

6.3 Love Came Down at Christmas

Christina Rossetti

6.3.0 Objectives

6.3.1 Introduction

6.3.2 The Text

6.3.3 Glossary and Notes

6.3.4 Summary of the Poem

6.3.5 Analysis of the Poem

6.3.6 Check Your Progress

6.3.7 Key to check your progress

6.3.8 Exercise

6.3.9 Further Reading

6.3.0 Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able

- to understand the poem as a religious poem
- to learn the use of poetic techniques
- to feel the love of God

6.3.1 Introduction:

Christina Rossetti was born on 5th December 1830 in London. Her father Gabriele Rossetti was the poet and her brother Dante Gabriele Rossetti was also the poet and a painter. She was educated at home in the familial environment by her parents. Her initial poems were published in her grandfather's private printing press in 1842. Under the pseudonym Ellen Alleyne, she wrote seven poems to the Pre-Raphaelite journal 'The Germ.' Rossetti is best known even today for her writing ballads and religious lyrics.

'*Goblin Market and Other Poems*' published in 1862; is remarkable collection that placed her significant voice in Victorian Poetry. She is also known for her Christmas carols including "*In the Bleak Midwinter*", and "*Love Came Down at Christmas*". Rossetti also wrote romantic, devotional, and children's poems. Her poetry is noteworthy for symbolism and feelings. On 29th December 1894 she died due to cancer in London.

The present poem 'Love Came Down at Christmas' deals with the theme of love of Jesus Christ who brought it to the earth from Heaven. The poetess in the poem shows how love came and served for mankind in the embodiment of divine love of Jesus, the Christian avatar of the God.

6.3.2 The Text:

Love Came Down at Christmas

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine,
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love Incarnate, Love Divine,
Worship we our Jesus,
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,
Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.

6.3.3 Glossary and Notes:

Divine: Godly, holy

Godhead: essence or substance of the Christian God

Token: sign, mark

Incarnate: a deity or spirit embodied in human form.

Sacred: pure, holy

6.3.4 Summary of the Poem:

The present poem 'Love Came Down at Christmas' is a short but sweet religious hymn that has become a popular Christmas carol in the Christianity. It

deals with the history and nature of love. Love was born and came down to the earth in the form of Jesus Christ for the sake of human beings. It is blissful and divine like Jesus who bestowed it to the whole world. It was the only star and angels who gave the sign of the birth of Jesus.

We worship God. He/God is the embodiment of love and whose love is divine. Jesus Christ is God and we worship Him but where is such sacred/holy symbol we find?

We the worshiper find that 'love' as a symbol will only be existed forever for mankind. Love will be mine and love will be yours. Jesus will allow us to love not only to the God but also to the whole universe. Jesus in the form of love is reached in this world for mankind. Love is Jesus and Jesus is love. Love is a prayer; love is a symbol of God and gift of God.

6.3.5 Analysis of the Poem:

The present poem is divided into three stanzas with four lines each. The poetess evokes the love of Jesus and it is seen in the theme of love. The word 'love' is repeated several times to highlight its importance in the poem. In the first stanza, Christina Rossetti states that the sign of birth of Jesus at Christmas was given by the star and the angels. His arrival in the form of human being is a noteworthy for mankind. The joy is doubled at Christmas festival as Jesus let the love acknowledged to the human beings. According to the poetess love is key and good way in life that teaches how to love each other for betterment of human beings' existence. One can equally love the God and his fellows.

The second stanza shows relation between worshiper and the God-Jesus and how we should connect with Jesus who is the incarnation of love and divinity. We worship Him as the godhead. In the Christian tradition "Godhead" refers to the divinity of the Christian God, the "father, son and "Holy Spirit". Jesus' arrival in the form of human being at Christmas is worthwhile to spread the message of 'love' which is inevitable to this world. In other words, Jesus' human being form shows how He could share his divine love with mankind. Thus, love is an avatar of Christian God and love becomes divine too. Further the poetess says that the Christian world has been worshipping Jesus as a God but she poses the question in rhetoric manner that why and how Jesus legacy of love should be existed/carried forever as a sacred sign?

In the third stanza the poetess uncovers the role of sacred sign-love. According to her since “love” is going to be major savior of all human beings, it should be existed and shared among all kinds of the race. It should not be confined only to the individuals. It is everything to everyone forever. Thus, the legacy of love of Jesus is carried forever from one generation to another across the world as a gift of God to the entire existing race.

6.3.6 Check Your Progress:

A. Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence each.

1. What came Down at Christmas?
2. What is the theme of the poem?
3. Whom the poet is referring to as love in the poem?
4. How many stanzas are there in the poem ‘Love Came Down at Christmas’?
5. How is the love described in the poem ‘Love Came Down at Christmas’?

B. Rewrite the following sentences by choosing correct option.

1. ‘Love’ came down at Christmas in the form of _____.
 - a. Christmas tree
 - b. angels
 - c. Jesus Christ
 - d. star
2. _____ gave the sign of Jesus Christ’s birth.
 - a. Adam and Eve
 - b. Satan
 - c. Stars and Angels
 - d. God
3. The mood of the poem ‘Love Came Down at Christmas’ is _____.
 - a. Joyful
 - b. Nervous
 - c. Sorrowful
 - d. None of the above
4. _____ is celebrated in the poem ‘Love Came Down at Christmas’?
 - a. Easter Day
 - b. Christmas Festival
 - c. Good Friday
 - d. None of the above
5. ‘Love Came Down at Christmas’ is a _____ poem.

- a. Religious
- b. Romantic
- c. Metaphysical
- d. Epic

6.3.7 Key to check your progress:

A: Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence each.

1. Love
2. Love
3. Jesus Christ
4. Three
5. Lovely, divine and incarnate.

B: Rewrite the following sentences by choosing correct option.

1. c. Jesus Christ
2. c. Stars and Angels
3. a. Joyful
4. b. Christmas Festival
5. a. Religious

6.3.8 Exercise:

- A. Discuss 'Love Came Down at Christmas' as a Religious Poem.
- B. Write a note on 'love' reflected in 'Love Came Down at Christmas'.

6.3.9 Further Reading:

Christina Rossetti's religious poetry.

~~~~~

## 8.4 A KIND OF HAPPINESS

Jayanta Mahapatra

### 8.4.0 Objectives

#### 8.4.1 Introduction

#### 8.4.2 The Text

#### 8.4.3 Glossary and Notes

#### 8.4.4 Summary of the Poem

#### 8.4.5 Analysis of the Poem

#### 8.4.6 Check Your Progress

#### 8.4.7 Key to check your progress

#### 8.4.8 Exercise

#### 8.4.9 Further Reading

### 8.4.0 Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able

- to find the different tones of the poem
- to learn the use of symbols
- to understand the use of rhetoric questions

#### 8.4.1. Introduction:

Jayanta Mahapatra was born on 22 October 1928 in Cuttack, Orissa where he spent his most of the academic years. He completed his education from science stream and joined as lecturer in Physics and served in different colleges. Jayanta Mahapatra is a celebrated poet in post-independence Indian English Poetry. He is the first Indian English poet to receive the Sahitya Akademi Award for his anthology titled *Relationship* in 1981. Considering his contribution to Indian Literature, he was awarded “Padmashree Award” in 2009.

Mahapatra initiated his writing career in poetry when he was becoming in his 40s. He has written 18 anthologies of poems. He is a bilingual poet, writes in Odia and English language. His collection of poems include ‘A Rain of Rites’ (1976) and ‘Life Signs and Whiteness of Bone’ (1992). As well as his recent poetry volumes include ‘Bare Space’ (2001), *Random Descent* (2005), and ‘Shadow Space’ (2011), and his short story work includes *The Green Gardner*

(1997). He is also a notable Editor of magazine named *Chandrabhaga*. His translation work from Odia to English is also published in literary magazine *Indian Literature*. In the present poem 'A kind of Happiness', Mahapatra expresses a deep sense of loss of his belongingness/attachment with his society and culture in the modern world. As a result he is seen in a confused State to find his origin of identity.

#### **8.4.2 The Text:**

##### **A Kind of Happiness**

The boat I've laid my mind on  
is adrift, moving slowly up an ageless creek,  
through water still and colourless as time,  
among drifts of uncomprehending silent reeds.

In it I've staked those my precious years,  
the fear of the depths and the unholy cold;  
now for that reason maybe (being so awake)  
I fear it may never reach the promise of the sea.

There is a hand I remember, that lay simply  
in your lap, warm and sacred and drenched  
with its promise, a hair's breadth away from my own,  
yet some spell did not drop anchor, to lay mine on it,

barely escaping happiness I thought I knew of it,  
but would I recognize it if it really came?  
What use would it be if I'd tie the boat to a tree  
and lie down in the heart of its demand?

It soaks into each song, words and the throats of birds  
hoping such symbols would make up its definition,  
yet can the good world

hold the flowing movement of fear in the mind?

Can slain men show the miracle of being alive?  
Always it's this boat that nails me to the water,  
darkening its silent waste and flow,  
the reeds merciless like those dead,  
yet don't I know it is better to leave the boat alone?

What would tell me at last where I belong?  
The cracking keel, the bold green moss?

### 8.4.3 Glossary and Notes:

**Adrift** : not tied to anything or controlled by anyone.

**Creek** : a small river; a stream

**Reed** : a tall plant, like grass, that grows in or near water

**Uncomprehending**: unable to understand

**Stake** : to put efforts to complete action

**Anchor**: a heavy metal object put into water to stop ship

**Drench**: to wet thoroughly

**Slain**: murder

**Keel**: the wooden or steel hull of a ship

**Moss**: a small soft green plant that grows in wet places, especially on rocks

### 8.4.4 Summary:

The poet is travelling through his boat from the immortal passage of creek which has the long and strong way to reach to sea. Since the time immemorial creek is flowing steadily in the calm and colorless water where his boat moves slowly in the tall grass at the edge of the creek. To the poet it is highly impossible to understand the nature of the stream of the creek that supports boat to reach their destination.

Though, the poet has spent his precious formative years, travelling in the same stream of creek, the depths of creek and coldness of wind often creates fear



to him. Due to these natural calamities of environment, he often awakes and travels but still feels that he will never reach to his destination.

The poet knows that to escape from such hurdles, there is an existence of warm and sacred hand. He remembers the blessing is very close to him and always ready to grace but unfortunately he escapes from such blessing and moves desperately.

The poet missed happiness but at the same time he asks whether he would recognise the coming happiness or not? He also expresses the possibility of tying his boat to a tree. That the very time of coming happiness if he ties his boat to a tree and lie down having the natural beauty in the mind, what is the usefulness of boat?

Poet says that we prepare a good definition of identity for good impression to the world with the help of good words and rhythm of birds. But poet always fears and asks can we create a good world?

Keeping fear in the mind poet asks whether such a miracle is possible when murdered men will be alive. The poet says that it is this search for identity that keeps him alive in the water. Just like dead people, the dead flow of water creates a dead atmosphere in the world. Thus, he is in confusion mood that is it better to leave the boat/thought alone in its course?

#### **8.4.5 Analysis of the Poem:**

The present poem 'A Kind of Happiness' explores the poet's sense of belonging to his tradition and culture. To search it Jayanta Mahapatra uses several symbols and raises several questions to know his present status in the world. He uses different symbols such as creek, boat, sea, reeds, moss, etc. to show the journey of life through which he tries to explore his belonging, self and existence in life. The status of tradition and culture in life is also weighted comparing the status of boat in its way in the creek to reach the intended sea. The condition of the poet's life is no more or less good than the condition of the boat that suffers in the water to its destination. While exploring his search for belongingness, he raises several questions and left unanswered to the reader. Eventually the poet ends the poem without having and knowing any kind of happiness but concluding his origin either broken like the cracking base of the boat or sticking green moss to the stone.

The poet is travelling in a boat which represents his search of belonging.

It is roaming desperately in an everlasting creek to reach its destination i.e. to sea. It seems that the poet is in his dreamy land and moving very slowly in stagnant and colorless water. He realizes his life is aimless and motionless and his existence is like steady water. His life becomes an inanimate life. Thus, he feels that he is trapped in timeless sphere.

The poet says that he has a long experience in the journey of life and though, he is conscious of such depth and coldness of water in creek, he feels his boat may not serve and reach to the sea.

The poet fears that in future he may not be able to find or search a good, healthy and wealthy attachment to his tradition and culture. Like his boat in the creek which will never reach to its destination-sea, he will never well associate to his culture which is a very rich in the world. He remembers there is a warm and graceful powered hand of blessing near his lap but the very magical hand couldn't bless on the poet's lap. He regrets that by missing the blessing, he escaped happiness and now lingers in the same environment.

He is aware about his unfortunate escapes from his good luck. Now he is ready to gain good fortune but he poses the question that would he recognize it if it really comes in future? Moreover, he asks what use would it be if he ties it to the tree and enjoys the apparently seeming good environment-society.

The recurring doubts and fear of the poet poses his true identity that bothers the self. The poet feels that the defined concept of 'identity' or 'belongingness' is very good to sing in a rhythmic way as the birds do in the nature. But is it really applicable to each and every culture? He knows that his culture is rich but now he is differing from his true culture. In other words, there is the impression of loss of culture which he carries still in his mind.

In the second last stanza, the poet still fears that he will never be able to find a deep attachment to his culture, like the boat in the creek that will never reach the sea. Since, there is no any possibility of miracle to gain the lost culture Mahapatra feels entrapped in the hybrid culture. He expresses man's loneliness, his search for identity with vivid images lead to a fake identity. These enchanting expressions of the poet are meditative, often tinged with helplessness, hollowness and ambiguity. In the light of the loss of his belongingness, he questions, is it right to leave his boat in its course alone?

The poet concludes that his belongingness /identity is either broken as the cracked base of the boat or stagnant as the green moss to the stone. Perhaps his searching of belonging is a kind of happiness because there is no firm answer we get from the poet.

#### **8.4.6 Check your Progress:**

##### **A. Answer the following in one word/phrase/sentence each.**

1. Who is the speaker in the poem 'A Kind of Happiness'?
2. What does the boat represent?
3. Write the symbols used in the poem.
4. What nails the poet to the water?
5. Which emotions are mentioned by Mahapatra in his poem 'A Kind of Happiness'?
6. What is the tone of the questions raised in the poem 'A Kind of Happiness'?
7. How is the condition of the poet?

##### **B. Rewrite the following sentences by choosing the correct option.**

1. The poem 'A Kind of Happiness' is loaded with \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) fear and anxiety
  - b) joy and celebration
  - c) beauty and glory
  - d) depression and stress
2. The boat is slowly moving \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) in the river
  - b) up an ageless creek
  - c) in the sea
  - d) in a well
3. The poet would tie his boat \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) to a rock
  - b) to another boat
  - c) to a tree
  - d) to a big stone

4. The poet ends the poem by expressing the possibility of his belonging either to the cracking keel or the bold \_\_\_\_\_

- a) grasshopper
- b) tree
- c) stone
- d) moss

5. The poet is searching \_\_\_\_\_

- a) identity
- b) way
- c) water
- d) food

#### **8.4.7 Key to check your progress:**

##### **A. Answer the following in one word/phrase/sentence each.**

1. The Poet.
2. The search of belonging.
3. Water, moss, tree, creek, reeds etc.
4. The boat.
5. Emotions such as joy, sadness, despair, anguish, pain, doubt, hatred, love, compassion, desire, admiration, faith, veneration, and hope.
6. Rhetoric.
7. Confused and in a dilemma.

##### **B. Rewrite the following sentences by choosing the correct option.**

1. fear and anxiety
2. up an ageless creek
3. to a tree
4. moss
5. identity

#### **8.4.8 Exercise:**

- Q.I. 1. Write a critical note on the poem 'A Kind of Happiness'.
2. Explain the theme of the poem.
- Q.II. Write Short- notes on the following.

1. 'Symbols' in the poem 'A kind of Happiness'.
2. Mood in the poem 'A Kind of Happiness'.

**8.4.9 Further Reading:**

1. Jayanta Mahapatra is a bilingual poet.
2. Indianess in Jayanta Mahapatra's poems.

~~~~~