

11-5-20
Lecture No. (24)
Dr. Hemanti Shah

Eng (Hons.)
DII / Paper - IV (Prose)

①

Topic : Life and Works of Emily Bronte.

Emily Bronte was the fifth child of an Irish clergyman "whose background was Methodist but who was himself firmly of the Church of England". Her elder sister, Charlotte, was the most successful of three precocious sisters as a novelist and writer but even she was not to live for more than thirty-nine years, succumbing to the disease like the other two. Emily Bronte herself died of the same disease - tuberculosis - at an early age of thirty in 1848 just around the time her only novel "Wuthering Heights" got published.

Her father has been described as "a person of peasant stock (The Rev. Patrick Bronte) with a 'the strong passionate nature of his countrymen; a more impatient selfish man with ideas of his own on training and education of children'". His temperament was, so to say, somewhat untamable and barbaric. Patrick Bronte had only one son, Branwell by name, who naturally got spoiled by getting too much importance and attention at the expense of his sisters and could not live upto his early promise of artistic talent that was evident in his childhood.

All the Bronte sisters, cut off from the society owing to their secluded place of dwelling and special kind of education

2

as they did receive, developed a reserved kind of personality. But of all of them, Emily was still more reserved. Arthur Compton Rickett writes: "Reserved as was Charlotte, Emily was still more reserved. She seemed to have absorbed the silence of the gaunt, lonely moors in her aversion to society, and her passion for the moors in all seasons and in all weathers made her almost as one of themselves."

Her this quality of finding affinity to the point of oneness with the natural elements is highlighted by her sister Charlotte also when she says: "In the bleak solitude she found many and dear delights, and not the least and best loved was liberty. Liberty was the breath of Emily's nostrils, without it she perished."

The father Brontë, on account of his inability to successfully communicate and socialize with the society, was unable to sustain the family financially, and hence, the children "had to depend on their own resources entirely." In 1816 both Emily and Charlotte was sent to Cowan Bridge, a school for the daughters of clergymen. They had, however, to return home after their two sisters died unfortunately one after another, and pursue their study at home under the guardianship of their aunt.

By 1835 Emily had developed ~~into~~

into a tall, good-looking girl of seventeen and accompanied Charlotte to Rochdale where both of them joined as a teacher in a school. It was not to be for any longer duration as both of them had to quit their job as a teacher, and return ~~to~~ home to Haworth on account of failing health and homesickness. From now on we see a kind of tug of war between the finance-driven necessity for working as ^a teacher and health-driven necessity for recuperation and rest, taking hold of the Bronte sisters. To gain necessary proficiency in teaching we see them again enter the Heger Pensionnat in Brussels and, by dint of their studiousness, make much progress in French. Even this stint as a teacher for them was again to ~~be~~ ^{be} curtailed on getting sad news about their aunt's death. This time when Charlotte left to rejoin as a teacher in Brussels, Emily did not accompany her. She remained ~~to~~ stationed at home in Haworth.

All this time literature was a secret fascination for the sisters. Their first attempt at creative literature was a collection of poems, which they published under the title of "Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell" on the ~~front~~ ^{front} of novel writing also, the three sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne, were ready with their respective books — "The Professor" by

Charlotte, "The Wuthering Heights" by Emily and "Agnes Gray" by Anne. The last two of the three, "The Wuthering Heights" and "Agnes Gray" were accepted for publication by the publisher, Mr. Newby "on a terms somewhat impoverishing to the authors". Charlotte's novel on the other hand had to wait till two more years when her second attempt "Jane Eyre" got the nod.

Emily Bronte, though less ~~to~~ prolific than her elder sister Charlotte was, nevertheless, ^{is} considered by critics as having "a talent of stranger and perhaps rarer quality". This talent was, by the cruel hands of fate, to be extinguished prematurely. Fate had conspired to confine her, most of the times, in a secluded environment but from this misfortune also she was to draw from the wild moors and solitary musing the creativity of a rare and spiritual kind to put her in the league of literary genius. Louis Cazamian writes: "The figures which she had fashioned from the fabric of her dreams are worked out in wonderful relief, as if they had been borrowed from the most intimately known substance of reality. Her psychology, as naive as it is ~~of~~ profound, is at the same time, wholly imaginary, and astonishingly convincing." He goes on to add: "There is no one after 1830 who so completely and boldly realizes the ideal of independence in thought, and freedom in spiritual life." (concluded) -

X — — X