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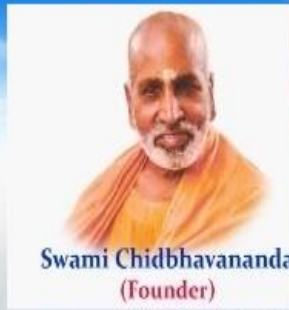
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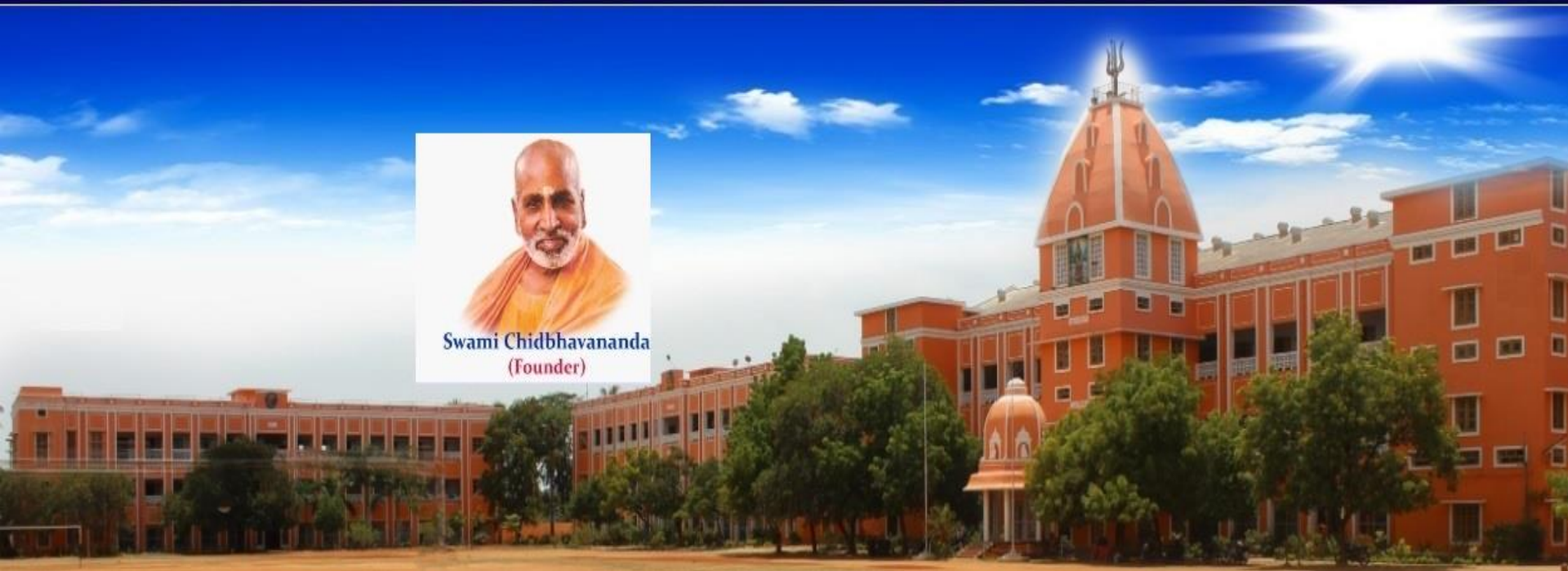
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Tiruvedakam West, Madurai District - 625 234, Tamil Nadu

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



Swami Chidbhavananda
(Founder)



Poetry IV 12CT61 Unit-5

Dr.S.Bharathiraja,
Assistant Professor & Head(i/c),

Days

BY [PHILIP LARKIN](#)

What are days for?

Days are where we live.

They come, they wake us

Time and time over.

They are to be happy in:

Where can we live but days?

Ah, solving that question
Brings the priest and the doctor
In their long coats
Running over the fields.

A Short Analysis of Philip Larkin's 'Days'

- Completed in August 1953, 'Days' is one of Philip Larkin's shortest poems. Like many of his poems, its meaning seems obvious, its words asking to be taken at face value; but, as with Larkin's great poetic mentor, Thomas Hardy, upon further analysis the poem is revealed as elusive and ambiguous.

- Like a handful of Larkin's other well-known poems, such as 'Going', '[Water](#)', '[Afternoons](#)', and 'Solar', 'Days' is written in free verse, with no rhyme scheme or regular metre. Its ten-line simplicity is reminiscent of the Imagist poetry of [T. E. Hulme](#), F. S. Flint, [Joseph Campbell](#), and other early free-verse pioneers in English poetry from nearly half a century earlier. Whereas most of Larkin's poems utilise regular metre and some sort of rhyme scheme 'Days' does not

- In summary, 'Days' reflects, in a rather matter-of-fact way, on the deepest of questions: 'what's it all about?' and 'what is the meaning of life?' But the recalibrating of this question in terms of 'days', rather than life or existence in general, points up an important and recurring theme for Larkin's poetry: the daily ritual of work, the day-to-day business of living. (Compare '[Toads](#)' and '[Toads Revisited](#)', for instance.) Days are, we are told, 'where we live' and they are for being happy in: the upbeat, almost childlike catechism of this first stanza seems coyly innocent of the day-to-day realities of drudgery and work.

- But then, in the second stanza, the ‘turn’ of the poem comes with that word ‘Ah’, and the response that the only way to escape living one’s life in terms of ‘days’ brings the priest and doctor running ‘over the fields’ in ‘their long coats’. For ‘doctor’, here, we are probably meant to think of psychiatrists rather than podiatrists. Or perhaps, more grimly still, we should consider the fact that the priest *and* the doctor are running in tandem (somewhat comically, given their flapping long coats): the only people who can truly escape the day-to-day struggle of life are the dead. And who are the dead tended by, typically? The priest (administering last rites) and the doctor (attempting to do something either to avert the patient’s death, or, at the very least, alleviate their suffering at the end).

- In other words, there is nowhere we can live but in 'days' – that is, in the daily cycle of work and being a functioning member of society – unless we're mad or dead. The second stanza of Larkin's poem characteristically combines the faintly comic (the priest and doctor in their long coats) with more morbid subject matter. Although analysing this short meditation on life any further may be unnecessary, the questions posed in 'Days' are far from small and the poem leaves us with much more to meditate on.

Mr Bleaney (1955)

Philip Larkin

- ‘This was Mr Bleaney’s room. He stayed
The whole time he was at the Bodies, till
They moved him.’ Flowered curtains, thin and
frayed,
Fall to within five inches of the sill,
- Whose window shows a strip of building land,
Tussocky, littered. ‘Mr Bleaney took
My bit of garden properly in hand.’
Bed, upright chair, sixty-watt bulb, no hook

- Behind the door, no room for books or bags —
‘I’ll take it.’ So it happens that I lie
Where Mr Bleaney lay, and stub my fags
On the same saucer-souvenir, and try
- Stuffing my ears with cotton-wool, to drown
The jabbering set he egged her on to buy.
I know his habits — what time he came down,
His preference for sauce to gravy, why

- He kept on plugging at the four aways —
Likewise their yearly frame: the Frinton folk
Who put him up for summer holidays,
And Christmas at his sister's house in Stoke.
- But if he stood and watched the frigid wind
Tousling the clouds, lay on the fusty bed
Telling himself that this was home, and grinned,
And shivered, without shaking off the dread

- That how we live measures our own nature,
And at his age having no more to show
Than one hired box should make him pretty
sure
He warranted no better, I don't know.

Critical Analysis of “Mr. Bleaney” | Poem by Philip Larkin

- Modern life is full of worries. Company can be found anywhere yet heart remains isolated. Loneliness is a major problem especially in developed countries. In “Mr. Bleaney”, Philip Larkin after doing critical analysis of a person’s life concludes that modern life is entirely tasteless, emotionless, boring and dull. Some critics such as Andrew Motion believes that the poem is highly autobiographical, whereas Janic Rossen is of the view that it is a comparison between poet’s life and Mr

- **Introduction of Poem “Mr.Bleaney” and its Critical Analysis:**
- Art is fading day by day. Humans are living life of machines. As a result, stupidity is at its peak. Critics have also done critical analysis of “Mr.Bleaney” and find out that the poem deals with all modern individualistic problems. It is about troubles of an individual. Dull life story of a person has been portrayed. Due to lack of interest in art, his life was far away from creativity. However, it is wrong to say that his life was totally miserable. In this poem, Philip Larkin makes difference between living a life and passing days of life.

- **Thematic Critical Analysis of “Mr.Bleaney”:**
- Modern problems are entirely different from ancient ones. In those days, isolation was not a problem. Mostly poet used to portray relation between gods and men. With the change in time, poets started demonstrating relation between man and society. Modern life has psychological problems. Social problem or political problem is no more an issue. Hence, themes of this poem are about all individualistic problems. Besides, some other themes have also been presented, which are:

- Art
- Loneliness (quality)
- Isolation (quantity)
- Dullness
- Lack of creativity
- Life's complications
- Ambition-less life
- Hopeless life
- Meaninglessness

- **Stanza-I & II Critical Analysis of “Mr.Bleaney”:**
- In start of the poem, speaker talks about previous tenant of his room. He was living in “The Bodies” (boarding-room) and subsequently was removed. The poet describes room’s condition. Curtains of the room show the lifestyle of previous tenant. Speaker says that they are worn-out, however, they are flowered. He describes them in detail. They are shorter than the required length. From window, buildings, grass and rubbish can be seen. Speaker has been informed by the landlady that name of the previous tenant was Mr. Bleaney, who used to look at the garden from the window. The poet has described room with additional imagery. Some objects such as: a bulb, a bed, a chair and a door without hook have also been illustrated in the poem.

- **Stanza-III & IV Critical Analysis of “Mr.Bleaney”:**
- Speaker talks further and says that there is no space for books in the room. Now, he is also lying on the same bed, on which once Mr. Bleaney laid. Speaker does not think this room a perfect place to live. He finds a lot of inadequacies in it yet he decided to live. He is smoking and putting ashes in saucer instead of ashtray, which belonged to landlady; it was gifted to her. Noisy image of a radio set is also there in these stanzas. It was purchased by the landlady on the request of Mr. Bleaney. In order to save himself from the troublesome noise of radio, the speaker puts cotton-wools in his ears. Until now, he has guessed the habits and schedule of Mr. Bleaney. He preferred sauce to gravy, the speaker said.

- These lines are somewhat ironical. Speaker does not like the room yet he decides to live therein. He criticizes every habit of Mr. Bleaney yet he follows him. He also puts ashes in the saucer instead of ashtray as Mr. Bleaney used to. He has also noticed an important thing viz. “no room for books or bags”. It seems that Mr. Bleaney was literally a tasteless person. He was not interested in reading books. Was radio enough for him to spend his time? He might be spending a busy life.

- There are small similarities in Mr. Bleaney's character and the speaker but sharp contrast between the two. Some habits of both of them resemble with each other. Mr. Bleaney was not interested in books but in radio. On the other hand, speaker reads books. So far as the similarities are concerned, both do smoking; both use saucer as ashtray. In these stanzas, Mr. Bleaney's character and speaker's character are compared.

- **Stanza V, VI & VII Critical Analysis of “Mr.Bleaney”:**
- The poet demonstrates further lifestyle of Mr. Bleaney. He loved to spend his holidays with his relatives at Frinton, whereas he used to enjoy Christmas with his sister at Stoke. His lucky number was four. The speaker is unsure about the fact that whether Mr. Bleaney ever considered this room as his house or not. Philip Larkin mentions the very important fact “That how we live measures our own nature”. Furthermore, whether Mr. Bleaney ever thought that he was living an ambition-less life.

- These Stanzas have much significance. In fact, they summarize the whole poem. In a nutshell, Philip Larkin has presented modern life. Mr. Bleaney was living a useless life. Modern life is also useless. A lot of people have no ambitions in their lives. How many people nowadays can answer if they are asked “What is your ambition?”. Besides, Mr. Bleaney was not interested in books. He had no ambition. He often spent his time with his sister and relatives. Mostly, he did it in order to drive out his loneliness. Suffice is to say that he spend his whole life in isolation.

- He was a narrow minded person. His living style reveals his character. Every line of the poem is realistic and refers to meaninglessness in life. Modern life is tasteless, dull and ambitionless. People are compelled to spend life of machines. Work, earn, eat, drink and sleep. It is the only purpose of life, which in the eyes of Philip Larkin, is not good enough. There is an artist in everyone which should be provoked. Art should be preferred. If one can do nothing he should take interest in books. Moreover, why do we feel loneliness in presence of people? Mr. Bleaney has never thought that this room is his home. He never thought that it his world.

- Another important theme of this poem which has been pointed out by the critics is “Meaningless life”. We work hard; spend our most of time in earning bread for our near and dear ones but ultimately it would have no purpose. One day, death will end everything. Perhaps Mr. Bleaney thought the same hence he lived a hopeless and meaningless life.

- **Conclusion of Critical Analysis of “Mr.Bleaney”**
- In this poem, the poet creates sketch of a person named Mr. Bleaney. He has painted this character very realistically. Imagery of the poem is as clear as day. It has also been said that Mr. Bleaney is no other than [Philip Larkin](#) because there are a lot of autobiographical elements in the poem. Nonetheless, the poem is the finest example of “character analyzing technique”. It consists quatrains with regular rhyme scheme. It is a successful dramatic monologue.

Thank you



Dr.S.Bharathiraja, Assistant Professor & Head(i/c), Department of English,
Vivekananda College (Autonomous), Tiruvedakam West, Madurai, Tamil Nadu – 625234