

## The Idea of Unconscious and Tennyson's 'The Lotos-Eaters'

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The idea of unconscious, as developed by Sigmund Freud and later as enlarged by Lacan, finds the fitting expression in Lord Tennyson's 'The Lotos- Eaters'. The very idea of 'lotos' in this poem is far from being creative and constructive and thus antedates all the transcendental, divine and heavenly significance which might have been otherwise attributed to lotos the flower. Lotos, in present context, is both the sign of pleasure principle, hypertrophy of dream world, castration of male-logos and deferral of continuity and reality. It explains the nature of joy that is obtained in the loss, failure, disinheritence consequently it becomes a celebration of loss of structure, totality, foundation and form. Ulysses and his mariners should like to prolong the spell of stupor, drunkenness and languor thereby concede the fact that even the world of dreams in which all the inhibitions are broken could not safely and securely become a place for dispelling extraordinary amount of creative energy stored in libido. The opening of the poem substantiates the argument :

'Courage! He said, and pointed toward the land,

'this mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon'.

In the afternoon they come unto a land

In which it seemed always afternoon.

All round the coast the languid air did swoon,

Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.

(1-6)

The poet here expounds an object in Ulysses whose subject is very expansive consequently he comes to understand that he cannot go away from this place yet there is a strong desire to return to the homeland. The poet works out a structure in which everything is passive; everything is static and the artistry achieves the continuity of the passive attending on the event. Afternoon, is, therefore, always the afternoon and the air has become languid and the whole existence consequently is weary and dull. We can understand that in actual reality, event such as these cannot take place. It can only happen in the state of unconsciousness. It is fairly open to examination if object and subject enter into any correlation or there is no correspondence of the object and subject.



From our reading of the first passage conclusion at once is possible that the both object and subject extend the events they come to embody. In fact, Ulysses is struggling to return to his unconscious so much so that he can save himself. Having had a long and very long period of time wasted in the wars and more than that thousands of years spent under the spell of intoxication, how could he be in a position to admire the consciousness of spirit. Reality is a fact of aggression and unreality or unconsciousness for him the substance of condensation and displacement. He creates his metaphors primarily on account of the release of energy from libido in such a way that the inhibitions created and imposed by reality are broken down. This is almost like the carvinalization of joy and celebration of the passive in the event. For example, look at the following:

Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,  
 Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.  
 Then some one said, 'We will return no more ;  
 And all at once they sang 'Our island home  
 Is far beyond the wave; We will no longer roam'.

(40-45)

It seems as if Ulysses and his mariners do not want to resolve the event with a conclusion suitable to their fair future. On the other hand, they should like to prolong, persist, subsist, continue and protect the situation attending on them. The drunkenness and intoxicated state of being are now the well defined indices, stupor governs what they feel; what they think; what they meditate consequently what they act on the whole. To be able to live in fantasy and to be able to be guided by phantasmagoria certainly, to a great extent bring about conflicting and contradictory variation in personality which do not find any meaningful expression. What actually is happening is that the intensity of sublime which should have been prefatory to principle of life has become transformed into a logical crisis of representation. We can take up following verses for examination :

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,  
 And utterly consumed with sharp distress,  
 While all things else have rest from weariness ?

(59-61)

And :  
 Hateful is the dark-blue sky,  
 Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.  
 Death is the end of life; ah, why  
 Should life all labour be ?

(83-87)

And also the following:  
 To lend our hearts and spirit wholly  
 To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;

To muse and brood and live again in memory  
 With those old faces of our infancy  
 Heap'd over with a mound of grass,  
 Two handfuls of whilte dust, shut in an urn of brass! (100-106)

And finally this : (170)  
 Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

We can easily understand that Tennyson has idealized the idea of the unconsciousness as being, in the words of Lacan, "insistence of letter". It is only the prolongation that we can observe in respect of the mariners. They prolonge the events thereby they are disassociated from conscious imagination rather they always return to unconsciousness where they have peace, satisfaction, pleasure, joy, celebration and above all bliss.