



## MATTHEW ARNOLD'S "THE SCHOLAR GYPSY": THE QUINTESSENTIAL REPLICA OF EMERSON'S "THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR"

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### ABSTRACT



Literature has been confounded with the innumerable thinkers and scholars who collaborated in the development of society. They are contributing to advocating their ideas to bring out the changes in society. Emerson's "The American Scholar", considered as one of the "finest and most popular" philosophical work, investigating the duties of the scholar as one of the functions of the human being. Emerson, a commendable man was also responsible for bringing changes in the society. He was allured by the skeptical views of the metaphysical poets and marked effect in the form of his actions. The objective of this study is to demonstrate the replica of the 'American Scholar' in the depiction of Arnold's 'Scholar Gypsy'. It shows how Arnold's manifestation of Scholar Gypsy is appropriately fitted into Emerson's persona of the 'American Scholar'.

**Keywords:** *Man Thinking, American Scholar, Influences, Self Trust, Know thyself.*



## INTRODUCTION

Ralph Waldo Emerson is considered as one of the prominent figures in American literary spirit. He won recognition as an American essayist, lecturer, philosopher, and the poet. He belonged to the clergyman family. His contribution to National American identity focused on recreating the individual identity of the nation. He was the pioneer of the American Transcendentalist movement of the mid-nineteenth century. He was seen as the proponent of individualistic ideas and criticizing the countervailing notion of society. He is known as 'sage of Concord'. His ideas progressively move away from the social and religious belief of his contemporaries, constructing and exhibiting the philosophy of Transcendentalism in his essay *Nature* published in 1836. The visions of the numerous Hindu sacred texts helped him to formulate his philosophical mindset. He has poetic imagination which is highly philosophical, reviving both the 'reason' and 'power' of thinking. Emerson is conceptualizing the independent notion of America through the philosophical framework. Emerson's prognostic views for American independence can be clearly depicted in his essay when he says:

"Our days of dependence our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands drawn to close" (The American Scholar)

Emerson's most known work, "The American Scholar", originally a lecture delivered to Phi Beta Kappa society at Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1837 and republished in 1841 entitled, "The American Scholar" The essay begins with his intention of investigating the duties of the scholar as one of the functions of entire humanity. He suggested "in this distribution of functions, the scholar is the delegated intellect... he is, Man Thinking" (57). Gillespie says: Emerson points to three major influences on the development of the reflective person: nature, history, and action or experience" (Gillespie 8). In the last section of the essay, he "remains to say somewhat of his duties" which may be comprised of 'self-trust', 'self relying', 'self-directed' and 'the state of virtual society' in which he was intended to create an educated society. The theme of the essay lies with the notion

of independent America which is different from the authority of the European past.

On the other hand, Matthew Arnold is considered the renowned English poet and the critic of the social and cultural aspects of Victorian England. His major contribution to his works like, "The Scholar Gypsy" (1853), "Thyrsis" (1865), "Dover Beach", and "Culture and Anarchy", have gained recognition in the field of literary spirit of Victorian Era. "The Scholar Gypsy" is regarded as one of the finest and most popular poems of Matthew Arnold. The entire idea of the poem has taken from the tale of 17<sup>th</sup> century Oxford student found in the Joseph Glanvil, *The Vanity of Dogmatizing*. The poem revolves around the story of an Oxford student who left University and joined the secret band of gypsies to reveal many of their secrets of the trade. He gradually shifted himself from the traditional kind of learning in order to attain the power of imagination.

Despite the fact that both the thinkers belonged to different ages, social classes and national identity though still they present the variations in similarities and differences through their works. Emerson's and Arnold's thoughts are similar in 'Democracy' as both thinkers believed that individual and society should pursue to high moral and intellectual standards. However, they have different approaches in order to achieve those high standards but their ideas are similar. Arnold emphasized the skeptical ideas with an optimistic approach at the rise of democracy. Arnold belonged to the upper-class strata of the society whereas Emerson belonged to clergyman family. Arnold was not opposed to the idea of liberation of the lower classes but he wants to taste the notion of democracy along with the aristocratic society existed in the prevalent time span. Though Emerson only formulated the ideology for the liberation of a lower section of the society. Robert D Habich says that "his thoughts on class and inequality would be affected by both the 'natural aristocracy' that he found to be the backbone of Britain's power" (Habich 18). In other words, Arnold was in favor of supporting all the classes of society being free but he thought that there must be some central authority of morality and intellectualism. However, both the thinkers intended to improve the society which leads to the collective individuals



working together independently and would form a united society which is completely independent.

### DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the replica of the 'American Scholar' in the depiction of Arnold's 'The Scholar Gypsy'. It shows how Arnold's manifestation of Scholar Gypsy is appropriately fitted into Emerson's persona of the 'American Scholar'. According to Emerson, The American Scholar should be the 'man of learning', 'man of intellect', "Man Thinking" (57), neither "mere thinker" nor "the parrot of others men thinking". By "mere thinker", he meant that the scholar should not repeat the works and ideas of the other. He must not be the imitator of the other person. He should be original in his ideas, thoughts, and opinions. Likewise Emerson, Arnold manifested the story of Oxford scholar as:

"Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain"  
("The Scholar Gypsy")

It shows the fact that the Scholar Gypsy was thoughtful and pensive in nature. He possessed the traits of "pensive and tongue-ties" and leaning backward in the "pensive dream". Secondly, Emerson provides pictures of the scholar, "him the past instructs, the future invites", which is clearly visible in his poem, "The Scholar Gypsy". Arnold belonged to the era when Queen Victoria ascends the throne (1837-1901). It was the age of Victorian Compromise which brought gradual changes in the prevalent existed society. With the advent of urbanization and industrialization, people lose faith in the religion and created a clash between science and religion. In his poem, "Dover Beach", Arnold mentioned:

"The Sea of faith, was once, too, at the full."  
(Dover Beach)

The Scholar Gypsy was inspired by the past Victorian events in a way that he acquired the abilities to transform the society by revealing the secrets of Gypsy to the world. In this way, he tried his best to instruct the past in order to invite the future. Thirdly, Emerson presents to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; that must take the whole society to find the "whole man ". He suggested that:

"Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all" ("The American Scholar")

He emphasized on the traits of the American Scholar that he can be anyone. He can be 'priest', 'farmer', 'professor', 'student'- he can be any particular figure of a human being. Similarly, the figure of the Scholar is the figure of the student, who left Oxford University so that he could wander by the power of imagination and gained knowledge about the secretive art of gypsies.

### INFLUENCE OF NATURE

In his essay, Emerson explained the importance of the influences upon the mind of the American Scholar. He says the first influence on the American Scholar "is that of nature". Despite the fact that he was highly influenced by the romantics, says "The Scholar is he of all men whom this spectacle must engage" (57). The term 'spectacle' must settle its values in his mind, with elements of nature like "the sun; and, after sunset, night and her stars. Ever the wind blows; ever the grass grows. Every day men and women, conversing, beholding and beholden" (57). On the other hand, Arnold's poem was highly influenced by nature. When he left Oxford, he started exploring the world in the midst of nature where he was sheltered with sunrise in the corner and till the sunset.

"Through the thick corn the scarlet  
poppies peep,  
And round green roots and yellowing  
stalks I see Pale pink convolvulus in  
tendrils creep;" ("The Scholar Gypsy")

Furthermore, he was witnessed by the people from the university. They watched him crossing the river Thames where he was found leaning back in a thoughtful way with the bunch of flowers in his lap, which he plucked from Wyscherwood.

"Mid wide grass meadows which the  
sunshine fills,  
And watch the warm, green muffled  
Cumner hills,  
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy  
retreats." ("The Scholar Gypsy")

In addition to this, according to Transcendentalist views of Emerson, Nature is the primary revelation of



the divinity. As Lawrence Buell notes, "Nature comes first because it is the most perennial: the resource literally for all seasons" (Gillespie 9). They focused on the 'oneness in nature' by creating a bond between 'man and nature' and 'God and man'. According to him, the scholar educated himself in the presence of nature, who acts as a teacher. As a result of which, the poem is a pastoral poem where he mentioned 'darkening fields', 'purple orchise', 'bridge', scythe in sunshine flames', 'breezy grass', 'shepherd', 'winter Cumner hills' and so on. In order to understand his own self; he delved deep insight in the knowledge of nature. Emerson provides the basic understanding that a great knowledge of nature results in a greater understanding of self. He focused on the philosophical framework of ancient percepts, "know thyself" and the modern percepts, "study nature" become at last one maxim. Emerson mentioned: "there is no beginning, no end, but always circular power returning into itself" (57-58). It means that a person discovers natural laws and can understand them but they are similar to the operation of the intellect.

#### INFLUENCE OF BOOKS AND PAST LEARNING

As Kenneth S. Sacks notes, "in redefining the duties of the intellectual, Emerson went far back to his Transcendentalist colleagues- and about as far as anyone has gone since" (Gillespie 8) Emerson's scholar was highly influenced from the 'Past' or 'Book learning'. He claimed that "Books are for nothing but to inspire". He says that scholar should not be a "bookworm". He must have originality in his thoughts and ideas. For instance, Arnold's character of Scholar Gypsy was not a bookworm personality; he left his studies at Oxford in search of

"the secret of their art

When fully learn'd, will to the world  
impart" ("The Scholar Gypsy")

According to him, books are responsible for the distortion of creativity. He says that no doubt Books contain knowledge, past, history but one should not be confined to the bookish knowledge. He says "Books are for nothing but to inspire" (59). It helps an individual in rejecting the old traditional system of values and looking for new ideas through the power of imagination.

He says, "The soul" of the Scholar should "see absolute truth". The scholar must have creativity in his actions and words. He says that scholar must be rational, individualistic, and pragmatist not just contemplative in his approach.

#### INFLUENCE OF ACTION

The last influence on the mind of Scholar is that of "action". It talks about the notion that the scholar should be "recluse, a valetudinarian- an unfit for any hard work or public labor" (61). According to Emerson, the scholar should be the "practical men of action", sneer at speculative men, as if, "they speculate or see, they could do nothing". He must not be the man of 'words' rather should have the authority of applicability of these words through actions, in order to bring changes in the society. The Scholar Gypsy claimed that when he gained the knowledge of gypsies, will definitely reveal the secret to the world.

"the secret of their art

When fully learn'd, will to the world  
impart" ("The Scholar Gypsy")

The entire theme of Arnold's poem is to exemplify the fact that how individual and society, as a whole can achieve those higher standards. So, then, the Scholar Gypsy is so-called the "practical man" of action. According to Emerson, "Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it, he is not yet a man" (61) He has put forward his intention by claiming that, "total strength in fit actions, has the richest return of wisdom" (62). It summarizes the thought by stressing Emerson's "participation in reform activities especially abolitionism" who "engaged with the people, events, and politics of his day". (Field 4)

#### CONCLUSION

In this way, Emerson highlighted the duties of the American Scholar, which provide compatibility to Arnold's model of The Scholar Gypsy. Emerson revealed that the duty of the scholar is "to cheer, to raise and to guide men by showing them facts amid appearances" (63). His ideas must be 'self relying' and "self-directed"; and "the state of virtual hostility" in which he seems to stand to society and especially to an educated society. He says scholar must "resist the vulgar prosperity" and must possess "confidence



in himself". In this way, Arnold's manifestation of Scholar Gypsy is the quintessential replication of Emerson's persona of the American Scholar.

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