Unit -6 ❑ Milton : Paradise Lost

Structure

6.0 ❑ Objectives

This unit has several objectives :

a) It aims to provide detailed background information about the age and outline of life of Milton.

b) It will relate the text *Paradise Lost* to its social background.

c) It will discuss the literary qualities of the text.

d) It will critically comment on the various themes present in the text.

6.1 ❑ Background to the age

The Protestant Reformation split the hitherto single Christian Europe into two broad groups—the Catholics and the Protestants. The Church in medieval age had grown corrupt and hedonistic, more interested in garnering material power than in spirituality. A number of reformers like Wycliff, Huss, Martin Luther, Calvin arose in various countries who protested against corruption at the highest levels of the Church, the sale of indulgences, the excessive veneration of saints and the low moral and intellectual standards of ordained priests. After the Reformation, the Protestant Churches in different countries took various forms. In England Henry VIII declared Protestantism to be the official religion with the monarch as the head of the Church. The persecutions by his Catholic daughter Queen Mary I. and the long rule of his Protestant daughter Queen Elizabeth I strengthened that religion in England. However soon there arose several factions within the Protestant movement, most notably the Presbyterians or Puritans, each of whom claimed to practice true Christianity and some even posed challenges to the government itself. Elizabeth was succeeded by James I, the Stuart king of Scotland. The official Church of England was Episcopalism which had a hierarchy of Bishops rtnd resembled in many of its rituals the Catholic Church. The Presbyterians on the other hand followed the Apostolic model of Church government, one in.which there is no hierarchy and the king is not its head. They demanded a return to literal interpretation of the Bible which they held to be the sole guide Tor human affairs. James I dismissed their pleas with the statement, "No Bishop, No King" thus tying the form of church government directly to the power of kingship.

James' trouble did not end with religious questions alone. He was known as the ".wisest fool in Christendom"—wise on account of his scholarship and a fool on account of his inability to govern. His predecessor Elizabeth was a charismatic and brilliantly intelligent ruler who ruled as an absolute monarch without serious opposition. Unfortunately James lacked her qualities. He was a firm believer in the "divine right of kings"—the theory that God appointed kings and therefore the king could do no wrong and none had the right to rebel against him. However he had to deal wi,th the English Parliament which was not inclined to look upon James in such a manner. There were constant clashes between the two, particularly over money. In 1611, James suspended Parliament and it did not meet for another 10 years. In 1621, James re-called Parliament to discuss the future marriage of his son, Charles, to a Spanish princes, Parliament was outraged at the thought that an alliance would be made with a Catholic princess and from a nation who had been at war with England during Elizabeth's time. The marriage did not take place but the damaged relationship between king and Parliament was never mended by the time James died in 1625.

James was succeeded by his son Charles I. Like his father he believed in the divine rights of kings. He argued with parliament over most issues, but money and religion were

the most common causes of arguments. He married a Catholic wife and continued to ignore the demands of the Puritans who were growing stronger and stranger. In 1629, he refused to let Parliament meet by locking the doors. For eleven years Parliament could not meet—a period called the Eleven Years Tyranny. Charles ruled by using the Court of Star Chamber. To raise money for the king,, the Court heavily fined those brought before it and sold titles to rich men. In 1635 Charles ordered that everyone in the country should pay Ship Money for the upkeep of the navy. John Hampden, a Member of Parliament refused to pay the new tax as Parliament had not agreed to it. Charles also angered the Scots by ordering that they should use a new prayer book for their-church services; the Scots invaded England. Charles was forced to recall Parliament in 1640 as only they had the required authority to collect extra money needed for the war. So he had to yield to many demands of the Parliament. In 1642, he went to Parliament with 300 soldiers to arrest his five severest critics. But they already knew of the plan and fled. This was the turning point. Only six days later, Charles left London to raise an army to fight Parliament. The king raised his banner at Nottingham and the Civil War started. The king's party was known as Royalists or cavaliers, while the Parliamentarians were known as Roundheads. At first the war was indecisive until Cromwell was appointed as general of the Puritan side and created the New Model Army. After the Battle of Naseby Charles surrendered to the Scots who sold him to the-English Parliament for £400,000. As the conquerors quarreled among themselves Charles made a treaty with the Scots who attacked England. But they were defeated. Charles was put on trial at Cromwell's insistence, found guilty and executed. England now officially became a Commonwealth. At first it was governed by the Parliament; but they proved to be so weak that ultimately Cromwell took over as Protector and ruled as dictator.

After the death of Oliver Cromwell in Sept., 1658, there was confusion, Cromwell's son and successor, Richard, was an ineffectual leader, and power quickly fell into the hands of the generals, chief among whom was George Monck, leader of the army of occupation in Scotland. In England also a strong reaction had set in against the Puritans. A new Parliament was elected, which decided to recall Charles II, son of Charles I, as the new king. Charles returned to England and landed at Dover on May 25, 1660. This is known as the Restoration period.

The Restoration period was marked by an advance in colonization and overseas trade, by the Dutch Wars, by the great plague (.1665) and the great fire of London (1666), by the birth of the Whig and Tory parties, and by bitter anti-Catholicism. Theatres were opened and drama revived giving rise to the notorious Restoration Comedy of Manners. Milton and Dryden were the great poets of this age. A great prose work is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). The age is vividly brought to life in the diaries of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn..

6.2 ❑ Milton's Life and Works

John Milton was born in 1608, December 9 to John Milton Sr., and his wife Sara, in London. His father had converted to Protestantism and was disinherited by his Roman Catholic family. Milton grew up under the influence of both Renaissance and the Bible., tutored at home by a Presbyter. In 1620(?) he entered St. Paul's School, under the high master Alexander Gill. Apparently he was very studious and already practised writing verses. In 1625 he was admitted to Christ's College, Cambridge, under the tutor William Chappell. In 1626 disputes with Chappell caused him to be sent home to London or "rusticated" temporarily though he returned later. In 1629, December 25, he composed *Ode On the Morning of Christ's Nativity.* In 1632 he took M..A. at Cambridge. He now retired to family homes for more study. In 1634 *Comus* was performed as part of a private ceremony in a lord's home. While in 1637 *Comus* was published, *Lvcidas* was published in 1638. He then went on a tour of Europe and met with prominent scholars, In 1640 he started a school in London. He now wrote several pamphlets reflecting his religious and political opinions. He showed himself to be a Republican and Puritan.

He married Mary Powell who left him within a month of their marriage. When the Civil War broke out, the Powells declared for the king. But when Milton announced his intention of marrying a second time after getting a divorce, she returned and later Milton sheltered the Powell relatives after the king's defeat. In 1649 he was invited to become Secretary for the Foreign Tongues (a post dealing with diplomatic correspondence, usually in Latin) by the Council of State. Milton was appointed Secretary. His first task was to answer *Eikon Basilike,* the book supposedly written by Charles I on the eve of his execution, which depicts the king-as a martyr He wrote *Eikonoklastes* ("breaker of icons"). He was also ordered to answer Salmasius's *Defensio Regia* ("defense of kingship"). In 1651 *Defensio pro populo Anglh~ano* ("defense of the English people," to vindicate the actions of the English on the Continent) was published.

After the death of his wife Mary who had given him several children, in 1656 he married Katherine Woodcock who died in 1658. After the Restoration he was arrested by Parliament but later pardoned. By this time he was old and had become blind. He was also famous for his learning. This probably influenced his pardon. He was allowed to retain a pension. He now settled down to tutoring and working on *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regain'd.* In 1663 he married Elizabeth Minshull. In 1667 *Paradise Lost* was published. In 1670 *History of Britain* was published. In 1671 *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* were published together. *(Paradise Regained continues* where *Paradise U)sl* left off—with the temptation of Christ and his rejection of Satan so that he can redeem mankind. *Samson Agonistes* tells of the martyrdom of the Old Testament hero Samson who though blind and enslaved destroyed the Philistines—Milton saw himself as another

Samson and wished to emulate him). By the time of these publications he had become very ill and infirm. In 1674 he died and is buried in St. Gile's Church, Cripplegate.

Milton's famous poetic works are *Ode On The Morning Of Christ's Nativity, L'allegro, U'penwro, Counts, Lycidas, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, Samson Agonistes.* He also wrote voluminous pamphlets and prose works. AH of them have a distinctly Christian flavour.

Milton lived through exciting times. When he was born in 1608, Shakespeare was still alive and Queen Elizabeth was only five years dead. Her influence was still felt. When Milton died in 1674, Charles II reigned as constitutional'monarch without any real power except that granted to him by Parliament.

6.3 ❑ Story and Background to Paradise Lost

The story of *Paradise Lost* is taken entirely from Christian mythology though it is obvious that Milton was deeply influenced by classical writers. Satan had been one of the highest angels in Heaven. But he was also vain and arrogant. When God declared that his Son Christ would share Godhead equally with Him Satan-saw it as an insult. He persuaded a third of the angels to rise in rebellion against God. Inevitably they were defeated in the war and cast out of Heaven into Hell. Undaunted Satan swore eternal War against God. He learned that God had created a new race, called humans, and had placed them in the garden of Eden. He flew there. He learned that though everything in the garden is for the use of Adam and Eve, the first Human couple, they were forbidden to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the guise of a toad and serpent he tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. She then persuaded Adam to eat it as well. After they had eaten they were no longer happy innocents but filled with sin and guilt. God then decreed that they would be cast out of Eden; from now on they would be forced to live by labour amidst hostile nature and know death, until Christ redeems mankind by his sacrifice.

Milton began *Paradise Lost* in 1658 and finished it in 1667. Since he had become blind, he dictated the poem to an amanuensis, who would read it back to him so that he could make necessary revisions. Milton claimed to have dreamed much *of Paradise Lost* through the nighttime agency of angelic muses.

Milton had several reasons for wrking this massive poem. In the first place the story of Genesis raised vexing questions about the nature of God's justice in the layman; he planned to demonstrate that the expulsion of Adam and Eve was just and it was humans who are to be blamed for their sins and sufferings and not God. Secondly, he was educated in the classical tradition and had written several Greek and Latin poems. However he became ambitious to make his native literature an extension of the classical tree. Like Homer and Virgil before him, Milton would be the epic poet of the English nation. But he

would not only be a national poet; his theme would be that of religion and cover the whole human race. As he wrote in a letter, "the bard is sacred to the gods; he is their priest, and both his heart and lips mysteriously breathe the indwelling Jove"! His poetry would serve both God and England by putting before it noble and religious ideas in the highest poetic form. In *Paradise Lost* he harmonizes both religious and political principles to become the writer of the first successful English epic.

In this poem, Milton was not only justifying God's ways to humans in general; he was particularly justifying his ways to the English people between 1640 and 1660. He felt very bitter about the failure of the Rule of Saints and the Restoration. He blamed the English people for failing to create a perfect society once they had got rid of the king. Like Adam and Eve, they had failed through their own weaknesses, their own passions and greed, their own sin. God was not to blame for humanity's expulsion from Eden, nor was He to blame for the trials and corruption that befell England during the time of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell. England had the opportunity to become an instrument of God's plan, but ultimately failed to create the New Jerusalem. The Restoration to him was the equivalent of Hell. *Paradise Lost* is therefore more than a work of art. Indeed, it was a moral and political treatise.

Still another reason for writing the poem was to improve, -in Milton's mind, the English poetic language. A note on "The Verse" explains: "The measure is English heroic verse without rime, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin,—rime being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre; graced indeed since by the use of some famous modem poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse, than else they would have expressed them. Not without cause therefore some both Italian and Spanish poets of prime note have rejected rime both in longer and shorter works, as have also long since our best English tragedies, as a thing of itself, to all judicious ears, trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like' endings,—a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory. This neglect then of rime so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming."

6.4 ❑ Outline of Book I of *Paradise Lost*

Book I *of Paradise Lost* begins with Milton describing what he intends to undertake with his epic: the story of Man's first disobedience and the "loss of Eden,", invocation of

the Heavenly Muse, subjects "unattempted yet in prose or rhyme" and above all to "justify the ways of God to men."

The poem proper begins in media res (in the middle) with Satan lying dazed in the fiery but dark lakes of Hell. When he regains consciousness he finds that his second in command, Beelzebub, has been transformed from a beautiful archangel into a horrid fallen angel. Satan's speech tells us the background. Presuming himself to be the equal of God, he and his followers had waged war on God; but they had been defeated and cast out to hell. Still all is not lost for he will never bow down to God. Instead they would wage eternal war and make evil victorious. The two then fly over the lake wherethey see their army lying. Satan calls to them and they respond. In a magnificent speech Satan rallies them and tells them that now they will attack God's latest creation, man. The rebel angels then construct a Temple, a throne room, for their general and for their government, greater in grandeur than the pyramids or the Tower of Babylon.

All the millions of rebel angels then gather in the Temple for a great council, shrinking themselves to dwarfish in order to fit.

6.5 ❑ General comments

The first book therefore (1) introduces the theme of the entire poem, (2) introduces Satan and the fallen angels, and (3) tells the readers that they are reading an epic.

Though Milton is apparently writing about the battle between Good and Evil and the Fall of Man, he is actually exploring human nature and why there is suffering. Milton tries to weave into his canvas all the accumulated learning of Western man so that it can truly be an epic. Milton is presenting his, and his culture's views on what good and evil mean, what mankind's relationship is with God, what man's destiny is as an individual and as a species.

Milton's portrait of Satan has led many in the Romantic period to claim that Satan is, in fact, the heroic protagonist of the whole work. Certainly Milton's depiction of Satan has greatly influenced the'devil's image in Western art and literature since the book's publication.

Many of the structures and symbols used by both Heaven and Hell are similar. In heaven and hell there is a king and a military hierarchy of angels. Like Christ's twelve Apostles Satan too takes on twelve close associates. However there is reversal of values. While heaven is filled with light, hell is filled with darkness. While the unfallen angels were beautiful, now the fallen angels are ugly. The physical corruption-anddisfigurement that occurs to all the fallen angels is symbolic of the corruption which has occurred in their souls. While in Heaven all are attuned towards pleasing God, in Hell everyone is bent towards turning away from God.

6.6 ❑ Textual Annotations

4. One greater Man: Christ:

6. Heav'nly Muse: the Muse of Christian poetry, first invoked by Milton in *Nativity Ode 7.* Sinai, where God appeared to Moses and gave him the tables of the Law, was a mountain in the range Oreb;

8-10. that Shepherd: Moses.

10-11. Sion is Jerusalem, the Temple is the oracle or sanctuary of God there, and the pool Siloa is one with whose water Christ restored sight to the blind.

15. Aonian: Mount Helicon.

31. For one restraint: the prohibition to eai of the tree of Knowledge.

52. fiery gulf: the burning lake of Hell.

81. Beelzebub: Baal-zebub, the "Lord of Flies," the god Baal, worshipped by the Philistines at Ekron.

82. Satan: the term literally means "The AdversaiA,"

117. empyreal: fiery or heavenly substance which is indestructible.

157. Cherub: one of the orders of angels, belonging to the second rank.

198-200 The 'Iliads fought against iheir father t.'ranus (Heaven), loiter, they themselves were overthrown by /eus (Jove). Finally the Giants, sons of Earth (Earth-born), fought unsuccessfully against Zeus and his fellow Olympians.

Briareos: a hundred-handed monster, son of Uranus, here Milton uses him to imply an enemy of God.

Typhon: a hundred-headed serpent monster, who rebelled :i$_c$.ainst the gods and was punished.

200-8. Leviathan: a mythical seabeast, probably rose from sightings of whales. The prophet Isasiah described it as Hie dragon that is in the sea. A popular legend of the times told how a grou,. of sailors mistook the sleeping back of the leviathan for an island and anchored there; but when the beast woke up it swum away and the crew drowned. Here Milton is hinting at the deceptiveness and untrustworthiness of Satan.

209. Archfiend: Satan.

232. Pelorus: the northeast point of Sicily.

233. Etna: the great volcano near Pelorus.

236, bottom: valley;

239. stygian Flood; Styx is a river in Hell in Greek myth.

288. Tuscan Artist: Galileo, who perfected the telescope.

289. Fesole: Fiesole, a hill-town three miles north of Florence.

290. Vuldarno: Val d'Amo, the valley of the river Arno, which runs through Florence. 294. ammiral: ilagship, from the Arabic "amir al bahr," prince (emir) of the sea. 296. marie: soil.

303. Vallombrosa: "Shady Valley," a valley eighteen miles from Florence. Etrurian: the anqient state of Etruria included Tuscany.

305. Orion, a giant transformed to the constellation of that name, whose rising and setting coincided with storms.

306. The Red Sea.Coast: According to Old Testament when the Egyptians persued the Hebrews under Moses fleeing from them, God parted the Red Sea to allow the Hebrews passage and then closed it on Egyptian ranks drowning them.

307. Busiris: a legendary king of Egypt with whom Milton identifies the Old Testament Pharaoh.

Memphian: Egyptian, since Memphis was the ancient capital of Egypt.

320. virtue: valour (Lat. *virtus).*

339. Amram's son: Moses who called up locusts, to cover the sky over Egypt.

345. cope: roof.

351-55. Milton compares the angels with the floods of barbarian invasions spreading from the north to Europe and Africa.

361-75. The names of the rebel angels were wiped out from the Book of Life kept by God. These angels later persuaded various races of men to worship them as gods forsaking Jehovah.

392-405. Moloch was worshipped by Ammonites. Solomon, the wise king of Israel due to the influence of his non-Jewish wives built temples to Moloch, Cheinos and Astaite on the Mount of Olives which therefore is called "the mount of corruption". The wooded valley of Hinnom, dividing the Mount of Olives from Sion where stood the Temple of God, was also used for pagan worship. It came to be called Gehenna and Tophet and each became the synonym of Hell.

406-18. Chemos was called "the abomination.of Moab". The places mentioned by Milton are in the territory occupied by the Moabites till taken from them by the Amorites. Chemos was associated with Moloch, and Baal-Peor. Solomon built temples to Chemos and Moloch on the Mount of Olives, but king Josiah destroyed them.

420. the brook that parts: Shihor, "the River of Egypt."

422. Baalim.and Ashtoroth: plural forms of pagan deities Baal and Ashtoreth.

438-57. Astoreth or Astarte was called by the Greeks Aphrodite and the Romans Venus. She was represented with crescent horns and worshipped as queen of Heav'n. Solomon built a temple to her.

446-57. In Phoenician myth and, ritual, Thammus (the original of the Greek Adonis) was annually slain in Lebanon by the wild boar, when the river Adonis ran red, supposedly with his blood, and annually revived.

457-66. Dagon was the national god of the Philistines. When the ark of the covenant was brought into his temple, the idol fell from its place and, set up again, fell once more on the threshold.

467-76. Rimmon was a Syrian god worshipped at Damascus. Milton alludes to two otherwise unconnected episodes. Naaman, a Syrian captain was cured of his leprosy, by Elisha,.the prophet of God, and abandoned Rimmon's worship for God's. Ahaz, king of Judah, having entered Damascus as a conqueror, imitated the altar and worship of his vanquished enemy.

476-89. Osiris, Isis, Orus, were gods of Egypt. According to Milton the Israelites learnt worship of beasts from Egyptians and hence during their wanderings worshipped the golden calf. The rebel king is Jeroboam, rebel against Rehoboarn who set up two golden calves in Bethel and Dan.

490-505. Belial: not a god but an abstraction, meaning "worthlessness,". In speaking of the Sons of Belial, Milton is referring to Restoration London and the courtiers of Charles II.

508-21. The Ionian gods are the Olympian deities worshipped by the lonians, who stand for the ancient Greeks, supposedly descended from Javan, the son of Japeth one of the sons of Noah. They were the children of heaven and earth. The first offspring were the Titans ruled by Saturn who was displaced by his and Rhea's son Jove. Saturn fled to the Western fields.

534. Azazel occurs in Leviticus 16:8 (A.V.) as the marginal reading for "scapegoat" in the text Mere Milton maks him a fallen Cherub

546. orient: bright.

550. Dorian mood: a kind of Greek music.

575. That small infantry: the Pygmies; said by Homer to be attacked yearly by cranes.

577. Palegra: a peninsula in Macedonia, scene of the fight between the Giants and the Gods.

580. Uther's son: King Arthur.

581. Armoric: Breton.

583. Aspramont: town and castle near Nice, mentioned in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso:* Montalban: Castle of Renaud, or Reynaldo, a hero of Old French romance.

584. Trebisond.: a splendid city on the Black Sea 1204 to 1461, until captured by the Turks.

585. Biserta: the port from which the Saracens invaded Spain.

586-87. The scene of this famous battle was not Fontarabbia, but Roncesvalles, forty miles away. Charlemagne was not killed, but his nephew Roland.

609. amerc't of: deprived of. 672. scurf: scales.

676. pioneers: troops (now called engineers): so named formerly because they went before to prepare the road.

678. Mammon: an abstract term signifying riches; Milton however makes him one of the fallen angels.

713-17. pilasters: rectangular columns set within a watt] Doric pillars: the simplest of the three types of Greek column;

architrave: main beam resting on the row of pillars, with the frieze coming just above and the cornice projecting above this again;

bossy: done in relief; fretted: covered with designs.

728. cressets: iron vessels for holding burning oil or other inflammable matter and hung aloh to give light.

732-51. The architect is the Greek Hephaestus, Roman Vulcan, also called Mulciber (the softener or welder of metals, from Lat. *mulcae,* to soften'). Hephaestus, son of Zeus and Hera, enraged Zeus by taking the part of Hera against him, and so Zeus threw him down from Olympus which made him lame.

The Orders bright are the nine orders of angels, which were grouped into three hierarchies: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones; Dominions, Virtues, Powers; Principalities, Archangels, Angels.

756. Pandemonium: place of all the demons.

6.7 ❑ Important Aspects of *Paradise Lost,* Book-I

6.7.1 Satan's Character

"Paradise Lost" has been described by Dryden as "undoubtedly one of the greatest, most noble, most sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced." Yet it raises a very important question central to its theme: who is the real hero of the poem? It has haunted critics for generations and has stirred fierce controversy. For most readers, Satan, (chiefly due to his portraits in the first two books) seems to steal the show. Yet Milton, a devout puritan, surely couldn't have intended to make Satan the hero. Indeed throughout the text Satan is constantly belittled while God and Christ are exalted. Armed with this fact many critics have argued that Satan is a hypocritical selfseeking cheap political orator and his "heroism" is a perversion of the true heroism embodied by Christ. But other critics have

answered along with Blake that unconsciously Milton was of the devil's party. The Romauucs in particular saw Satan as a Promethean rebel while many modern critics have compared him with a tragic hero. A.L. Rowse observes, "The subject is the biblical one of the Fall of Man but leading themes are rebellion, defeat, revenge: one recognizes civil war, commonwealth, restoration...Satan is the hero-Lucifer, proud and arrogant, of ambition illimitable, rebellious, defeated but unrepentant, unyielding, never giving in." It might be a description of Milton as well. This might explain why the official villain commands inspired poetry and why in spite of all efforts to render him loathsome Satan still seems to be the true hero of the epic.

C. S. Lewis who fights most stubbornly against the notion of a sublime Satan says caustically. "The proposition that Satan is a magnificent character may bear two senses. It may mean he is a magnificent poetic achievement or that he ought to be admired as a person. The first has been never denied and the second never affirmed before Blake and Shelley." Satan according to him is a ridiculous and contemptible figure. He suffers from *a* sense of injured merit because the Messiah has been appointed the Head of Angels though he is superior to Satan in both kind and degree. In rebelling against his maker Satan also rebels against himself. Also his pry for liberty becomes entangled with hierarchy: "order and decrees jar not with liberty but well consist". His justification for the revolt is thus,, nonsense for the intellect. Moreover he cannot conceive any state of mind other than the infernal - he cannot believe that the good angels find joy in their service instead of being envious and resentful. In war he proves himself to be a coward, when wounded he runs away. In Hell he is the typical politician manipulating his followers by cheap rhetoric. He proposes to voyage through the sea of chaos and hastily prevents anyone else from offering to take his place so that they might not gain a reputation for valor. Finally he sinks low enough to harm two innocent creatures who have never harmed him merely to annoy God. He spies on Adam's and Eve's tryst: this role of a voyeur is proof of how far he has degenerated. Later he takes on the form of a toad and a serpent, his outward shape becoming an expression of his base mentality. From Hero to General to Politician to Spy to Peeping Tom to the lowest form of reptiles, such is the progressive descent of Satan from his high estate, ending only when he can fall no lower.

Yet it is Satan's heroism we remember. We are first introduced to Satan as he lay in the burning lake. But still he would never repent of his rebellion or bow down to God's tyranny

> "*.... What though the field 'be lost?*
> *All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,*
> *And study of revenge, immortal hate,*
> *And courage never to submit or yield:....".*

Whatever qualms we might feel at such self-pride is swept away by the splendour of the lines; while his daring to be God's eternal adversary immediately wins our admiration.

Again Satan makes us feel the horrors of Hell and what a torment it is to one who has known Heaven :

"Said then the lost Archangel, "this the seat.
That we must change for Heaven,
this mournful gloom

For that celestial light?..
... Farewell happy Fields

Where joy forever dwells; Hail horrors, hail.'.." We are made to feel his deep anguish and mourn with him. But in the true heroic style he rises above his grief. He speaks in the accents of a born leader :

"The mind is it's own place, and in itself

Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven...

..... Here at least

We shall be free.....

Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven. " We can only admire knowing that such majestic sentiments are beyond us. The same vein of implacable determination echoes in his call to his followers : "Awake, arise, or be forever fallen", and like a true leader he raises them from dejection. One cannot help feeh'ng that Satan's speeches have such eloquence and passion because they are Milton's innermost conviction as well.

The descriptions given by Milton also contribute to this impression. Satan is compared with a Leviathan implying great bulk and strength. His shield is as massy as the moon; his spear is taller than the tallest pine; the flames of the burning lake give way before him. The council of the Fallen Angels is reminiscent of Olympian Gods sitting in state, while Satan's regal splendor outshines the richest kings of earth. The scene where they proclaim him sovereign is magnificent. Like the roll of remote thunder they hail him as equal to "the Highest in Heaven." We know that Hell is a grim parody of Heaven and Satan to be the supreme evil, nevertheless the grandeur of the scene cannot be wiped away.

However, Milton does try to degrade him. We are told that though Satan vaunts aloud yet inwardly he is in pain and *"rackt with deep despair."* His words are only froth, not to be taken seriously. Again he is compared with the Leviathan because that beast is famous for deception which is Satan's speciality. He swears to do ill whenever possible and to employ guile-and fraud, which is not heroic. In the following books he is presented to us always as a villain. In Book IV he is wracked by despair and even thinks of repentance and submission. He is torn by his need for revenge and the pity he feels for the human couple's innocence. During the war in Heaven he is described as envious out of ambition.

Though he is constantly in agony from the "hot hell" in him yet he refuses to change his condition, for he finds more pleasure in evil. In fact he is so changed that Waldock feels that Milton has made the heroic Satan disappear and created a new Satan who bears no relation to the original.

However, we must not forget that Satan is the source of all evil. Milton wishes to show how.he slowly degenerated. Hence from the glorious Satan of Book I he slowly becomes ignoble and his lustre dims correspondingly. Moreover to make his theme interesting Milton must create a suitable adversary of the omnipotent God. Therefore Satan must be made majestic. Finally, Milton wished to show that evil is seductive. People would not be attracted to evil unless it has power and grandeur and so Satan as the prime evil must be splendid enough to attract us and lure us to evil. These are undoubtedly some of the reasons why Satan is so splendid.

Nevertheless our response to Satan is still to think of him as a tragic hero. Helen Gardner compares him to Macbeth. He is not a simple villain like lago who is driven by vanity and petty malice. Instead he is a charismatic personage who has much good and potential in him. But like Macbeth he is driven by ambition and so rebels against the moral law of the universe. This corrupts him. However, all the. time he is conscious of what he has lost and his agony haunts us. This acceptance of the full horror of the situation without a trace of self-pity and his vow that he is "One who brings/A mind not to be changed by Place or Time" bestows on him the aura of heroic magnitude.

Satan therefore remains an ambiguous character. On the one hand we have the heroic leader and prince, on the other we are constantly reminded that he is a liar, destroyer of innocence and adherent of evil. William Empson argues that Satan is morally innocent since to him God is only a tyrant whom it is right to defy. Even if we do not accept this we must acknowledge that Satan is the strongest character. W. Raleigh observes that anyone who opposes the Omnipotent is either a fool or a hero and Milton is far from having us think of Satan as a fool. Hence it is the heroic Satan who predominates proving that Milton created the last great tragic figure in English literature aiu' ilestroyed the unity of his poem in doing so.

6.7.2 "Paradise Lost" as an epic

An epic has been defined as a long narrative poem on a great and serious subject related in an elevated style and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depend the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the whole human race. The earliest models in European literature are Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey.* They are "primary" epics shaped from traditional legends and are part of oral literature. After- him we have "literary" or "secondary" epics which are composed by selfconscious craftsmen in imitation of the traditional forms. Virgil's *Aeneid* is such an example and it formed the model for *"Paradise Lost"*. Milton borrowed heavily from all three epics as well as from others.

Milton uses a number of epic conventions in his poem :

1. **The Hero :** in an epic the hero is a figure of great national or cosmic importance, with a royal or even divine lineage. Achilles and Odysseus are the sons of kings while Aeneas is the son of the Goddess Venus herself and is the founder of the Roman Empire. In *"Paradise Lost"* Adam has no parents as such but he is created in God's image, while both he and Eve are the Parents of the human race. Christ is the Son of God while their adversary Satan is the First of all angels.

2. The epic must have a broad canvas. In both Odyssey and Aeneid the heroes travel all over the world and visit the underworld. The action of "Paradise Lost" is conceived in Hell, perpetrated on earth and punished by Heaven. Thus tne range is the broadest in Milton's epic.

3. **The Action :** it involves superhuman deeds including battles and journeys. In "Paradise Lost" we have the war in Heaven, Satan's creation of Pandemonium, his journeys to earth through the sea of chaos etc'. The action must be of great importance and here it involves the Fall of Mankind. These are the epic moments which make the action sublime.

4. **The Epic Machinery :** in epics gods and other supernatural creatures often take an active interest in the action and participate in them. In "Paradise Lost" we have Jehovah, Christ and angels. However, while in classical epics the action takes place on two planes, the human and supernatural, in "Paradise Lost" it is basically supernatural because the real battle is between Heaven and Hell.

5. **Epic Style :** An epic poem is a ceremonial performance and it is narrated in a manner which is deliberately distant from common speech to suit the grandeur and formality of the subject. This is the epic style. In "Paradise Lost" we have Milton's famous "grand style", latinate diction, stylized syntax, sonorous list of names, catalogues of principal characters (like the magnificent rollcall of the devils as false gpds), wide ranging allusions, and imitations of Homer's and Virgil's similes and epithets.

6. **Invocation :** In epics the harrative begins by giving the subject matter of the poem and invoking a Muse to inspire the poet. In "Paradise Lost", we have a prose argument followed by an invocation (lines 1-49 of Book I). We are told about the topic (of man's first disobedience), the characters ("our Grand Parents" and the "infernal serpent"), and Milton also calls upon the "Heavenly Muse" to inspire him.

7. **In Media Res :** the narrative begins at a critical point of the action. "Paradise Lost" opens with the Fallen Angels in Hell where they rally their forces to assault God and His creation.

Thus "Paradise Lost" faithfully follows all the conventions that are found in the traditional epics and are emulated by the literary epics. Thus it belongs to the epic tradition. Its debt to

the older epics is even more evident in the constant echoes from Homer and Virgil we find in it.

Milton saw himself as another Homer. Like Homer he is blind so that he can tell the truths not perceived by other men. So again and again he invokes the spirit of God to inspire him to sing of the rebellion of the angels and the folly of our first parents, as Homer and Virgil invoked the muses to inspire them to sing of the "wrath of Achilles" and of "arms and the map". But besides being the English Homer he also wished to be the English Moses through whom God spoke to his chosen people.

The description of Satan's shield is taken from the shield of Achilles. The garden of Eden follows the pattern of Arcadinas in Aeneid. The picture of Hades provides the model for Milton's Hell. The descent of Raphael to warn Adam of impending danger is akin to the descent of Hermes to Calypso or Mercury to Aeneas. The picture of Nature lamenting the fall of man is taken from the storm during Dido's and Aeneas wedding. Satan's journey through the sea of chaos is reminiscent of both Odysseus' and Aeneas' wanderings. Even the lovemaking of Adam and Eve is taken from the tryst of Zeus and Hera in *Iliad.* The description of the war in Heaven is modeled upon Homer's description of the war of the gods : they fight like human beings complete with all the paraphernalia of war (chariots, shields, spears) but the situation becoms comic in both cases since neither side is capable of seriously injuring the other. Both Satan and Venus are wounded, bleed ichor, and run away in pain. The scales of justice are Zeus' golden scales. The fall of Mulciber is patterned after the fall of Vulcan. From Ovid's Metamorphosis comes the description of the creation of man, the awakening of Eve which is like that of Narcissus and her comparison with Proseipina.

Satan himself is presented as a heroic character who gives grand speeches, undertakes perilous journeys, and battles for glory and sovereignty like Achilles and Aeneas. God is equated with Jupiter: both rule in Heaven and defeat rebels. In fact the pattern of the first two books follows that of Aeneid : Satan's defeat parallels the burning of Troy and his finding a new home for the exiles is like Aeneas' quest. But Milton takes the identification further. In "Paradise Lost" the Fallen Angels relate to the classics on two planes. They are like the giants who sought to overthrow Jove but even more importantly they are also the pagan gods whom Greece and Rome once worshipped and whom Homer and Virgil celebrated in their epics. (According to Milton the rebel angels set themselves up as gods on earth). Thus classical and Christian theology mingle through analogies.

Thus we find that Milton owns a considerable .debt to the classical epics. The themes, the events, the style, the comparisons all are taken from earlier literatrue. Yet there are significant differences as well. Being a devout Christian Milton cannot wholly accept classical conventions so he Christianizes them. His muse is the Holy Ghost, his hero is not the kingly Satan but Christ who preaches mercy, and providence is more powerful than Fate. In

classical epics gods were powerless against the three Fates, but here God can reverse the evils committed by Satan. Also this is a God meant to be loved, not feared.

Brought up simultaneously in the heady atmosphere of the Renaissance and the grim code of the Puritans, Milton combines Renaissance and Reformation elements in Paradise Lost. He follows Homer and Virgil so closely that no one can mistake it as anything other than an epic. Yet the classical world with its ultimately powerless gods and individualsistic hubristic heroes is rejected for a world of piety, mercy, and love. But what is important in an epic is its spirit, its scope, and its profound human importance and a text better suited to this description than "Paradise Lost" can hardly be found.

6.7.3 "Paradise Lost" as a Christian epic

For all his appreciation and adaptation Milton as a devout Christian sees this as an opportunity to denounce the morality of the classical epics and to exalt Christianity. In the epic there is a vast difference between gods and men. It is the lot of men to suffer on earth and after death to exist in the dark underworld without joy and sans end; but the gods sport forever in the irridiscent world of Olympus. In spite of their all too human behaviour and emotions their world is totally different and separate from that of men; it'is the world of eternal delight where the tragi-: spirit cannot enter. But in Christian theology, a virtuous and pious man can know joy on earth and after death dwells in heaven with God. Again classical gods cannot save men from sin or Death but Christ can redeem man from sin and rescue humanity from the mortality one cannot escape in the classical world.

The classical counterpart of Christ is Athene, Both are offspring of the Highest God begotten directly by their Fathers. Athene alone wields the thunderbolts of Zeus, Christ alone can wield God's thunder. Athene has her aegis, Christ his cherubs. The chariot of Zeus thus blends with the chariot of Ezekiel. And the wrath of Achilles becomes the wrath of God. However, there's a crucial distinction between the two : Athene is a goddess but not all powerful, while Christ is indistinguishable from the supreme Godhead. Moreover Athene never offers like Christ to be incarnated as a mortal to redeem mankind. Indeed such a concept is foreign to classical theology. But as Milton emphasizes, this shows that Christ has greater love and compassion and so is more worthy to be worshipped. He also insists that Christ's offer constitutes true heroism. He is a hero in the epic tradition in his war against Satan, but the glory of the battlefield is a false glory. True glory comes from doing the will of God and from selfsacrifice. Here Satan behaves like an epic hero. Yet both Achilles and Aeneas excel him in virtue, and piety; while odysseus fights to preserve civilization Satan only wishes to destroy.-Thus the notion of epic heroism and the gods' essential remoteness from man is set aside.

There is also emphasis that Jehovah is greater than Jove. What had been fate in epics subject to no god's control becomes Providence designed and directed by God. Zeus cannot

overrule the decrees of Fate — he can neither save Hector nor prevent the fall of Troy; but God easily stops the war in Heaven. Again Zeus cannot save man from death, not even his own son; but Jehovah has the power to make men immortal and resurrect them from the grave and so His Son rises from death. Zeus is a partial reflection of God just as Athene is a partial reflection of Christ. Both Zeus and Jehovah make use of destructive blindness in their enemies (Zeus in men, God in angels) to bring them to their proper punishment. But while there is no way to escape the consequences of Zeus' wrath, the vengeance of Jehovah is followed by the sacrifice of his only begotten Son. Unlike in classical epics here Sin and Death are God's servants. The relationship between Heaven and men has also changed : people feared and obeyed the classical gods, but now it is possible to *love* God. It is a step upwards from Greek philosophy.

Again and again Milton transmutes epic devices to create a Christian framework. Eden can be considered as another Ilium which was destroyed when its inhabitants chose passion over duty and honour. Adam is like another Aeneas misled by female charm, but unlike Aeneas he capitulates wholly and the consequences are more serious. Eve is the bringerof death to mankind — but in this she is like the classical warriors whose delight was in war. Hence the warrior's code is rejected. Another interesting example is Milton's handling of the golden scales of justice. When Zeus weighs the fates of Hector and Achilles the scale that goes down signals death; but when God hangs the scales in the sky the scale that goes up signifies defeat. It is obviously an echo from the Old Testament: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, i.e you have been weighed and found wanting. Hubristic heroism that can end only in death is rejected. The goal of man is now changed. The classical heroes were eager for material wealth, power, glory, status and above all for earthly renown. But now man's ambition is to be worthy of Heaven. This new concept transcends the pagan philosophy : it is not this life of flesh but the afterlife that is important.

6.7.4 Invocation of Paradise Lost

The opening of Milton's "Paradise Lost" is both an invocation and an exordium. An exordium is the beginning of a discussion or a treatise; here Milton launches on a treatise on *thefelix culpa* and discusses how best to prove that God is just. But his work is an epic as well and so he begins in the time honoured fashion by invoking supernatural powers to aid him in his creation. It is an epic convention that the narrator must invoke a guiding spirit to aid him in his great undertaking and also address to the Muse the epic question the answer to which inaugurates the epic proper. Greeks and Romans believed that there are nine goddesses who preside over the arts and sciences. Both Homer and Virgil invoke them. But Milton invokes the Judeo-Christian God. Only then does he move to introduce the main characters and discuss the epic question in detail. Milton here creates double invocation and hence it is unusually long (homer's is 7 lines, Virgil's is 10, but Milton's is 49).

Milton's invocation has an inverted syntactical structure. He begins by stating the theme

and then invokes the Muse. In this he follows Virgil who begins with "Of Arms and the Man I sing". But unlike other epics, in "Paradise Lost" the invocation focuses on man, not the gods. The emphasis is very clear: "Of Man*'s* First Disobedience". The story is how Satan deceived the Mother of mankind so that our Parents trespassed and fell. It is also marked by anticipation of the sequel — the redemption of humanity. The emphasis is still on man: "till one *greater man* restore us". Adam is the hero and Christ is the second Adam. He is the Son of God but he is also the Son of Man born of Woman. Even the reason behind writing the epic is man: Milton wishes to justify God to man. There are two other invocations: to the "Holy Light" and to Urania but the first is the most important.

Milton begins by answering the epic question. The sin of Adam and Eve lay not in the actual eating of the fruit but in ignoring God's edict. He puns in the next lines:

"the fruit/ of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste/ brought death into the world". The fruit' refers both to the actual fruit eaten and also to results. It has a mortal i.e. deadly taste; as a result of eating it death entered Eden. Adam and Eve would die and so would their posterity. But the lost paradise would be restored by Christ.

Then in the sixth line Milton swings to the invocation proper with tremendous impact. He calls on the spirit that had inspired Moses who taught the chosen seed. The reference is highly significant since Milton saw himself as another Moses. The Puritans thought that they were the chosen race, a second Isreal. Milton as their spokesman wished to be like Moses, another poet-prophet. It is his boast that he would outshine the ancients and compose things "unattempted yet in prose or rhyme". But this piece of blatant egotism is counterbalanced by a deep Christian humility : he begs God to instruct him. This God is the God who loves the pure heart of man above all temples; He is a God to whom man has direct access. Here -we see the puritan ideal - man can reach God without the mediation of priests of Church. Hence Milton dares to call on the God who brooded "dove-like" over chaos and created the world. Here perhaps the poet is trying to link God's creative aspects with his own creative efforts. He freely confesses himself to be fallen and ignorant; the Muse must raise and enlighten him. He introduces here the metaphors of light and darkness, falling and standing that are to form the key structures of the poem. Finally he comes to the true purpose of the epic.

"..... assert Eternal Providence

And justify the ways of God to Men."

Milton is not writing to win fame. His aim is nobler than Homer's and Virgil's: he would show how good comes through evil and prove to all who doubt that God is just. (Perhaps it was even more necessary to reassure himself after the Restoration and his own blindness.)

Now Milton moves on to the second invocation. He begs the Heavenly Muse to show him why our first parents fell from Eden. He questions who seduced them. The answer is "the infernal seipent". The reason is envy and guile. Milton gives us the background: Satan and his

followers aspired to Godhead and so\vere cast down by God to Hell. Form line 50, the actual epic begins, in media res.

The opening of Milton's epic is at once daunting and exhilarating. It is a triumph of expressive rhythm and syntax. Some might complain that "Him writ no style but a Babylonish style". Nevertheless this was the only rhythm lofty enough for expounding eternal wisdom and imitating the celestial song. This is the famous Miltonic grand style - latinate diction, stylized syntax, sonorous list of names, catalogues of principal characters (like the magnificent rollcall of the devils as false gods), wide ranging allusions, and imitations of Homer's and Virgil's similes and epithets. He is writing an epic and the language of an epic should be deliberately distant from that of common people in order to fit the grandeur and majesty of the heroic subject-matter. Moreover in the new religio-poetic language Milton finds a way of claiming that the ultimate principle is both aesthetic and moral. The-opening is a highly formal set-piece whose inescapable "monotony of ritual" makes us aware of the profound human importance of the theme.

6.7.5 Epic Similies in Paradise Lost

One of the reasons readers *of Paradise Lost* are put off is its language. There is distortion of construction, convoluted syntax, use of foreign idiom, the use of a word in a foreign way or with the meaning of the foreign word from which it was derived, allusions to classical literature. The verse is English heroic pentametre which is blank verse at its grandest. The sentences run on and on, creating large passages which must be read at one breath. This is what is known as Miltonic Style. Since he was writing and epic, Milton wanted a language that would be far removed from ordinary prose and poetry. So he invested his language with solemnity and loftiness beyond the norm. This certainly gives the epic the grandeur it requires, but also makes it difficult. One of the major stylistic devices that Milton uses to create the Grand Style is the use of epic similes. A normal simile is a brief comparison for the sake of illumination. But an epic simile is not a single comparison. Instead it combines many images - one single object can be compared with several other objects one after another. Thus such similes occur in clusters. They are carefully selected to stress a particulars point the author is intent on driving home to his readers. An epic simile is of such length and ramification, that it gains independent existence of its own and operates as a poem-within-a-poem instead of an ornament of the narrative function.

There are several epic similes in Book I *ofParadi.se Lost* which demonstrate how vast the canvas of the epic is. One of the earliest in lines 196-208, where Satan's size is described. Satan is so big that his trunk covers "many a rood," a rood being about a quarter acre. He is as big as the Titans and Giants who rebelled against Jove. Milton furnishes a list of rebel giants with whom to compare Satan. He is also compared with a leviathan-,, the hugest beast in the world. But in neither case is it a simple comparison of size. Like Satan, the Titans and Giants were rebels against authority. As they had warred against the gods, so too Satan had warred against God; as they had been cast down by Jove to hell, so too Satan and his cohorts had

been cast down to hell. In the same manner to story of the leviathan is used to point out an aspect of Satan's character- he is the Father of Lies. The huge leviathan floats on the water; his back appears to be an island in the night and attracts a lost sailor to anchor in his hide. On morning the beast dives down into the sea, dragging down the unfortunate sailor with him. The leviathan was held up as an example of arch-deceiver and was frequently termed the enemy of the Lord. This story would have been well known to Milton's first readers, who had been brought up on "bestiaries," descriptions of animals in terms of the moral lessons they provide for mankind. Just as the leviathan, promising safety deceives, so too Satan promising glory and refuge deceives everyone. Thus the effect of this simile is to emphasize Satan as a rebel and deceiver.

In lines 302-311, we have another famous description - that of the rebel angels. The rebel angels lay cast down as the autumnal leaves in Vallambrosa. This is not a simple comparison describing how they are lying. The significant term is 'autumnal' - in autumn, dead leaves fall off from trees, yellow and withered. This is the condition of the angels - cut off from God, they are spiritually dead and their abject exhausted condition stresses their physical and mental plight. Then they are compared with sedge on the Red Sea which floats tossed by winds and waves. As the vegetation has become rootless, so too are the angels rootless. But the comparison does not stop here - Milton goes on to tell the story of Exodus. Moses freed the Jews from slavery to Egyptians but they pursued the Jews. God made the Red Sea part so that the Jews could cross over. When the army of Pharaoh pursued them the waters closed over them. As the broken chariots and carcasses of Egyptians floated on the waters, so too the abject rebel angels floated on the sea of fire. The identification of rebel angels with the Egyptians carries a heavy load of theological implications. The Egyptians had disbelieved in the true God; the rebel angels had rebelled against God disbelieving Him to be their superior. The Egyptians had persecuted the chosen people of God; the denizens of hell in future would try to destroy mankind, God's latest and most cherished creation. In fact Christian theologians had seen the Pharaoh as a type of the devil. As the Egyptians were destroyed by God, so too the angels led by Satan would at doomsday be entirely destroyed by God. Thus Milton constantly equates the fallen angels with evil and death. He also emphasizes through such comparisons their abject condition - they are completely lost and in future would be completely destroyed.

Still another description of the fallen angels occur in lines 339-355. As they flew they looked like the plague of locusts that Aaron's rod had conjured up to cover Egypt. As the cloud of locusts had darkened the land, so too the angels darkened flaming hell itself and were as- numberless as the insects. Since the locusts are harmful, it is significant that the angels are linked with them. They flew down to the plain like a horde of barbarians. From the snow-covered lands of Northern Europe had come the wild tribes of Vandals and Goths who had poured down south and spread everywhere. Again the comparison is significant. These

barbarians had destroyed the last remnants of civilization of Roman empire thereby beginning the Dark Ages, which ended only with the Renaissance. They were notorious for their cruelty as well. As children of Renaissance, Milton and his readers naturally regarded these barbarians with contempt and abhorrence. This comparison therefore poises the rebel angels with the destruction of civilization and wisdom.

There are other comparisons as well. Satan's shield is like the moon. It is like the moon that Galileo had viewed through his 'glass' and has spied new lands, rivers and mountains on her surface. The simile serves two purposes - it makes us realize the size of the shield and gives the simile a truly epic reach, encompassing another world. His spear was so tall that the tallest tree would be like a slender wand to it. The ruined archangel looked as the glory of the sun does through a haze a mist - a reference to the loss of his brightness due to the fall. Similarly the other angels are compared to stately trees blasted by lightning - only their shell remains.

Thus even in a single short Book, there are sufficient examples of epic similes to judge Milton's style. Milton is not content with simply giving a comparison. He must illustrate what he means in a detailed manner. By doing so, he wants to ensure that the reader does not miss any nuance of the comparison. Also, the key term is 'epic'. An epic by its nature must compass a vast canvas, containing the whole of the world known to the poet and his contemporaries. Therefore, Milton tried to encompass as much as he could in a single comparison. Such similes are both descriptive and argumentative. They point to other places and, perhaps more significantly, other times that subtly comment on the current moment. They become poetic pieces inserted into the narration as something separate. They take on a life of their own.

6.8 ❑ Question

(a) Do you think in Book I *of Paradise Lost* Satan is presented as a hero? What could have motivated Milton to present him in such a way? (See 6.7)

(b) Comment on Satan as a rebel and leader as shown in Book I of *Paradise Lost.* (See 6.7.1)

(c) Critically comment on the Invocation *of Paradise Lost* discussing its pagan roots and Christian theme (See 6.7.4)

(d) How far does Book I of *Paradise Lost* follow the conventions of an epic? (See 6.7.2)

(e) Comment on Book I *of Paradise Lost* as the beginning of a Christian epic. (See 6.7.3)

(f) Discuss some of the epic similes you find in *Paradise Lost Book* I. (See 6.7.5)

(g) *"Paradise Lost is* both a religious and political statement"—discuss this with reference to Book I. (See 6.1, 6.3, 6.5,6.7.3)

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Unit -1 ❑ London : William Blake

Structure

1.0 ❑ ABOUT BLAKE

William Blake who possesses the distinction of being the first major English Romantic poet, was born on 27 November 1757, the third son of a London shopkeeper who dealt in hosiery goods. The child Blake was never sent to school by his parents, perhaps because he was too high -spirited and reballious, and he was probably educated at home by his mother. Even as a child, the young William displayed a marked artistic talent, and this to gether with his highly imaginative meutal faculty, probably led him to see "visiows" of on allegedly mystical kind. There is a story that when Blake was only four years old, he saw God's face at a window and screamed. On another day, when he was about eight or ten,the boy sow a vision of a tree full of angelsa. Years later, when he was about forty three, Blake had similar visionary experiences which he wrote about in his epical poem Milton (late 21,11.4-8), and in two letters to his friend Thomas Butts on 2 October 1800 and 22 November 1802.

Blake's father encouraged his son's artistic inclinations by sending him to a drawing school. However, since the family was apparently not rich enough to pay the fee that would be demanded by an artist to train the young boy, Blake was instead apprenticed to an engraver when he was fourteen. After completing his apprenticeship, Blake took admission in the Royal Academy Schools for artists, and exhibited his paintings in two of the annual exhibitions held by the schools. Simultaneously with his development as an artist and engraver, Blake began emerging

as a poet. His earliest literary compositions- poems, prose pieces and dramatic fragments which he had written between the ages of twelve to twenty, were printed in a volume entitled **Poetical Sketches** (1783). The Publication of this book was financed by a contemporary clergyman— a Rev. Mathews whose wife seems to have been a patron of die young Blake. However, Blake appears to have been disinterested about this publication, and it is a fact that he never again attempted to publish any of his works by conventional methods of printing. Instead, Blake either invented or adapted a special technique which enabled him to print both text and illustrations in a way that wus less expensive and more flexible than the options afforded by the conversional printing technology of the time.

The exact technique used by Blake is still not entirely elear, but it seems that Blake would take a small flat rectangular piece of copper and write or draw on this plate the words and designs he wanted to print, using a liquid or ink that was impervious to the action of acid. He would then immerse the drawn-on copper plate in an acid bath so that the surface of the plate not covered by the inked lines and words would be corroded. This left the words and the lines of the designs standing up from the surface of the copper plate on a kind of a printer's type face, and Blake could print off these plates by inking them and by pressing down sheets of paper on them. Finally, the line drawings would be touched up by hand, colours applied on and within them, and the different pages (or "plates") thus printed bound by hand to form small books. The whole process had the advantages of being totally under Blake's own control and of being fairly inexpensive. And since Blake could keep the copper master plaits in his own possession, he could print just as many wpies of a paniculate book as there were buyers for. Additionally, and perhaps more importarlly, Blake's technique took on for Win all the weight of symbolic manifestation. As he claimed in his text The Marriage of Heaven & Hell, his method of prinfing was "salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid."

1.1 ❑ SONG OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

The just important look that Blake printed by his own process was a slim volume of (?) entitled the Song of Innocence. A blend of colorful illustrations and words constitute each of the paper of this text, each page on plate featuring poems and pictures representing and indicative of the golden world of child hood innocence. Many of the poems (and illustrations) of the Songs of Innocence depict scenes of cliild in at play, of singing birds and happy animals, and of elders like nurses and mothers benignly looking on. In writing these songs, Blake may have had in mind some of the song books for children that had been published in his own age, but

Blaka's poems are remarkable in that they are not simple moralistic verser but far more Brilliont and complex prices of poetry. Thus, while most of the songs of Innocence apparently embody messages about the goodness of Jesus and about the virtues of generosity, unselfishness and mutual sympathy, modem critics have discerned the presence of deep and disturbing monies beneth the apparently simple surfaces of these poems.

The songs of Innocence were engnved (or reverse-ctehed) by Blake in 1789, but five years later in 1794, Blake produced a sequel in the form of a collection of poems he named the Songs of Experience. The plates of this collection were bound by Blake together with those of the Songs of Innocence, and the two sets of illustrated poems were issued under the title The songs of Innocence and of Experience : Shewing the two Contrary States of the Human Soul. Innocence brings the Contrary State" of Experience, die poems of Blake's Songs of Experience are about human suffering, fears, hopelessness, despair and death. In virtually all the poems of Experience, Blake writes about the darkness in his contemporary society and times. Often using simple stanza forms and rhyming patterns and an unostencations poetic diction, Blake represented Ms vital realizations about the complexities of his civilization in powerful and compelling lines of poetry. Many of the poems of Experience were obviously intended by Blake to be read as the "contrary "pieces of corresponding poems in the Innocence volume, and so "The Lamb" of Innocence is set off by "The Tyger" of Experience, and there is "The little Boy Found" of Innocence against "The Little Boy Lost" of Experience, "Infant Joy" and "Infant Sorrow" and so on. There are also several poems with the same titles but with different, divergnt, meanings and implications in the Innocence and Experience collections for instance, there are two poems entitled "Holy Thursday", two named "Nurse's song", two called "The Chimney Sweeper" etc. Additionally, there are a number of "stand-alone" poems which have pair in Innocence, and of these the lyric titled "London", is a good example to be found in the Songs of Experience.

1.1.1 TEXT AND ILLUSTRATIONS

A short 16-line poem, it is hardly an exaggeration to call "London" one of the greatest short lyrics written hi the English language. The complete text of the poem is as follows :-

I wonder thro' o each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg 'd manacles I hear.

How the Chimney sweeper's cry
Every black'ning Shurch appalls
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new born Infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

Accompanying this verbal text, there are illustrations that cover nearly the whole page in Blake's printed plate. At one side at the right, there is a picture of a boy warming himself at a fire has been lit within in an open space or by a street. But the whole plate is dominated by a picture at the top which shows a similar boy leading an old man with a long beard along a cobblestone paved path, beside a closed door. In the picture, too, the child and the man are illuminated by a beam of strong light that falls on them. The importance of this illustration will be touched upon later, and so this discussion will first cowcentrate on the implications of Blake's verbal text.

1.1.2. TITLE AND THEME

"London", the title of Blake's poem immediately indicates the subject matter of the poem, that is the city of London itself. Towards the end of the eighteenth century. When Blake was writing his poem, London had already become a metropolis and the political and economic capital not only of England but also of the then mighty British Empire which stretched across the glole from America to India and beyond. Ships laden with merchandise sailed from the river Thames in the middle of the city of London to all the four quarters of the world, and came back to London with the wealth of the world. And it is this commercial, trading activity that Blake obliquely refers to in the opening line of his poem :

I wander thro' each charter'd street,

Near where the charter'd thames does flow.....

Blake's wonderer, the narrator of the poem, is evidently sojourning through the dockyards of the city. But what catches our eye immediately in these two lines is the use of tiie word "charter'd", used twice in succession. E.P. Thompson in a fine essay on Blake's poem, notes that the word "arose in Blake's mind in association with 'cheating', "and that for the radical tllinkers of the time like Thomas Paine, a "charter implied not a freedom but monopoly", In "London", Blake evidently use the word in this sense, for in the next two lines of his poem he goes on to speak of the "marks of weakness, marks of of woe" that his narrator notices in "every face" he comes across in the streets of the city. However, there is also a special edge of irony in Blake's use of the word "chartered" in the context of the city streets and of the river Thasues that flows thorough it This is because both streets and river are so evidently throughfares-spaces or facilities that belong to all that it is almost unimaginable that they can be "charter'd" or leased, or rented out to, or reseried for the exclusive use of a few individrals. And yet this was exactly what was happening in Blake's own age as the rich merchants of the time literally took over the streets of the city of London to store the goods they exproted or imported, and the river thames itself was as full of ships and commercial vesses, that recreational activities on the river became almost impossible.

1.1.3. CONTEMPORARY BACK GROUND : SOCIAL ECONOMIC POLITICALLY

Yet, this is not every thing about the first stanga of Blake's poem. If the first two lines are strongly suggestive of commercial activities and so of an economic nexus the next two evidently reflect upon the human consequences of such economic practices. The buying and selling, the trading with overseas nations in Blake's time, were manifestations of the rampant growth of die economic system of capitalism in the eighteenth country. Fuelled by the Industrial Revolution, the British economy was positioned uniquely to profit from trade and industry. The profit however, did not percolate down to all the levels of society which was instead marked by a shaip opposition between a limited number of rich people-the capitalist factoryowners and traders, for instance-and an increasingly large mass of poor people. Virtually as an outgrowth of capitalism, there emerged in British society a new class of poor people-peasants dispossessed of their ponds due to the so called enclosure movements, labourers employed in the new factory towns, and artisans forced into unemployment by the development of new processes of manufacturing involving machines. And it is evidently about, and of, such people reduced to misery by the workings of capitalism that Blake refers to in the last two lines of the first stanga of "London".

The second stanga of Blake's lyric has a different locus of concern, no longer economic but political. This implication in this stanga is brought out through Blake's

reference to cries of “fear”, to “every ban”, and to the “mind-fong’d manade”. It is a fact that the 1790s saw in England a wave of governmental repressionary measures directed against all political radicals. Even since the French Revolution of 1789, the British government was mortally afraid that a similar revolutionary movement could sweep overtheir country too, and the king and his Parliament responded by enacfing a Jraconian series of lesislations directed against radical political opinion. Working men’s organizations like the London Corresponding Societies were banned, political meting prohibited, and local magistrates arned with the power of arresting any man suspected of plotting revolution against the government. As Blake’s contemporary, the well known political radical John Thelwall (who was imprisoned and tried on the charge of High Treason) wrote in 1795 in on essay entitled “Dangerous Tendency of the Attempt to Suppress Political Discussion”, “words are constried into treson and men can no longer unbosom themselves to their friends at a tavern, associate together for the diffusin of political information, but at the percl of their lives. “The cries of fear, the bans and the manacles that Blake writes of are clearly feferences to the restrictions placed on the rights of men by the political authorities of the time. Most evocative of all is ofcourse the image of the “mind-forg’d manacles.” The “manacles” - chains or handcuffs are suggestive of the restrictions imposed on a free people, but they are “mind forg’d in the sense that they were Acts of Parliament (like the infamous Gagging Acts of 1795) devised and formulated by intelligort men bent on disallowing vast numbers of then fellow men from voicing forth their discontent.

1.2.1 BLAKE’S USE OF SYMBOLS

From large statements made in the first two stanzas about economic exploitation and political repressions, the third stanzas of Blake’s “London” provides us with visions of specific examples of suffering humanity. Chimney sweepers in Blake’s time were little children, six to twelve years old, who had been forced into the profession by the poverty of their parents. Unlike other in which a child’s father had to pay a lump sum fee for his child to be taken on or as anapprentice and taught the trade, chimney sweeper masters would pay the guardians of a child an amount of money for iivtually selling the child to him. This is exactly what Blake writes about in his ‘Songs of Innocence Poem, “The chimney Sweeper” :

> When my mother died I was very young,
> And my father sold me while yet my tongue
> Could scarcely cry “weep! ‘ weep! ‘ weep!’ weep!”
> So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

As these lines of Blake indicate, the lives of the little children sweepers were full of misery. Forced to get up at the crack of dawn, they were made to walk through the streets of the city in hail, or rain or cold, or sun. They were given no opportunities

to play or even to wash, and were deliberately underfed so that they would remain thin and small in size and so could be easily thrust into narrow chimneys to clean them from inside. At night, they would be herded into small and dark rooms and blocked up so that they could not escape. Their heads were shaved to prevent lice, but many if not most of the child sweepers suffered from skin cancer and cuts and bums for which little or no treatment was provided.

The "cry" of the chimney sweeper that Blake writes of in "London" obviously refers to both the anguished cries of the suffering children and to the street cry - "Sweep!"- that these children were made to shout out as they walked through the streets of London. (In Blake's Innocence poem "The chimney Sweeper" this cry itself becomes a site for irony as the small child cannot even fully pronounce the word "Sweep!" and it comes out as '"weep!"- itself an indication of the and the tears of the poor motherless boy sold into a life of virtual slaverey.) The reference to the "church" in "London" however brings in another context of reference in Blake's poem. This is the failure and hence, hypocrisy of the established church in the late eighteenth century to look alter the poor, the neglected and the exploited. Blake in Ms lyric powerfully imagins the cry of the Chimrcy Sweeper, unheard by the church, as covering as with a black pall the churches themselves. But the imaginative Blake is also the literal Blake, and the "appalling" or covering of the churchler also refers perhaps to the physical coating of the white stone churches of London with the soot and smoke released into the air and atmosphere of the city in the years of the Industrial Revolution. And finally, we should note too the irony resident is Blake's use of the word "appalls". For as Blake's lines make clear, while the church as an institution should really be "appallg" with the pliedht of the child sweepers, what is really appalling in that it is indifferent to and unconcerned about the suffering of these little children.

Blake's reference to the "hapless soldier" in the next two lines of the third stanza of his poem indicates another matrix of signification. After the dawn of the French Revolution, the British government had declared war against France and had sent out thousands of soldiers to tight. Many, if not most, of the soldiers were young men farm workers, and labourers, and artisans who had been forcibly conscripted into the army, and many were turned out of the army with little or no compensation if they had the misfortune of losing arms or legs or eyes in battle. Unable to work for a living any longer, these handicapped former soldiers took to begging on the streets of London, and it is to these unfortunates that Blake refers in the lines :

> And the hapless soldier's sigh
> Runs in blood down palace walls.

As in the two earlier lines in the same stanga in which Blake had indicted an

institution-the church-for being unmindful of the suffering of a class, so too in these lines Blake speaks out (allcit obliquely) against the king and Ms government for neglecting to look after other those who had shed blood in the king's interest.. But there is also possible a deeper irony resident in Blake's lines. This is because the soldier's sigh over the blood that he has shed without reward, a sigh that takes the form of blood in terms of Blake's visionary imagination runs, only "down palace walls," that is without affecting the lives and thoughts of those who live inside the encirching walls of the palace.

But it is in the last stanja of "London" that Blake gives vent to his anger and indignation. The central symbol here is the figure of the youthful Harlot the— young girl who has been forced to sell her lady in order to live. The curse of this adolerceat compelled to prostitute herself in a society overrun by rampant economic inequality lights on the "new born Infant" - probably the prostitutes's own, since it represents to her yet another mouth, beside her own, she will have to feed. But the prostitute is to the victius as well as an agent of retilntion. The "players" that has "curse" engurder are a clear reference to the thes incusable venereal diseases prostitutes often spread in contemporary society. And one result of such sexually transmitted tied diceases was that children born to one or boths parents infected with such discuases would often be born dead. Indeed, it is very probably this implication that lies behind Blake's words "marriage hearse" which are themselves an ironic inversion of the term "marriage bed" which itself is symbolic of pocreation and of the coming into existence of new life.

It should be clear from this that Blake's lyric "London" constitutes a searing indictment of the social, economic, political, religions and moral environment of Blake's own time. As Blake powerfully shows us through his extremely evocative pprase "mind forg'd manacles", the city of London (an acute metonym for the whole British civilization in the post Industrial era) is affectively enclosed by an ideological miasma that bred selfhood, hypocrisy, opression, indifference and an absence of love. All the symbols in the poem both non human and human-chartered sheets, chartered faces marked with weakness and woe, cries of fear, bans, blackening churches, marriage hearse, infants, chimney sweepes, soldiers and harlots— are *examples of* the effect of the repressive dominance of this ideology that fetters, Confirms, restricts and seeks to shut up everything that would open outward into the freedoms of action and perception, love and compassion benevolence and caring.

1.2.2 BLAKE'S POETIC CRAFTSMANSHIP : HIS USE OF IMAGERY

"London" in thus a poem that is about the experience of closure. But it is also important to note that the lyric also enacts, performs, and demonstrates this experience by rhetorical, imagistic and structural devices. There are, first, the many repetitions

of the same words— of "chaslesed" twice, and "mark/Marks" three tines, all in the first stanza. Then again the word "cry" is used in two lines, and "every" no less than five times in three consecutive lines in the second stanza. Several of these words are also used as links between the different stanzas. The word "every", for example, is used first in the opening stanza before being used again and again in the second stanza. Likewise the word "cry" used for the first time in the poem in the second stanza is re-used is the poem's third stanza. Finally, the "charter'd street" of the first stanza rscurs in the past as "midnight steets," and the "Infant" is referred to in the second and the fourth stanzas both.

The consequence of such intricate verbal resonances in the creation of reticulation, itself an image suggestive of enclosure. But the effect does not stop with this, for we have in "London" the presence of a (certainly deliberate) symmetry in image distribution. To put it simply, all the images in the first stonza of the lyric are of a visual kind, while all those in the second stonza are of an auditory type. But the pattern of image distribution gets more complex in the third stanga. Here, instead of the same classes of images (visual and auditory) being spread over two stanzes respectively, we have auditory and visual imagery set in alternative odd and even numbered lines - "cry" and "sigh" black'ning church "and" Runs in blood down palace walls" in the second and fourth lines. The greatest complexity in image patterning is, however, to be noticed in the last stanga. Here, in the first line itself we are given the visual image of the "midnight streets" before we come across "hear". Then, in the second line of this stanga this design is repeated in the phrase "youthful Harlot's curse," in which the visualizable Harlot is conjoined with her audible "curse". But after this we climactically come down to the single word "Blasts" which combines or unifies in the matrix of its implication both the visual sight of a flash of light together with the audible sound of a "Blast" or explosion. In "London", therefore, from the organization of whole stanzes on the basis of an alternation of two kinds of images- those of sight and of sound- we thus gradually come down through a distribution of the same types of images in separate lines, then in single, individual lines, to finally one solitary word. This is an enactment of a rigorous symmetry no less fearsomely and intricately structured than the "mind forg'd manacles" that Blake evokes in his lyric.

What this funnel or inverted pyramid form of image distribution in the poem seems to underscore is the miasma of control that Blake protests against. And the effect is reinforced by the gradual change of pace and tone as the poem progresses or develops. The whole of the first stanza with its long and open vowels in "wander", "charter'd," "flow", "marks", "woe" and so on - is evocative of a slowness of tempo, extremely, appropriate in the context of Blake's narrator wandering slowly tlirough the streets of the city. But the pace builds up over the succeeding stonzas till wem

reach the forceful plosives in the last line - "bright", plagues", "Marriage hearse" - which effectively communicate the poet's auger over the economic, social, moral and political degeneracies that had beset and blighted the quality of life of the citizens of the capital of the British empire in the closing years of the eighteenth century.

But if the verbal text of "London" projects the city as a zone of dark, "midnight" experiences, the illustration to the poem carries strangely contrary implication. For the picture at the top of the plate shows the enactment of a kindly deed-a child leading an old man on dutches that is significantly illuminated by a from of strong light that falls upon the man and the child and goes beyond. Many years after he had reverse-etched the "London" plate, Blake returned again to the some figural conception in plate 84 of his epical poem **Jerusalem :**

I see London blind & age bent begging thro' the steets Of Babylon; led by a child, Ms tears run down his beard.

The interfext here is Babylon the city in the Book of Revelation (Chapters 3, v.20 and 4,v.l) in the **New Testament,** from which source Blake probably derived the icon of the doorway that figures so prominently in the "London" illustration :

Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if anyone hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me.....

After tliis I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven.....

There seems little enough of heaven in Blake's "London", and yet Blake was a isionary who could dream of building Heaven in Hell's despair, and it seems that the illustration to the lyric looks forward to a world where there will be no exploitation and suffering, no weakness or woe, no terror stricken intants, children, adolescents or adults, no midnight of the anguished soul and body.

1.3 ❑ SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- **A. Long Answer Type :**
  1. "London" is a short lyric, but it embraces a wide range and depth of significance. Discuss.
  2. Show how Blake's poem "London" Presents an image of contemporai-y English society.
  3. Is Blake's "London" a more symbolic poem than a realistic one? Give reasons for your answer.
  4. Comment on Blake's vision of the city as expressed in his poem "London"
  5. Why do you think did Blake include "London" in his Songs of Experience?

In what way is the poem one of "Experience"?

6. Write a note on the imagery and symbolisn in Blake's "London" and show how these are related to the them of the poem.

- **B. SHORT ANSWER TYPE :**

1. "And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls."

Comment citically on these lines and bring out their full significance in the context of the poem from which they have been taken.

2. Why does Blake describe the sheets of London and the river thaner as "Charter's" ?

1.4 ❑ SELECT RECOMMENDED READING

There are many good editions of Blake's poems, and the standard one is the Oxford University Press edition, **Blake : Complete Writings** edited by Geoffrey Keynes. Another good edition is the Norton critical Edition, **William Blake's Poetry and Designs** edited by Mary Lymi Johnson and John E. Grant. Some helpful works of criticism containing material on the **Songs of Innocence and of Experience** are :

(1) **Twentieth Century Interpretations of 'songs of Innocence and of Experience',** ed. Motion D. Paley (Prentice Hall).

(2) **Vision and Disenchantment : Blake's 'Songs' and Wordsworth's 'Lyrical Balladis'** by Heather Glen (Cambridge University Press)

(3) **William Blake** by Edward Larring (Basil Blackwell, Oxford).

(4) **The Poetry of William Blake** by orichael Ferber (Penguin)

(5) **Burning Bright : William Blake and the Poetry of Imagination** by subir Dhar (G.J. Book Society, Kolkata).

Unit -2 ❑ Resolution and Independence : Wordsworth

Structure

2.1 ❑ INTRODUCTION

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) is said to have brought a completely new approach to the writing of English poetry. Along with Coleridge, he made a conscious effort to make literature "adapted to interest mankind permanently", because classical literature, they felt, could never do that. His approach to literature was marked by a choice of humble rustic folk who served as his characters, simple diction and a fresher attitude to nature. Poetry was a record of the emotions of the mind, and as David Daiches says, the value of poetry for him lay in the value of the state of mind which the poem recorded. He reacted sharply against the artificiality of 18th century poetry. Instead of being preoccupied with nymphs and goddesses, he portrayed the emotions of village girls and peasants. He went against the neoclassic view that poetry should both instruct and delight, when he stressed that the function of poetry was to give pleasure, a pleasure of a noble and exalted kind, pleasure which results from increased understanding and sympathy. If at all it teaches, it does so only indirectly, by purifying the emotions, uplifting the soul and bringing it nearer to nature.

Wordsworth was deeply affected by the philosophical, social and political events of his age. The French Revolution; the eighteenth century development of the psychological views implicit in Locke's concept of perception and knowledge, the principles of the Enlightenment and his own cllildhood in the Lake District contributed towards the development of his view of poetry. His early poem **An Evening Walk** (1793) shows the influence of French poets Losset, Rouches and Delille and Saint Lambert's poem on the seasons.

Wordsworth planned his **Lyrical Ballads** with Coleridge in 1797 when he was with his sister Dorothy. His namative poem **Peter Bell** may be contrasted with **Lyrical Ballads. Peter Bell** is a retrospective chapter on the darker aspects of his life while **Lyrical Ballads** is a celebration of all that he had acquired in the form of "self-

knowledge". "The ballads represent an important step toward in his literary life. He produced what were for the most part anecdotal poems for his immediate circle of friends while he took stock of the longtenn task of developing the autobiographical theme for his epic 'public poem'. (2) **Tintem Abbey** is said to be "the star of the 1798 volume" whereby Wordsworth developed from the eighteenth century meditative verse a new and unique poetic style. It helped him then to move forword with **The Prelude** which some critics feel is the only successful long autobiographical poem in the English language. This poem explores the experience of a mind torn between love of nature and the demands of political ideologies. **The Prelude** was written for "private consumption" and proposed a reformed body politic for Britiain as the most difficult achievement of all, "peace at home, / And noiseless fortitude." (3) The poem was first published in its final form posthumously in 1850. It had originally been intended as an early section of a preliminary poem, **The Recluse,** "a philosophical poem containing views of Man, Nature, and Society..... having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement".

Wordsworth's criticism consists of **Advertisement to the Lyrical Ballads,** 1798, **Preface to the Lyrical Ballads** 1800, **Preface to the Lyrical Ballads,** 1802, with an **Appendix on Poetic Diction.** The **Preface** was constantly revised for the subsequent editions of the **Lyrical Ballads.** For the 1815 edition, Wordsworth wrote a new Preface and the older one was added as an Appendix. The 1802 **Preface** is generally taken as the staudard text and critics regard it as a landmark in the history of criticism.

2.1 ❑ THE TEXT ; CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Resolution and Independence. The poem was originally named **The Leceh Gatherer** The poem is based on an actual meeting of Wordsworth with an old leech gatherer. In a letter written to Sara Hutchinson on June 14, 1802 Wordswarth wrote the following commentary on the poem stating Ms poetic intentions in support of the old man narrated in the poem : "I describe myself as having been exalted to the highest pitch of deight by the joyousness and beauty of Nature and then as depressed, even in the midst of these beautiful objects, to the lowest dejection and despair. A young Poet in die midst of the happiness of Nature is described as overwhelmed by the thought of the miserable reverses which have befallen the happiest of all men viz Poets-I think of this till I am so deeply impressed by it, that I consider the manner in which I was rescued from my dejection and despair almost as an interposition of Providence....It is in the character of the old man to tell his story in a manner which an impatient reader must necessarily feel as tedious. But Good God! Such a figure, in such a place, a pious self-respecting, miserably infirm old man telling such a tale!

Wordsworth's major task in 1800 had been to oversee the publication of the **Lyrical Ballads.** This challenged him with the mammoth task of "frequently panik stricken letters detailing alterations and errors". (5) The transciptions were prepared by Dorothy aided by others including Coleridge and Sara Hutchinson. Faced with the revision and editorship of this work, some time elapsed before any further significant compoaition. After this he publisheds series of 39 poems from Grasmere. Tliis included **Resolution and Independence** in 1802, along with the first version of the **Ode : Intimations of Immortality.**

Many of the poems of this 1802 period show the tension between the public and private worlds of a modem poet. The subjects are "simple" and encounters take place with daisies, birds, butterflies, children, vagrants and unassumring travellers. In **Resolution and Independence,** we encounter the Leech Gatherer.

In the **Preface** Wordsworth explains his aim behind the choice of such simple and humble characters. His first and foremost altack was on what Derek Roper calls, the "gaudines and inane phraseology "of contemporary poets. Wordsworth said : "Poetry sheds no tears 'such as angels weep', but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial ichor (fliud) that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both."

Wordsworth further goes on to explain his chief aim in die composition of his poems. His aim has been to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate them in a selection of language really used by men, (5) and at the same time to throw over them a colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things would be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect. Wordsworth believed that in humble and rustic life, feelings are freely and frankly expressed because the feelings are simple and so, are expressed more accurately and forcefully. Moreover, since the rustics are not sophisticated, their passions are connected with the grand and noble objects of nature, and so they are more noble and permanent. He proved through suitable illustrations that the real thing in poetry is feelings and not language. Worthy sentiments, he said, ennoble the language.

The poetry of the neo-classical schools was very artificial because it was extremely limited in its themes. Wordsworth believed that a poet is essentially a man speaking to men. Since he is a man, and he has to appeal to the heart and mind of man, he must study human nature, and try to understand "the primary laws of our nature". These primary instincts and impulses which govern human conduct can best be understood by studying the simplest and most elementary forms of life. Thus, the village fanners, beech gatherers, even idiots represent human life reduced to its simplest and the poet can proceed to study the "primary laws of our nature".

The passions of the rustics are "incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature". They live in the midst of the grandeur and beauty of nature, and if Plato is to be believed, they must absorb some of that beauty and grandeur. Thus their language is a more philosophical language — it is noble and poetic and is capable of giving the highest poetic pleasure.

Resolution and Independence was composed after Wordsworth read Dorsthy Wordsworth's journal of October 1800 where she had noted an encounter with an old man near their home. The poem was initially called **The Leech Gatherer** and was later given its present name. A. Gardiner in his critical analysis of the poem mantions the fact that Wordsworth made certain omissions in his text, hi Dorothy Wordsworth's journal, the leech gatherer had given up his search, but Wordsworth's aim being to celebrate the fortitude of the man, he made the leech gatherer continue the search.

Both the poet and the leech gatherer live within sight of extinction, the old man because of his age, infirmity and the scarcity of leceh‌es, Wordsworth because of his choice of an unorthodox literary life. (6) John Williams comments that the style of "naked simplicity" adopted for the poetry threatens at the very least his credibility as a poet; the poem suggests that there may be an even higher price to pay." (7) "Like Bums and Chatterton before him, Wordsworth is detennined to go his own way, and the poem recalls their fate, and suggests a similar one for himself."

By Our own spirits are we deified;
We poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof comes in the end despondancy and madness.

(It will be significant to remember here that Chatterton had committed suicide at 18, and Robert Bums met with an untimely death at 37).

In *a* letter to Sara Hutchinson Wordsworth defends Ms own position as a poet. He says that he has deliberately introduced spirituality in the poem. When the leech gatherer answered Wordsworth's queries, there was an inner illumination made visible. In fact, this is present in the introductory lines of the first sight of the leech gatherer.

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,
A leading from above, a something given,

or later,

But now his voice to me was like a stream
scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide :
And the whole body of the Man did seen
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength by apt admonishment.

The leech gatherer, old and crippled, was "the oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs". He seemed "not all alive or dead, nor all asleep in his extreme old". His body was "bent double" by age, sickness and hardship.

John Williams comments on Wordsworth's inability to concentrate on what the leech gatherer actually says. While he gives a solemn albeit mundane account of his circumstances, the poet's mind drifts off into reverie.

"His voice to me was like a stream sarce heard." Any benefit to be had from the "naked simplicity" of the man's account is being blocked by Wordsworths anxieties. There is conflict here between Wordsworth's concern for the world in which he aspires to be publicly recognised as a poet, and the value of this private moment for him". It is important to note here that in making an attempt to listen to the man's wrods, and not pay much heed to his own thoughts, Wordsworth draws his sense of "resolution" which would lead to "independence". Wordsworth was seeking a "redefined permanence" from instability— and the leech gatherer came to his aid at the correct moment. The poem repeatedly insists that what the world in its current mood of getting and spending "condemns as marginal, be it people or things are pointers towards the quality of permanence that, once perceived, will renew our lives with a spiritual and moral wholeness that is otherwise daugerously lacking in society."

2.3 ❑ CONCLUSION

Resolution and Independence has a combination of moral generalisations about life and the nomation of the incident that prompted it. The use of the rhyme royal stanza helped Wordsworth to give a special shape to an otherwise insignificant encounter. The Leech Gatherer's words apparently seem like a rather mundane account of his life like Rob Roy's song **(Rob Roy's Grave)**, but the deepn import of the lines go beyond literal description.

Finally, to quote John Williams, "we should remember that for the purposes of **Lyrical Ballads,** he is the insensitive young observer of Simon Lee; he it is who bullies the child in **Anecdote for Fathers,** he it is who receives 'admonishment' from the Leech Gatherer in **Resolution and Independence,** and who subsequently leaves the work of converting the solitary in **The Excursion** for the most^part to the Warderes. Wordsworth and his absent gentle reader were arguably both victims of a cultural crisis exacerbated by the political crisis experienced after the outbreak of the French Revolution. If the situation reached by 1815 is to be fully understood, it is important to reconsider briefly what the problems were for a young poet attempting to write and publish through the 1790s." (9)

2.4 ❑ NOTES AND REFERENCES

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- 3. Dairs, J (ed.) Wordswath
- 4. Arnold, Matthew, Essays Criticism
- 5. Rogers, Pat. History of English Literature

2.6 ❑ QUESTIONS

1. Discusw Resslution Independence as a narrative poem.
2. Resolution and Independence is Wordsworth's study of man in Nature.
3. "Wordsworth wrote no poem more characterstic than Resolution of Independence" Discus.
4. Discus the title of the poem.
5. What contradictions do you find in the poem?
6. Discus Wordsworth's narrative art with reference to Resolution and Independence.
7. Annotate and answer with reference to the context.
   (i) "And fears and fancies thick upon me come" What are there fears and fancies?

   (ii) "A more human weight upon his frame had cast." What is the implication of this line?

Unit -3 ❑ Kubla Khan : Coleridge

Structure

3.1 ❑ INTRODUCTION : THE POET

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) poet and critic, is known to general readers mainly for four poems— The Ancient Mariner, Christabel Kubla Khan, Dejection,

an ode and a volume of criticism, Biographia Literaria. Wordsworth and Coleridge published Lyrical Ballads (1798). With this book started the great period of English Romantic poetry. Both the poets had their respective fields of poetry. It was Wordsworth's aim to shed the light of imagination over things real and ordinary; but Coleridge aimed at procuring 'for the shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.' No poet has succeeded better in rendering the state of entrancemeut.

3.2 ❑ TEXT : KUBLA KHAN ; SOURCES

Born in the 'timeless cell of dreams' Kubla Khan is a source of perennial delight. In it the true spirit of Poetry is everywhere. It is a pity that the poem is a fragment. But as poetry it is perfect even as fragment. That is one of the reasons why Humphry House says : 'If Coleridge had never published his Preface, who would have thought of "Kubla Khan" as a fragment?' Walter Jackson Bate seems to echo similar sentiments : 'Few readers would think that "Kubla Khan" is a fragment'2. Though the poem is composed in a dream, it does not suffer from such irregularity as might mar its poetic beauty. It has the symmetry of a finished work of art.

The poem, inspired by Coleridge's reading of Turchas's Pilgrimage' shows the power of the unconscious. As to the cause of the dream it can be safely said that the unconscious worked in him as a result of homesickness, a term which, Henry Newbolt thinks, is best suited to express the romantic longing of the spirit. Coleridge had in him such a longing and the poem is the reproduction of 'the ecstasy in imaginative fulfihnent'[3]. Graham Hough describes the poem 'as a fragment of psychic life"*.But we would rather take the poem as a psychological release where there is an unconscious revelation of the longing self. In its concentration on the self the poem fulfils an important condition of romanticism.The dream perfectly recaptures the sensational awareness of the poet's longing self and thus also offers scope for the analysis of the dreamer— his instinctive nature. From the dreamer we can make an analysis of the nature of the dream which is selective, never confusing and abrupt. In the concluding paragraph of his essay on 'Kubla Khan[1], Bate describes the poem as simply a fanciful embroidery of something he had read - in fact a fanciful development of something he had been actually reading at every moment - Purchas : his Pilgrims,^ but the 'fanciful embroidery' to which Bate refers is an' incomplete formula for Coleridge's poem. It cannot be interpreted without any reference to the longing of the spirit or self. It is the romantic poet's personal self that goads and helps the 'fanciful embroidery'. It is the longing spirit that sets the Winged chariot of the poet's fancy roam in the region of romance and causes the 'fanciful development'. So Coleridge's reading of Purchas's Pilgrimage could not by itself cause the dream poem; and it is much more than a 'fanciful embroidery' of something the poet had read.

3.3 ❑ COMPOSITION

The facts about the composition of 'Kubla Khan' offer a fascinating study. While living in a lonely farm house on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire in the summer of 1797, Coleridge took an anodyne to prevent indisposition. The immediate effect of taking an anodyne was that he fell in profound sleep for about three hours. Immediately before his sleep Coleridge, as we know from his own account of the composition of the poem, was reading the following from Purchas's Pilgrimage^ :' Here Kubla Khan commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were enclosed by a wall'". The images that rose up before Mm in Ms dream were reproduced by Mm immediately after waking and without any conscious effort. But me recollection was never completed as he was suddenly interrupted for an hour by a person who came to Mm on business from Porlock. The interruption resulted in a fragmentary reproduction of the dream poem, as Coleridge could not retain the entire vision which, he said, 'passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into wMch a stone has been cast'.[7]

3.4 ❑ CRITICAL ANALYSIS

It is evident that Coleridge, the philosopher, could be an inspired dreamer. It is definitely here that the poet with his dreaming eyes could give to airy nothing a permanent habitation. The poem remains as a recollection of Coleridge's dream-vision, the imaginative experience in wliich his soul delighted in wonder. The poem shows how the poet can reject the external world by completely relying upon the world wliich is private, arbitrary and irrational. The poet's soul's joy lay in the expectation of the revival of the symphony and song of the Abyssinian maid. The lines that suggest this expectation of delight are set in a rising crescendo which, however, coincides with the spirit of mystery of the close :

> Could I revive within me
> Her symphony and song,
> To such a deep delight't would win me,
> That with music loud and long,
> I would build that dome in air.

It would not be too fanciful to search for Miltonic reminiscences in 'Kubla Khan'. The decription of Kubla Khan's walled garden 'bright with sinuous rills' and 'many an incense-bearing tree' recalls to our memory Milton's description of the Garden of Eden, 'that fair field of Enna[1] ('Paradise Lost IV, 268-9). Coleridge's 'Mount Abora' and 'Abyssinian maid' recall Milton's 'Mount Amara' and 'Abassin Kings' (Paradise Lost', IV, 280-3). This is, as Humphry House aptly says, 'Coleridge's Miltonising'.

Yet Humphry House who sees the resemblances between Milton and Coleridge thinks that (this approximation to, or parallelism between, Kubla's garden and the Paradise of Eden 'causes a positive distortion of the poem's on the ground that Kubla is not Adam. But it can be stated against Humphry House's contention that Kubla, essentially human, loves architectural splendour and is a dignified Tartar, an imaginative aesthete, a representative lover of pleasure and beauty, and as such has his points of kinship with Adam.

The idea of a demon-lover, which has direct reference to witchcraft, owes its origin to a common theme used in classical mythology and the medieval ballads in which Coleridge was interested. Demons, who come to seduce women in the form of human beings, are found to be favourites of the ballad writers.

It is astonishing, and more so because the poem was composed in a dream, how Coleridge even in dream could collect ingredients, so weird and fantastic, from different sources and could transform them altogether by the rich alchemy of his

imagination. Imaginagion is, as Coleridge himself says, the soul of poetic genius. And in the shaping power of imagination lies one of the central principles of romantic ait. This esemplastic power explains the eclectic nature of his dream. The process which worked behind the amalgamation of these diverse elements in the poem is what Coleridge calls 'the streamy nature of association'. It is evident how Coleridge's imagination ranged over a wide field from Xanadu to Abyssinia, from the medieval ballads and Elizabethan explorations to the history of China and Greek myths Besides, it has been suggested by Livingston Lowes that Coleridge, apart from reading 'Purchas's Pilgrimage', also read James Bruce's Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile and Thomas Maurice's History of Hindostan.

The symbols used in the poem relate it to the Platonic tradition. As a schoolboy Coleridge read the neo-Platonists in translation and later had also read some Greek Philosophers in the original. The images, which can also be related to 'Purchas's Pilgrimage', are more in the Platonic tradition. The sacred river Alph has its prototype in Greek myths. The very word 'Alph' is derived from the Greek word 'Alpheus' which is one of the lergest rivers hi Greece. The mystery round the Alph can be traced back to Greek sources.The 'sunless sea' is a Greek symbol as it reminds one of Odysseus' voyage on the sea. It would be highly relevant to mention here that the sea plays a significant role in romantic poetry and specially in the poetry of Coleridge. The entire theme of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner[1] is based on a sea voyage. The sea is a part and parcel of Coleridge's story. In 'Kubla Khan' Coleridge thrice refers to the sacred river, Alph, and describes with characteristic details its winding :

> And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
> It flung up momently the sacred river.
> Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
> Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
> Then reached the caverns measureless to man.

In the treatment of the supernatural Kubla Khan perfectly illustrates Coleridge's poetic creed : 'That willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith[1.9] Here, as in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, the moon is largely instrumental in creating the supernatural atmosphere.The world conceived in Kubla Khan is a dim, distant world, far away from our world of meddling intellect. Yet it is not so intangible to Coleridge, the poet sorcerer who knows all the secrets of the enchanted world of Xanadu. The poet, with the help of the 'waning moon', creates an artistic apotheosis to describe a charmed savage Place :

> A savage place! as holy and enchanted
> As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
> By a woman waiting for her demon-lover!

Poetic magic has reached here its ultimate limits : it can go no further. Referring to these lines (and to the two lines of Keats on the 'magic casements') Kipling says : "Remember that in all the millions permitted there are no more than five—five little lines— of which one can say : 'These are the pure Magic, These are the clear vision. The rest is only poetry'."[10]

Suggestiveness, which is a feature of all great art, is the poet's forte. He can conjure the vision of the mysterious world of Xanadu with infinite suggestiveness. The shadow of Kubla Khan's 'dome of pleasure', floating midway on the waves, may be taken to suggest the ultimate fragility of the dome. The insubstantial nature of Kubla's dome of pleasure has been forcefully conveyed through the floating image. The Oriental monarch's vanity and his desire for pleasure are not matched with corresponding wisdom. Throughout the poem some mystery is suggested. Mystery is associated with the Alph which, while meandering, reaches caverns measureless to man and finally sinks its tumult in a lifeless ocean. In spite of Coleridge's description of Kubla Khan as an aesthete, the monarch is not totally shorn of his traditional character-the Kubla Khan of history. Kubla's inherent love of war has been finely suggested in these lines :

> And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
> Ancestral voices prophesying war!

It is also through suggestiveness that Coleridge successfully maintained what Humphry House calls 'the factual-visual consistency.

Though Coleridge was supposed to have been in a trance, his mental faculty seems to have been fully alert. Thus Kubla Khan is a conscious outcome of an unconscious creative process. Herbert Read, while commenting on the poem, harmonises these two contradictory attitudes of the mind-the unconscious and the conscious. Read says : 'There is nothing surprising in this. I believe that every sound we hear and every object we see is instantaneously recorded by the brain whether or not we consciously register the experience. Our consciousness is only a tiny aperture opening on to the wide world of the unconscious-a finger in an intimate range of indexes'.[11]

Kubla Khan offers a study in contrasts between the poet's present state and the desired state when the song of the Abyssinian maid would delight his soul and inspire him to create— to build the dome in the air. From joy of music thus came the bold assertion of creation. This reminds me of the great Upanisadic truth that it is out of joy that this universe has been created. The Oriental source of Kubla's dome of pleasure and Kubla himself are in contrast with the Occidental source of the Alph. Contrast between heat and cold is conspicuous in the line :

A sunny pleasure-dome, with caves of ice !

It is in the fusion of the contrasts that the miracle of Kubla Khan's pleasure-dome lies. The pointed contrasts deepen the sense of mystery which runs through the poem.

Besides contrast, the poem depicts a wide variety of feelings and moods-those of delight, surprise, fear, enthusiasm and ecstasy.

The poet is under the bewitching spell of the Abyssinian maid's song which has been experienced only once. The experience had made the poet a captive of the maid's music. He is keen on reviving within him her symphony and song :

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw :
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight't would win me.
These line superbly illustrate the captivating power of music.

3.5 ❑ CONCLUSION

Kubla Khan is a dream poem without the incoherence of a dream.— Kubla Khan is a marvel of romantic imagination, a miracle of rare device. Here Coleridge seems to set the limits of nineteenth century imaginative verse. The liberation of imagination, of wliich the poem is a fine product, shows how in a romantic poem there can be perfect dissociation of imaginative life from everyday reality. The poem offers an escape from reality. But it does not stop there, It carries us out of our confining existence to that enchanted land of beauty and wonder which lures the imagination of the eternal child in us. Poems like 'Kubla Khan' do not assert but create, not inform, but move. Such poems give a taste of the life of pure sensations unalloyed by thought. For such a life Keats aspired in one of his letters to his friend Bailey. In its evocation of pure sensations, Kubla Khan fulfils the purpose of poetry; for the purpose of poetry, says Herbert Read, 'is the enhancement of the enjoyment of life, either by sensuous celebration of its immediate qualities, as in lyrical poetry, or by communication of its ultimate meaning, as in epic and dramatic myths'[12]. Poetry is the essence of literature and Kubla Khan is the quintessence of poetry. True poetry' says Rebert Lynd, 'begins with the delighted use of the sense. It creates the mermaid, the unicorn and the fiery dragon. It peoples the vague unknown with witches on broomsticks and fairies and beasts that are kings' sons in disguise.

Distance has no terrors for it, and we can travel over impossible spaces either in seven league boots or by the light of the candle' 13. Kuble Khan is indeed a specimen of such poetry.

3.6 ❑ NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Humphry House, Cloeridge, (London, 1953) p. 114
2. Walter Jackson Bate. Coleridge (London. 1969)
3. Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, (O.U.P, 1951) P. 95
4. .Graham Hough, The Romantic Poets. (London, 1957), P. 63
5. W. J. Bate, Coleridge, (London, 1969) P. 84.
6. Golden book of Coleridge (Everyman's Library, London, 1945) P. 284.
7. Ibid. P. 285.
8. Humphry House, Coleridge, (London, 1953) P. 120
9. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, (London, 1958) P. 6
10. Quoted by M. R. Ridley in his essay on Coleridge, included in Fifteen poets (Oxford, 1965), P. 257.
11. Herbert Read, Collected Essays in Literary Criticism (London, 1950) P. Ill
12. Ibid, P 110
13. A Methuen, An Anthology of Modem Verse, Introduction by Robert Lynd P.12

3.7 ❑ ANNOTATIONS ;

Alph : 'Scholars agree that Coleridge compounded the first letter of the Greek alphabet, 'Alpha' with mythological speculations that the Garden of Eden, where language began, was in Abyssinia, and with memories of the classical river Alpheus which ran underground'. (O.A. of E.L. vol.11)

Milk of Paradise : Milk from the rivers of a muses' paradise— source of poetic inspiration,

Questions

1. Discuss **Kubla Khan** as a romantic poem.
2. **Kubla Khan** is about magic, music and poetic creation. Elucidate.

3. Analyse Coleridge's poetic craftsmanship with reference to Kubla Khan

4. Answer briefly

   i) The 'Abyssinian maid' has nothing to do with the subject in Kubla Khan. Do you agree?

   ii) Refer to a few lines to show how magic is reflected in the imagery of the poem.

3.8 ❑ RECOMMENDED READING ;

Bate, W.J., **Coleridge**

Beer, J. B., **Coleridge, the Visionary.**

Lowes, J. L., **The Road to Xanadu.**

Hartmau, G. L (ed), **New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth,**