CHAPTER-V

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Arnold’s critical sensibility acts like an instrument of the best knowledge. We will see next his critical sensibility in action - his social criticism, a critic of society. This sub-unit of the 6th Chapter will highlight Matthew Arnold as a critic of Victorian society.

Arnold as a poet could not continue for long, he spent more time in critical prose writings. The good reason for Arnold ceasing to be poet, can be attributed to his search for infinite possibilities that are still unexplored. This ambitious aspiration took him beyond his craft of poetry, that is why his poetic theory and practice are not tallied. This has already been referred in the foregoing pages. Arnold’s time at disposal did not allow him to devote more time to poetry. That is why, although in his later phase of life he tried his level best to return to poetry, he could not succeed in it. Therefore, his later poems rather tended to be impersonal essays.

However, Arnold’s greatness in his prose writing is far excellent. As Basil Willey puts it, “As a poet he can be ranked amongst the first four or five (shall we say?) of his time; as a literary critic he can hardly be given any but the first place.”

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1 Basil Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies (London: CUP, 1949) 251.
But the prose gave him an opportunity as “physician of the iron age”, the phrase which he used in connection with Goethe. As a physician, he was a good supplier of the beautiful seminal ideas which drastically affected public taste and opinion. Arnold’s prose worked on several fronts like social, political, religious writing till the end of his life. But these several fronts were all united in his conception of culture.

Arnold’s real greatness rests upon his social function of literary criticism. Criticism’s enormous social function can be seen in the title of the essays, namely, “The Function criticism at the Present Time” The two essays as the major manifests are mubeally complimentary. The grand concept of poetry is seen in the second essay.

As already pointed out in the preceding chapters, Arnold’s criticism, social or literary is not different. Literature, life and criticism all do mean the same thing. Aesthetic sense or aesthetic theories all corroborate the life principle. That is why Nirmaljeet Oberoi remarks, “He made no secret of the relationship between his literary opinions and his views on the great question of life and society.”

From this it becomes clear that literary criticism cannot be completely separated or divorced from his writings on society, history and religion. “All his writings,” as pointed out by Susie S. Valentine: Both social and literary direct our attention what he considered the basic weakness of the English nation – their

\[2 \text{ Nirmaljeet Oberoi, Matthew Arnold as a Critic (New Delhi: Creative Books, 1995), p.94.}\]
intellectual provincialism, their self satisfied and Smug Philistinism and their insensitiveness."³

Arnold as a critic was endowed with his sharp sensibility in studying the social phenomenon. The analysis of the social phenomenon is possible only through scientific passion which Arnold had possessed this scientific attitude in literature from the French Writer Science Bureau. But the scientific passion was not only the end in Arnold’s approach, there was a social passion to correct the world and to make right prevail. This was Arnold’s basic point of view of the critical spirit. So, his definition literature is criticism of life holds true. And as Lionel Trilling says, “Criticism, he announced, was the instrument for their discovery and evaluation; the close relationship between literature and life which Arnold perceived and explained gave him his first hold upon his readers.”⁴

Arnold with his scientific view and corrective measures was able to view the contemporary society analytically. The contemporary society looked un-poetical. Arnold found out that there were not required materials or elements for the composition of poetry. Arnold in the essay called “The Function of Criticisms at the Present Time” is deplores the fact that there is not enough critical effort in England. Therefore Arnold says, “Of the literature of France and Germany, as of the intellect of Europe in General, the main effort, for now many years, has been a critical effort; the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy,

history, art, science to see the object as itself it real is’. Because of the lack of this critical spirit, there is not poetry of the best order.

As referred in foregoing pages, poetry to work with, needs its materials and elements. And those materials and elements are nothing but the best ideas. If these materials are not available, creative power has to wait till its materials are ready. It is the critical power that prepares the ground for the creative work.

The distinction between the creative and critical powers consist in the mode of work. As Arnold puts it, “The grand work of literary genius is work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, when it finds itself in them; of dealing divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combination – making beautiful works with them, in short.”

The other side of the function of the critical power is just the analysis and discovery. Arnold is of the opinion that the creative periods are not possible at all times. In absence of such atmosphere, it is the critical power which will create that atmosphere of intellectual and spiritual.

With this background in view Arnold is able to comment on the deficiency of the poetry of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. As a result the poetry of Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth fell short of the high mark. Consequently, Byron’s poetry becomes empty of matters; Shelley’s incoherent and Wordsworth’s lacks in completeness. But Arnold found the creative epochs that of Athens of Pericles and the England of Elizabeth. These periods were filled with glow of national life and thought.

Arnold thinks periods such as the Greek of Pindar and Sophocles, and the period of Elizabeth as animating and nourishing to the creative power. The society is intelligent and alive, and is filled with fresh thoughts. This formed an atmosphere in which a poet can live and work efficiently and produce splendid artistic products. As pointed out earlier such epochs are rare to be seen. In the absence of such periods, Arnold recommends semblance such periods at least in books and readings.

Books and readings, according to Arnold, construct mental world of knowledge and intelligence in which the poet can live and work. But, yet, this is not equal to the actual atmosphere of the naturally diffused life and thought.

In the above consideration it becomes clear that Arnold demands at least the semblance of the atmosphere, the indirect one. Because such an atmospheric helped the German poet Goethe. He was benefited from the many-sided learning and the widely combined critical effort of Germany. Therefore Arnold says, “But
there was a sort of equivalent for it in the complete culture and unfettered thinking of a large body of Germans, that was his strength.”

French revolution of earlier periods finds constant reference in Arnolds writings as a period of national glow and life. The earlier period of the revolution was inspired by the high ideas of Research and Voltaire. In the later phase, the revolution took different turn, which is termed as political and practical Arnold diet not like the later phase as it deviated from its ideal.

Arnold’s whole endeavour was directed against such practical and political consideration. His threefold distinction of creative and critical, thinker and poet, and political and practical as against intellectual and spiritual lay bare the whole social phenomenon in front of us. This social analysis anticipated. Arnold’s concept of culture – a fight against philistine.

Arnold’s views on political and practical consideration mean deviating from the standards of intellectual and spiritual ideas. Things of the mind receive little attention in England. Arnold observes the phenomenon as, “The English has been called a political animal and he values what is political and practical so much that ideas themselves become objects of dislike in his eyes, and thinkers ‘miscreants’…”

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Things of the mind can be interpreted as instinct of the mind, disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects for its own sake. This instinct of the mind prompts to know the best that is known and thought in the world without any other consideration whatever. This, according to Arnold, as a true act of criticism.

Arnold has used the world ‘instinctive mind’ for the curiosity. Although English people do not like this expression, but it really stands for the love of knowledge. This, according to Arnold, will work better, if there is wider link with external world. The specific phrase used by Arnold for wider contact is “the epoch of expansion.” This is possible only when the foreign ideas enter the nation. Obviously, when the nation does not allow any foreign ideas to enter their country, is called the epoch of concentration. Arnold had noticed the benumbing period of the epoch of concentration after the French Revolution. Now Arnold with his sanguine hope believes that the period of expansion is slowly opening in England. Therefore he emphasizes that the period should be fruitfully used, and the criticism should be seriously concerned with it. Arnold sums up the very function of criticism as, “The rule may be summed up in one word, disinterestedness. And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called ‘the practical view of things’, by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects where it touches.”

Arnold's critical phase 'disinterestedness' is borrowed from the Indian sacred book, Bhagavadgita, about which once Arnold recommended its reading to his Friend Hugh Clough, to correct his poetical work. Arnold’s aspiration towards the best gives him right direction on the path of critical endeavour.

The connotation of the word in Bhagavadgita is its genuine purity or devotion to the something great, the ultimate reality. Thus, heart divested of all worldly ties finds its pleasure in the spiritual reality. This phrase really embodies grand concept of critical endeavour. And it really becomes under current in the whole endeavour of critical pursuit of Arnold.

Thus Arnold’s critical pursuit moves in all direction, widening its horizon in search of something the best that is known and thought in the world. And thereby creating the fresh knowledge and communicating that fresh knowledge. And one’s sense of judgment mingles with it for the better consideration. Therefore Arnold has discouraged the trend of the English people solely relying upon current English literature. He wants his countrymen to dwell much upon foreign thought so that their outlook can be broadened. Hence, he recommended the great -literature to the current one, the more unlike his own.

Thus Arnold has recommended a future course of critical action to the many sided approach to one great end intellectual and spiritual progress. As Arnold puts it, "... the critical spirit, is a criticism which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint
action and working to a common result; and whose members have, for their proper outfit; a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern Antiquity, and ‘of one another.”

To guide the intellectual life of English people Arnold had thought of an Academy. This was after the model of the French Academy. Arnold had expected the benefit that would accrue to English letters by the establishment of an English Academy. Arnold’s motive behind this was to explore in every field from the field of journalism to poetry and to see what English energy might gain from ‘French order. In this connection Lionel Trilling speaks of the beneficial effect as, “An Academy, he indicated, would control the helter-skelter laissez faire of English thought. Criticism’s function was to determine it and the Academy might well be the critic enlarged and endowed with the prestige of establishment. It might serve as a centre for the best opinion of the time, checking the whim of the individual, advancing his talent.”

Arnold with sound knowledge background was a skilled physician, and was interested in studying the Victorian society. To Arnold’s sharp sensibility, the contemporary England revealed that which was much unwanted. They are its parochialism, its provincialism, its Vulgarity, its lack of centrality, its lack of contact with the great European movements. All these faults were leading English people towards anarchy.

12 Trilling, 200-201.
The main motive behind Arnold’s critical writing was to bring about congenial atmosphere in Britain. Arnold wanted all sided development or the harmonious expansion of society. The story of Elizabeth Wragg mentioned in the essay, “The function of criticism at the Present Time” is a good example of the one sided development in society. Politicians like sir Charles Adderley and Roebuck spoke highly about the Anglo-Saxon vigorous race and its achievements. They expressed their faith in the perfect security and the lasting of unrivalled happiness. But they did not see the other side picture of the British Society.

Arnold was able to see short sightedness in the speeches of Sir Charles Adderley and Roebuck. To this effect Arnold quoted the statement of Goethe as, “The little that is done seems nothing when we took forward and see how much we have yet to do?’ Clearly this better line of reflection for weak humanity so long as it remains on this earthly field of labour and trial.”¹³

In Arnold’s view there remains vast field. Yet to be achieved. In this context Criticism asks a simple question—what about the case of the poor, Elizabeth Wragg, who murdered her illegitimate child out of starvation? And she is now in prison. This disparity, Arnold says, symptom of one sided growth in society which is not a good sign. And the criticism discharges its true function in the words of Arnold as, “There is profit for the spirit in such contrast as this; criticism serves the cause of perfection by establishing them.”¹⁴

Arnold was quick to observe the time spirit in which there was predictable shift from aristocracy to mass democracy. The nineteenth century England saw the triumph of democracy in France, and Arnold realized that if England were to follow the example set by France, drastic change had to be brought about in her social structure.

Culture and Anarchy published in 1869 is an extended study of social criticism. The book is based on the searching analysis of contemporary society depicted on a broad canvas. Then England was passing through political and social unrest. The defect of Gladstone's Reforms Bill in 1866 give rise to a determined agitation for the extension of suffrage. Hyde Park Riot erupted and destroyed its railings for a half mile. Feminism, trade union and anti-Catholicism were also rampant at this time. Arnold gives the description analytically of such tendencies taking place in the following words: "... this and that man, and this and that body of men all over the country, are beginning to assert and put in practice an Englishman's right to do what he likes; his right to march where he likes meet where he likes, ether where he likes, not as he likes, threaten as he likes, smash as he likes."15 All such tendencies, according to Arnold, are symptoms of anarchy.

In the first chapter of the book, Culture and Anarchy, Arnold by the standard of culture helps to know the so called materialistic opulence. Things like coal, railways, machines, wealth and population can lead but to vulgar materialism. People engrossed in these things are called philistines who are

15 Matthew Arnold “Culture and Anarchy” Ed. Collini 85.
common and ordinary. But culture is for the combination of beauty and intelligence. Arnold writes of these two ingredients as "... the truth that beauty and sweetness are about these two ingredients Arnold writes as, 'the pursuit of perfection, then', essential characters of a complete human perfection".

Arnold now realizes the difficulty of implementing cultural task in the English life. English people had started expressing this liberty and freedom. As a result unruly behaviour of the masses was perceptible in the Hyde Park Riot. In order to curb such wanton acts, Arnold felt the need of the Central Authority. In his searching analysis he finds Victorian society consisting of three classes viz., the Barbarians, the philistines and the populace.

The Barbarian or the aristocracy are as children of the established facts, inaccessible to ideas; their culture was entirely exterior. It consists chiefly in good looks and complexion distinguished manner, high spirits and politeness. However, the aristocratic class possesses an image or shadow of sweetness, but sadly lacks the second chief ingredient of perfection viz., light. They are more lured by the irresistible charms worldly, splendour, security, power and pleasure.

It was in the essay on the "Heine" that Arnold first used the Word 'Philistine' to denote the middle class. He defines philistine as a strong, dogged, unenlightened opponent of the chosen people, the children of light. The middle class had energy, seriousness and self reliance, but failed miserably where

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Matthew Arnold "Culture and Anarchy" Ed. Collini 72-73.
intellect, knowledge and taste were concerned. They possessed matter the spirit of beauty nor the spirit of light and were afflicted with definite type of religion. The reason for this dismal and deplorable state of affairs was that in the seventeenth century, 'the great English middle class, the Kernel of the nation, and whose intelligent sympathy had upheld Shakespeare, but later entered Puritanism which lasted for two hundred years. The middle class in the seventeenth century had imbibed hellenic spirit, but later Puritanism entered them and lasted for two thousand years. Puritanism subsumed Hebraism, the principle of moral conduct, but not Hellenism, the principle of sweetness and light.

As for the populace, that vast portion of the raw and undeveloped working class, just emerged from their hiding place, were asserting their privilege of doing as he likes. None of these classes proved to be the deserved centre of authority. As seen in the proceeding paragraph, Barbarian were inaccessible to ideas, the philistines were Hebraic and the populace were raw and bind. The members of each of these classes were solely intent upon doing as they liked, which meant following the dictates of their ordinary selves. But thee are group people who are called aliens or the best selves, who rise above all petty considerations of their class; and they are fit to be considered to entrust the state authority. Therefore Arnold says “But by our best self we are United impersonal at harmony.”

Arnold considered the State Authority as repository of the collective best self of the nation. The state would be above all classes and sects, synthesizing

their diversities and resolving their conflicts. State as the central authority is valid defense of Arnold against anarchy.

However, the society of his day was slow to respond to his advice. In friendship Garland, his trenchant criticism against, British Philistinism is voiced through the view of Arminius, Baron Van Thunder-Ten Troncleh a scion of Prussian nobility. He rages against the English system of education English law and legal administration and repeatedly denounces the middle class for its worship of personal liberty, industry, publicity and Mormonism. The exposition of this attack was aimed at middle class which was growing as the potential rulers of the future.

Arnold warned them unless they thought a little move and bustled a little, they would not be at the top of the next historical wave. Therefore with this foresightedness Arnold wanted compulsory education. Especially to middle class and at large to all classes. A equal pressure should be exerted on all classes for proper training and instruction.

Matthew Arnold was the most representative writer of his age. His writings reflected the intellectual, social, political and religious thoughts. What emerges from his critical writings is a strong bias towards perfect harmony, or balance in society. He was aiming at classless society of morally responsible citizen imbued with neighbourly love, such motives, as these, Arnold terms social and they form the base upon which culture of an individual and the society in which he lives, are
Arnold’s literary criticism cannot be completely separated or divorced from his writings on society. All his critical writings are directed against un congenial atmosphere in Victorian society. More than any other Victorian critic, it was Arnold who focussed our attention on the peculiar problems faced by this age of transition since one of his main concern was to awaken public consciousness to the signs of the times. The transition was an era of upheaval in the social and political life of the English nation as the society was slowly evolving into democratic, urban-industrial one from semi-medieval agricultural society. Basil Willey observes this scene as, “which make culture and Anarchy (in particular) a masterpiece of ridicule as well as a searching analysis of contemporary society.”

Arnold is not a silent spectator, an indifferent mystic wholly absorbed in transcendental aspect of his self-close observation by Arnold, his contemporary society awakens in him a social responsibility. Instead of plunging headlong into social evils of the society as a politician, he takes recourse to literature. Therefore, there is not difference between Arnold as a literary critic and social critic. As Basil Willey puts it, “Things in England being what they are”, he wrote soon after the book was published, I am glad to work indirectly by literature rather than directly by politics. Arnold was convinced of the ‘beneficent function’ of literature and speaks of the immense work it has to do in the middle region between religion and science.  

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18 Willey 234.
19 Willey 255.
Arnold next surveys the English scene, analyzing the whole structure of society. He sensed mechanical nature in Victorian society. Clinton Machann observes, “The economics of culture are a mechanical and material civilization that stifles the inner life of the individual, an unsympathetic spirit of competition, and an intense energetic absorption in specialized pursuits.”

Arnold pin points to mechanical elements which have engulfed British Society. The English people have much faith in machinery. In the Arnold’s consideration it stands for secondary importance, simply as a means to an end. Therefore Arnold says, “Faith in machinery is, I said, our besetting danger; often in machinery most absurdly disproportioned to the end which this machinery, if it is to do any good at all, is to serve; but always in machinery, as if it had a value in and for itself. What is freedom but machinery? What is population but machinery? What is coal but machinery? What are railroads but machinery? What is wealth but machinery? What are even, religious organizations but machinery? Now almost every voice in England is accustomed to speak of these things as if they were precious ends in themselves and, therefore had some of the characters of perfection in dissolubly joined to them.

In the above paragraph, it becomes ample clear that the so called achievements and progress of the British Society during 19th century was of secondary importance. Arnold’s view of considering them as machinery is giving due importance to them. But the ultimate goal does not lie with them. In England

21 Matthew Arnold "Culture and Anarchy" Ed. Collini 63.
people also believe in one sided development. Arnold here administers an antidote, namely, culture to these ills of society. The men of culture give the least importance to these developments; but they care for over all development in society which is awakened in the atmosphere of sweetness and light. Light disseminates the best knowledge; sweetness spreads the gospel—of to make reason and will of God prevail.

Another besetting evil is individual freedom-doing as one likes. For instance, freedom or personal liberty is one of those things, which the English people worship in and for itself. But according to Arnold this is a symptom of anarchy. As Fraser Neiman, puts it, “By anarchy, he also meant inward signs; specifically, these were ‘the want of sensitiveness of intellectual conscience, the disbelief in right season (and) the dislike of authority’ that characterized for him the typical Englishman. By culture on the other hand, he meant authority the authority—of a national church and of the state, hypostatized as ‘the best-self’ of the nation; he also meant inward ripeness, the Socratic admonition ‘know thyself’, and the admonition of Jesus ‘Be ye therefore perfect.”

Arnold next surveys the English scene, analysing the structure of English society consisted of different classes. Everyone knows this classification of English society into Barbasians, Philistines and Populace. At the same time Arnold explores the dangers of conferring central authority on one of the three classes into which the society is divided. V K Gokak observe this classification

22 Fraser Neiman, Matthew Arnold (New York: Twayne) p.105.
as, "When Matthew Arnold spoke of the barbarian, the Philistine, and the populace, and divided the English society of his time into these three classes, he was looking for signs and traces of culture with a great deal of scepticism and frustration. The rich man who does not care for culture; the middle class man who is satisfied with his narrow success, and thinks in his self-importance, that there is nothing else worth acquiring; and the populace which is struggling all the time for mere subsistence, having hardly any time for the finer things of life."²³

Finding lack of true culture in all these classes, Arnold concludes that none of these classes is competent enough to hold the reins of government. But Arnold finally resolves that central authority (state) for the maintenance of civilization is safe in the hands of a group comprising the best individuals (aliens) belonging to each of these classes.

Arnold next proceeds to probe into the different predominant tendencies of the English society. The two tendencies according to Arnold are: Hebrasim and Hellenism. The two tendencies in their extremity are liable to upset the balance of society leading to anarchy. He views the present milieu as one given to Hebrarism; a philosophy which supports ‘action’ in lieu of “Hellenism” which advocated ‘thinking’.

Basil Willey remarks “Arnold attributes to the Hebraising Philistines (an odd paradox, yet so it is: they are children of Israel but not children of light) the

main defects of contemporary England: its parochialism, its provinciality, its vulgarity, its lack of centrality, its lack of contact with the great European movements, and even with its own most venerable tradition."24 Here in this analysis, Arnold acts as an psychologist in pin pointing exact malady of the situation in" psychological make up of the British people.

Arnold’s remedial suggestion is praiseworthy. He recommends synthetic approach to the problem in order to come at best at all points. The combination of the two tendencies in the proportionate balance is to arrive at the state of perfection.

Coming to the prevalent pressing issues of the time Arnold analyses them and pronounces his own judgement to resolve. Liberal practitioners were bent upon in disestablishing Irish Church. Liberals, who are non-conformists, have a fetish or a stock notion on their wrong interpretation of Christ’s words: “My kingdom is not of this world”. This has led them to hate any religious establishment. Here Arnold supports state intervention in the field of religion if the state is of all its citizens without the fanaticism of any of them.

Another issue based on The Real Estate Intestacy Bill. According to the Bill, if a man dies without maulers his will land would be distributed, equally among all his children, culture, according to Arnold, demands close examination of the situation by arriving at intelligible law of things.

24 Willey, p.258.
Arnold objects to another Improper Bill to be passed by liberals. It is allowing to marry the sister of his dead wife. Arnold makes fun of it as, Solomon, who had several hundred wives and mistresses. Interests of the liberals in passing this bill shows their improper desire for its own sake. Arnold exposes it satirically. Free Trade Policy without state intervention for the well being and happiness of the state. But contrary to it, the policy of true trade has not reduced poverty in England.

As regards to population liberals had wrong notion. They think that children are sent into this world by God and that God takes pleasure in endlessly increasing the number of living beings on this earth. In all these cases, Liberals lack intelligible law of things. Arnold’s culture, all in all, acts as an antidote to all such social ills.

Arnold has responded as an honest critic to his own contemporary society, and has performed his job as a critic of society.

Arnold’s second phase of life tends to be predominantly religious. He wrote some books which certain leading religious ideas. They are St. Paul and Protestantism (1870) Literature and Dogma (1873), God and the Bible (1875) and Last Essays on Church and Religion (1877). Out of these works Literature and Dogma stands out Prominently. Douglas Bush Writes. “In the preface to the popular edition (1883) of literature and Dogma Arnold spoke of this as, among all
his books in prose, "the one most important (if I may say so) and must capable of being useful"...  

Some critics did not like Arnold’s concern with traditional religious texts and his comments on them. To them, Arnold, did not seem to be an expert in that field. Arnold himself as an unorthodox man had cultivated his father’s liberal spirit. And his specific fields were poetry and criticism. Even his liberal friends also did not like his condemning the book of Bishop Colenso. But Basil Willey shows Arnold’s concern with religion as, “I make no apology, then, for devoting most of the ensuing remarks to his religious writings; they are not only relevant to the purpose of the present book, but they are also the corner-stone of Arnold’s work. Arnold is commonly thought of as the apostle of Culture and Poetry, but to him religion was the highest form of culture and of poetry.”

But to ignore Arnold’s religious concern is to fail to understand the real import of religion that too in the time-spirit. His job of criticism actually culminates in religious views. When the religion was on the verge of losing its significance, it was Arnold who gave sustenance to religious belief. Arnold’s mind is in perfect rhythm with the changing situation of life. Arnold in his religious views, was a true son of his father. He followed Thomas Arnold’s readiness to follow the lead of Coleridge and the German’s in entertaining more

26 Willey, p.253.
enlightened views on scripture interpretation. Arnold wanted to add more progressive views to religion even to the extent of transcending his father.

Arnold had already noticed the time-spirit fast marching. In the changed context of life, he performs his job of a critic very appropriately. Arnold wanted from his countrymen receptive mood in this context. Failing to this, his countrymen will be in the ridiculous position to meet with the time-spirit. As Basil Willey puts it. "Arnold's aim was not to awaken the English from their provincial unconsciousness: the time spirit would soon do this in any case. His aim was to supply them with a new and true base for their religion, so that when the inevitable awakening came it should not lead them to reject Christianity itself along with their untenable traditional beliefs."^27

Arnold's religious and Biblical criticism grows directly out of his writings about culture. Arnold felt at this juncture his critical responsibility to voice his opinion on religious matter in an age of scientific scepticism. Arnold had attended religious services regularly and had defended the Church of England as a national institution. He wanted the Dissenters to came back into the fold. This is one constant ringing note in the essay called "Culture and Anarchy" in the establishment national church.

As the Victorian society was being governed by the scientific spirit, and there was difficulty in accepting supernatural facts. Therefore the main objection

^27 Willey, p.265.
to popular Christianity was not its moral principles but intellectual revolt against its miracles and metaphysics.

The Orthodox theologians had already, through their abstruse thinking made religion unsound and untenable to the masses. Hence, Arnold endeavoured to free religion from belief in an anthropomorphic deity. He also wanted religion to be freed from belief in miracles, prophecies. He wanted to treat Bible not as rigid fixed and scientific, but as fluid, passing and literary.

Arnold sensed the fact that men who recorded Bible used hyperbolic language and the personality of Jesus, being beyond their grasp, had misrepresented him. Therefore the prophecies and miracles should not be taken literally. He also felt that the reporters could err and did err.

Arnold in trying to explain the concept of God, he simply did not believe him as a person as an intelligent governor of the universe. This fact was not verifiable. Therefore he defined God, the Eternal not ourselves, that makes for righteousness. In the beginning the Israelites perceived God in the anthropomorphic concept but with the passage of time extra beliefs were added.

Arnold had implicit faith in the righteousness which he, as mentioned in proceeding paragraph considered as God. And this righteous conduct was three-fourths of life. So Religion to Arnold was more than mere morality, it was morality touched by emotion. In other words, it was love of righteousness that
kindles the heart. And, therefore, God should be sought through experience and feeling, but not through metaphysical speculation. The efficacy of conduct, according to Arnold, leads to salvation and righteousness which, in turn, brings about life and happiness. So the truth of religion cannot be proved simply by murals and metaphysics. Instead, it should be through personal and practical experiment.