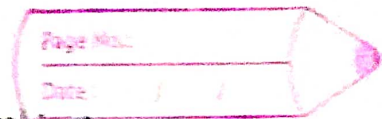


A.01 - (English)
Sem - III
C.C - 10

Church Going

Philip Larkin



'Church Going' is one of the most famous poems written by Philip Larkin. It was written after World War II, when the shattering influence of war was at its peak and there were constant social changes. The poem was written in 1954, in a monologue form in which the speaker discusses the futility and the utility of going to a church. It clearly reveals the social context of the time when it was written.

Philip Larkin, the great poet of modern times, noticed the people's dependence on the church was fading, which leads us to the two possible meanings of the title 'Church Going', the first being weekly act of going to a church, or the fading away of the church. The poet himself wasn't a believer in the church, he was agnostic and indifferent, and the speaker in the poem could be the poet himself or a persona adopted by him. The poem talks about the speaker's thoughts as he enters a vast, empty church and wonders what will happen when the churches fall in to disuse. At a deeper level the poem becomes an inquiry into the role of religion in our lives today.

In the poem, the speaker says that he goes in to a church and sees the matting on the floor, the seats, and a number of Bibles, flowers

which had been placed inside on last Sunday, a small organ etc. He mounts the lectern, and goes through a few verses in a Bible. Then he goes back to the entrance, signs the book, drop an Irish sixpence in to the charity-box and comes out. It seems to him that it was not worthwhile for him to come to the church. He thinks about the people who come to the church for different purposes and goes on to conclude that the importance and use of churches is going to decline. According to the speaker, a time is coming when people would stop going to churches altogether, because they would have lost their faith in God and in divine worship. Then a time is also coming when people's disbelief in God and their superstitions would come to an end too. Eventually, however some people might still visit the decayed and disused church buildings on account of some inner compulsion or to derive some wisdom from the sight of the many graves in the churchyard. However, he is also of the view that though churches have a very little role to play in the lives of people yet the spiritual significance of the churches will never die.

The poem "Church-Going" is written in a conversational tone. The poem also shows that it is written in iambic pentameter and regular rhyme scheme - ABABCADCD. The title of the poem is

itself puzzling. It gives us two different meanings. One meaning is that it is a regular visit to a church. The other shows the decline of the institution because people lost faith in God and religion. The language is always simple and lucid and the idiom has great variety.

Philip Larkin is called a sceptic poet. He enters the church as a sceptic who does not have any faith in the church. But he slowly realizes the truth that church fulfils a deeply felt human need and it is "a serious house on a serious earth it is." A church is a symbol of man's sincere search for the ultimate meaning of life. The poem underlines the truth that the power and glory of God can not be destroyed by the advancement of science and technology.