

Paper - 2
May 31st

THE COLLAR

The story of human life has always been a struggle between faith and doubt, allegiance and disobedience, hope and despair. Swinging as a pendulum between these two extremes, man finally reaches his ultimate destination. Those weaker in spirit get overawed by the struggle. The stronger riding their faith and belief ultimately choose the righteous path for they always hear the calling of God when he addresses them as 'child'; and they responded to it by reciprocating 'My Lord'.

"The Collar" is typically Metaphysical in spirit as George Herbert is trying to unravel the mystery and the connection, between a life led in a pious and just manner and the resultant after life as a consequence to it.

The basic question of the existence of life after death has been the center point of discussion is almost every school of philosophical and religious thought. It is generally perceived that one who leads a chaste and religious life goes to heaven after death, which means—accepting the yoke of God in life. As Mathew says,

"My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The poet accepted it gleefully throughout his life by living a chaste and pious life thus bearing the light burden. An unflinching faith God guided as a beacon throughout his tumultuous life, but being a mortal, a progeny of Adam but banished to earth from The Garden of Eden; it is quite natural that doubt arose in his mind.

"What? Shall I ever sigh and pine?"

The life that the poet is leading raises a question in his mind.

There is a tug of war going on within him. His faith reassures him that his belief in God and his willingness to die for his cause will take him to heaven after death; but his mind raises a doubt.

"Have I know harvest but a thorn"

Whatever he has done throughout his life is it sufficient? He deliberately shunned all the objects of pleasure and indulgence, which he refers to as "wine and corn", still he wonders whether that is sufficient.

"Is the years only lost to me?"

Have I no bayes to crown it?

No flowers, no garlands gay? all blasted?

All wasted?"

It is not so, there is a harvest and he has hands to take it. He can, if he feels like, recover all the years lost to sighing by enjoying himself to the fullest. There is no point being ensnared in a cage. He braves himself and comes out of the dispute.

"Leave thy cold dispute
of what it is fit, and not forsake thy cage
Thy rope of sands,
Which petty thoughts have made --"

But soon his faith reaffirms 'I will abroad,
and his Captains must realise this.

"He that forbears
To suit and serve his need
Deserves his load."

His confidence arising out of his austerity his belief in God and his adherence to the Cause of humanity makes him capable of hearing God's voice.

"Me thought I heard one calling, child
And I reply'd My lord."

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Piers the Plowman

'Piers the Plowman', makes Langland the other great poet of the 14th century, apart from Chaucer. To use Eliot's words, like Chaucer, Langland was also 'writing his time'. Langland vividly reveals all the facts of the life, of the conflicts of 14th century England - its aspirations and hopes, defeats and agonies, social habits and sentiments, religious corruption and conflicting opinions of the time.

Fourteenth century was an age of transition, marking the end of medievalism and the birth of Modern age. The old feudal pattern of the society was disintegrating, and new forces were at work. The final victory in the 'Hundred Years War' emboldened the spirits of the English people and whetted their appetite for other social and ecclesiastical reforms. Ironically, the church had become the most fertile breeding ground for those very things which it sought to eradicate. We find an echo of the same sentiments in Canterbury Tales too, when Chaucer describes the Bishops, Friars, the Monks and the Pardoners. As awareness of the prevailing malady, precedes the desire of reformation or eradication of the same, Langland's contribution to the cause becomes significant.

The Poem, a mix of theological allegory and social satire, concerns the narrator/dreamer's quest for the true Christian life in the context of medieval Catholicism. This journey takes place within a series of dream-visions; the dreamer sees, among other things, the allegorical characters Dowel ("Do-Well"), Dobet ("Do-Better"), and Dobest ("Do-best"). The poem is divided into Passus ('steps').

(As spokesman of his age)

Literature bears the impression of and is born out of the age to which it belongs. T.S. Eliot, recoiling from the chilling contact with the modern materialism, depicts the disillusionment of the modern man. Similarly, 'Piers the Plowman' holds up the mirror to the 14th century England. Langland reveals the Semi-Civilized Society of the 14th Century England. Contemporary political and social events, like the terrible pestilence of 1348-49, 1361-62 and 1369, the violent tempest of 1399 and dark famine of 1370, all find a mention, which he attributes to the sins and evil of the age. With an astonishing boldness Langland also refers to the political affairs. The Condition of the Court before Edward III is allegorically revealed in the fable of rats wishing to be the Cat.

'Piers the Plowman' also provides us with a vivid picture of the political and social institutions of the time. The Church had degenerated and was beset with corruption. The Church officials lacked the spiritual zeal and religious fervour, and lived a godless and shamefully worldly life. Langland not only refuses to accept Pope as the spiritual descendant of St. Peter, he further goes on to denounce the corrupt clergies.

He also talks about the vices of the age. Not only he is contemptuous of beggars, the bakers and the merchants are also not spared. Pilgrimages had become a fashion with singing and merry making becoming the main activity in it.

Langland is very severe on lawyers too. Like the pardoner in Chaucer's prologue, they are the lost souls in 'Piers the Plowman'. The rampant bribery, the marriage system, which degenerated into marrying girls, "for wealth of his goodis", not for love. Be it the ignorant masses or the opulence of the rich, everything was under the scanner. 'Piers the Plowman' presents a full and complete picture of the contemporary society, fully justifying Dr. Whittekar's observation that 'The Author of these visions was an observer and reflector of no common powers.'

As a Satirist

The 14th century was essentially an age of transition and unrest, troubled by social ~~distress~~ disorders, political upheavals and religious discontentment. With the feudal pattern of the society cracking, the age was sadly 'out of its joints'. ~~while~~ while Chaucer could wink at the corruption ridden society, Langland was filled with intense hatred and righteous indignation, and the result was the remarkable poem, 'Piers the Plowman'. In it Langland not only satirically points out the evils which afflict the contemporary society, he also suggests the way to honest and true life. His satirical whiplash spares none, be it the Pope, the church, clergy or the Pardoner. He denounces them vehemently for exploiting the ignorance of the simple folk. Langland's Puritan soul is filled with intense hatred and indignant anger - the same anger which Milton shows when speaking of 'the sons of Belial'. He is a constructive satirist with a positive approach to the problem of life.

Le Morte D'Arthur

"Le Morte D'Arthur" is a reworking of existing tales by Sir Thomas Malory, about the legendary King Arthur, ^{his wife} Guinevere, ~~Lancelot~~ Merlin and Lancelot, Merlin, and the knights of Round Table. Malory interpreted existing French and English stories about these figures and adds original material (eg; the Gareth story). Published in 1485, by William Caxton, ~~and~~ it is today one of the best known works of Arthurian literature in English.

Book I lays the foundation for the whole of 'Le Morte d'Arthur's' epic tale by introducing the main events which laid to Arthur's coronation, victory of over his enemies and the formation of the Round table. Written as prose, it looks like a history of events. The setting is a pseudo-realistic medieval England, where fictitious kings and knights rule the country through the feudal system. Malory's aim behind writing this was to bolster the nationalistic identity of his English reading public.

King Arthur's low birth is an impediment towards loyalty. By leaving him with Sir Ector, Merlin created hurdles that ~~are~~ Arthur would have to overcome. He would have to prove his worth, which he did by winning many battles before the truth of his parentage validates his rule. These hurdles teach Arthur the virtue's important to

rule and ~~attained~~ ultimately lead to the creation of the novel and virtuous Round Table.

To the feudal system the right to rule was passed from father to next of kin. The death of a seemingly childless noble sparked a contest between the greedy neighbours, by defeating them Arthur created peace within the nation and set the precedent for his later reign and mercy, justice and chivalry of the Round Table.

During his ~~later~~ ^{letter} against Rome, Arthur upheaved his own cord by besieging towns, thus protecting the women and children and avoiding large death toll, as a host to employ the tactics of his enemies who ravished the land and its people with no regard for fairness. Thus Arthur displays the virtues that he learnt.

The introduction of magic through Merlin in the Book I serves a literary function. Through it, Merlin not only oversees the course of events but also plots out the eventual happening within the story. Thus employing a type of fate and prophecy. It helps in stabilizing that greatness is pre-ordained and needs only a great man to grasp it. The symbol of Excalibur reflects the union of personal strength and magic.

Forewarning as written messages are also a frequent motif. The following words were inscribed on the sword's hilt, whose puller out this sword of this stone and anvil is rightwise king born of ~~the~~ ^{all} England.

Written warning or mysterious inscription are used within the text not only plot device but also as their own motif. For example; the written warning ~~over~~ above King Solomon's boat during the quest for the sangreal and then the words inscribed on the tomb of the dragon which foretells of Galahad's destiny both move the plot along and foreshadow coming events.

The motive of violence is also apparent from the very beginning of the epic. Kings Ban and Bers ride into battle soaked in the blood of their enemies. Arthur uses Excalibur to hack away at opposing forces; and King Lot kills any man who desert his army. It is a violent world and Malory engages in it without any overt commentary on the violence.

The narration of *le Morte D'Arthur* written in prose looks like it were a history and as if the characters had all ~~lived~~ ^{lived} in England at sometime. The structure is disjointed giving credence to the idea that

Malory may not have written *le Morte D'Arthur* as one work but a collection of tales, with deliberate attempt to interconnect them. For instance, Book I ~~and~~ end with the introduction of Sir Balin le Savage, who is the major character of Book II.

Malory reestablish the Arthurian legend in tune with the time. The need of the hour was a Chivalrous and strong King capable enough of bringing the warring sects together. The lines from the seventh inscription make it evident.

~~"Whoso pulleth out this sword of
this stone and anvil is rightwise
King born of all England."~~

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this stone and anvil is rightwise
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Paradise Lost

Q. Evaluate the character of Satan as the hero of Paradise Lost?

OR →

Is it proper to say that Milton was of the devil's party without knowing it?

OR →

Attempt a brief character sketch of Satan as he is presented in Book I of Paradise Lost.

Ans :— Milton's Paradise Lost is an epic both in terms of its thematic concern and its treatment. In the very openings of the epic, he outlines his grand project which is to "justify the ways of God to men". The epic is evidently based on the Biblical story of the fall of man from the grace of God. Naturally, the main characters in this epic are Adam and Eve and Satan. In Book I, the character of the Satan is delineated on a grand scale. Satan had revolted against God challenging his authority but is adequately banquished. He along with all those angels who sided with him are "hurled down" to the burning flame of the hell. However, the most striking thing is that Satan appears undaunted, and least affected by his fatal ~~fatal~~ defeat.

In Book I, Satan is illustrated with the most striking images in whatever he says or does,

he is gigantic, uneasy and disturbed because of his hurt ego but he still appears dazzling in his fatal splendour. Another important aspect of his character is his oratory and his indomitable will. His defeat has not derided his spirit and he musters all his strength to reorganize his army of the fellow fallen angels. Despite all horrors of suffering and the prospect of an eternal clamour, Satan manages to deliver an inspiring and emotionally charged speech before the fallen angels to motivate them. The following lines reveal his indomitable will and his capacity for action and suffering alike.

lost

"All is not ~~lost~~^{lost}; the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge immortal hate,
And Courage never to submit or yield,
And what else ~~is~~ not to be overcome."

The power that Satan possesses appears as matchless as the strength of his mind. His capacity to endure is also extraordinary. As a leader too, he is superb because he can psychologically motivate his colleagues to reunite against their common cause despite all adversities.

Satan's stature also seems to be enhanced because he dares to challenge God himself. Owing to such a portrayal of Satan, some critics, particularly romantic ones, expressed the view that Milton

was of the devil's party without knowing it. Blake and Shelly believed that Milton attributed certain grand qualities to Satan which are worthy of highest admiration. These romantic critics believe that Milton, himself a Puritan poet, sought freedom from the king and Roman Catholic church. It is this very speed of revolt that is the defining feature of Satan's character. However, such an evaluation of Satan's character is not valid because it goes against the very moral and religious scheme of the epic.

The misinterpretation of Satan's character relates to our natural human tendency to romanticize the rebel. Moreover, in his speech, Satan makes use of highly emotive words such as oppression, liberty and freedom, which again appeal to our romantic instinct. But in order to properly evaluate Satan, we must not forget the nature of his rebellion and his act of treachery against innocent creatures like Adam and Eve. Satan lacks the most valuable Christian virtue, i.e., ~~human~~ humility. His heroism is based on unworthy aims and aspirations. He certainly exhibits tremendous energy but this energy comes from his perverse desire for revenge.

His "injured merit" is nothing but his own hurt egoism. Infact, Satan doesnot symbolize Christian virtues and on closer analysis appears quite the opposite of the selfless sacrificing nature of Jesus Christ. Finally, it is natural to ~~be~~ ^{feel} impressed by the attractive qualities of Satan because evil is always tempting. Milton ~~has~~ wishes to present evil in all its grandeur, while making Satan an adequate foil to god.

Paper 1

Macbeth

Q. Macbeth is a tragedy of ambition. Discuss.
OR,

Discuss with suitable example from the text
Macbeth as a Renaissance tragedy.
OR,

Macbeth is more a victim of the witches and his wife than of his own tragic flaw.

Ans :- Shakespeare's "Macbeth" contains all the essential ingredients of a Renaissance tragedy. The Protagonist (main character) is a man of eminence, who, on account of his ambition, succumbs to the unbridled ambition following the three witches prophecy. He despite all his moral scruples is led to a condition when he accepts her suggestion. He commits the most heinous crime when he kills the king. His ambition blinds his sensitivity and blurs his ability to discriminate between the good and the evil. Finally, he is destroyed through the influence of the fatal flaw of his ambition and his pride.

In the beginning of the play, Macbeth is represented as a good soldier. He has performed heroically in the battle and has crushed successfully the rebellion against the monarchy. The king, on knowing the news appreciates Macbeth and rewards him profusely. On his way back from

the battlefield, Macbeth happens to meet three witches who make prophecy about him. When he learns from them that he is the future king, his mind becomes greatly disturbed. The excitement and the "strange intelligence" begins to germinate and the latent ambition in his mind. Specifically, after the first two prophecies become true, he is completely overpowered by his ambition a spirit in his personality becomes quite distinct. This spirit is obviously caused by the great pull of moral sense on the one hand and irresistible desire to become king:

"Why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair."

Macbeth has the ambition to become king and for that he has to kill Duncan. However, it is important to note that he does not easily surrender to his temptation. We find him in a tug of war with his conscience. As he says to himself:

"Stars hide your fires
Let not light see my black and deep desires."

He demonstrates his good sense when he comments on the prospect of becoming the king; "Present fears are less than horrible imagines". This inner conflict in the mind of Macbeth is significant as it suggests that he is not a born criminal. At the same time, it adds to the irony of situation when he kills

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Duncan. It is indeed an irony that Macbeth on the insistence of his wife decides to perform an act that cause his degeneration beyond redemption. At the precise moment of committing the murder of King Duncan, Macbeth once again is found hesitant and exhibits moral scruples. However, the insinuation of him and he kills the king who is also a guest taking rest in the house. In this way the murder is not only a violation of the law. It is also a sinful and inhuman act. Though critics have tried to exonerate Macbeth from all his sinfulness, putting the blame on his wife. However, Macbeth cannot escape from the responsibilities of committing the crime. The real nature of Macbeth comes out as soon as he murders the king and experiences the psychological effects of his crime. He gradually gets alienated from the nature and the society. He faces the ordeal of the absence of the divine grace. In order to project his innocence and also to protect his kingship, he goes on committing murder after murder. He does not learn anything from the prick of the conscience. On the contrary, he seeks to affirm his authority in a wrong way. However, his authority is snubbed by the intervention of Banquo's ghost.

In the meanwhile lady Macbeth has already withdrawn from the world of realities and

retreats to her own confined self. Macbeth also undergoes a total transformation of personality. He becomes dependent on the witches to find out what he ought to do. He emerges as a tyrannical and suspicious ruler. He appears to be hardened criminal when he gets the wife and the child of Macduff killed. All these acts of killing cannot just be ascribed to mere impact of the prophecy of the witches. At this stage A.C. Bradley views becomes relevant that in a Shakespearean tragedy that character is a destiny. A character like Macbeth is himself responsible for his downfall.

In the tragic fall of Macbeth is contained the catharsis of pity and fear." The character of Macbeth qualifies Aristotle's criteria of a tragic hero; he gets vanished from the scene having behind some greater understanding of life.

"Life ... is a ~~rough~~ tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury."