

1. Discuss 'Lycidas' as a pastoral Elegy.

1. Introduction

Lycidas is a pastoral Elegy written by Milton. It outdistances all the previous English pastoral Elegies. The word 'pastoral' is derived from the Greek word 'pastor'. The meaning of the word is 'graze'. Hence pastoral poetry deals with the lives of shepherds. It speaks about the doings, joys, and sorrows of the humble dwellers of the countryside. Elegy means a mourning poem. In a pastoral Elegy the poet mourns the death of a friend. The poet in the guise of a shepherd mourns the death of another shepherd. Sir Philip Sydney and Edmund Spenser popularized pastoral poetry in English.

2. Conventional name

In *Lycidas* Milton has followed the pastoral tradition. It is a pastoral Elegy. The very name 'Lycidas' is the conventional name for a shepherd. It frequently occurs in the pastoral Elegies of Theocritus and Bion. The pastoral machinery has been made full use of by the poet. He speaks of himself as a shepherd. He speaks of Edward King, another shepherd. Both of them lived together and grazed their animals together.

*For we were nursed upon the self-same hill
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade and rill*

Further there are charming descriptions of the beauty of the countryside. This is also in line with the pastoral tradition.

3. Cause of death

Next Milton probes into the cause of the death of the fellow shepherd. First he questions the sea-nymphs. He asks them what they were doing at the time of the death of Lycidas. But soon he realizes that the nymphs could have done nothing to help his friend. Every wind was questioned by Triton. So the winds were not responsible for the death of his friend. Even the powerful goddess Calliope could not save her son Orpheus from death. Even if all the goddesses were present, they could not have saved the life of Lycidas. They are also helpless before death.

4. Procession of mourners

Another convention of pastoral Elegy is the procession of mourners. Milton also introduces a procession of mourners in his poem. All nature, the woods, the caves, the echoes mourn the death of Lycidas. Canes and St. Peter are the other mourners. Canes represents the Cambridge University. Canes is the name of the river on which Cambridge is situated. The introduction of St. Peter gives chance for Milton to attack the corrupt contemporary church. Such a criticism is also a part of the usual machinery of pastoral Elegy. One finds such an attack in Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* and in the Elegies of Italian poets.

5. Note of hope and consolation

Milton ends his Elegy on a note of consolation and hope. Orthodox pastoral Elegies end in that way. Though drowned in

ocean Lycidas is not dead in reality. Like the Sun he would rise again. He would live a happier and modern life in some other region. His living place would be heaven. He would be the guardian angel of the place where he drowned. In future he would protect all those who sail that area.

*Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more
For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead.*

6. Conclusion

In spite of the artificial form of a pastoral poetry, 'Lycidas' no doubt is a successful elegy. It has got almost all the features of an elegy. It is, in short, a sincere lament.

POETRY I I. B.A. (ENGLISH)
UNIT III LYCIDAS

SECTION A.

- ① Who was the mother of Orpheus?
- ② What does Apollo remind Milton?
- ③ Why does St. Peter mourn the death of Lycidas?
- ④ What was Milton's father?
- ⑤ Who are the muses?

SECTION B.

- ① How does Milton probe the cause of Edward King's death?
- ② Write about the poetic devices used in Lycidas?
- ③ Write about the second mourner in Lycidas?

SECTION C.

- ① Discuss "Lycidas" as a pastoral Elegy?
- ② Describe how Milton attacks the corrupt clergy in his Lycidas?