

## MEETING AT NIGHT

ROBERT BROWNING (1812-1889)

**Life & Works:** Robert Browning came to this very earth in the year of 1812. He was the son of the bank clerk of England. His father has immense interest in poetry and literary works & made every congenial atmosphere for them to study properly to be a poet. In the year of 1833 he went on a continental tour and visited many countries on return he composes “PARACELUS” (1835). He married Elizabeth Barrett but she died shortly at Florence that incident moved him profoundly & her immersed in the morose and sadness. After some time by recovering himself he resumed to write more vigorously and he composes many masterpieces like MEN AND WOMEN, DRAMATIC ROMANCE, and DRAMATIC PERSONAE. He introduced DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE in English poetry and his masterpieces are “MY LAST DUTCHESS”, “PORHIRIA’S LOVER“, “THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER”. This great person died on 1889.

**ABOUT POEM:** MEETING AT NIGHT is literal masterpiece in the Longfellow’s cascade of poetry. He composes that gem at the very outset of his marriage life with Elizabeth Barrett. The hush hush matter and note of secrecy has given the poem a mysterious, heart pounding tone. There might be some autobiographical touch in the poem & essence of love with fear and longing for meeting the beloved has given the poem an ecstatic charm with the throbbing heart, palpitating pulse. It was first published in “Dramatic Romance & lyrics “in December 1845, parting at morning is sequel to it & has close resemblance with this masterpiece .Initially Composer composes a poem entitled Night and Morning , later he divided it into two . 1<sup>st</sup> part is MEETING AT NIGHT & 2<sup>nd</sup> part is named PARTING AT MORNING. The poem has autobiographical element. It depicts Browning’s secret meeting with his lady love and spouse Elizabeth Barrett because of her ill health & strict father. The poem is lyric not a dramatic monologue.

**SUBSTANCE:** The lover has possessed insatiable thirst to be satiated by meeting her lady love who lives a far from his house. At night he desires to furlong a prolonged journey across the infinite grey sea & miles of black lands. The lover undertakes the journey amidst night in a boat. The moon is not in its full grandeur it has half of it. The

quiescent /dormant, heavy-eyed sea rises in ripples, the waves are full of zip and pulsating/ lively. It seems that waves have just been aroused from its profound slumber & now dancing in ecstasy. The speaker concludes his voyage only at the destination. The journey doesn't end here after disembarking from the boat he has to cross a galaxy on the sea fumed beach & after those, three fields to have a long cherished view of his beloved. The wait doesn't end here, to message his arrival he taps at the window pane of his beloved's house & her lady love responds with the flash of match stick the blue light is discernible his awaiting face . The lady love whispers. Every sound within & without fades with the sound of pounding heart of the lovers which throbs in the beat of each other & composes a saga of eternal love.

**TITLE OF THE POEM:** This magnificent poetry is an ideal example of dramatic lyric .The very title reflects its theme. This is the eternal saga of two love laden soul.

[ **WRITE SUBSTANCE** ]

The clandestine /secret meeting of two love imbued soul is suggested by the title so we can wrap up by saying that the title is apposite/apt.

**MEETING AT NIGHT AS LOVE POEM:** MEETING AT NIGHT is imbued with constituent & particle which cements or forms an ideal love poem. It has theme of the secret union of two love laden soul amidst all intricacies & hazards & at the end rubbing of soothing balm on the forehead of fret, pain, longing by long coveted union of two estranged/ separated soul. The poem opens with wonderfully crafted imagery of grey sea, black infinite land and mesmerizing night with the presence of half moon. Startled waves, slushy land, sea fumed beach, three fields and at last the arrival of farm house where his lady love resides, by dodging every destined danger lover at last reaches to the destination but wait does not end here, the lover has to message his arrival, he taps at the window pane of his beloved's house & her lady love responds with the flash of match stick the blue light is discernible his awaiting face. The lady love whispers. Every sound within & without fades with the sound of pounding heart of the lovers which throbs in the beat of each other & composes a saga of eternal love. The creeping tension of the lover, the zeal to satiate his mental longing and quenching of thirst by meeting his lady love all these give an ideal setting of a love poem.

**MEETING AT NIGHT AS DRAMATIC LYRIC:** Browning is one of the creator dramatic lyric in the horizon of English literature , with the super artistry of his craftsmanship he composes an exotic dramatic lyric in the form of this poem . MEETING

AT NIGHT is imbued with constituent & particle which cements or forms an ideal dramatic lyric. Dramatic lyric is a poetic form in which single character addressing a silent auditor at a critical moment reveals himself or herself. This particular poem is attired with dramatic suspense, action, dynamism, elements of breath taking suspense, tension, expectation. It has theme of the secret union of two love laden soul amidst all intricacies & hazards & at the end rubbing of soothing balm on the forehead of fret, pain, longing by long coveted union of two estranged/ separated soul. The poem begins with the lover's insatiable thirst to be satiated by meeting her lady love who lives a far from his house. At night he desires to furlong a prolonged journey across the infinite grey sea & miles of black lands. The lover undertakes the journey amidst night in a boat. By dodging every destined danger lover furlong grey sea, black infinite land, startled waves, slushy land, sea fumed beach, three fields and at last the arrival of farm house where his lady love resides, but wait does not end here, the lover has to message his arrival, he taps at the window pane of his beloved's house & her lady love responds with the flash of match stick the blue light is discernible his awaiting face . After prolonged wait & breathe taking tension at last two separated soul united. the cryptic expressions , abruptness of report , presence of lyrical tone & intonation , melody of the poem, emotional urgency ,agitation, suspense , excitement, picturesque setting all these crafted an ideal setting and atmosphere of Dramatic lyric .

**IMAGERY IN THE POEM & ITS USES:** The poem is attired/imbued with astounding imageries and the poet has used these imageries to craft a wonderful hypnotic effect on the reader. The poet has used it with 3 senses-

1. **Visual(sight):** 'gray sea', 'long black land', 'yellow moon', 'startled little waves', 'fiery ringlets', 'blue spurt of a lighted match', etc.
2. **Hearing(sound):** 'tap at the pane', 'sharp scratch', 'voice less loud', 'hearts beating', etc.
3. **Tactile(touch) and Olfactory(Smell):** 'Slushy Sand', 'Warm sea-scented beach'.

Imagery plays a significant role in the poem. It presents the landscape and time and place of the journey and makes the poem picturesque and vivid. The images of 'yellow half-moon' and the 'black land' create a romantic surrounding and an atmosphere suitable for a secret meeting. In the second stanza, a climactic moment is built up and

suspense created by the images of a ‘tap at the pane’, ‘the quick sharp scratch’, ‘blue spurt’, etc. While the less loud voice of the ladylove presents joy and fear, the beating of two hearts represents the excitement of a secret meeting. The images appear in chronological sequence. This sequence matches with psychological journey and rise of passion. Thus, in Browning’s “Meeting at Night”, imagery creates a symbolic setting that befits the boundless passion of a secret meeting.

**Autobiographical tone in the poem:** Browning poem is an occurrence of a lover’s journey to meet his ladylove secretly. Before the desired meeting with his beloved, he undertakes a long journey through the sea and land. The shadows of the dark night are falling rapidly and the sea appears grey. The lad appears long and black and black as darkness engulfs the atmosphere. The colour of the atmosphere is an induction of time and secrecy of the lover’s journey. The depiction of the seascape and landscape is followed by the sky scape. The moon appears ‘yellow’, ‘large’ and ‘low’. Evidently the setting of the Sun and the rising of the moon have been suggested. Only at the time of rising the moon is low and yellow and large. So, the time of meeting is early evening. The sea beach is still warm after getting the scorching sunshine throughout the whole day. The feeling of the nocturnal atmosphere is heightened by the silence and darkness of the night beach. The silence is so reformed that even a sharp scratch on match box by match stick or a gentle tap on the window pane is clearly heard. And the darkness is so intense that even the blue light of the lighted match is visible. The lady love's voice comes in a whisper. The eager beating of two hearts of lovers makes a sound overwhelming the voice of ladylove. Thus, the atmosphere of the night helps in augmenting the effect.

**The description of the night-time sea in the poem “Meeting at Night”:**

The poem, “Meeting at Night”, opens with a description of the sea. The sea is grey. The poet speaks of the startled waves, a cove and the warm sea-scented beach. The speaker’s boat hits the slushy sand. Thus, the poet describes the color of the sea and the things associated with it as grey sea and long black land. Even the title of the poem, “Meeting at Night” introduces the time of the secret meeting of lovers. The references to the yellow moon, black land and blue spurt of a lighted match describe the night and darkness and night suggest the secret meeting.