounts for its greater popularity, but there is necessarily more variety in that garment of divers colours - *The Earthly Paradise* - a lovely fabric of verse into which he has woven some of the most enchanting stories in the world; graceful fancies from Greece, gay romances of French origin, passionate legends
from the North. The poet always is medieval in his outlook. In *Sigurd* he hews a piece of pristine savagery from the quarry of the old Sagas, and dropping for a while his gracious moods, enters with fine spirit into the elemental grandeur of the epic. Here the verse thrills with virile power. The sweeping rhythm breaks over the story like big Atlantic breakers on a rocky shore. Spiritually Morris was more akin to Homer than to Virgil as he made translation of the *Odyssey*.

*Dante Gabriel Rossetti* wrote verse tales full of sensuousness and passion, being the most distinguished representative of the Pre-Raphaelite group. His verse suggests pictures. His *A Last Confession* is the story of a murder, and the colour red gleams through the verse from the very opening, where the man finds the child on the hills and she tells him her parents had left her and walked into "the great red light," down to the catastrophe when "sea and sky were blood and fire and all the day was one red blindness."

The human elements of old romance were finely apprehended by Scott and William Morris; the sensuous elements attracted Keats; the mystic elements inspired Coleridge. But no one poet has gathered up all these diverse elements in their verse tales in the way the Rossetti has done. In such poems as *Stretton Water*, *The King's Tragedy* and *The White Ship*, he touches the popular ballad with all its rough simplicity and naivete; he is faithful to the conventions of the old ballad
form. He has essayed in poems like The Bride's Prelude and Rose Mary to reproduce that sensuous atmosphere which gave such richness of effect to The Eve of St. Agnes and Lamia. Keats never excelled the pictorial splendour of The Bride's Prelude or the opulent imagery of Rose Mary; and in Sheer intellectual grasp of old superstitions and ancient customs he is distinctly inferior to Rossetti. There is no finer treatment of the social problem in poetry than may be found in Jenny—a poem refreshingly free from the mawkish sentiment that so often spoils verse dealing with this subject.

Robert Browning was one of the greatest poets of the 19th century who wrote stories in verse in the form of dramatic monologues, written in blank-verse. His stories provide us with a peep into the inner working of the mind and soul of the characters taken from all walks of life like cowards, rouges, artists, scholars, dukes, cheats, murderers and saints etc. His stories are not in the form of pure verse tale as there is generally one character at the centre, and the substance of the story consists of what passes within his soul. His poems reveal his philosophy of life; his optimism based on imperfections of man; his belief in the immortality of the Soul, and in the Love and Mercy of God; his conception of Death as the gateway to Heaven and this life as a preparation for the next; his zest for life; his faith in struggle not in achievement, Crime, art, love, religion philosophy, Nature, human personality etc. are the
main themes of Browning's poetry. His verse tales show him as a deliberate and conscious artist. In his poems we find a harmonious composition, a noble style and a clear, sweet melody of verse. His verse tales are full of humour, satire, keen observation, joy in life, joy in thought, joy in passion. In The Ring and the Book (1869), the story - a Roman murder case - is told in twelve books and from nine point of view which shows Browning as an observer and a critic of life. It is psychological, pictorial, analytical, dramatic, satiric and tragic. Balaustion's Adventure is memorable for its vital and appealing figure of the Greek girl with her quick prehensile intelligence and strength of character. Fifine at the Fair (1872) is full of fantasy, pathos, satiric and ingenious quibling. It is a defence of inconstancy. It is a story based on the relation of a man and woman. Red Cotton Night - Cap Country; or, Turf and Towers, is a story thrown into monologue with Normandy as a background. The tale is in essence a study in sensuality and related with power and psychological insight. Muleykeh is an interesting Arabian tale. In James Lee's Wife we have a study in the caprices of love. This is really a novel in verse. The Last Duchess, Rabbi Ben Ezra, Fra Lippo Lippi, Andrea Del Sarto are some poems in which story is told through monologues in which Browning was past-master.

Verse-tales after covering a long journey of experiments in the hands of different poets of different
ages found its full and perfect play in the hands of Lord Tennyson, the most representative poet of the Victorian Age. Though Tennyson dealt with almost all literary forms like ode, elegy, sonnet, ballad, dramatic monologue, verse drama etc., but it was with that particular genre i.e. verse tale that he was at home partly because it provided him with ample scope for the expression of his thought and emotional content as well as his literary and artistic excellence, and partly because the vogue of fiction in that age convinced him that verse-narrative would be popular. He had woven excellently the tapestry of verse-tale with the threads of his poetic genius. He had expressed in his verse stories his philosophy, his social and political views, his feminism and his disapproval of many things in the Victorian age. At the same time he enriched this form with the glamour and golden colours of his fancy and imagination, romantic zeal and emotional exuberance. Lastly, in this literary form he was able to display and exhibit his perfect art and technique, cadence and rhythm, workmanship and versification. In this way he gave this form a new colour and look.

Tennyson has written his verse-tales on different themes with great originality. Some of his verse-tales belong to the classical age and legendary history with a great moral purpose infused in them such as Idylls of the King, Tithonus, Oenone and others which show Tennyson's
knowledge and love of old classics and old legends. Having a conscious and well-informed mind, Tennyson wrote also on realistic themes giving a glimpse of the contemporary 19th century. Such tales are "The Princess, Locksley Hall, The Vision of Sin, The Revenge, Ode to Wellington in which Tennyson comes out before us as a thinker, philosopher and social reformer, upholding and disapproving certain values prevalent in that age. Besides this, his romantic impulse imagination, fancy and emotional instinct compelled him to write some imaginative and romantic verse-tales the result of which are these poems - The Miller's Daughter, The Gardener's Daughter, The Lady of Shalott, Dora, Audley Court etc; full of emotions and passions, and coloured in an atmosphere of true love. But the true and real genius of Tennyson is seen in enlivening these verse-stories with the touch of his excellent narrative power, pictorial imagination, colourful images, wonderful music and melody, epigrammatic terseness, and the application of suitable words and metres suiting to different themes.

Tennyson enhanced the beauty of verse-tales under his patronage. In order to study more in details about it, we will have to go deep into the above mentioned verse tales. That's why in my this doctoral thesis, I have made some tentative efforts to discover the hidden beauties of his verse-tales and to bring them into lime-light in the coming chapters.