

IDHAYA COLLEGE FOR WOMEN, KUMBAKONAM



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POEM: THE VILLAGE PREACHER – OLIVER GOLDSMITH

ABOUT AUTHOR:

Oliver Goldsmith was a writer of such range, such enormous output, and such varying quality that he is difficult to categorize easily. Success came slowly for Goldsmith after years of work as a Grub Street hack, but as his style and reputation as a writer developed, he became a member of the eminent London literary circle, which included men of letters such as Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, and Sir Joshua Reynolds. Many of his poems and essays attracted favorable notice, and with his novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), he achieved a solid reputation as a writer of fiction.

Goldsmith's first play, *A Good-Natured Man* (pr., pb. 1768), failed in its initial production at Covent Garden but went on to become a moderate success. His next play, *She Stoops to Conquer*, earned him greater honor as a playwright. Goldsmith's clear, charming style and his gift for humor and characterization have ensured his enduring popularity in the many genres he practiced.

Although best remembered as a dramatist, Oliver Goldsmith is also known for his work in several other genres. His only novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), the comic and sentimental tale of a village curate's attempts to guide his children through the tribulations of growing up, remains a minor classic. *The Citizen of the World* (1762), a recasting of Charles de Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (1721; *Persian Letters*, 1722), is a collection of fictitious letters, purportedly written by a Chinese philosopher who is living in London, describing English customs and English society from an outsider's point of view.

Goldsmith's poetry was often comic as well (as in his parodies of "An [Elegy](#) on the Death of a Mad Dog," of 1766, and "An Elegy on the Glory of Her Sex: Mrs. Mary Blaize," of 1759), but when his sympathies were touched, he produced some creditable serious poems, the most notable of which is *The Deserted Village* (1770), a protest against the economic and social conditions that were forcing a massive shift of the populace from small villages to cities.

OUT LINE OF THE POEM:

The poem "The Village Preacher" by Oliver Goldsmith narrates the story of an old school master. The poem starts with the depiction of an old, abandoned school. The poet tells that this school used to be a "noisy mansion" and a stern and strict man used to teach there. The teacher was ruthless and every student feared him because he was uncompromising when it came to rules and education. Despite his hard nature, the teacher used to tell jokes to his students that really made them laugh. The villagers used to respect and find him very kind. He was revered among people because he was knowledgeable and people always wondered that how could he be enlightened about so many things. The ending lines of the poem tell us that now the school master does not teach there anymore and the school has become merely a reminder of the old ways of life.

The poet narrates the story of an aged old school teacher. It starts with the description of an old, closed school. The poet remembers that this school was once like a noisy mansion and one strict teacher used to teach there. The teacher was ruthless and every student feared him because he never compromises when it was related to rules and education. Despite his rough nature, the teacher used to tell jokes to his students that really made them laugh. The villagers used to respect him for his kindness. He was regarded by people because he was knowledgeable and kind-hearted.

TEXT

The Village Preacher by *Oliver Goldsmith*

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
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 faltering accents whispered praise.
At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remained 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,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

SUMMARY OF THE POEM

The poem "The Village Schoolmaster" is actually a fragment of a longer poem called "The Deserted Village," which is a description and social commentary on a village that has been abandoned by its residents. The final line of "The Village Schoolmaster" refers to the abandonment of the village when it says: "The very spot where many a time he triumph'd is forgotten." It was first published in 1770. Although the full poem was quite popular, it was also controversial due to its disparagement of the pursuit of excessive wealth and disdain of the corrupting influence of luxury.

"The Village Schoolmaster" opens with a description of the fence and the shrubs that surround the school building. It then zooms in on the schoolmaster. In appearance he is severe and stern. In other words, he looks as if he is a strict disciplinarian. In his expression students can read if the day has been difficult.

The schoolmaster often tells jokes, and the students laugh to please him, whether or not they think that the jokes are funny. If they see him frown they are concerned and whisper to each other about it. However, the poem emphasizes that he is a kind man, and if he is ever severe, it is only because he is so concerned that the students learn their lessons.

The entire village is impressed by the schoolmaster's education. He can not only read and write, but he can also do arithmetic, is skilled at debate, and has an impressive vocabulary. The simple rustic villagers marvel how one person can know so much.

The time during which the schoolmaster was famous as a man of learning is in the past, though, and the school where he taught is forgotten.

The poem is an excerpt from a longer poem by Goldsmith called "The Deserted Village" and conveys the speaker's sentiments about a teacher. The word "village" in the title clearly suggests that the poem is set in a rural area, probably where the speaker lived and was taught by the subject of the poem. In the first two lines, the speaker mentions exactly where the school was located. The fence beside which the school building was situated is described as "straggling," which means that it was dilapidated and probably leaning over. The road leading towards and past the school was lined with flowers, which were "unprofitably gay." The phrase suggests that the flowers that were blooming beautifully were not being admired or appreciated.

In the following couplet the speaker refers to the school building itself, a "noisy mansion" bustling with the activity of teaching and learning. The village teacher, equipped to manage a class, taught his lessons there. The term "master" denotes the respect he enjoyed. The speaker goes on to describe the teacher's character and style of teaching. Each description is rounded off in a rhyming couplet.

The teacher was very strict and had a stern look about him. The speaker states that he "knew him well," which means that he had an in-depth understanding of his teacher and could probably read into his expressions and gestures. This familiarity could also have been the result of the many personal and individual encounters he had had with his educator. The word "truant" implies that the speaker may have been one of those who deliberately missed classes and who had been confronted by the teacher about his misdemeanors.

Further aspects about the teacher's personality indicate that he had an expressive face and that his pupils could easily read his mood as a result. They would, for example, know that a certain ominous look spelled trouble coming, especially for those who had been disobedient. They would

be trembling in anticipation and fear of what was to come. It is clear that the teacher also had a good sense of humor, for "many a joke had he."

THEME OF THE POEM

"The Village Schoolmaster" is a poem by Oliver Goldsmith that reflects an earlier period in British life before the start of the Industrial Revolution. Its main theme is one of nostalgia for villages, which were slowly being displaced as economic centers. The lands previously held as commons were being enclosed to support large scale agriculture and Goldsmith objected to the concentration of wealth and displacement of the peasantry.

The Schoolmaster himself was an extremely important figure in the village. Normally, the schoolmaster, vicar, and possibly a lord of the local manor were the only people in the village with advanced literacy and numeracy skills. The schoolmaster and the vicar would normally help the villagers in any tasks that required literacy and numeracy (thus the abilities to "write and cipher") such as letter-writing, contracts, surveying, etc. Although Goldsmith is gently satirizing the rustics' overestimation of the village schoolmaster, there is a certain nostalgia and affection for him. Even though the village has disappeared, the basic knowledge the schoolmaster imparted remains in the memories of the children he once taught.

IRONY OF THE POEM

Irony exists when what is expected and what occurs are in conflict with each other. As a literary device and a figure of speech, it highlights inconsistencies and is intended to draw attention, often in a humorous or marginally sarcastic way, to situations and actions which contradict their usual meaning. It gives an edge to the work in which it's being used to add depth to the reader's understanding.

"The Village Schoolmaster" is part of a larger poem by Oliver Goldsmith called *The Deserted Village* and read in isolation, it laments a time when the school is viable and not "behind a straggling fence." This sets the tone for the poem and is ironic because a school is a disciplined, organized environment and not one surrounded by an unkempt fence. The schoolmaster, at his peak, ran his "little" school. It sounds somewhat derogatory to call his school "little" and is ironic

that, for him, his school would have been everything, where he was "skill'd to rule." Irony often exists in hyperbole and suggesting that he "rule" overstates the schoolmaster's influence and again contradicts the use of the word "little," revealing the irony.

It seems that the image of the schoolmaster is one of a "severe" man but a man with "many a joke." The irony here is that the children laugh at his jokes and he thinks he is obviously funny but in reality they are scared of him because they laugh with "counterfeited glee."

The overemphasis on his knowledge is ironic and humorous because he is a schoolmaster so really should be knowledgeable anyway but as he is in a village, the suggestion is that the residents are perhaps not quite so learned and are "gazing rustics," simple people. This is almost sarcastic in its tone. The fact that the residents are in awe that "one small head could carry all he knew" continues the tone.

The narrator reminds the reader that, for all the schoolmaster's learning, he is no longer important. It is ironic that, having been such a prominent figure in the village, even standing up to the parson (the reverend), he is now forgotten.

SUBSTANCE OF THE POEM

In "The Village Schoolmaster," Oliver Goldsmith (c.1728-1774) presents a vivid picture of a certain schoolmaster. With each line, the reader peels away the layers of the schoolmaster's identity. Once the setting is described in the first three lines, Goldsmith goes about discussing the character of the schoolmaster himself. In his appearance, he is very severe and stern. The reader would suppose him humorless, except that he likes to tell jokes. When Goldsmith says "the boding tremblers learn'd to trace/The days disasters in his morning face," the reader comes to understand that the schoolmaster does not or cannot hold things back. They are quite literally written on his face. The fact that the students laugh at his jokes "with counterfeited glee" can also indicate the level of fear he inspired in his pupils.

The schoolmaster's learning is beyond question. He can argue with the best of them, and those gathered around marveled at his learning. The last two lines are quite revealing. Up to that point, Goldsmith reveals the schoolmaster as a living being; in the last two lines, he indicates that the schoolmaster was no more. All of his fame has gone and "the spot/Where many a time he

triumph'd is forgot." It is only in the last two lines where Goldsmith uses the present tense. The shift in tense presents a somewhat unexpected result.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VILLAGE SCHOOL MASTER

The Village School master was a man who could easily be identified as an "old stone face", or a man with a strong gaze and expression that inspired the respect and seriousness in students.

A man severe he was, and stern to view,

He imparted discipline and apparently was in charge of placing truant students out of the streets, and he was quite good at it. The students respected him.

Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace

The days disasters in his morning face;

Despite of the stern look and serious authoritative nature, he was very wise, had always a joke to tell, and he actually did have a lighter side that made him more human to others.

At all his jokes, for many a joke had he:

Yet he was kind; or if severe in aught,

The love he bore to learning was in fault.

The village all declar'd how much he knew;

'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too

He apparently will argue a point until turning blue in the face, whether or not he had the right argument. He was also strong in making his point across.

For e'en though vanquish'd he could argue still

While words of learned length and thund'ring sound

Amazed the gazing rustics rang'd around;

However, we know that the passage was an elegy to the man, who was already forgotten in time, and this poem was a way to bring his uniqueness back to life again.

THE MOST REMARKABLE THINGS ABOUT THE SCHOOL MASTER

The most remarkable thing about the village schoolmaster is the amount of knowledge he has. He is very smart. The author lets us know this by describing all the things he can do:

The village all declar'd how much he knew;
'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too:
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
And e'en the story ran that he could gauge

The schoolmaster could write and do arithmetic, of course, but he also knew how to measure land (which would have been very important in his day) and figure out the tides (also important). To gauge means to do even more difficult calculations.

The poet goes on to tell us that he was very good at arguing because “While words of learned length and thund'ring sound Amazed the gazing rustics rang'd around.” It isn't just that he can keep arguing for a very long time, it is how he argues—with long words that amaze the farmers standing around him.

The poet continues with “And still they gaz'd and still the wonder grew, That one small head could carry all he knew.” In case the reader did not understand by what was said earlier, the poet reminds us one last time that the schoolmaster may have had a small head, but he had great knowledge.

POEM: THE LAMB - WILLIAM BLAKE

William Blake (28 November 1757 – 12 August 1827) was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Largely unrecognised during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in the history of the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. What he called his prophetic works

were said by 20th-century critic Northrop Frye to form "what is in proportion to its merits the least read body of poetry in the English language". His visual artistry led 21st-century critic Jonathan Jones to proclaim him "far and away the greatest artist Britain has ever produced". In 2002, Blake was placed at number 38 in the BBC's poll of the 100 Greatest Britons. While he lived in London his entire life, except for three years spent in Felpham, he produced a diverse and symbolically rich *œuvre*, which embraced the imagination as "the body of God" or "human existence itself".

Although Blake was considered mad by contemporaries for his idiosyncratic views, he is held in high regard by later critics for his expressiveness and creativity, and for the philosophical and mystical undercurrents within his work. His paintings and poetry have been characterised as part of the Romantic movement and as "Pre-Romantic". A committed Christian who was hostile to the Church of England (indeed, to almost all forms of organised religion), Blake was influenced by the ideals and ambitions of the French and American Revolutions. Though later he rejected many of these political beliefs, he maintained an amiable relationship with the political activist Thomas Paine; he was also influenced by thinkers such as Emanuel Swedenborg. Despite these known influences, the singularity of Blake's work makes him difficult to classify. The 19th-century scholar William Michael Rossetti characterised him as a "glorious luminary", and "a man not forestalled by predecessors, nor to be classed with contemporaries, nor to be replaced by known or readily surmisable successors".

Blake's marriage to Catherine was close and devoted until his death. Blake taught Catherine to write, and she helped him colour his printed poems. Gilchrist refers to "stormy times" in the early years of the marriage. Some biographers have suggested that Blake tried to bring a concubine into the marriage bed in accordance with the beliefs of the more radical branches of the Swedenborgian Society, but other scholars have dismissed these theories as conjecture. In his Dictionary, Samuel Foster Damon suggests that Catherine may have had a stillborn daughter for which *The Book of Thel* is an elegy. That is how he rationalizes the Book's unusual ending, but notes that he is speculating.

OUTLINE STORY OF THE POEM

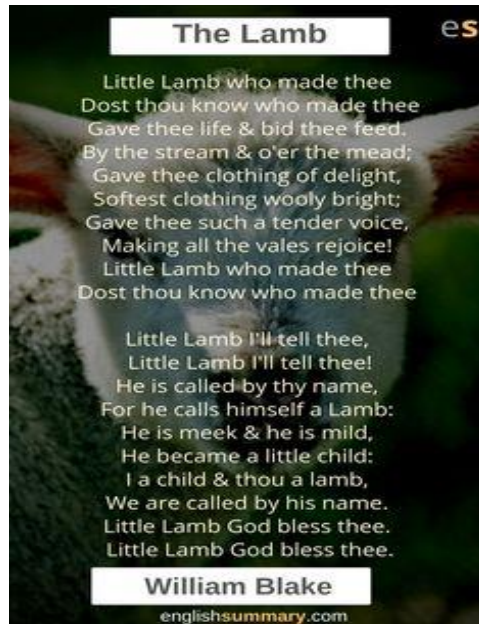
The lamb in the poem "The Lamb" by William Blake is represented as a weak and innocent child. In real life, Lambs are the type of animals used in livestock. Their wool is stripped of them at most, twice a year. This process is called shearing. The reason they can't keep the wool on them is

because they are weak and can't fight back for themselves. Shearing lambs can also cause injury or cuts because of the tools humans use to take it off. In the first stanza, Blake is asking who is the creator of the lamb. He adds how the creator gave life and food to the lamb. The food consists of a stream and a meadow. In addition, Blake talks about the soft, wool and gentle voice of the lamb. This can go back to the representation of the lamb, talked about in the beginning of the paragraph. The lamb has many gentle and childlike characteristics.

When someone is a baby, their skin is very soft and very gentle. This is because they haven't fully developed and need to be carefully taken care of with the right resources to eat. In the second stanza, Blake answers the question he had asked the lamb in the first stanza. The creator of the lamb is Lord Jesus Christ. In the Christian Gospels, Jesus is compared to a lamb because of the way he surrendered to God's will. Also, for his gentle treatment of sinful humans. He goes weakly to be sacrificed on behalf of humanity.

Later, the author calls himself a child and the lamb a lamb. So from a bigger perspective, child, real lamb, and Jesus Christ in the poem can be viewed as lambs and they can also be seen as children. This is the result of them doing innocent or weak behaving actions. Which can be inferred that they are children of God. Overall, Blake seems to have instructed the lovable, weak, and innocent farm animal on the basis of the Christian religion.

TEXT



SUMMARY OF THE POEM

The speaker directly addresses a lamb, asking it if it knows who created it, who gave it life and invited it to eat. The lamb is then described in its natural environment, frolicking beside streams and running through fields. Whoever made the lamb also gave it its coat, which is made out of soft white wool. The lamb's gentle noises, according to the speaker, make the surrounding valleys happy. The speaker then asks again: Who made the lamb?

The poem begins with the question, "Little Lamb, who made thee?" The speaker, a child, asks the lamb about its origins: how it came into being, how it acquired its particular manner of feeding, its "clothing" of wool, its "tender voice." In the next stanza, the speaker attempts a riddling answer to his own question: the lamb was made by one who "calls himself a Lamb," one who resembles in his gentleness both the child and the lamb. The poem ends with the child bestowing a blessing on the lamb.

The lamb of course symbolizes Jesus. The traditional image of Jesus as a lamb underscores the Christian values of gentleness, meekness, and peace. The image of the child is also associated with Jesus: in the Gospel, Jesus displays a special solicitude for children, and the Bible's depiction of Jesus in his childhood shows him as guileless and vulnerable. These are also the characteristics from which the child-speaker approaches the ideas of nature and of God. This poem, like many of the Songs of Innocence, accepts what Blake saw as the more positive aspects of conventional

Christian belief. But it does not provide a completely adequate doctrine, because it fails to account for the presence of suffering and evil in the world.

THEME OF THE POEM

Blake famously believed that humans are born with everything they need to live lives of joy, freedom, and closeness with God. By making the speaker in this poem a child, Blake argues that people need to hold onto the values childhood represents—not unlearn and reject them through the fears and worries of adulthood. All of the poem's joyful appreciation of the lamb, nature, and God is tied to the speaker's childhood perspective. Childhood, then, is not a state of ignorance, but one of innate understanding.

In the first stanza, the child worships the lamb. The child feels drawn to the small creature, perhaps sensing in the lamb a kind of symbol of himself: innocent, vulnerable, and joyful. The child's ability to appreciate and understand the lamb brings up the question of whether this is something that adults can do in the same way. Adulthood, with all its troubles, can keep people from appreciating the world. In contrast, the child speaker hasn't yet had to encounter the perils of the adult world and is therefore able to look at the "little lamb" in this uncomplicated light. But Blake suggests that this is not a naïve perspective. Rather, it's a kind of enlightenment. The second stanza makes this point clearer.

Though the child expresses wonder at the lamb's existence, the child is nonetheless able to intuitively understand "who made" the lamb. That is, the child instinctively understands that the lamb is an expression of God's design and that the child, too, is a part of this design. The child refers to Jesus, pointing out that he, the savior of humankind was *also* born into the world with all the innocence, vulnerability, and curiosity of a child. Jesus was God himself, showing that childhood is, in fact, something sacred. To underline this link between the lamb, the child, and God, the speaker states that "we are called by his name." That is, they are unified because they are all a part of God.

Childhood, then, is not presented as something to grow out of in the way that people often think of it now. Instead, it is an enlightened way of seeing the world that the poem implores its readers to retain in doing so, it argues, they will see the joy and beauty that surround them.

GOD AND CREATION

“The Lamb” is a religious poem that marvels at the wonders of God’s creation. In the poem, a child addresses a lamb, wondering how it came to exist, before affirming that all existence comes from God. In the humble, gentle figure of the lamb, the speaker sees the beautiful evidence of God’s work. Furthermore, the lamb is not just made by God—it’s an *expression* of God, as is the speaker. Through the example of the lamb, the speaker suggests that the entire world is in fact an expression of God.

The poem is directly addressed to the lamb. Though the lamb of course cannot respond, its very existence is answer enough to the question of “who made” it. The speaker is clearly awed by the lamb. Though the Christian God is often associated with power and might—and even, at times, violence—the lamb is none of these things. It is small, fragile, and innocent. By existing, it proves the delicate beauty of God’s creation, which is why it makes the speaker so joyful.

The poem **rhetorically** asks, “who made thee,” but everything that follows is presented as evidence that God is the maker. The first stanza depicts the lamb in its natural habitat, a beautiful pastoral scene in which the lamb is free to run around. All that the lamb needs is provided for it, making the lamb a symbol of freedom and uncomplicated joy. This, argues the poem, is God’s intention for all His creatures: that they live happy, joyful lives.

NATURE

The poem presents an idyllic pastoral scene, painting a vivid picture of the lamb frolicking in its countryside environment. The urban world is notable for its absence. Implicitly, then, the poem seeks to highlight the beauty of nature *and* to portray it as a powerful source of happiness and freedom.

The lamb itself is one part of nature, but it’s also a symbol of the freedom and happiness associated with the natural world more generally, which the poem implies can’t be found in the modern urban environment. The first stanza expresses this deep connection between nature and joy. The lamb lives among streams and meadows. These are places where nature is allowed to

grow, and they in turn give the lamb a beautiful and free environment to live in. That's why the lamb's coat isn't just "clothing," but "clothing of delight." Nature allows the lamb to be fully itself, without restriction. That idea is also behind the association of the lamb's coat with "brightness" this is a positive environment without any of the misery of the city (the kind that can be found in Blake's famous poem "**London**").

The lamb in turn has a positive effect on its natural environment its "tender voice" makes the "vales" (valleys) "rejoice." The lamb and nature, then, are in symbiosis a balanced and nurturing relationship that benefits them both. This balance, in turn, makes the speaker happy and joyful. In the lamb's freedom and nature's beauty, the child speaker sees an idyllic way of life. The child feels close to the lamb and its environment, implying that this is an instinctive relationship between humans and nature too. That is, it's the natural world that makes people joyful and free not the restrictive, dangerous city.

Implicitly, then, the poem calls on its readers to value the relationship between humanity and nature. It asks its readers to nourish and nurture that relationship in the same way that the unspoiled natural environment allows the lamb to live happily.