CHAPTER – V

ANALYSIS OF
LATER ESSAYS
In the previous chapter, *Nature*, Emerson’s first book and five essays from the first series of Essays has been discussed in detail. Emerson’s concept of spiritualism based on his transcendental beliefs has been discussed with reference to the six essays. Emerson’s basic idea of the spirit within man, the centrality of Man, the primacy of the present over the past and the relationship between man and nature is present in all the essays. So, in this chapter, four essays from the *Second Series of Essays* and one from *The Conduct of Life* will be taken up for discussion. The essays are “The Poet,” “Experience,” “Nature,” “Politics” from the *Second Series of Essays*, and “Fate” from *The Conduct of Life*. The ideas that Emerson explores in the *Second Series of Essays* are amplifications of the themes he had written in *Nature* and his earlier prose and poetries. The essays clarify his thought for the readers.

The *Second Series of Essays* was published in the year 1844. The volume contained nine essays. They are “The poet,” “Experience,” “Character,” “Manners,” “Gifts,” “Nature,” “Politics,” “Nominalist,” and “Realist,” and “New England
Reformers.” This volume of essays is less challenging but more realistic than the *First Series of Essays*, both in subject matter and in style “Experience” and “politics” which are more practical in its subject matter dominate this series instead of idealistic essays like “Self-Reliance” and “The Over-soul.” Donald Yanella in the book *Ralph Waldo Emerson* wrote:

> Rightly constricted, occasionally pointed and even poetic, most of the essays are rich in rhetorical power and vigorous in their insights and assertions.¹

We can see a certain quietness of the bold and revolutionary voice. The vigorous assertions of his Transcendental faith gave way to a subdued voice which are controlled by the experiences of life. Two important factors are responsible for this change of tone between the two series of essays. One was the death of son Waldo in January 1842 and the other was his lack of vigour and energy brought by his age. Emerson also began to ‘demonstrate a renewed interest in societal relations,’² and we can this from the various essays of the second series. Instead of challenging the set norms and tradition of the society, there is a sense of deliberation in this *Second Series of Essays*. The most striking example of this fact is the essay, “The poet,” which is the first essay of this series. This essay is Emerson’s fullest statement on the function of a poet. Emerson attached two mottoes to the essay to indicate its basic theme. Some material in this essay is from the lecture “The poet” from the series Emerson gave called “The Times” between 1841-42. Again, some of the ideas express in the essays are also from his journals. The importance of the present essays lies in the theoretical relation between fine art and transcendental
philosophy which it expresses. As elsewhere with Emerson’s essay, the ideas express here can also be seen in his poems, journals and prose writings. In the book, *Emerson Centenary Essays*, it is written:

The poet which opens Essays: Second series is the result of Emerson’s rethinking of the whole question of who the poet is and what his vocation was to be.3

In the essay, Emerson presented his thought on the role of the poet and also on the theory of poetry. The poet completes the portrait and doctrine of the individual by adding the necessity of expression to the fact of being. As “Self-Reliance” is a character for American Life, “The poet” may be a character for American Literature. In the words of Walter Blair and Faust, the poet considers ‘diversities and identities and their relationship in a fashion keeping with the Emersonian metaphysics and dialectic.’4

The essay as a whole is divided into four parts. First, he gives the introduction of the essay. Second, he discusses the nature and functions of the poet. Thirdly, he describes the means and materials he uses in the essay. And the last part contains Emerson’s views on the general state of art and literature in contemporary America. Emerson in the very first paragraph of the essay indicates his central ideas. He expresses concern about the present state of literary criticism and art of poetry. According to him, the art of poetry is in a state of spiritual malaise which only the ideal poet can repair. This is due to the fact that men have lost the instant dependence upon the soul. They could not hear the voice within their soul and thus could not produce great work of art. Emerson’s concept of spiritualism which put
Emphasis on the concept of soul can be seen in this essay also. He wrote in the essay:

It is a proof of the shallowness of the doctrine of beauty...
There is no doctrine of forms in our philosophy.\textsuperscript{5}

Emerson points out four groups of men – esteemed umpires of taste, intellectual men, theologians and poets of an inferior kind. The alleged critics study only rules and make their judgment in a very limited way. The intellectual men also operate on the level of understanding alone and detach opinions and hypothesis from matter. The theologians also fail to operate on the level of reason and believe that spiritual truths are detached from matter. Even poets of inferior kind separate experience from art and write from the fancy instead of the imagination. According to Emerson, all the above mentioned men do not rely upon their soul and could no longer receive the spontaneous instinct from the divine within. But the highest minds, including the master of poetry ‘have never ceased to explore the double meaning.’\textsuperscript{6} or many more meanings of every sensuous fact.

Emerson next goes on to discuss about the nature and functions of the poet. Emerson describes the poet as a representative man and he is unique among all the people. The poet acquaints us with the common wealth and not with his wealth. The poet according to Emerson is a genius who speaks from within. He wrote in the essay:

They receive of the soul as he also receives, but they more.
Natures enhance her beauty to the eye of loving men, from
their belief that the poet is beholding her shows at the same time.\textsuperscript{7}

For Emerson, the poet is the person where his experience is balanced by his power of expression. The poet alone has the power to express adequately everything that he experiences. He can even express hidden mysteries or truths and has the power of expression to convey his insights into transcendental truth.

Emerson next states that the poet shares the universe with two other children. They are the “knower,” or lovers of truth, the “Doer,” the lovers of good. Donald Yanella in the book \textit{Ralph Waldo Emerson} writes, ‘The triumvirate is complete by the poet, the lover of beauty, the “Sayer,” or “Namer.”\textsuperscript{8} The poet is the “Sayer,” or the lovers of beauty. Emerson wrote in the essay:

\begin{quote}
The poet is the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty. He is a sovereign, and stands on the centre...but Beauty is the creator of the universe.\textsuperscript{9}
\end{quote}

The poet perceives the beauty and expresses it for the others. He is beholder of the divine and Transcendental truths which he utters for his fellow men. The poet expresses not only beauty but also truth and good. So, he is greater than both the knower and the doer. The true poet is not just the man who has skill in meter but a man who expresses eternal truths. So, the birth of a poet is the most important event in history. The poet stand poised between the two worlds of reason and understanding and partaking of both, he is able to transform vision into art.
Emerson in the next section of the essay discusses the materials and means use by the poet. Emerson also writes about the importance of symbols in poetry. The poet is fascinated by symbols. Even ordinary people feel the magic of symbols. The poet by an ulterior intellectual perception gives to symbols a power which makes their old use forgotten. He also puts eyes and tongue into every symbol he uses. Through his better perception, the poet stands one step nearer to the mystery of things and sees the flux and metamorphosis which characterize nature. All facts of animal life like sex, nutrition, birth are symbols for him, of the passage of the world into the soul of man. The poet uses the forms according to the life, hidden in them and not according to the form itself. According to Emerson, this is true science and:

By virtue of this science the poet is the Namer, or language maker, naming things sometimes after their appearance, sometimes after their essence... and boundary.10

Emerson in this essay tries to analyze the process by which poetry is written. He not only establishes a relationship between the poet and nature but also describes the transmutation of the facts of life by the genius of the poet. By his use of words, the poet often gives a new meaning to them. Sometimes, he even coins new words.

Emerson also states that the poet uses languages to express his act. The poet has the ability to use both nature and language for the spontaneous creativity of the higher which generates the low. The expression of the poet is not art, but a second nature just like a leaf which grows out of a tree. According to Emerson:

What we call nature; is a certain self-regulated notion, or change; and nature does all things by her own hands, and
does not leave another to baptize her, but baptizes herself;
and this through the metamorphosis again.\textsuperscript{11}

So, nature itself is a creation of spirit. Just as spirit creates the world, the poet creates poems. And both creations are organically related to their creator. A true poet is a genius who eradicates the ugly. He also repairs andreassembles all the things which are dislocated and detached from God. He goes to the root of the matter, understands reality, and so rightly analyses and names the things. \textquote{By means of his superior insight the poet can induce a sort of transcendence,}\textsuperscript{12} which ultimately leads the readers to vision which is similar to the one described in \textit{Nature}. Emerson's first book, The poems which result from the poet's ripeness of thought are a fearless and deathless progeny of the poet's soul. The songs of the poet ascend and leap into the depth of infinite time. The expression of the poet is organic. Like the metamorphosis of things into higher organic forms, the melodies of the poet also rises higher and higher. The poet listens to the sound of nature with a fine ear and tries to write those sounds without diluting or depriving them. So, a rhyme in a poem is not less pleasing then the low sounds we hear from a sea-shell.

Emerson in the essay also writes about imagination which is use by the poet for his poetic expression. Emerson wrote in the essay:

This insight which expresses itself by what is called imagination, is a very high sort of being, which does not come by study... and so making them translucid to theirs.\textsuperscript{13}
The poet relies on his instincts which open new passages for him into Nature. When the imagination of the poet is excited, he is caught up into the life of the universe. His speech is thunder, his thought is law and his words are universally intelligible. Emerson also gives the reason why poets love wine, opium, or other drugs and stimulants. They obtain from these drugs a feeling of exhilaration in order to add to their normal power of imagination and intellect. But these methods are useless as no one can take advantage of Nature by means of such methods. The inspiration from wine and opium is not poetic but false excitement. Emerson wrote:

For poetry is not Devil’s wine but God’s wine. True inspiration comes from the common sense and sights of nature.\(^{14}\)

Emerson in the essay writes that imagination is active in other men also. The metamorphosis it causes excites in the beholder an emotion of joy. The use of symbols has certain power of emancipation and exhilaration for all men. We seem to be touched by a magic wand which makes us dance and run about happily. By reading symbolic poetry, we feel like persons who have come out of a cave or a cellar into the open air. Such is the effect of figures of speech, fables, and all poetic forms upon the common men. Poets are therefore, like liberating Gods. Emerson wrote in the essay:

The poets are thus liberating Gods. The ancient British bands had for the title of their order, Those who are free throughout the world.\(^{15}\)
Emerson view of the power of poetry to emancipate and exhilarate the readers is the common response of all lovers of poetry. Emerson ranks the poet much higher than even the mystic. The poet does not stop at the colour or the form of things, but tries to find their real meaning. The poet makes the same objects a symbol of different meaning at different times. The mystic nails a symbol to one sense only. It remains true for some time but soon becomes false and old. According to Emerson, all symbols are fluxional and even language is vehicular and transitive. For Emerson:

Mysticism consists in the mistake of an accidental and individual symbols for an universal one.¹⁶

Emerson in the essay names Swedenborg as a man who stands eminently for the translator of nature into thought. He was a true poet who uses his insight for proper expression of art. The true poet knows that the same objects appear differently to different men and also at different times. The poet is not deceived by such differences. He penetrates to the essential reality which lies beneath such appearances. He realizes that nature is ever in a flux. It is constantly changing, growing and becoming different.

In the last section of the essay, Emerson makes few observations about contemporary American poets and poetry. He feels that the kind of genuine poet he has in mind is difficult to find in contemporary America. Time and Nature has bestowed many gifts to the Americans, but they still wait for the true poet. Most of the American writers of verse in modern age are wits rather than poets. Even ideal poets are rare.
Art is the path of the creator to express his work. All the artists have the desire to express their works properly and abundantly. A true poet pours out verses in solitude. Most of the things he writes or says are original and beautiful. He does not have doubts about his capacity. He persists till a transcendental power in him brings out what is within him. Poets of genius like Homer, Chaucer and Shakespeare had no limits to their artistic capacity, except the limits to their life-time. Their souls were like a mirror which shows the image of every created thing. For a true poet, there is beauty everywhere and in every condition which he finds himself. No place is devoid of beauty for him to produce great work of art. So a true poet ‘is not merely an arranger, a compiler or composer of meters but a diviner, a prophetic speaker.’

O. W. Firkins in his book Ralph Waldo Emerson writes about this essay:

The essay as a whole is excellent in its well-bred way, but its orthodoxy that is, its Emersonian orthodoxy is decided; it is hardly a good fifer to march at the head of the troop.

In this essay also, Emerson is asserting his basic Transcendental ideas that Nature is symbolic, the universe emblematic. He is also asserting the distinction between Reason and Understanding and also in the belief of the divine presence within each and every individual. He is putting his emphasis on the concept of soul which inspires the poet to produce great work of art.

“Experience” is the next essay which is to be discussed in this chapter. This essay is the second essay in Emerson’s Second series of Essays published in 1844. This essay is one of the most provocative and brilliant essay of Emerson. It has been
the favourite essay of many critics but is not very famous like his essays “Self-Reliance” and *The American Scholar*. This essay was never given as a lecture like his other essays. This essay ‘seems to have been written all at once in a mood of reaction against his earlier idealism, caused by the death of his son.’ The structure of the essay is carefully well-planned and the development of thought in the essay is presented logically and clearly. This essay is based mostly from his journal entries of 1842, the year his first child died of Scarlatina. This essay suggests the whole scope of Emerson’s thinking and idea. So, it has been analyzed twice in detail by W.T. Harris in *The Atlantic Monthly* and F.I. Carpenter’s book *Ralph Waldo Emerson* published in the year 1934. In this essay, we find a world weary and muted Emerson in contrast to the revolutionary and celebrating optimist of the earlier works like *Nature* and “Self-reliance.” Emerson in this essay is influenced by the experiences of life but his optimism and courage of the earlier works remains throughout the essay. O. W. Firkins in the book *Ralph Waldo Emerson* wrote:

> Experience, seems one of the boldest essays in literature, though its boldness has almost a casual air, as if man should blow up a minister by way of connection of the monotony of an evening walk.20

Emerson prefaces “Experience” with a poem describing the solemn procession of the lords of life, the forces that affect all men’s experience of common life. The essay starts with the following lines of the poem:

> The lords of life, the lords of life,
> I saw them pass,
> In their own guise;21
Here, Emerson is describing the lords of life and the whole essay will study these forces which affect men’s life. God is referred as an unnamed presence, an inventor of the game in the poem.

The essay as a whole is divided into eight parts. In the first part, Emerson discuss about reality. He begins the essay skeptically by making a reassessment of the doctrine of self-reliance. The doctrine of self-reliance has been discussed by him in his previous works. And in this essay, he discusses the doctrine in the light of his own experiences of life. In the very first paragraph of the essay, Emerson observes ‘the dream like, almost surreal dimension of human experience.’22 Emerson also wrote in the essay:

Where do we find ourselves? In a series of which we do not know the extremes, and believe that it has none. We wake and find ourselves on a stair; there are stairs below us, which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, which go upward and out of sight.23

Emerson painfully reconsiders man’s relation to spirit and nature in the beginning of the essay. His skeptical attitude is confirmed when we consider the lords of life in the life of every individual. In the essay, Emerson explores the action of these forces on the way we live and understand our lives. Man walks in confusion among these lords of life. But he is comforted by nature, who assures him that the lords will wear another face tomorrow. And the position of men will be in fact, one of ascendency over them. According to O. W. Firkins, the very form of the composition is
suggestive. He also wrote that the essay ‘is packed with matter, but it is not air-tight, there are spaces which favor respiration.’

Emerson in the next part of the essay goes on to discuss the various lords of life. Illusion, temperament, succession, surface, surprise, reality and subjectiveness are the seven lords of life which experience introduce to us. He discusses about illusion and temperament as the first two lords of life. According to Emerson, the experience of life is confusing we lead a life of illusion where we see only the surface. The confusion of life affects our perception of our place in relation to nature. We also remain unaware of our powers. We are unable to see beyond our material existence and utilize the creative vigour that nature has given us. We cannot distinguish between our productive and unproductive efforts. We only see what we are capable of seeing and live a life of illusion. In the essay, he wrote:

Dreams delivers us to dream, and there is no end to illusion...We animate what we can, and see only what we animate.

Emerson next turns to the subject of perspective, to the way temperament and mood affect perspective. According to Emerson, genius is useless if receptivity is limited by some temperamental trait. A man’s talents cannot be effectively applied if he does not care sufficiently for higher truth. The “so-called sciences” that is medicine and phrenology exaggerates temperamental limitations on human possibilities by suggesting that temperament is materially predetermined. Emerson is against this perception of temperament given by the people of medicine and phrenology.
Although temperament does colour our perception and constrains our potential, the material approach to it discounts higher intuitive capabilities altogether. It fails to recognize the direct and spontaneous connection between God and the individual. According to Emerson if virtue is present in every individual, all others thing are not important. There is in the intellect of men an access of another kind of knowledge whose truths are not dependent on sensation for their cause, origin or proof. Emerson wrote in the essay:

> Into every intelligent there is a door which is never closed, through which the creator passes.\(^{26}\)

Emerson in this essay is also asserting his basic Transcendental belief in the consciousness within man capable of being awakened by a higher agency. This consciousness he calls reason and this is more important than understanding. In the essay, when he wrote ‘the definition of spiritual should be, that which is its own experience’\(^{27}\) he is referring to the fact of consciousness, reason being prior to sensory experience.

In the next part of the essay, Emerson discusses about succession. Like temperament, men also need to move in succession from one object of focus to another. Our innate love of absolute draws us towards the permanent but our human constitution requires change of objects. Emerson wrote in the essay:

> Our love of the real draws us to permanence...Dedication to one thought is quickly odious.\(^{28}\)
According to Emerson, every individual represents a particular aspect of human nature and capability. This tendency must be reinforce and capitalize properly rather than to grow in other ways. We must look at the weak as well as the admirable examples as God underlies all of them. Every individual must see the necessity of succession in order to gain an insight into the larger symmetry of things. We must always see the threads of divinity present in the texture of our life. Emerson therefore wrote in the essay:

It needs the whole society, to give the symmetry we seek...Divinity is behind our failures and follies also.  

So, the succession of moods is both an argument for despair when seen from the point of understanding, and for hope when seen with the believing eye of reason.

In the next part of the essay, Emerson discusses about surface. Here, he is asserting every individual to accept life as it comes. According to him, living life is better than thinking about it. The test of life is our experience of it, not our intellections about it. Here, Emerson is also emphasizing his point which he discusses in self-reliance and his other prose works. We must not think about life but go about doing our duties properly. He wrote in the essay:

Do not craze yourself with thinking but go about your business anywhere...Its chief good is for well-mixed people who can enjoy what they find without question.  

So, every individual must face whatever challenges life gives and try to live a balanced life. The balanced individual who accepts life will extract what can be
enjoyed from it. Emerson also advises living to the best of our abilities in the present moment. We must accept our actual companions and circumstances and approach each day as sound and good. We must also try to make the best of what life brings the good as well as the bad. If we expect nothing of life, we will be pleasantly surprised to receive anything at all. But if we expect too much, we will be disappointed inevitably. Life’s gifts are not obtained by analysis, but in the process of living. According to Emerson:

\[
\text{We live amid surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate will on them.}^{31}
\]

Emerson in the essay recommends “the temperate zone” between the ideal and the material. Every individual must be well-mixed in order to avoid the excesses of both materialism and absolutism.

‘Surprise’ is the next lord of life which Emerson discusses. According to Emerson, human life is susceptible to intimations from a higher source. We cannot simply lead an ordinary or measured live. Life is full of surprises. God isolates us in the present so that we respond to our intuition and not to brood over the past and future as so. Both nature and men are impulsive and spontaneous. Emerson in the essay also wrote about this:

\[
\text{Nature hates calculators; her methods are salutatory and impulsive...and the mind goes antagonizing on, and never prospers but by fits.}^{32}
\]

Human intention and design are not always factors in the way life plays out. The most attractive person is the one who exult power incidentally and not directly. The
thought of genius always contain the unpredictable. Our experience of life, too, contains an element of divine inspiration, which won’t bear analysis. Everything in life happens thorough the grace of God. Man’s vital forces are always derived from the eternal. Emerson wrote in the essay:

The ardors of piety agree at last with the coldest skepticism, that nothing is of us or our works...All writing comes by the grace of God, and all doing and having.33

Emerson next writes about reality or the ideal. In this section of the essay, Emerson is emphasizing the nature of the ideal and the means of man’s perception of that ideal. The ideal is always journeying with us. So is the faculty which perceives the ideal, the consciousness. It is this consciousness which makes it possible for man to live from his experience. What men learn is that life is a fabric of objective and subjective realities. Through the consciousness, we also feel the spirit or intuition present in each of us. We must believe in the universal impulse of our receptivity. In this essay also, Emerson is asserting his basic idea of spiritualism.

According to Emerson, spirit is conveyed directly to man, without explanation likewise it is expressed directly through man, in his character and actions. It allows us to influence others without words and even without physical proximity. Emerson wrote about spirit in the essay:

The spirit is not helpless or needful of mediate organs. It has plentiful powers and direct effects.34
Therefore, openness to spirit not only imparts personal force but also allows the ever-greater understanding of life and duty and doctrine of life to transcend any written record.

Emerson in the last part of the essay writes about subjectivity. Human subjectivity is an inescapable force that causes us to project ourselves on to what we perceive in life, of nature, even of God. There is an inequality between the subject perceiving and the object perceived. But we must always rely on our subjectiveness. Subjectivity is another name for self-reliance, for relying on man’s consciousness to rank all sensations and states of mind. Subjetiveness therefore is man’s hope, the principle upon which he must rely to test his experience. According to Emerson, we must live our own lives, think our own thoughts and must keep our focus on the eternal. He also urges us to have patience, to avoid wasting time and be persistent and optimistic. We must always open ourselves to the intuitive insight which will bring the light of our life. So he wrote in the essay:

Never mind the ridicule, never mind the defeat: up again, old heart it seems to say,...be the transformation of genius into practical power.35

Ultimately, genius will be transformed into practical power by a thorough exercise of man’s consciousness. He must wrestles with illusion and temperament, gains something from succession and surface, rediscovers surprise and reality that causes it and closes with subjectivness, the principle behind the exercise itself. Frederic I. Carpenter in Emerson Handbook wrote about this essay:
Beginning with a description of the transitory moods and apparent illusions of individual experience it ends by suggesting how truth can be discovered by piecing together this partial experiences and by seeing life as a whole.  

“Nature” is the next essay which is to be discussed in this chapter. In the book *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Donald Yanella writes that nature ‘enhances the organization and thematic coherence of the entire volume and repeats his predominant concern for the individual in the social context.’ This essay is very carefully and strategically placed among the various essays of the second series. This essay is a short essay which discusses Emerson’s fundamental views and concepts regarding his concept of God, Men and Nature. The essay discusses at length the relationship which men share with nature. This essay also reinforces the central Transcendental concepts of flux and growth which Emerson discusses in his other works.

This essay is included in the *Second Series of Essays*. In the book *American Renaissance in New England* edited by Joel Myerson, it is written that the essay ‘stress on nature’s elusiveness rather than man’s power to fathom her.’ This essay is closely based on the earlier *Nature* of 1936. This essay contains passages having intensity of a lyric. It gives an account of the unchanging laws of nature which cannot be voiced and changed. In this essay, the various ways of nature which are at work are discussed. The glory as well as the mystery of nature; the two polarities of identity and rest; motion and change; and essential unity of all things in nature are discussed in detail. The essay opens with the following lines:
There are days which occur in this climate, at almost any season of the year, where in the world reaches its perfection ... tranquil thoughts.\textsuperscript{39}

In this very first part, the glory and beauties of nature are described by Emerson. This account of nature reminds the reader of Wordsworth, who also glorifies nature. The spring days are nature’s greatest glory where there is joy and delight. Nature is at its best during this time and those people who go to the woods and dales can enjoy the best of nature. When man is all alone in the midst of nature, benign influences flow from the nature to the human soul. Nature thus soothes and consoles and delights every human soul. The sights and sound of nature make us forgot all the politics and personalities of our city or town. We realize that all human invention and urbanization are useless when we see the incredible beauty of nature. It is only when we are with nature, that we can feel the divine presence felt in nature. ‘Coming into nature, Emerson wrote, we come into our own and make friends with matter.’\textsuperscript{40} Emerson thus wrote in the essay:

\begin{quote}
Cities give not the human senses room enough...up to her dearest and gravest ministrations to the imagination and the soul.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

Emerson in this essay is like Wordsworth and other English romantics who were against the urban life and sees beauty in every aspect of nature. Nature provides us nourishment of the body as well as of the soul. Both the physical and spiritual nourishment are provided to us by nature.
According to Emerson, true art only copies nature and seeks merely to enhance the beauty of nature. The scenes and sounds of nature are the music and pictures of the most ancient religions. Nature is the source of all the artistic activity. It is nature which inspires the artist to create beautiful works of art. A man who appreciates the beauty of nature is a rich man. Real people who can use nature to their aid can reach the heights of magnificence. This is the reason why they have ‘their hanging-gardens, villas, garden-houses, islands, parks and preserves.’ They acquire such imitations of nature in order to strengthen their faculty personalities with this aids and adjacent. For Emerson, the real rich people are those whose minds and hearts are who create beautiful works influenced by the beauty of nature.

For Emerson, beauty breaks in everywhere and we can see the beauty of nature everywhere. There is beauty in every aspect of nature and not in any particular landscape or place. So, we don’t need to go distant places such as ‘Como Lake’ or Madura Islands to appreciate real nature. In every landscape, we can find the beauty of nature. The stars at night appear same to the poor as well as the rich. The spiritual magnificence as seen form of nature is same as the open fields of campagna and the deserts of Egypt. Emerson wrote in the essay:

In every landscape the point of astonishment is the meeting of the slug and the earth, and that is seen from the first hillock as well as the top of the Alleghanies...or on the marble deserts of Egypt.

We should try to understand the various ways of nature imaginatively. A casual interest in nature is barren. Man must not make a display of his interest in nature like
displaying his clothes. We should not be frivolous and must try to understand the
mysteries and secrets of nature’s beauty. Literature, poetry and science are the
homage of man to the mysterious secret of nature. According to Emerson, we can
feel God when we are inspired by nature. Nature is like the city of God and true
religion is not praying the false Gods which are certified by the church and
authority. For Emerson, ‘the multitude of false churches accredits the true
religion.’ Here also Emerson is emphasizing his concept of spiritualism which
asserts in the divinity within man. He is also attacking the churches as he did in his
earlier works. The rapture that we can find in nature can never be there if there are
only good men who can appreciate the beauty of nature.

Emerson in the next part of the essay goes on to discuss the active principle
of nature. Nature is always active and men must always feel the energy behind the
various forces of nature. Emerson recorded, ‘From your centre, Nature carries every
integral part out to the horizon, and mirrors yourself to you in the universe.’ Nature
is not to be studied selfishly to achieve our human gains. We cannot understand the
mysterious and hidden forces of nature if we study it selfishly. Emerson also calls
nature ‘Efficient nature’ as it shapes and moulds everything. The science of Geology
has made us aware of the secularity of nature. It has also taught us to discard our
instruments of measurement. Nature has been at work through the ages achieving
higher and higher forms of life.

Nature, according to Emerson has two sides. These two sides are the secrets
of nature. Matter is added to matter and in this way the most complex forms are
created in nature. Things are compounded in nature to give form to a complex thing. Emerson wrote in the essay:

> Motion or change and identity or rest are the first and second secrets of nature: ... Motion and Rest. The whole code of her laws may be written on the thumbnail, or the signet of a ring.\textsuperscript{46}

The working of nature can be seen manifested even in small and minute things. Nature is always consistent though sometimes she pretends to break her own laws. She always keeps her laws but seems to transcend and violate them. For instance, she arms and equips an animal to live on earth yet she also creates another animal to destroy it. According to Emerson, space exists so as to divide creatures. By giving wings to a bird, nature enables it to fly to any place and thus gives a petty omnipresence. If we look at the various workings of nature, we always see a system in transition.

In nature, things are always closely related with one another. A bit of stone is necessary to build a city. In the way, the past and present are related as past is required to make the present. In this way, a house is made by a mason who in turn is made by nature. Thus a basic identity runs through all the surprises and contrasts of the works of nature. The history of nature is inscribed in human brain and it is only because of this reason that he becomes the prophet and the discoverer of nature secret. Every known fact in natural science is understood and verified only by those who are thus alive to the past of nature. The creative principle that permeates nature
is always at work. So, the aim of nature is to re-produce and carry forward its own progeny and everything in nature is designed to achieve this end.

The progress with which the world is made also runs in the mind and character of men. Men are not rational. Every man has an element of folly in his composition. Every man has over faith in the things which he has to do or to say. The poet or the prophet puts a higher value on what he speaks than his hearers do. A great man like Luther declares with great emphasis that God himself cannot do without wise man. Even young and ardent writers do not realize their faith and feels an exaggerated sense of their importance. So, exaggeration is also a law of nature.

So, according to Emerson, there are deceptions in human life and such deception finds their analogy in nature. Appearances are everywhere deceptive. There is in the woods and the waters a certain allurement and flattery. But there is also a failure to yield satisfaction in the immediate present. The poet finds himself no nearer to his dream of beauty even when he is in contact with the most beautiful objects of nature. True nature is still elsewhere. We find all this disappointing as we feel nature is treacherous and is befooling us by her false appearances. But in the end, we must realize that nature is intelligent and holds large promises for us. The mysteries of nature cannot be explained hastily. The secrets of nature are manifold and we cannot deal with nature as we deal with persons. Emerson wrote in the essay:

*We cannot bandy words with Nature, or deal with her as we deal with persons. If we measure our individual forces against hers we may easily feel as if we were the sport of an*
inseparable destiny...of life preexisting within us in their highest form.\textsuperscript{48}

We must instead feel that nature is always on the move to attain higher ends. We must feel the beauty of nature in our heart and feel the divine force of nature present within us.

According to Emerson, we tend to look too much at one condition of nature, namely motion. This has brought uneasiness in our thinking and we feel that we are helpless in the chain of cause and effect. But the movement of the wheels of nature is always balanced. Whenever the impulse to move exceeds, rest or identity comes in to hold the balance. There are always compensations in nature and here Emerson is emphasizing his basic doctrine of compensation. Emerson in the last part of the essay wrote:

And the knowledge that we traverse the whole scale of being from the centre to the poles of Nature and have some stake in every possibility, lends a sublime luster to death.\textsuperscript{49}

This sublime luster according to Emerson is expressed in philosophy and religion in the well-known doctrine of the immortality of the soul. We also learn that the reality of human life is more excellent then what it is considered to be. The divine circulations are always at work, and never linger nor rest. Nature is the incarnation of a thought which in turn becomes another as ice becomes water and gas:
The world is mind precipitated and the volatile essence is forever escaping again into the state of free thought.\textsuperscript{50}

So, every moment of life instructs and so is every object. There is knowledge and wisdom hidden in every form of nature. So, we must realize the various beauties and forces of nature so as to feel the divine presence in nature.

So, this essay as a whole discusses Emerson’s concept of nature as a divine force which made us realize that there is always a cosmic unity between man, God and nature. Through the help of nature, men can feel the divinity present within them. This is Emerson’s basic idea of spiritualism and can be seen in his essay also.

“Politics follows \textit{Nature} in the second series of Essays. So, from a relatively sublime topic on nature and its various manifestations and uses, Emerson in this essay discusses the eminently practical world of politics. Frederic I. Carpenter in his book \textit{Emerson Handbook} writes about this essay. According to him, ‘although this essay deals with a subject distasteful to Emerson it remains one of his best balanced essays.’\textsuperscript{51} Emerson prefixed the essay with a long motto which ends with the following lines:

\begin{verbatim}
Where the statesman ploughs
Furrow for the wheat;
\end{verbatim}\textsuperscript{52}

In the motto, he criticizes the materialistic craze of contemporary America and stresses the need of character, love and wisdom for the establishment of a perfect
state. A perfect state will come only when human nature is transformed, force is replaced by love and truth and honesty replace the political intrigues and selfish nature of human beings. In this essay, Emerson’s remarks about human nature, about the character of political parties, and the manner in which political parties are led by their leaders. His opinions are all based on his observation of day to day life. His idealism appears in his belief that the wise man, a man motivated by love, truth and justice can replace the state presently run by force.

The essay “Politics” offers a powerful defence of the individual against the encroachments of societal institutions. Emerson’s idealistic faith in the importance and greatness of the individual can be seen throughout the essay. ‘The challenge to institutional authority with which he opens the piece springs from the fundamental notion of flux, mutability.’ According to Emerson, the political institutions of the state are not aboriginal. They are all man-made and fragile like a rope of sand. The state must follow the character and progress of the citizens and must not lead them. The essay opens with the following lines:

In dealing with the state, we ought to remember that its institutions are not aboriginal, though they existed before ...they all are imitable, all alterable; we may make as good; we may make better.

To the young people, society appears to be an illusion but an old statesman understands that society is fluid. According to Emerson a good government must ensure the full development of the human personality. The kind of government
which a country has depends entirely upon the character of its people. So, Emerson wrote in the essay:

And they only who build on ideas, build for eternity; and that the form of government which prevails, is the expression of what cultivation exists in the population which permits it.  

Any form of government is an expression of the character of the people. These views of Emerson holds true for the democratic form of government prevalent even now.

Emerson next discusses the two basic objects for which government exists. They are to protect persons and to protect property of the people living in the society. According to Emerson, people possess equal rights in general but their rights on property are unequal like their respective possession of character. One man just owns his clothes, while another owns a huge estate. According to Donald Yanella, ‘measured by modern liberal standards, Emerson’s political position is conservative.’ According to Emerson, in the earliest societies the owners made their own wealth. And it seemed reasonable that laws for property are made. But now property often comes to individual who have not created it. Therefore, there is no justification for law for property. Emerson also rejects the remedies proposed by reformers regarding the laws of property for the reformers themselves are young and foolish. For Emerson, the majority of youths are ignorant and deceivable. And if they cannot put to effect their reforms, then the states would get degraded and
ruined. But there always limitations and consolations and property will be protected as things cannot be trifled. Emerson wrote in the essay:

With such an ignorant and deceivable majority, states would soon see to ruin; but that there are limitations... Things have their laws, as well as men: and things refuse to be trifled with.57

In the next part of the essay, Emerson turns his discussion to the forms of government in America. He is against the cultural and political arrogance of the contemporary America political institutions. Emerson is vehemently opposed to any person or group which tries to impose its will on another. The forms of government must not be imposed upon the society. Rather it must grow organically according to the cultural and political needs of the people. In America, the people have the democratic form of government which has resulted from their own character and their own way of thinking. Democracy is better for the Americans because it accords better with their aspirations.

Emerson in the next part of the essay discuss about the various political parties prevalent in America during his time. According to him, these parties like governments pose threats to the freedom of the individual. These parties which are founded based on some set principles degenerate due to some bad leaders.

It has been said that America allows too much personal freedom and that is why American Democracy is degenerating into anarchy. But according to Emerson, there is no reason for alarm on this because it is through liberty that an iron
conscience develops. The personality of the individual can develop fully when there is freedom of expression. The individual cannot grow and make decisions when there is denial of freedom. This is also an example of Emerson’s idealism which asserts for the individual freedom. Truth, virtue and holiness can only come when there is free and fair expression of every individual. Some limitations or constraints to the individual freedom are a must. But this must come from within the individual and not from without. So, politics cannot be divorced from morality and both are interrelated.

In the next part of the essay, Emerson goes on to discuss about the need for men of character. The guiding principle, according to Emerson, should be fewer laws and less delegated power in the hands of the government. The less the government we have, the better it would be for the people. The misuse of power by the people in governance can be stopped when character is developed in each and every individual. So, the growth of the individual and the appearance of the wire are the only remedies for good government or a state. All things must go to form character. Freedom, education, social intercourses, revolutions must have only one aim, that is, the formation of character. The formation of character is the end and aim of nature. It is the climax of all endeavors of Nature. Emerson wrote in the essay:

That which all things tend to educe, which freedom, cultivation, intercourse, revolutions, go to form and deliver, is character; that is the end of nature, to reach into this coronation of her king.58
According to Emerson, the state exists to educate the wise man and with the appearance of wise man the state comes to an end. According to Emerson, character is something lofty, something sublime, and something enabling. A man of character is one who is move by love and not by hatred. This man has truth, integrity, virtue and respects the integrity of others. Such a man of character can only bring change in the government and society.

In the last part of the essay, Emerson considers the question of self-government. Artificial restraints or the use of physical force should not be the basis of a government. Self-government should be based on moral force and therefore should be the real government. But this will be very difficult as there will always be a government of force where men are selfish. There should be among people a reliance on the moral force. Only then people will realize that society can be maintained without artificial restraints. The state should always be based on the principal of right and love. And people should also have sufficient faith in the power of rectitude. Emerson wrote in the essay:

There is not, among the most religious and instructed man of the most religious and civil nations, a reliance on the moral sentiment,...and a good neighbour without the hint of a jail or a confiscation.\(^5^9\)

So, every individual must depend on their moral feelings and believe in the unity of things so as to maintain a good society. A good citizen, a good neighbour or a person without the threat of fine or punishment can help in maintaining a good society.
So, Emerson concludes the essay by asserting his idea of the centrality and sanctity of the individual. Emerson’s idea of self-government which he emphasized in the essay has not been possible in the modern times. Such ideas of self-government have always been dreamed by idealists and, Emerson is no exception in the respect. Emerson’s idea of idealism and transcendentalism find a forceful expression when he wrote about the potentialities of human character, about the possibility of the emergence of the wise man and about the reliance on the moral feelings. The essay as a whole is a moving and freak assessment of the various realities of the government and state by Emerson. The essay reveals a very cautious and shrewd man observing the political system of his time. It also shows ‘a man capable of translating the essential principles of his transcendental faith into practical political terms.’ The individual freedom which we can see in Emerson’s other works can also be seen here. This is Emerson’s basic idea of his spiritualism which advocates the individual to be free from all constraints so as to feel the divine present within us. This idea of self-reliance which asserts the individual to rely on himself and not to be pulled down by customs and traditions is closely related with the freedom of individual. When an individual is free, then he can think and act according to his own will and thus become a self-reliant person.

“Fate” is the next essay to be discussed in this chapter. This essay is included in *The Conduct of Life*, Emerson’s last major book. This book was published in the year 1860 and contains nine essays. In this book, we find a more mature and pragmatic Emerson. The challenging and revolutionary tone found in the earlier works like *Nature* and other prose works is absent in this book. This book contains
some of the best essays of Emerson and appealed very strongly to his contemporaries. But modern critics have frequently criticized this book for its subtle tone and they preferred the early essays. After reading *The Conduct of Life* Carlyle wrote:

You have grown older, more pungent, piercing:- I never read from you before such lighting-gleams of meaning as are to be found here. The finale of all, that of “Illusions” falling on us like snow-showers, but again, of “the Gods sitting steadfast on their thrones” all the while, what a Fiat Lux is there, into the deeps of a philosophy, which the vulgar has not, which hardly three men living have, yet dreamt of! well done, I say; and so let the matter rest.  

The book contains the two famous and best essays of Emerson. They are ‘Fate’ which is the first essay in the book and “Illusions” which is the last essay. Both these essays deals with ideas which are basically oriental but Emerson wrote it in simple way using examples and metaphors from the modern world. These essays also give every reader a feeling of eternity in their thinking. These essays present original ideas which are timeless in contrast to his earlier address and works. 

In *The Conduct of Life* Emerson is again asserting his idealistic views which he had argued in *The Method of Nature*, which was published in 1841. In the last essay of *The Conduct of Life*, “Illusions”, Emerson reaffirms his idealism which asserts for individual freedom and freedom of the mind. Joel Myerson in his book *A Historical Guide to Ralph Waldo Emerson* wrote: ‘In writing and publishing *The Conduct of Life*, Emerson expected readers to recognize that his emphasis was still
on reverence for nature and thought." Emerson held on to his idealism which he asserts in his early works even in this book. In the book, he wrote that every individual must submit to the number of influences which ranges from fate to culture, to illusion and to subjectivness. But he still held on to his idealism.

Frederic Carpenter in *Emerson Handbook* wrote: “Fate” is a well developed essay, suggesting successive definitions of the idea which make it vivid to the modern reader." This essay is full of passages which are remarkable for the recognition of evil and cruelty which nature and life gives to individual.

The essay offers a clear and fair discussion of a problem which Emerson, like any deeply thinking man, in Melville’s phrase, had pondered from the time he had become intellectually conscious.

The question of fate was a bothersome topic to Emerson who asserts for individual freedom and centrality of man in his early life and works.

Like the other essays of Emerson this essay also starts with a motto which starts with the following lines:

Delicate omens traced in air  
To the lone bard true witness base;  

From the very first paragraph of the essay, Emerson insists on the necessary obedience to the powers of fate and the limitations of life. We are incompetent to solve the problems of our life. We can only obey the polarities that exist in our life.
Even if we want to reform men and society, we are always restrained by the limitations prevalent in nature and in the society. Emerson wrote in the essay:

We are fired with hope to reform men. After many experiments, we find that we must begin earlier... We must begin our reform earlier still, at generation: that is to say, there is Fate or laws of the world.66

Here, Emerson is accepting that fate does play an important part in our life. ‘No longer is he emphasizing and celebrating the self-reliant individuals, the Man thinking, who might mould his own destiny’67 in this essay. The Emerson that we see in the earlier works like New England reforms which asserts for regeneration of individual is absent in this essay. Nevertheless, Emerson faith and his abiding optimism which he maintains throughout his whole life is seen in the essay. So, he wrote in the essay:

If we must accept Fate, we are not less compelled to affirm liberty, the significance of the individual, the grandeur of duty, the power of character, This is true, and that other is true.68

Emerson again insists that necessity does comport with liberty and we don’t know how. This he express in his other essays like “Compensation” and “Spiritual Laws.” Emerson also writes about how people in other countries accept the belief of foreordained fate. The Hindus, Arabs, Turks, Persians and even the Greeks believe that whatever is there in our fate, will take place.

Emerson next goes on to discuss about the terror of life which great men and nations confront.69 Nature sometimes treats men with terror and shock. It does not
always pamper us or treat us nicely. It sometimes gives diseases and calamities and men can’t do anything against it. Providence sometimes is very rude and wild. Nature sometimes acts ferocious and it has it’s up and down. Emerson wrote in the essay:

Providence has a wild, rough, incalculable road to its end, and it is of no use to try to whitewash its huge, mixed instrumentalities, or to dress up that terrific benefactor in a clean shirt and white neck cloth of a student in divinity.  

Emerson gives various examples and demonstrations of the limitations and laws which we encounter in life. So, he concludes the essay by stating about the way people are born. According to him, ‘people are born with the moral or with material bias.’ It is the same with the story of nations or groups. Emerson also discusses the Hindu concept of fate as deeds of a prior state of existence. He also talks about the English Conservatives who are like women and strong natured people like Napoleon. Both types of people meet the same decline in the end.

Emerson continues his analysis and writes about power and circumstance. He also admits the inadequacy of his earlier view that positive power is all that matters and nothing can influence our will and determination. But he concedes that circumstance do play an important role in our life. According to him:

The circumstance is Nature. Nature is what you may do...Once we thought, positive power was all. Now we learn, that negative power, or circumstance is half.
So, circumstances do play a very important part in human life. This circumstance may also be called as Nature. According to Emerson, ‘The book of nature is the book of Fate.’\textsuperscript{73} So, nature plays the role of circumstance in life. The forces of nature affect the human life and we cannot do anything against it. Emerson gives instances and evidences in the essay from the discipline of statistics. He points out a ‘system of the world which eventually brings Famine, typhoons, frost, war, suicides, and effete races.’\textsuperscript{74} We cannot make any attempt to change or challenge this system of fate. We cannot omit odious lessons of fate. Emerson gives the definition of Fate as “limitation.” It is an element running through the entire nature, so whatever that gives limitation to us is called fate by Emerson.

In the next part of the essay, Emerson again reaffirms his optimism. According to him, we cannot leave everything to fate also. All the actions are not determined by external or natural forces. We don’t need to be gloomy and pessimistic. Even fate has its over limitations and bounds. So, if fate limits power, then power again opposes fate. Emerson wrote in the essay:

\begin{quote}
For, thought fate is immense, so is power, which is the other fact in the dual world, immense. If fate follows and limits power, power attends and antagonizes Fate.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

Emerson in the essay also wrote that freedom of man is a part of fate. Man has the ability to think and this ability gives him the impulse to choose and act according to the soul. So, the intellect of the men makes fate void and null. So, if man has the thinking capacity, then he is free even from the limitations of fate.
According to Emerson, it is the weak and vicious people who put blame on fate. So, fate must be used by people in the right way. Every individual must act and bring their conduct to the loftiness of nature. If men can use the resources properly and in right way, then he can turn the harmful way of fate for his own good. So, a balance can always be maintained. It is the thought of man that can help him against the forces of nature. This thought can also bring out his noble creative forces and can also bring him freedom. We can hear the echo of the earlier Transcendental soaring and vigourous self-reliance of Emerson when he wrote in the essay:

A man speaking from insight affirms of himself what is true of the mind, seeing its immortality: he says, I am immortal; being its invincibility, he says, I am strong. It is not in us, but we are in it.76

Emerson continues his optimistic tone in the following passages and maintains that the intellectual people can help in igniting those who bear them. So, when souls accept knowledge through the clearness of perception, a breath of will blow eternity. This eventually helps in taking the right direction which is necessary for life.

The optimistic tone of the essay continues in the next part of the essay. According to Emerson, the moral sentiment and thought frees human life. And the limitations which fate gives to life may be viewed in one way as the meter and measure of growing man. The moral sentiment which he refers in his other essays like “Self- Reliance” and his addresses can be seen distinctly here. His basic idea of spiritualism which put emphasis on this moral sentiment is also present in this essay. He wrote in the essay:
Whoever has had the experience of the moral sentiment cannot choose but believe in ultimate power. Each pulse from that heart is an oath from the Most High.\textsuperscript{77}

Emerson insistence in the belief of a divine presence in our heart within us is vividly seen in this essay.

Emerson in the next part of the essay offers an elegant definition of fate as ‘a name for facts not yet passed under the fire of thought; for causes which are unpenetrated.’\textsuperscript{78} He gives various examples of this unpenetrated causes and at last gives example of ‘Man’s turning to his advantage that which he formerly dreaded steam.’\textsuperscript{79} Emerson next goes on to discuss about melioration which fate involves. According to Emerson behind every individual, organization closes in and before him, there opens liberty which offers him the better and the best. So, the whole cycle of life ascends and is refined for a higher use.

The emphasis which Emerson gives to Nature is seen in this essay also. According to him, ‘Nature is intricate, overlapped, interwove, and endless.’\textsuperscript{80} So, the various relation found in nature is seen in the ecological balance which we see in nature. Balances are always maintained in nature between its various habitats and faunas. Again there is a close tie between person and event in nature. One thing is made by the other. So, the pleasure of life lays in way that men lives. According to Emerson, ‘Life is on ecstasy and a man’s fortunes are the fruit of his character.’\textsuperscript{85} So, men must not rely on fate and must do his duty properly. He must always try to maintain his character as there is always a balance, a compensation in nature. According to Emerson:
History is the action and reaction of these two, —nature and thought...Everything is pusher or pushed; and matter and mind are in perpetual tilt and balance, so.\textsuperscript{81}

In the concluding part of the essay, Emerson not only accepts fate but insist that we must ‘build altars to the blessed unity which holds nature and souls.’\textsuperscript{82} We must also accept this beautiful necessity of fate. This necessity cannot be ignored or cast away by us. Instead, we must accept it as a law which is required for our existence. According to Emerson, it is:

That law rules throughout existence, a Law which is not intelligent but intelligence, not personal or impersonal,...it vivifies nature, yet solicits the pure in heart to draw on all its omnipotence.\textsuperscript{83}

Emerson’s ends the essay with optimism and vigour. The earlier exuberance which he celebrates in Nature and his other essays may be absent but his optimistic tone and reliance on soul and nature is found in this essay. The unity of things which he points out in other essays is maintained in this essay also. In this essay, we see a more experience Emerson making his observations about the various forces of nature in human life. But his basic idea of spiritualism which gives emphasis to the reliance on the soul within our own heart is maintained in this essay. So, his concept of God, Man, and Nature remains the same all throughout his works either written in early phase or late phase of his life. So, Emerson’s basic ideas can be seen in all the five essays of Emerson that we have discussed in this chapter.

In the next chapter, a summary of the thesis will be presented.
NOTES


