Chapter II

Pessimism in the Poetry of Arthur Hugh Clough
Arthur Hugh Clough was a representative Victorian poet. He was living in a period which was specially characterised by a profound spiritual unrest, brought about mainly by the far reaching discoveries of science and Biblical criticism. In this period we encounter the clash and fusion of old and new on every side. The result of this social and religious disturbance was the appearance of the note of pessimism. This temper generally occurs in the period of transition when the lack of stability and permanence arises a feeling of insecurity in human mind. Victorian period was the period of change and this fact may be seen in works of most of the poets of this time.

In the changing world, poets worked under the shadow and burden of a conscious social responsibility. The Victorian literary artists were inspired by a social zeal to represent the problems of their own age. Among these poets, Clough was much more concerned, directly or indirectly with the social, political, religious and literary movements of his time. He was influenced by some new ideas and did agree with many of them but not completely.
He is the typical Victorian poet voicing in his poetry the hopes and aspirations, doubts and scepticism refined culture and religious liberalism of the age. His entire work in poetry is intellectual in character and is marked with introspective self-analysis and self-delineation. His poetry expressed with great sincerity, the spiritual unrest that was corroding his spirit. The feeling of misery and melancholy to be witnessed in the works of Clough was due to the philosophical, religious and social changes brought about by the development of science.

Clough's personal experiences have reflection on his poetical works. His poetry is the poetry of information. He was disappointed by the attitudes of political parties. He felt that no one was interested in solving the problems of lower class, and this disappointment is reflected in his poetry. For Clough, poetry was basically the disclosure of a man's character, the reflection of his nature and the verbal expression of his inner most being.

Besides social unrest, there were many other personal causes which made him a pessimistic^1^"He had had to learn very early to accept unhappy facts and make something of his life in spite of them. Clough's particular
experiences made him almost a prototype of the deracinated man, for he suffered from the experience of being uprooted many times, intellectually emotionally, socially, and religiously. Cut off from his family, his family's love, and from his country (however alien he had been in America it was all he knew) at the age of ten, from faith at twenty, from effective power in politics by circumstances and history, from ancestral ties and from the upper and business classes alike by training and education, and finally by his own acts from the present — Oxford — and the future — his career — he serves as a kind of paradigm of the man who has experienced alienation it is the triumph of his best poetry that it speaks of that condition, rather than hides it".

Clough's first long poetical work is *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* a narrative poem in hexametre set in the scottish Highland. It is a large work in every sense than any of his later worrying poems. It was composed just after he left Oxford. Clough's loss of religious belief just after he left Rugby is, undeniably, the central fact in his life. When he lost the direction which Dr. Arnold's moral earnestness had supplied, he lost his sense of purpose in life.
The Bothie, is the story of those Oxford students who visit Scotland with their tutor, Adam. One of them, Phillip, who is the hero of this poem, falls in love with Elspie, the daughter of the 'thin man clad as a saxen'. Phillip is the representative of modern age while his tutor Adam represents middle age who believes in old custom and tradition. So in response of Phillip's wish to marry Elspie, Adam gives him advice not to marry her because of class distinction. Phillip rejects this suggestion and gives his views on this system. He is a modern man and believes in equality. His sensitivity to the limitations imposed by class barriers is a current theme which has been discussed in this poem. He is not satisfied with the privileges the higher class to whom he belongs enjoys. He does not believe in those old traditions which reveal a difference between high and low. He expressed his views about social inequality:

2"I am sorry to say your providence puzzles me sadly;
Children of Circumstance are we to be? your answer, oh no wise!
Where does circumstance end, and Providence where begins it?
What are we to resist, and what are we to be friends with?
If there is battle, 'tis battle by night: I stand in the darkness,...
Yes, I could find in my heart to cry, notwithstanding my Elspie,
O that the armies indeed were arrayed! O joy of the onset!
Sound, than Trumpet of God, come forth, Great Cause, to array us,
King and leader appear, thy soldiers sorrowing seek thee."

He appears to be extremely upset about social injustice. Throughout the poem, there is a controversy with the world. He depicts faithfully the spirit of the age, the paralysis of faith through doubt, the lack of purpose, the superficiality. This poem deals with those social problems which were being discussed by the more thoughtful minds of that time. Clough was largely a disciple of Goethe; and his influence could be seen both in the form and thought of The Bothie, at the same time the poem reflects the intellectual atmosphere of Oxford.

Social unrest was the great distinguishing feature of the Victorian era and the demand for social justice coloured the whole thought of the time. Clough's thought on this topic is reflected in The Bothie. He was much affected by the social unrest which was the result of scientific development. The industrial advancement created social unrest and economic distress among the masses. The impact of this
advancement was worse on labourers. Their condition was miserable. They were forced to live in wretched condition. The condition of children and women was also not satisfactory. Clough faithfully reflected this aspect of Victorian life in *The Bothie*. His repulsion towards rich class and sympathy for labourers and poor could be noticed in these lines:

3"Often I find myself saying, and know not myself as I say it.
What of the poor and the weary? their labour and pain is needed.
Perish the poor and the weary! What can they batter than perish,
Perish is labour for her, who is worth the destruction of empires?
What! for a mite, for a mote, an impalpable odour of honour,
Armies shall bleed; cities burn; and the soldier red from the storming
Carry hot rancour and lust into chambers of mothers and daughters.
What would ourselves for the cause of an hour encounter the battle,
Slay and be slain; lie rotting in hospital, hulk, and prison;
Die as a dog dies; die mistaken perhaps, and dishonoured.
Yea, - and shall hodmen in beer-shops complain of a glory denied them,
The impact of science was not limited only to the society. Religion was also affected by the scientific advancements. In this sphere, a marked spiritual disturbance, which struck the time-honoured edifice of Christian values, could be seen. The application of the historical method to the study of the Bible resulted in the development of 'the higher criticism' which not only had disturbing effects upon orthodox believers but also induced scepticism and pessimism in sensitive souls like Clough. He had firm faith in Christianity but side by side was influenced by scientific achievements. Science was progressing day by day. The advancement of science, however, shook the very foundation of faith and religion. As a result, man and women had become restless in a fast-moving and fast-changing world. So in this restless situation the hero of *The Bothie* speaks directly of looking for guidance and finding none:

4"I stand in the darkness,
Here in the mêlée of men, Ionian and Dorian on both sides,
Signal and password known; which is friend and which is foeman?
Is it a friend? I doubt, though he speak with the voice of a brother".
This poem deals with the problems of women in Victorian society. In that era women were pushed to a lower place. They were expected to cultivate domestic virtues, rear up children and look after home. Education was a closed book for most of the women. Phillip's permission to Elspie to read his book is a revolt against this injustice. He is in favour of giving more liberty to women. He likes those girls who are attractive and intellectual. He hates artificiality and likes natural beauty. He does not like those high born girls who are like dolls. This poem presents the ideal of true womanhood. The whole poem is a protest against the conception of feminine grace and embellishment as consisting of vulgar decoration and intellectual insipidity.  

"Clough's attitude to women is, indeed, developed at length in the poem. It is a forward looking attitude, much in advance of his time."

Most of the Victorian poets were suffering from alienation and *The Bothie* speaks about this alienation. The hero of this poem, Phillip feels isolated because he is unable to adjust with the society. His views are totally different from those persons who follow traditions and customs so Phillip revolt against these, because they are
based on inequality. He believes that all men have been created by God so there should be no discrimination.

"All the work of His hand hath disposed in a wonderful order? Who hath made man, as the beasts, to live the one on the other, Who hath made man as Himself to know the law-and accept it!

But Adam does not agree with him. Phillip's alienation is different from two other heros of Clough. "The reasons behind Phillip's alienation are clearly definable in external, logical causes which are primarily social and political. He is uncomfortable in his society on principle, because it denies equality and subjugates man to man and woman to man". The complexity of modern life is reflected in The Bothie. According to Clough, the social situation no less than the religion is responsible for the crumbling down of many of the intellectual and moral values.

The Bothie deals with all those problems which are waiting for solution. This is Clough's first long poem which tells about the inner conflict of the poet, "This was his first long poem, and gives us a just a view of his capabilities and temperament. For all its play of humourous fancy, there is a deep underlying seriousness in the poem, and a sensitive
appreciation of the weightiness of modern social problems”.

His second long poem is *Amours-de-Voyage* which he composed during his visit to Rome in 1849. It has been written in the form of letter series, telling the story of an English man’s love affair in Italy during the Italian Revolution. It is a representative poem of the age and exhibits the doubts and uncertainties of the period in which the poet lived. It is more a series of reflections on contemporary problems than a tale of incidents and events. Those letters which have been written by an English man, Claude, from Rome, Florence, Bégind, Lucca and other towns give information about the culture, art, and religion of Rome. Claude, who had heard a lot about the Rome, is now disappointed. He wrote to his friend Eustace:

9"Rome disappoints me much;
I hardly as yet understand, but
*Rubbishly* seems the word that
most exactly would suit it.
All the foolish destructions,
and all the sillier savings,
All the incongruous things of past
incompatible ages.
Seem to be treasured up here to
make fools of present and future".

He also tells his friend about that revolution which was going on in Rome. His comments on this topic reflect
his ideas. He is in favour of this fighting which is for freedom. He has sympathy for the Italian people but is not ready to do something practically. In response to his friend's question 'why you not fight' ? He gives many causes:

10 "In the first place, I haven't so much as a musket;
In the next, if I had, I shouldn't know how I should use it;
In the third, just at present I'm studying ancient marbles;
In the fourth, I consider I owe my life to my country".

Claude is a confused person who is unable to take a decision at right time. This poem sums up Clough's attitude towards life and religion. Claude's refusal to compromise results in his defeat. His hesitation on making decision is the root cause of his failure. 11 "He is always in a state of flux and reflux of thought. He cannot make up his mind whether he likes the girl, or whether he would take the trouble to save her life if she was in danger".

Claude finds a very little difference between politics, religion and society. In all these spheres, custom and convention are the standards of morality and behaviour. All are governed by artificiality. He is worried
because of the condition of religion. He finds no Christian faith.

"No, the christian faith, as I, at least, understood it,
Is not here, O Rome, in any of these thy churches;
Is not here, but in Freiburg, or Rhims or Westminster Abbey".

He writes the detail of war which was going on in Italy. This war made the condition of country worse. He gives the picture of that city which is facing war.

"Ere I leave, the caffé is empty,
Empty too the streets, in all its length the corso
Empty, and empty I see to my right and left the condotti".

He also writes about his inability to take action against injustice, which he hates. He is seeing the bloodshed but he can't give witness :

"So, I have seen a man killed!
An experience that, among others!
Yes, I suppose I have: although I can hardly be certain,
And in a court of justice could never declare I had seen it".

Clough's sympathy for these revolutionists was based on personal observation. He is disappointed with the failure of revolutionists. This failure reminds him of the
reform of England which was brought by the working class of his country. He blames England for this defeat because it had refused to help Italian people. He has hatred for the Pope and France who were disloyal towards Italians. He writes:

15"I nevertheless, let me say it, could in my soul of souls,
this day, with the Gaul at the gates, shed One true tear for thee, This poor little Roman republic!
What, with the German restored with Sicily safe to the Bourbon,
Not leave one poor corner for native Italian exertion?
France, it is foully done".

Doubt and struggle were the ruling tendencies of Clough's time and this poem reflects the influence of these tendencies on poet. Claude, the hero of this poem, is always in doubt. This poem is a love story in battle-ground. Claude is telling about revolution, side by side, he gives information about the progress of his love affair with Mary Trevellyn. He is attracted towards her but is not ready to admit this fact. His hesitation to acknowledge his feelings for Mary, is due to that hatred, which he has for the class, she belongs.
Middle-class people these, bankers very likely not wholly
Pure of the taint of the shop".

He feels ashamed of his love affair because of his hatred for the people belonging to that strata of society as he does not want to have any association with them,

Is it, — the horrible pleasure of pleasing inferior people?
I am ashamed my own self; and yet true it is, if disgraceful
That for the first time in life I am living and moving with freedom".

Although this is a simple story, there lies a deep sincerity in it. "But the sincerity of the Amours-de-Voyage is the painful sincerity of a man scrupulously anxious not to think too well of himself or too hopeful of life. The power displayed is often the power of insight into the under-side of human nature - into the doubts, weakness, and self-distrust, after some transient outburst of the old enthusiasm".

Claude, is a mouthpiece of the age in which Clough was living, and that age was going through changes. Everyone was in dilemma about religious beliefs and scientific theories. So the effect of age could be seen in this poem. "Claude, the hero of this epic, in a dressing gown,
goes hither and thither like a blown leaf. Rome, which he finds 'merely marvellous mass of broken and castaway wine-pots', profoundly disappoints him".

This is the reason that he fails to get his love. When he is successful in taking a decision, he finds that Travellyen's has left Rome because of war. He goes behind them but misses them everytime. Till now he is not very much enthusiastic. He follows them half heartedly. At last he gives up the chase. He says:

20"Let me, then, bear to forget her.
I will not cling to her falsely;
Nothing factitious or forced shall important
I will let myself go, forget, not try to remember".

But it is very difficult. He makes a declaration about himself that he is a coward. He feels that he is week.

21"But it is odd when it comes. So plumb
I the deeps of depression,
Daily in deeper, and find no
Support, no will, no purpose
All my old strengths are gone".

He blame to faith for this failure

22"Great is fate, and is best".

And he decides to seek knowledge which is more important than love. Although
"Knowledge is hard to seek, harder get to adhere
do.
Knowledge is painful often; and yet when we
know,
We are happy".

Thus in the end of poem the hero has achieved nothing. It is a serious theme treated in a satiric manner, and the appeal of the poem lies in the universality of this theme: the conflict between absolute idealism and practical realism. Claude is, in this sense, Everyman who must face the problem of reconciling one's theories with the harsh realities of every day practices. His failure, dramatized in terms of his conflict over the natural and artificial, is his refusal to make any kind of compromise. His uncompromising attitude is the main cause behind his alienation. This alienation is different from Philip's alienation as Philip is against the inequality or injustice. But Claude's loneliness is due to his hesitation. Although he considers all those events which are going on around him but when some action is required then he keeps himself away both in love and war. Amours-de-Voyage is about a different kind of alienation, alienation from the self. Written in 1849-1850, the period when Clough said he 'could have gone cracked at time', the title of this poem is
ironic, for love is something like all feelings — that the hero can not experience. The poem may well be Clough's masterpiece on account of the perfect harmony that subsists between what might be called the objective correlative - the complicated civil and foreign war being waged in the streets of Rome, and the war, equally futile, downed, and piecemeal - like the man whom Clough saw incongruously carrying a canon ball through placid streets — going on inside Claude. The hero, like Rome, is waiting, latent, hoping to erupt into decisive feeling but unable and unwilling to do so at the right time".

The poem stands as a landmark of the age, characterized by paralysis of action through doubt, and lack of real purpose brought about by the conflicting claims of religion and science.

Clough's most ambitious and long work is *Dipsychus* which represents various aspects of his thought. This poem consists of a series of dialogues between the poet and an attendant spirit. The theme of this poem is the conflict between the tender conscience and the outside world. It is a remarkable work in the field of pessimistic and melancholic poetry. The purpose of *Dipsychus* is to depict a
spirit divided against itself in its battle with good and evil, pleasure and pain, faith and doubt, and all the most complex problems of life. In this poem we see the traces of the intellectual and religious struggle that began at Oxford.  

26"Clough wrote Dipsychus under the impulse of the shocks his intellect and emotions had been receiving and in this poem there is nothing to fight for except perhaps the very self".

That was the age, when scientific discoveries were challenging religious belief and everyone was in dilemma. Those changes which were made by science in religious sphere were not acceptable to conservatives. Clough was also influenced by the religious controversies of his time.

27"He passes through the great sinful streets of Naples, and sees there the result of nineteen centuries of so-called Christianity; and the sight rings from him the cry.

Christ is not risen, no -

He lies and moulders low, christ is not risen".

He is shocked by the present condition of religion. In the modern life no ancient opinion no old tradition, no old age belief is safe. The meaning of morality and religion has undergone a marked change. He is not happy with this
change in religious sphere but is unable to act immediately and this paralysis of action is mocked by the spirit. The spirit tries to convince him for submission to the ways of the world which are not too honest. *Dipsychus* finds it difficult. He insists on making a compromise between two different tendencies. He gives stress to connect the religion with daily life. He is in favour of patching up with science if time demands and in this way he is like Phillip who felt the need of compromise between old and modern values. But he is more courageous and practical than any two other heroes of Clough's poem because he faces the situation and does not escape from reality like Philip, on the other hand:

28"The spirit ... then, is a representative of the two extremes which any man must avoid: This compound of convention and impiety. This mongrel of uncleanness and propriety.' He seems to uphold either the freest license in all things - sex, religion, politics - with utmost propriety. For him, no compromise is possible".

Thus throughout the poem, there is a controversy between the views of *Dipsychus* and the spirit. The spirit insists that he should enjoy every moment of this life and not to think about right or wrong. But Dipsychus hesitates
to perform that act which is against religion. When spirit fails to convince Dipsychus for submission then it asks him to follow the customs and rules of church. So the spirit is in favour of choosing a path between two ways and follow that strictly but Dipsychus insists on finding the compromise between two extremes. This is the attitude of a victorian which was forced to make a balance between science and religion. He wants to enjoy the new scientific discoveries but not at the cost of religion. *Dipsychus* is a representative poem of that age in which religion was questioned by scientific theories. 29"...Dipsychus, unlike Claude, realizes the need for flexibility and growth of the human spirit. With his realistic attitude and his recognition of the positive qualities of naturalism, he comes to know that to face the truth is to have change, change that often involves the deepest kind of pain".

*Dipsychus* reflects Clough's views on religion. It gives the information about Clough's struggle in those days when the poet was suffering much more. He reveals all his experiences in this poem. He finds that the meaning of morality has been changed and he is confused in this new phase. He finds it difficult to decide whether to accept or reject it:
According to Clough, there is only one solution, which can solve the problems of man and that is to make religion a way of life, if religion is connected to the daily life it can be helpful for man. This is the attitude which gives idea about his strong faith in Christianity. Religion imposes a duty on its follower to work for human being. This duty to serve the community would encourage people to help each other. Clough was deeply concerned with the problems of his age and in Dipsychus he deals with those problems which have universal appeal. The essential hesitation in modern thought and the problem of alienation has been expressed by him more clearly than any other poet of the age. 

"In Dipsychus he sees that the machine was a symbol of man's dehumanization and alienation in the modern world."

Dipsychus is a poem of much deeper significance, in which the representative of idealism is defeated by the spirit of the world. Dipsychus, beginning to tire of inaction
and fruitless thinking, decides to find out the terms of surrender to the spirit. But this surrender is not a victory of spirit:

"Not for thy service, thou imperious fiend, Not to do thy work, or the like of thine; Not to please thee, O base and fallen spirit! But one most High, Most True, whom without thee it seems I can not."

This submission is a compromise as the only solution of that problem which was the outcome of the scientific development. Clough is in favour of taking risk for knowledge.

"What we call sin, I could believe a painful opening out Of paths for ampler virtue. The bare field, Scant with lean ears of harvest, long had mocked. The vest laborious farmer. Came at length The deep plough in the lazy undersoil. Down driving, with acry earth's fibres crack, And a few month, and lo! the golden leas, And autumn's crowded shocks and loaded wains Like Keat's Ode to Autumn, these lines reflect Clough's full recognition of man's need for both joy and grief and his spiritual capacity to encompass both."

Clough's poetry is informative of the age he was living in. There were certain doubts, which made poet restless and he chooses poetry as the medium to express
his inner feeling. *Dipsychus* contains more of himself than any other poem. Through the debate between spirit and *Dipsychus*, Clough is expressing his views on religion and its association with society. The religion, to whom Clough belonged was divided in different sects and this discrimination started a criticism on religion. The result was the failure of Christianity because due to different views these sects were unable to satisfy wholly the spiritual longing of man and this was the reason that man started rethinking about his religion. This conflict has been expressed by Clough in *Dipsychus*.

"*Dipsychus* like the Amours, is a poem about human action and the conditions governing it. Always Clough is conscious of a tension within himself. The instinctive, natural man pulls one way....The conditioned man on the other hand, the successor of the boy who had sat too long and listened too hard in Rugby Chapel, pulls another way."

Among victorian readers Clough was best known for his earlier short poems. These short poems were published in a volume called *Ambravalia*. These poems reflect the spiritual conflict of his oxford days and are the truest
expression of the moral and intellectual tendencies, the doubt and struggle towards settled convictions of the period in which he lived. He suffered because he could not conform to the narrow standards of his age. His mind was engaged with the religious controversies at that time when he should have concentrated on his education. He was deeply influenced by the theological controversies of the time at Oxford.

35"...Clough was in trouble always concerning his waning faith; he could not help regretting the creeds which he had outgrown. He wished to 'send his soul into the invisible', and yet was confronted always by visible realities. He hankered after the solution of the problems of life, and was driven back upon doubt."

These short poems have been written at a time when Clough's life was absorbing new influences and qualifying old beliefs. He was convinced with this view that basic beliefs should be re-examined and higher criticism could help to restore man's faith in religion by clearing away all unnecessary dogma and ritual. But this criticism should not be used as a means of attack upon Christianity. He makes fun of the conventional religious practices and
beliefs of his time but perhaps behind this is an idea, to change the attitude of contemporaries towards religion. In *The Latest Decalogue* he asks man to do the right things and not to take religion as a comfortable convention.

[36]"Though shalt have one God only, who would be at the expense of two?
No graven images may be worshipped, except the currency. Swear not at all, for thy
Thine enemy is none the worse:
At church on Sunday to attend
Will serve to keep the world thy friend.
...Thou shalt not steal, an empty feat when it's so lucrative to cheat".

The main idea which is present in almost every poem is that everyone should perform do to-day's duty and rest leave to God. This idea of duty as service is the theme of many short poems as in "*I have seen higher holier things than these*". According to him:

[37]"The summum pulchrum rests in heaven above.
Do thou, as best thou may it thy duty do.
Amid the things allowed thee live and love;
Some day than shalt it view."

In "*Hope ever more and believe, Oman*" the stress on duty is continued:
"Not for the gain of the gold, for the getting, the hoarding, the having,
But for the joy of the deed;
But for the duty to do."

And again in "Last words Napoleon and Wellington", the theme of the poem is duty and service:

"Not stirring words, nor gallant deeds alone,  
Plain patient work fulfilled that length of life.  
Duty, not glory - service, not a throne, inspired his effort, set for him the strife".

"Qui Laborat, Qrat" also stresses the need for good and useful service to the community.

Clough tried to come out of the swirling current of pessimism and uncertainty as can be noticed in his self-comforting and hope inspiring poem "Say Not the Struggle Nought Availath" but he could not be successful in his attempt. In his two poems Epi-straussium and Easterday his belief in higher criticism has been discussed in Easterday. The pessimism of the first part is often cited as proof of Clough's overwhelming grief at the loss of all his orthodox beliefs and as evidence of the doubt that critics claim over-whelmed him for the rest of his life.....Part I is Clough's statement that 'the whole origin of Christianity is lost in obscurity. Part II is his statement of acceptance of the symbolic truths of Christianity."
Duty - that's to say complying expresses poet's repressed emotion and outraged sensibility. To the Great Metropolis, In the Great Metropolis, and O Quino he portrays the conflict between the true realities and false attribute of modern life.

Clough's stress to serve the human being has been carried into his last, unfinished, long episodic poem. *Mari Magno* is a tale dealing with the practical problems connected with love and marriage. There are five story tellers going to New England and Canada. They decided to kill their time by telling tales about love and marriage.

First story is told by the lawyer. It's the story about a student who is interested in becoming a Don and is least bothered about his study. His married cousin advises him to drop that idea and take part into the activities of life. This tale gives stress to connect the religion with the practical life.

Second tale *The clergyman; first tale* describes a youngman's hesitation before committing himself to marriage.

*The Lawyer's second tale* is about human suffering and tears. The theme of this poem resembles to *The Bothie*. 
It tells about those who are dissatisfied with the world, *My tale* praises country's simplicity at the expense of urban sophistication.

Thus one can see that his short poems and long work highlight his ideas on God, Christianity and duty. His religion is closely connected with his social ideas and according to him a poet should be moral and his work should reflect the real life. Also, his work has historical significance as it gives information about the social, political and religious conditions of his age.
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