

Study Material for Degree I(Hons.), English, Paper-II

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NOW FADES THE LAST LONG STREAK OF SNOW

(A Poem by Lord Alfred Tennyson)

The poem 'Now Fades the Last Long Streak of Snow' has been written by Alfred Tennyson. This poem has been taken from a long poem, 'In Memoriam'. This has been a masterpiece creation by Tennyson. There are altogether 131 cantos. 'Now Fades the Last Long Streak of Snow' is numbered as Canto CXV. 'In Memoriam' was published in the year 1950. It is an elegy to mourn the death of his dear friend, Arthur Henry Hallam. Arthur Henry Hallam died in the year 1933 when he was twenty two years only. This event caused intense sadness to the poet. Tennyson produced this great masterpiece after seventeen years of Hallam's death. It is a masterpiece because it explores some of the important elements of the Victorian Age, an age of faith and doubt. In Memoriam is a result of his deep pondering over questions of life and death, faith and doubt and God and immortality. This is a poem of triumph of faith, love and God over death and doubt.

'Now Fades the Last Long Streak of Snow' is a remarkable lyric that depicts the poet's change of mind. As the last line of snow melts the poet's sorrow also vanishes. He turns away from regret and despair to love and hope. In this poem, Tennyson describes the arrival of spring season. It is the spring of 1838. As the spring arrives the whole environment is filled with new life. The blooming flowers and sprouting hedges fill the environment with freshness and fragrance. The nature all around gets a colourful hue. The blooming violet flowers give a lovely view to the garden. It seems that the earth has awakened from its long swoon. When the snow melts life returns to earth making the landscape beautiful and alive. The nature's bliss is felt all over. The following lines present the change that nature experiences in the spring season:

Now burgeons every maze of quick

About the flowering squares, and thick

By ashen roots the violet blow

The season of spring brings happiness to birds and beasts. They enjoy the newness spread all over. They chirp and sing to express their delight. The woodland rings with music. Even though the lark cannot be seen its presence can be felt in the melodies that it has poured.

The snow covered land becomes dark and gloomy. As the snow melts the land and valley glisten with light. Spring season gives movement to the sea and river. The boats and ship sailing on the river and sea look milkier because of the brightness of sunlight.

The entire woodland seems to enjoy the spring season. The pleasant environment that gleams in green makes the birds fly and dance in merriment. They move to find comfortable places to give birth to young ones. Hence, spring is a season of new life. The sea mews sing and dive in pleasure over the sea.

The spring season is a mark of happiness, joy and delight. The blooming flowers and the sprouting plants along with the singing birds give life and movement to the woodland. It's a gift of nature. It is a symbol of rejuvenation. Spring season has not only awakened the earth but has also filled the poet with hope. The poet recovers from his state of regret and 'becomes an April violet'. The violet flower is a symbol of life and freshness, both, for the earth and the poet. The freshness and hope leads him to believe in life and love. This is evident from the following lines.

*From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too, and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.*

Tennyson has in this poem portrayed the charms of spring season in a beautiful language. Each and every word used in the poem enriches the description of loveliness of spring season. The word 'snow' symbolises the winter season which indicates a sense of regret in the mood of the poet. The colour green, white and violet bear the significance of life on earth.

Points to Remember

- **Name of the poem:** Now Fades the last long streak of Snow
 - **Canto no:** CXV
 - **Taken from:** In Memoriam (A long poem)
 - **Poet:** Lord Alfred Tennyson
 - **Age:** Victorian Age
 - **Purpose:** To mourn the death of Arthur Henry Hallam, poet's friend, Who died in 1833
 - **Year of publication:** 1850
 - **Canto CXV:** Description of the Spring season
 - **Subject:** Change from the mood of regret
 - **Theme:** Hope and belief in life
 - **Language:** Use of nature images(burgeons, violet, bird, etc.) to reflect the mood
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