 **Annai Women’s College **

 **(ARTS & SCIENCE)**

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**CONTENT PREPARED BY:**

 **Ms. R. SANGEETHA**

 **ASSISTANT PROFESSOR**

 **DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

 **ANNAI WOMEN’S COLLEGE**

 **KARUR**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **S NO** | **UNIT** | **PAGE NO** |
| **1** | **I** | **3-7** |
| **2** | **II** | **8-14** |
| **3** | **III** | **15-17** |
| **4** | **IV** | **18-21** |
| **5** | **V** | **22-27** |

**POETRY I**

**UNIT - I**

**AMORETTI LXXV**

Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti LXXV: ‘One day I wrote her name upon the strand’

Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti is one of the greatest of the Elizabethan sonnet sequences; after Sir Philip Sidney’s Astrophil and Stella (which was the first great sonnet sequence in English), it is perhaps the greatest of all. Sonnet LXXV from Amoretti, beginning ‘One day I wrote her name upon the strand’, is probably the most famous poem in the cycle, and deserves closer analysis for its innovative use of a popular conceit.

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,

But came the waves and washed it away:

Again I wrote it with a second hand,

But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.

‘Vain man,’ said she, ‘that dost in vain assay,

A mortal thing so to immortalize;

For I myself shall like to this decay,

And eke my name be wiped out likewise.’

‘Not so,’ (quod I); ‘let baser things devise

To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:

My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,

And in the heavens write your glorious name:

Where whenas death shall all the world subdue,

Our love shall live, and later life renew.’

‘One day I wrote her name upon the strand’ addresses one of the key themes of the Elizabethan sonnet sequence: the struggle of the poet to immortalise his beloved, the woman his sonnets are written in praise of. In summary, Spenser tells us that he wrote his beloved’s name on the beach one day, but the waves came in and washed the name

beloved’s name out a second time, but again the tide came in and obliterated it, as if deliberately targeting the poet’s efforts (‘pains’) with its destructive waves.

Spenser’s beloved chastises him for his hubris and arrogance in seeking to immortalise her in this way, when she is but a woman, and only mortal. Her body will itself decay one day, much as her name has disappeared from the sand; her ‘name’, as in all memory of her, will be wiped out, just as her (literal) name has been erased from the shore.

But then there comes the volta or ‘turn’ which often comes at this point (the beginning of the ninth line) in a sonnet: Spenser responds to his beloved, arguing that whilst it is truer that less beautiful and fine things are mortal and will perish, someone as beautiful as she is deserves to live forever – not literally, but through lasting fame. Her name will live on thanks to his writing.

My poetry, he concludes in the final four lines, will immortalise your rare qualities, and write your name in the heavens; so that in the afterlife together we will have a richer life, because I have praised your name so.

Edmund Spenser packs a great deal into the fourteen lines of the sonnet here. (The rhyme scheme, by the way, is ababbcbccdcdee, making this a Spenserian sonnet, a sort of halfway house between the original Italian or Petrarchan sonnet, with its octave and sestet, and the English or Shakespearean sonnet, which also ends with a rhyming couplet, as Spenser’s does.) For as well as offering the usual conceit we find in Elizabethan sonnets – the idea of immortalising the woman’s name through writing – Spenser goes on to offer what is, effectively, a sort of Early Modern answer to skywriting, whereby through writing about his beloved’s virtues in verse (note how ‘verse’ and ‘vertues’ chime with each other in line 11, their sound and their sense chiming with each other), Spenser will immortalise her not simply by making her name survive on earth, but by imbuing her immortal soul with added value for when she is in the ‘heavens’. When he and she are together in the afterlife together, their existence will be all the richer because he has praised her in his poems, making her almost divine through his verse.

There is an important biographical piece of the puzzle which helps us to make sense of Spenser’s argument here. Many such courtly love poems are about a poet praising a woman he will never be with; but Spenser was writing Amoretti, and ‘One day I wrote her name upon the strand’, for Elizabeth Boyle, whom he had courted and married (Amoretti charts this courtship). So unlike many other sonneteers, such as Sir Philip Sidney’s Astrophil with his beloved Stella, Spenser can be pretty sure that he and Elizabeth will be together in heaven.

There is something slightly odd, of course, about the fact that all these Elizabethan sonneteers talk about immortalising their beloved’s name, but then fail to mention that name anywhere in their poems. It’s something we raised in our analysis of Shakespeare’s sonnets. But we know what they mean, even if such poems, in the last analysis, immortalised the poet, rather than their subject.

**SONNET 18**

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer’s lease hath all too short a date:

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimm’d;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance or nature’s changing course untrimm’d;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade

Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;

Nor shall Death brag thou wander’st in his shade,

When in eternal lines to time thou growest:

 So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

 Sonnet 18

The speaker opens the poem with a question addressed to the beloved: “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” The next eleven lines are devoted to such a comparison. In line 2, the speaker stipulates what mainly differentiates the young man from the summer’s day: he is “more lovely and more temperate.” Summer’s days tend toward extremes: they are shaken by “rough winds”; in them, the sun (“the eye of heaven”) often shines “too hot,” or too dim. And summer is fleeting: its date is too short, and it leads to the withering of autumn, as “every fair from fair sometime declines.” The final quatrain of the sonnet tells how the beloved differs from the summer in that respect: his beauty will last forever (“Thy eternal summer shall not fade...”) and never die. In the couplet, the speaker explains how the beloved’s beauty will accomplish this feat, and not perish because it is preserved in the poem, which will last forever; it will live “as long as men can breathe or eyes can see.”

Commentary

This sonnet is certainly the most famous in the sequence of Shakespeare’s sonnets; it may be the most famous lyric poem in English. Among Shakespeare’s works, only lines such as “To be or not to be” and “Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?” are better-known. This is not to say that it is at all the best or most interesting or most beautiful of the sonnets; but the simplicity and loveliness of its praise of the beloved has guaranteed its place.

On the surface, the poem is simply a statement of praise about the beauty of the beloved; summer tends to unpleasant extremes of windiness and heat, but the beloved is always mild and temperate. Summer is incidentally personified as the “eye of heaven” with its “gold complexion”; the imagery throughout is simple and unaffected, with the “darling buds of May” giving way to the “eternal summer”, which the speaker promises the beloved. The language, too, is comparatively unadorned for the sonnets; it is not heavy with alliteration or assonance, and nearly every line is its own self-contained clausealmost every line ends with some punctuation, which effects a pause.

Sonnet 18 is the first poem in the sonnets not to explicitly encourage the young man to have children. The “procreation” sequence of the first 17 sonnets ended with the speaker’s realization that the young man might not need children to preserve his beauty; he could also live, the speaker writes at the end of Sonnet 17, “in my rhyme.” Sonnet 18, then, is the first “rhyme”—the speaker’s first attempt to preserve the young man’s beauty for all time. An important theme of the sonnet (as it is an important theme throughout much of the sequence) is the power of the speaker’s poem to defy time and last forever, carrying the beauty of the beloved down to future generations. The beloved’s “eternal summer” shall not fade precisely because it is embodied in the sonnet: “So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,” the speaker writes in the couplet, “So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”

**UNIT - II**

**JOHN DONNE’S ‘SONG’ (‘GO AND CATCH A FALLING STAR’)**

 ‘Song’, often known by its first line, ‘Go and catch a falling star’, is an unusual poem among John Donne’s work in several ways. It doesn’t use the extended metaphors that we find in some of Donne’s greatest poetry, and yet it remains one of his most popular and widely known works. As the short analysis of ‘Song’ below endeavours to show, ‘Go and catch a falling star’ is, nevertheless, in keeping with Donne’s beliefs and poetic style in many respects.

Go and catch a falling star,

Get with child a mandrake root,

Tell me where all past years are,

Or who cleft the devil’s foot,

Teach me to hear mermaids singing,

Or to keep off envy’s stinging,

And find

What wind

Serves to advance an honest mind.

If thou be’st born to strange sights,

Things invisible to see,

Ride ten thousand days and nights,

Till age snow white hairs on thee,

Thou, when thou return’st, wilt tell me,

All strange wonders that befell thee,

And swear,

No where

Lives a woman true, and fair.

If thou find’st one, let me know,

Such a pilgrimage were sweet;

Yet do not, I would not go,

Though at next door we might meet;

Though she were true, when you met her,

And last, till you write your letter,

Yet she

Will be

False, here I come, to two, or three.

Although the poem is songlike as its title suggests and its tone is light and frivolous, ‘Go and catch a falling star’ seems to endorse the misogynistic belief that all women (or all beautiful women, anyway just to make it worse) are unfaithful and shouldn’t be trusted. Yet the way Donne builds to this conclusion is beguiling. In summary, he advises the reader (or, as this is a song, the listener) to perform a series of impossible tasks: catch a ‘falling star’ or meteor in the sky, impregnate a mandrake root, find the past and return it to the present, or discover why the devil has cloven feet. Similarly, the listener is commanded to hear mermaids singing (possibly a reference to the sirens of Greek mythology, who were actually half-bird; it was impossible, unless you were Odysseus, to hear the sirens’ song and survive). Other impossible commands include finding a cure for the ‘sting’ of envy, and what wind exists that can help an honest mind to get on in life. says that if you seek strange sights – things which are invisible, even – then ride for ten thousand days till you’re old and your hair is white (‘ten thousand days and nights’ is just over 27 years, if you’re wondering), and when you return, you’ll be able to tell Donne’s speaker about all the strange things you saw, and also, you’ll be prepared to swear that truly faithful and beautiful women do not exist. (In other words, if women are ‘fair’ or attractive, they will not be true to you.)

The final stanza might be summarised as follows: ‘If you do manage to find a woman who is both faithful and beautiful, let me know – a journey to find such a woman would be worth it. But having said that, even if she were next door and you wrote to tell me to come and see her, before I’d managed to make the journey to meet her, she would have been unfaithful to several men.’

Can we still enjoy a poem that seems to be so down on half the human race? (Or the beautiful section of that half, leastways: poor unattractive women can apparently be trusted to remain true, presumably because Donne’s speaker thinks no one else would want them.) This aspect of Donne’s poem – and the problem is not confined to ‘Go and catch a falling star’ – has exercised critics for a while now. Christopher Ricks, in his Essays in Appreciation, has a good essay on what Ricks sees as the unhealthy endings to many of Donne’s poems: they seem to become uncharitable as they reach conclusion. But Ricks’s issue with this poem in particular is not its misogyny (which loses its power to offend by being such a worn-out complaint) but the fact that the poem’s ending seems false to itself: it goes against what the rest of the poem promises. William Empson, who was heavily influenced by Donne and wrote extensively on his poetry, said of ‘Go and catch a falling star’ that ‘the song had aimed at being gay and flippant but turned out rather heavy and cross’.

Conversely, for another great Donne critic, John Carey, ‘Go and catch a falling star’ is more about self-improvement than women: the earlier sections of the poem, enjoining the listener to go out into the world and make discoveries and see strange sights, is the real core of the poem’s meaning, in Carey’s analysis. Certainly such a reading connects to Donne’s preoccupation with space travel and exploration (something Empson, in his essay ‘Donne the Space-man’, explored; the idea of discovery and exploration is also there in ‘To His Mistress Going to Bed’, with its reference to the woman’s body as ‘my America! my new-found-land’). How should we view the poem? Or does it derive its vital energy from offering both the exploration motif and the complaint about women in one poem? Can we overlook the negative twist at the end? That may depend on our view of Donne’s other poems.

The best affordable edition of Donne’s poetry is John Donne – The Major Works (Oxford World’s Classics) . It comes with very useful annotations and an informative introduction. Continue to explore Donne’s poetry with our analysis of his poem ‘The Canonization’, our discussion of his ‘A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning’, and our summary of his classic seduction poem, ‘The Flea’. If you’re studying poetry, we recommend checking out these five books for the student of poetry. We’ve offered more tips for the close reading of poetry here.

**A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE SOUL AND BODY**

Soul

O Who shall, from this Dungeon, raise

A Soul inslav'd so many wayes?

With bolts of Bones, that fetter'd stands

In Feet ; and manacled in Hands.

Here blinded with an Eye ; and there

Deaf with the drumming of an Ear.

A Soul hung up, as 'twere, in Chains

Of Nerves, and Arteries, and Veins.

Tortur'd, besides each other part,1

In a vain Head, and double Heart.

Body

O who shall me deliver whole,

From bonds of this Tyrannic Soul?

Which, stretcht upright, impales me so,

That mine own Precipice I go;

And warms and moves this needless Frame:

(A Fever could but do the same.)

And, wanting where its spight to try,

Has made me live to let me dye.

A Body that could never rest,

Since this ill Spirit it possest.

Soul

What Magic could me thus confine

Within anothers Grief to pine?

Where whatsoever it complain,

I feel, that cannot feel, the pain.

And all my Care its self employes,

That to preserve, which me destroys:

Constrain'd not only to indure

Diseases, but, whats worse, the Cure:

And ready oft the Port to gain,

Am Shipwrackt into Health again.

Body

But Physick yet could never reach

The Maladies Thou me dost teach;

Whom first the Cramp of Hope does Tear:

And then the Palsie Shakes of Fear.

The Pestilence of Love does heat :

Or Hatred's hidden Ulcer eat.

Joy's chearful Madness does perplex:

Or Sorrow's other Madness vex.

Which Knowledge forces me to know;

And Memory will not foregoe.

What but a Soul could have the wit

To build me up for Sin so fit?

So Architects do square and hew,

Green Trees that in the Forest grew

This poem is a conversation between the body and soul representing the conflict a person experiences between spiritual versus substantial advantages and disadvantages. The body and soul converse about how they do not need each other and how the body despises the control and the soul despises the entrapment of the mundane body. The tone of this poem is aggressive and full of despair. It is shown throughout the entire poem as the body and soul are unhappily combined and distress about the situation they are in. It is created in their Dialogue using specific words such as “Tortur’d” and “destroys” and handled with brilliant rhyme schemes and excellent descriptions. The body and soul describe their hatred for each other in each stanza and the word choice of the author is exemplified. For example, “…ill Spirit it possest” is the body describing the soul by calling it not a soul, but a possessive spirit that makes it seems controlling and unnatural. The imagery used in the poem is very intense. For instance, “A soul hung up, as ‘twere, in chains of Nerves and Arteries and Veins” proves that the soul feels trapped in the body and gives the reader an image of chains made up human innards. It is not a pleasant picture and gives the reader the impression that the body is cruel. Andrew Marvell\'s style is consciously following a pattern. Each Dialogue section is divided into ten lines with a repeating rhyme scheme that adds a musical effect to the way it sounds when read aloud. Overall: The body and soul are typically portrayed as a codependent team, but this poem portrays them as enemies representing the conflicts of the human experience. The poet is trying to give light to the negatives that the substantial living body and surreal consciousness have on each other. In addition, The author uses personification and paradox brilliantly to develop the poem to its full extent. He personifies the Body and Soul throughout the entire poem to emphasize the conflicts between spirituality and human instinct by allowing them to speak to each other and have a debate. Paradox is used multiple times in his work. For example, “Disease, but, whats worse, the Cure” or “Shipwrackt into Health again” are spoken by the soul to describe how it would like to be released from the body through death, but must sustain the body. Also in the last stanza, “Build me up for Sin so fit” describes how without the Soul, the body would only have instincts and would not have good and bad or right and wrong. This poem is rather brilliant and I think absolutely amazing.

**UNIT - III**

**LYCIDAS BY JOHN MILTON**

Milton's elegy 'Lycidas' is also known as monody which is in the form of a pastoral elegy written in 1637 to lament the accidental death, by drowning of Milton’s friend Edward King who was a promising young man of great intelligence. The elegy takes its name from the subject matter, not its form. No rules are laid down for the meter. The theme of the elegy is mournful or sadly reflective.

John Milton (1608-1674)

It is usually a lamentation of the dead. Besides some somber themes, such as unrequited love, or a great national disaster can as well be the elegiac theme. Though lyrical, it is not spontaneous, and is often the result of deliberate poetic art, and can be as elaborate in style as the ode. We read the elegy as a conscious work of art, and not as a spontaneous expression of sorrow.

Any elaborate and conscious mode of utterance might cause us to question the sincerity of the poet’s emotion. Dr. Johnson, criticizing 'Lycidas' remarks, “where there is leisure for fiction, there is little grief.” Neither is elegy a mere expression of a sense of loss. The elegiac poet engages himself in discursive reflections. Death, the primary theme of most elegies, is a vast evocative theme. It leads the poet to regions of reflections usually lying beyond the lyric imagination. Death can be, and is often, the starting point for the poet to deal with serious themes.

Milton, for example, gives us in 'Lycidas', speculations on the nature of death, tributes to friends, as also literary criticism. He comments on the degradation of poetry and religion in 'Lycidas'. And “Lycidas” would be a poor poem without its passage on fame, and the onslaught on the corrupt clergy of that day. Though grief is the dominant condition in the early parts of an elegy, many elegies end on a note of joyful resignation, and also on a note of affirmation. The pastoral elegy uses the mechanism of pastoral convention-shepherds and shepherdesses, incidents form bucolic life, and rustic speech. Originally developed among the Sicilian Greeks, it was later developed by Virgil and introduced into England during the Renaissance.

The poem 'Lycidas' can be conveniently divided into six sections (1) a prologue, four main parts, and an epilogue. In the prologue (lines 1-24) Milton invokes the Muse and explains the reasons for writing the poem. Although Milton had decided not to write poetry till his powers matured, “bitter constraint and sad occasion” compels the poet to attempt an elegy. That occasion is the untimely death of Lycidas. In the Second Section (lines, 25-84) he describes the type of life Lycidas and the poet had at Cambridge. The descriptions are in pastoral imagery. They together- Lycidas and Milton - began their study early in the morning, continued throughout the day late into the night. Besides, there were innocent recreations. But now that Lycidas was dead; a great change, heavy change had taken place. Milton laments the death of Lycidas in the manner of traditional elegiac poets. He asks the Muse where she had been when her Lycidas was dying, and adds that even her presence would not have saved him.

This leads to reflections on the nature and meaning of life and death, and of fate and fame. Why should one, abandoning all pleasures, live a life of strenuous discipline, and cultivate the Muse? Fame (the last infirmity of the noble mind) is the reward of living laborious days. But as one is about to obtain his reward of fame, then fate intervenes and he dies. In the precariousness of human life lies the tragic irony. But Milton rejects pure earthy reputations as the true reward of life; that reward is in the divine judgment.

At the beginning of the third section (which contains lines 85-131) Milton returns to the pastoral style, and describes a procession of mourners lamenting Lycidas’s death. The procession is led by Triton, the herald of the Sea, and the last to come is St. Peter “The Pilot of the Galilean lake.” Through the mouth of St. Peter, Milton gives us a burning denunciation of contemporary clergy, and the sad condition of the Protestant Church in England. In these lines, we have powerful expressions of some of Milton’s passionate convictions. The fourth section (lines 132-164), in which the poet describes the “flowerets of a thousand hues” cast on the hearts of Lycidas, is an “escape from intolerable reality into a lovely world of make-believe.”

In the fifth section (lines 164-184) Milton expresses his belief in immortality. Grief and sorrow are temporary. And though Lycidas is apparently dead, he has arisen from the dead: “Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves.” Lycidas is in heaven, and therefore “Weep ye no more.” The saints there to entertain him in “sweet societies / That sing, and singing in their glory move.” The epilogue (lines 185-193) brings us back to the portal images again, and refers indirectly to the Greek Pastoral poets. The conclusion points to a new determination both to face life hopefully, and to rise up to greater poetic achievements.

Thus though 'Lycidas' is a conventional pastoral elegy, which has its origin in the loss of a friend, the poem becomes impersonal and timeless. The elegiac mourning is twice interrupted to invest the personal sorrow with universal significance. This is achieved by making the tragic death of Lycidas as one example of the precariousness of existence, and the tragic irony of fate which renders all human effort futile. A second theme of equally great concern is the degeneration of the Church, and the contemporary neglect of the things of the spirit. 'Lycidas' is undoubtedly one of the greatest short poems in English language.

**UNIT- IV**

**A SONG OF St.CECILIA’S DAY**

This is an ode to the emotive power of music, and presumably a commemoration of some event on this festival day of musics patron saint. It re-imagines the Genesis account as an act of melodic conception, perhaps drawing on Miltons famous invocation to Paradise Lost. The later stanzas can be seen to carry this Biblical metaphor through Christian history until the Grand Chorus where music heralds the apocalypse. Intricate rhyme scheme and mirroring lines, together with varied line lengths create a frame and strive for a lyrical effect.

The opening stanza sees music as an aspect or incarnation of divinity in self-begetting genesis. The lyric, flowing rhythm of the first line with two harmonizing dactyls at the end sets the tone this ode has the grandeur of a hymn and the playfulness of a folk song. The universal frame likens nature to an instrument that requires assembling its constituent parts the elements, cold, and hot, and moist, and dry. Yet it is music itself, the tuneful voice that sets in motion this genesis. Consequently music, personified with its own power is seen as an expression of a self-begetting God. Nature then comes to represent the musical scale, which Dryden likens to the Chain of Being. Just as man is created on the final day of creation, so Drydens Genesis account ends in this stanza with mankind as the note which completes the scale.

Stanza structures throughout the poem are suggestive of the forms and frames of musical instruments. In the opening stanza the longer pentameter and tetrameter lines cut across the shorter to mimic the struts or strings on an organ or lute. The repeated line From harmony, from heavenly harmony might represent the same note in a scale struck again. The second stanza certainly aims to mimic the completeness of the compass of the notes, returning to its opening line to suggest the circle of fifths or other mathematical sequences that were being applied in music at this time. Alternating line lengths also try to convey a lyrical feel, as much as is possible for an Augustan poet whose strength is in grandeur, solidity and rhetoric. The rich rhymes on shell are not intrusive as they might be, but produce exactly this grand kind of effect which seems to work against the lyricism.

A major theme in the poem is musics ability to play on human emotions, something reflected by Drydens sounding of various emotions as if they were notes in a scale. The range moves from anger and courage in stanza 3 to jealousy in 5 and worship in 6. Each is associated with an instrument, and Drydens word choices mimic the sound of each with varying success. The trumpet is evoked well by clangor, which has a resounding metallic sound but also warmth. The repetition of double for the drum doesnt quite come off, sounding out of place where two repetitions would have conveyed the message better perhaps the line works once set to music. Musics divine beginnings in Stanza 1 work to suggest that music not only inspires humanity but provides a link with heaven. This is suggested in stanza 7 with Cecelias summoning of an angel with the organ.

However, music is also seen as a force of destruction in the poem, fanning the flames of jealousy and heralding judgement. The listening brethren that worship the music of Jubal need not be committing idolatry they worship the same divine music that represents and is God in stanza . However, the suggestion that musics power to manipulate can be abused is shown first here, With the hollow of that shell That spoke so sweetly and so well. Of course shells do make a sound because theyre hollow, but the word also acts in its pejorative mode to suggest the seductive, misleading rhetoric of a politician. Likewise music inspires wars with the thundering drum, and the pains of unrequited love. The poem gently and unobtrusively reminds us that when music is a human rather than divine tool, it can be misused. Hence finally in the Grand Chorus, the divine trumpet also brings about justice. The enjambment over So, when the last and dreadful hour This crumbling pageant shall devourcreates a speed of delivery that echoes the cataclysmic devouring of the world. The second line here seems to me to have a satirical bite to it suggesting that elevated art and abstracts like music will outlive and shed unfavourable light on the crumbling pageant of our lives. The final triplet is beautiful echoing the cadence of Revelation and bringing us full circle to the tuneful voice of stanza .

This poem is a grand but playful ode to music, celebrating arts power to affect us but also imposing a moral framework just as it imposes a universal frame on its stanzas. Music can be both a route to heaven and a herald of destruction

  **ODE ON SOLITUDE BY ALEXANDER POPE**

 This poem was written when Alexander Pope was about twelve years of age. It is his earliest poem which still survives. Surprisingly, it's actually quite good. It is written in ABAB throughout it, like most of Pope's other works. In this writing, Pope is basically saying that he likes being alone. He can do many things, like study, sleep, and have other unmentionable fun. It's as if he longs for it and wishes to spend the rest of his life alone as well as his death. In this instance, the title is quite telling. "Ode On Solitude". He is definitely praising it.

Happy the man whose wish and care

A few paternal acres bound,

Content to breathe his native air

In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,

Whose flocks supply him with attire,

Whose trees in summer yield him shade,

In winter fire.

Bless'd who can unconcern'dly find

Hours, days, and years slide soft away,

In health of body, peace of mind,

Quiet by day;

Sound sleep by night: study and ease

Together mix'd; sweet recreation;

And innocence, which most does please,

With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown,

Thus unlamented let me die;

Steal from the world, and not a stone

Tell where I lie.

**UNIT- V**

**THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

The Deserted Village is a poem by Oliver Goldsmith published in 1770. It is a work of social commentary, and condemns rural depopulation and the pursuit of excessive wealth.

The location of the poem's deserted village is unknown, but the description may have been influenced by Goldsmith's memory of his childhood in rural Ireland, and his travels around England. The poem is written in heroic couplets, and describes the decline of a village and the emigration of many of its residents to America. In the poem, Goldsmith criticises rural depopulation, the moral corruption found in towns, consumerism, enclosure, landscape gardening, avarice, and the pursuit of wealth from international trade. The poem employs, in the words of one critic, "deliberately precise obscurity", and does not reveal the reason why the village has been deserted. The poem was very popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but also provoked critical responses, including from other poets such as George Crabbe. References to the poem, and particularly its ominous "Ill fares the land" warning, have appeared in a number of other contexts.

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smil'd,

And still where many a garden flower grows wild;

There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,

The village preacher's modest mansion rose.

A man he was to all the country dear,

And passing rich with forty pounds a year;

Remote from towns he ran his godly race,

Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his place;

Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,

By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;

Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,

More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.

His house was known to all the vagrant train,

He chid their wanderings, but reliev'd their pain;

The long-remembered beggar was his guest,

Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;

The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud,

Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed;

The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,

Sate by his fire, and talked the night away;

Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,

Shouldered his crutch, and showed how fields were won.

Pleas'd with his guests, the good man learned to glow,

And quite forgot their vices in their woe;

Careless their merits, or their faults to scan,

His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,

And even his failings leaned to Virtue's side;

But in his duty prompt at every call,

He watched and wept, he prayed and felt, for all.

And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,

To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,

He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,

Allur'd to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was layed,

And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismayed,

The reverend champion stood. At his control,

Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;

Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,

And his last faultering accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,

His looks adorn'd the venerable place;

Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,

And fools, who came to scoff, remain'd to pray.

The service past, around the pious man,

With steady zeal each honest rustic ran;

Even children followed with endearing wile,

And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile.

His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed,

Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distressed;

To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,

But all his serious thoughts had rest in Heaven.

As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form

Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,

Tho' round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,

Eternal sunshine settles on its head

 **WILLIAM BLAKE’S ‘THE LAMB’**

 ‘The Lamb’ is one of William Blake’s ‘Songs of Innocence’, and was published in the volume bearing that title in 1789; the equivalent or complementary poem in the later Songs of Experience (1794) is ‘The Tyger’

THE LAMB

Little Lamb who made thee

Dost thou know who made thee

Gave thee life & bid thee feed.

By the stream & o’er the mead;

Gave thee clothing of delight,

Softest clothing wooly bright;

Gave thee such a tender voice,

Making all the vales rejoice!

Little Lamb who made thee?

Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb I’ll tell thee,

Little Lamb I’ll tell thee!

He is called by thy name,

For he calls himself a Lamb:

He is meek & he is mild,

He became a little child:

I a child & thou a lamb,

We are called by his name.

Little Lamb God bless thee.

Little Lamb God bless thee.

It’s almost like a riddle, crossed with a nursery rhyme, crossed with a religious catechism. The poem has a simplicity to it, with its rhyming couplets and tetrameter rhythm. ‘The Lamb’ can be read and enjoyed by children: few words are likely to be unfamiliar, with only a couple (‘meads’ for meadows, ‘vales’ for valleys) being of a more ‘ ‘The Lamb’ reads like one of William Blake’s most accessible and straightforward poems, but closer analysis reveals hidden meanings and symbolism. The solution to this riddle is: ‘The Lamb made the lamb.’ Christ, known as the ‘Lamb of God’, created all living creatures, including the little lamb – for Christ is not only the son of God but God the Creator.

As he reveals in the poem’s second stanza, the speaker of ‘The Lamb’ is a child, in keeping with the childlike innocence found in much of Blake’s Songs of Innocence. This young speaker addresses the lamb, asking if it knows who made it, who gave it life and its woolly coat, and its pleasing bleating ‘voice’ that seems to make the surrounding valleys a happier place.

In summary, the lamb doesn’t answer. Of course it doesn’t. But the speaker answers his own question: ‘I know who made you.’ It was the Lord God, Jesus Christ, who also funnily enough calls himself by the name of ‘Lamb’, Agnus Dei or ‘Lamb of God’. At several points in the New Testament, Jesus is called a lamb: in John John the Baptist, upon seeing Jesus, proclaims, ‘Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.’ The Jesus-as-lamb metaphor returns in Revelation, the final book of the New Testament.

Jesus is associated with the lamb for several reasons: because Jesus’ sacrifice echoed the Jewish concept of the ‘scapegoat’, because of the use of lambs in animal sacrifices, and because of the image of ‘gentle Jesus, meek and mild’ which the New Testament goes some way towards promoting (to counter the smiting and vengeful God, Yahweh, from the Old Testament). This Christian symbolism is integral to a full analysis and understanding of ‘The Lamb’.

But if both the literal lamb addressed in the poem and the ‘Lamb of God’ that is Jesus Christ are associated with each other in the poem, then the poem’s speaker – in being a child – is linked to both: a child is a young person just as a lamb is a young sheep. They are also connected by their innocence. But the word ‘meek’ in the second stanza recalls Jesus’ words from the Sermon on the Mount: ‘Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the Earth’ (Matthew 5:5). The child is exactly the sort of ‘meek’ Christian who might be viewed as an inheritor of the Earth. Speaker, lamb, and Christ are all linked by their innocence – making ‘The Lamb’, among all of Blake’s Songs of Innocence, one of the most innocent of all.

If you’re looking for a good edition of Blake’s work, we recommend the Oxford Selected Poetry (Oxford World’s Classics) . For more classic Romantic poetry, see our discussion of Blake’s ‘The Clod and the Pebble’ and our analysis of the Coleridge poem ‘Kubla Khan’.