

## W.B. YEATS

This study material has been prepared for B.A. English Literature Paper-III Modern Literature (A) (Poetry) students of Vth semester for the session 2020-21 of Lucknow University

- A Noble Prize awardee of 1923 and Senator of Irish Free State and well known in India as a man who introduced Rabindra Nath Tagore to Europe.
- Yeats was born in 1865 at Dublin to a painter father, got education at London, Primarily self-educated.
- He was fascinated by life and people in Ireland, myths and legends of that region were chief influences on him.
- He was devoted to Irish literary renaissance and founded Irish National Theatre Society in 1901 with Maud Gonne.
- Maud Gonne, was a spiritual love and supreme beauty in his poems.
- Ireland was under British occupation at that time.
- Maud Gonne was committed to Irish Nationalism, he too was a supporter of it.
- But he was against the violent means to attain freedom from Britishers.
- He chose a life of active contemplation as against a life of aggressive action.
- So he protested through his poetry, what he did not approve of in his life.
- Through his masterful images he explores the complexity of human existence.

### Work:

- **'The Wondering of Oisín and other Poem'** 1889.
- **'Easter'**, 1916.
- **'On a Political Prisoner'**.
- **'The Vision'** is a book that propounds the philosophy of gyres.
- **'Byzantium'**.
- **'Sailing to Byzantium'**

### Indian Connection:

- Mysticism of the east Swami Shri Purohit was his friend.
- He jointly translated **'Upanishads'** along with him.

- Also written introduction to Rabindra Nath Tagore's "**Geetanjali**".
- As a poet he constantly searched for new ideas and symbols.
- And he chose to reflect on contemporary situation is Ireland.
- Basically a narrative poet and was associated with '**Aesthetics**' or '**Decadents**' of rhymers club.
- Interestingly he proposed Maud Gonne- who had committed to Revolutionary Brotherhood, after the execution of her husband for involvement in abortive 1916 Irish uprising but rejected this time also. It was not enough Maud Gonne's adopted daughter Iseult too rejected him.
- Yeats had no faith in Christianity but a mystic of sorts- who attracted towards Blake's prophetic books.
- He deep dived in Theosophy, Neo-Platonism, Spiritualism and magic.
- The poem '**Second Coming**' is associated with Yeat's belief that history moves in gyres, what happened in the past will occur once again. This poem makes a prophecy of advent of Jesus Christ. Once again but not in his original form through various symbols and images he contemplates a society based on fascism that brings about gruesome wars. Instead of high valued and much appreciated tenets of Christianity this time a rough beast is going to be born in Bethlehem. That represents anarchy, lawlessness, and degenerate moral and ethical values.

#### Work Consulted and Cited:

- '**Eternal Rhythms**', 2012, Oxford University Press, India.
- '**The Infinite Riches**', 1999, Oxford University Press, India.
- '**A compendious History of English Literature**', 2001, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
- Iyenger, KRS, '**Indian Writing in English**', 2017, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi