

# 2

## CHAPTER

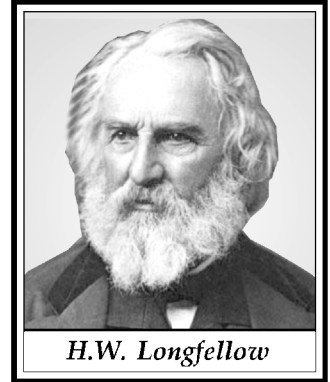
# The Psalm of Life

–H. W. Longfellow (1807-1882)

---

### ◆ *About the Poet*

The full name of Longfellow was Henry Wordsworth Longfellow. He was an American poet. He was very famous in the world. He worked as a teacher of Modern languages at Harvard University. 'Voices of the Night' was his first collection of poems, published in 1839. It included 'The Psalm of Life'. His other works were : 'Poems on Slavery', 'The Spanish Student', 'Belfray of Bruges', 'The Golden Legend', 'Village Blacksmith' etc.



### ◆ *Central Idea of the Poem*

The poem 'The Psalm of Life' published in 1838 is a celebration of life, an earnest effort to see life in the right spiritual perspective. In the Psalms (The Bible) at some places human life has been referred to as something of little consequence. The poet does not agree with this view of the Psalmist.

Life is not an empty dream. It is a serious reality. Death is not its ultimate object for soul is immortal. Sorrow or joy is not its preordained way or aim. Our main duty in life is to work hard and progress day by day. In this short and temporary camp of life we should face the circumstances of life as a hero, and not be driven this way or that way by them like helpless cattle. We should give up idleness and start working hard to achieve success after success. We should learn to labour hard and wait for the result.

Life is real! Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal.  
"Dust thou art, to dust returnest,"  
Is not spoken of the soul. ... (i)  
Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is our destined end or way;  
But to act that each tomorrow  
Finds us farther than today. ... (ii)  
In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle;  
Be a hero in the strife! ... (iii)  
Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labour and to wait ... (iv)

## || Glossary ||

<b>Earnest</b>	सच्चा, दृढ़ संकल्प	sincere, eager
<b>Grave</b>	कब्र	burial pit
<b>Goal</b>	उद्देश्य	aim
<b>Enjoyments</b>	आनन्द	pleasures
<b>Destined</b>	भाग्य में लिखा हुआ	fate decided in advance
<b>End</b>	उद्देश्य, परिणाम, अंत	aim, extremity
<b>Act</b>	कार्य/मार्ग	route
<b>Farther</b>	उन्नति के मार्ग पर	ahead
<b>Broad</b>	विस्तृत	large
<b>Bivouac</b>	अस्थायी पड़ाव	temporary shelter
<b>Dumb</b>	गूँगा	unable to speak
<b>Cattle</b>	भेड़ बकरियाँ, जानवर	animals of different type
<b>Hero</b>	वीर	brave
<b>Strife</b>	संघर्ष	struggle
<b>Fate</b>	भाग्य	destiny
<b>Pursuing</b>	अनुसरण करना	going after
<b>Still</b>	अब भी	even now
<b>Achieving to labour</b>	परिश्रम करना	accomplishing to labour

## || Exercise ||

### ↳ STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following stanzas given below and answer the questions that follow each—

**1. Life is real.....of the soul.**

- (i) Write the name of this poet who has composed the poem from which the above noted stanza has been chosen.
- (ii) Point out the rhyming words used in the given stanza.
- (iii) What is meant by the following expressions—
  - (i) Life is earnest
  - (ii) Dust thou art, to dust returnest.
- (iv) What is the message of the poet that he intends to give through this stanza?

**2. Not enjoyment.....than today.**

- (i) Who is the author of this poem from which the above noted stanza has been taken?
- Or What is the title of the poem from which these lines have been taken?
- (ii) What does the poet say in the first two lines of the stanza? What is meant by the word 'destined'?
  - (iii) How should we act in life? What is the meaning of the words find us farther?
  - (iv) Point out the rhyming words in the given stanza.
  - (v) What advice does the poet give to the youngmen in the above stanza?

**3. In the world's broad.....in the strife!**

- (i) Write the title of this poem from which the above noted lines of poetry have been taken.  
*Or* Write the name of poet who has composed the poem from which the above noted stanza has been chosen.
- (ii) What has the world been compared to?  
*Or* Give the title of the poem from which the above lines have been selected?
- (iii) How can we become a hero?  
 (iv) Point out the rhyming words used in the given stanza.

**4. Let us then.....to wait.**

- (i) What does the poet mean by the phrase 'be up and doing'?  
 (ii) What should we learn?  
*Or* Give the title of the poem from which the above lines have been selected.  
*Or* What do we learn from the above stanza?  
 (iii) What are the rhyming words in the given stanza?  
 (iv) Name the poem from which the above stanza has been taken.  
*Or* Give the title of the poem from which the above noted lines have been selected.
- (v) What does the poet mean by the words, 'with a heart for any fate'?  
 (vi) What do we learn the above stanza?

↳ **COMPREHENSION**

*Answer the following questions:*

1. What is life? What is not its goal?
2. What is the main quality of the soul?
3. What is not real aim of life?
4. What should be the real aim of life?
5. How is this world compared to?
6. What does the poet advise us to be?
7. How should we fight in the battle of life?
8. What should we learn and what should we wait?
9. What do we learn from the poem?
10. Give the Central Idea of the poem, 'A Psalm of Life'.

↳ **Project Work**

- (a) Select any four pairs of rhyming words from the poem. 'The Psalm of Life' and then add one word to each pair of them having the same sound. Make a **table** for this, practice these rhyming words in a group of four or five boys/girls.
- (b) Prepare a **report** on the life of H.W. Longfellow working with your partner. You may take help from the internet or library. Some cues are given below to help you.

Full name, American, Harvard University,  
 first collection of poems, the other works, death.