



THE INDIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL, KOCHI

GRADE 12-ISC

SUBJECT- ENGLISH

DOVER BEACH- MATHEW ARNOLD [cont]

Stanza 4

Meanings-

Sea of Faith= faith in God and religion

girdle= belt

furled= neatly rolled

melancholy= sad

retreating= going back, here retreating faith

drear= dull

shingles= pebbles

naked = here devoid of faith

Summary

The poet is then reminded of the eroding [washing away] of religious faith. Explaining this next thought, the speaker describes religious faith as a sea that was once full like the tide. At that time, it reached around the earth like a girdle. Now, though, the speaker just hears that sea's sad retreat. As the Sea of Faith becomes smaller, says the speaker, it disappears into the atmosphere and leaves the edges of the world naked. Naked here means unprotected and vulnerable because it is devoid of faith.

Stanza 5

Meanings-

Certitude- certainty

darkling- dark and gloomy

Summary

The speaker suddenly addresses the companion as "love," and states desperately that the two of them need to treat each other with honesty and authenticity. This is because the world, though it has a dream-like quality of variety, beauty and newness, doesn't actually offer joy, love or clarity. Neither, claims the speaker, can it provide certainty, peace, or relief from pain. The speaker then compares their collective situation to standing on a flat and dark piece of land, which is caught up in the chaos of fighting. Here, battles between unknowing groups continue under the cover of darkness.

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.

People in the modern world are living in a confused and alarmed state. There is a rattle and clash of every idea. We are suspicious of everything. The word 'ignorant' means that the soldiers do not know why they are fighting. Takes us back to Bob Dylan's John Brown where he says, 'I was just a puppet in a play'. The word night reinforces this thought of total darkness and lack of light- lack of the spiritual light.