Chapter 5.

An appraisal of the treatment of the common man by the Romantics.

An estimation of the treatment of the common man by other poets of the age of Wordsworth is presumably indispensable for an all-comprehensive idea of the prevailing conception of the common man vis-a-vis the especiality of Wordsworthian treatment thereof. The attitude towards the common man is, indeed, new in as much as it seeks to bring the poets back to the bosom of the common man to depict the essential and elemental qualities of life and the great Romantics have indulged in the simplicities and realities of everyday life by unveiling its mystery for their satisfaction. Definite it is that the Romantics have found the materials of poetry in the events of the Middle ages, and Greek art has greatly influenced them. Nature, which had an all-pervasive and benign influence on all the Romantic poets, has always been the creed of their poetry. But this could not satisfy their violent passion for creation and the field of Romanticism having been vast and wide the Romantics have the occasion not only to explore the inanimate objects and to delight in perception of ecstasy in abstract art far from realities but they have also discovered a new meaning in the conditions and realities of the life of the ordinary people. It is obviously an act of imaginative and intellectual realisation and the Romantic poets have transcendentalised the essential conditions of the life of the plain people by their imaginative brilliance and romantic sensibility. Among the Romantics Wordsworth, Blake
and Burns have stood as chief exponents of the causes of the common people. There are other Romantics who also have advocated the causes of the people of commonalty but these three Romantics stand above their comppeers with their treatment of the common man in divergent directions because they are primarily the poets of man. So, Wordsworth with his spirit of compassion, Blake with his mysticism and idealism, and Burns with his sense of unsophistication have heightened the sensibility of imagination which has found its manifestation and ultimate culmination in their treatment and exultation of the common man. Their treatment is coherent but contradictory, and contains in itself an intellectual attempt to satisfy their passion for idealism. The process of the treatment is dialectic, and involves the spirit of intellectual curiosity, which is not only aesthetic but also realistic because it explores the instinct of elemental simplicities of life and emphasises the worth and dignity of man as man by dwelling upon the transcendentalism of the real conditions of man. The treatment of the common man by these Romantics is the consequence of no one cause, but it is the outcome of the humanitarian attitudes of the poets. Their psychic affinities with the ordinary and plain-living people, comprehensive vision into the inner soul of the conditions of life of the common people and romantic inspiration to uphold their causes within the socio-economic framework are factors which are congenial for, and contributory to, this sort of sagacious outlook. In addition to this, the complexities and intricacies of civilisation and its related phenomena have greatly perturbed their compassionate minds and these Romantics
have recourse to the glorification of the man of the commonest origin as a reaction against the evils of the society which sprang from civilisation. The reaction is a sort of revolution in the sphere of literature because it has turned them towards speculation and inquisitiveness which, as an inevitable corollary, have culminated in assertion of virtue in the most ordinary form of life and also in individuals who lead such life, and so they have made themselves concerned with man of this position because an individual contains in himself the seeds of distinction and impressiveness which he is apt to fail to get possession of while in a state of conglomeration. So, an individual serves as an escape from the gloom and illusion of sophistication with the reality which is the subject-matter of proof and perception simultaneously, and stands as a new image of man which these poets have sought to apprehend in his form either by idealising or by realising him in his entirety as a special entity. Accordingly, Blake excels in spiritualising man as 'The Universal Man', the child of God and Burns sees 'mankind in a new phasls' by introducing dignity and a sense of perception into his creation without any artificiality.

Now, Blake is a visionary as well as a poet and believes, alike Pope, in the idea that the proper study of mankind is man. But Blakean belief is not the product of abstract reason but springs from imagination acting upon either sensation or memory or on both. So Blake's man is the personalisation of both matter and spirit — a dichotomy of corporeality and spirituality. He perceives man as an instinctive unit which achieves an imaginative reality and ultimately a spiritual liberty through a process of
transformation. So, man, according to Blake, is a harmonious combination of instinct and imagination. 'Infant Joy' is the supreme achievement of the instinctual sphere of life, and man enters the realm of eternity as a consequence of attainment of spirituality. Says Blake categorically:

'I have no name --
I am but two days old'.
What shall I call thee?
'I happy am,
Joy is my name'.
Sweet joy befall thee /

Pretty Joy /
Sweet Joy, but two days old --
Sweet Joy I call thee.'
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while --
Sweet Joy befall thee.


And again, 'the children of the elemental world' live 'in harmony' with towns, villages, temples, tents, sheep-folds, pastures' in 'Paradise stretched in the expanse' by entering the realm of 'eternity' through imagination.

So, Blake is a 'revolutionary prophet' and his conception of the common man is accordingly revolutionary. He perceives
man as 'a phantom of the earth' and 'a natural organ' susceptible to physical senses: the senses of joys and sorrows, pleasures and anxieties of life. But despite this testification to the materialism of the world he deviates from the conventional conception as his primary concern does not centre round the essential conditions of his physical life but the analysis of the soul. The condition of life pertaining to the world can be analysed, the elemental causes to these conditions can be assessed and the process for regularisation can be visualised, but soul remains far above all sorts of speculative measures. It can only be mystically sensed and Blake strives to sense it. His main object is "to portray the soul, not subjectively through the images of nature, but objectively through the images of his own imagination". (1) So the main theme of Blake's conception of the common man is the revelation of 'the nature of the soul'. He excels other poets in this regard because he considers the soul as "the dynamic life of the world, and the world itself to be a reflection, or shadow, of the reality which had its true existence in the soul". (2) Now, the question which is pertinent to this occasion arises as to why Blake has pressed to the highest degree the aim of delineation of 'the nature of the soul'. The answer to the question is quite clear and far above any ambiguity. Blake does possess a

(1) : An Introduction to the Study of Blake.
by Max Plowman.
London : Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.
1967.
p. 19.

(2) : ibid.
p. 43.
distinct faith in the spiritual aspect of life, and thinks that material existence is of no real value, because he craves for the salvation of the soul of man as the primal goal. So Blake not only projects the idea of salvation but also suggests a definite process for its attainment. He thinks that every individual has a spiritual identity which he has to achieve through the process of transformation from the stage of innocence to imagination through experience. The transformation not only affords him the opportunity to present himself as an integrated unit of the phenomenal world but also enables him to comprehend the pains of self-consciousness to revive spiritual consciousness and thus to enter the realm of salvation. So the poet's conception of the common man develops for the revelation of the fall of man and his ultimate restoration in establishment of the relation with God as the poet thinks that "man was encompassed about by God: that from the Fall he had shut himself up in the limitation of his five senses, but that Imagination, which was the divine expression of God, surrounded man like the invisible air, even waiting for the act of faith whereby man cast himself upon the Divine Imagination and thus released himself from the bonds of mortality". (3)

Now, the common man of Blake are to be analysed categorically in reference to this perspective for an idea and development of his thoughts. The field of the poet's creation is not fixed,

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(3) : ibid. p. 104.
but varied and he has created human figures of divergent colours and appearances. The pastoral sketches of the poet echo Shakespeare and the genial style of Goldsmith, the satirical figures emit the essence of intellectualism and makes him second only to Swift in this respect, and the archetypal and epic creations of Blake remind us of Dante and Milton, but nowhere the poet is so much triumphant and exultant as in the delineation of the pictures of simple and ordinary men and innocent children. The poet's imaginative capability finds its culmination in the celebration of the characters of shepherds and the like and children for their spiritual emancipation. So Blake's idea of the common man emerges from vision. He is not a prophet of an eternal type, nor is he a religious humanist, but he has anatomised human imagination against the background of his poetic conviction correspondent with the action of God and the re-action of man.

To him:

"Man can have no idea of any thing greater than Man, as a cup cannot contain more than its capaciousness. But God is a man, not because he is so perceiv'd by man, but because he is the creator of Man". (4)

So Blake's man is 'an indivisible unit' which derives purity and perfection through the process of transformation of 'natural reality' into spiritual joy through innocence. The poet thinks that man with the simplicities and innocence of mind creates life which is not only complete with the 'existential contraries',

but also it a definite end in itself. "The joy and grief of this existence are woven too fine; the course kept by the just man is planted, and becomes a natural custom, or falls into vegetative existence". (5) His vision is startling and associated with the spirit of attainment of the state of repose and ultimate comfort in the earthly abode through innocence. Innocence, according to Blake, is not ignorance or want of knowledge, but it means 'harmlessness'. Hence, it tends to signify the sense of 'freedom from sin' and 'guiltlessness'. The poem, Song by an Old Shepherd, expresses an idea of transformation of the fear of material sufferings into calm endurance through the benign influence of innocence. The concept of innocence appears as a 'winter's gown' to save the shepherd from natural inclemency, and thus enables him to 'abide life's pelting storm'. The emergence of innocence is primarily problematic, but it strengthens the heart of the shepherd against the elementary conditions of experience in life by providing him with 'Virtue' and 'Truth' as constant companions, and helps him to reconcile to the worldly adversities. The shepherd of humble origin thus achieves distinction of character for the categorical preference of mental vitality to ephemeral pleasures because the soul is warmed up against experience through the state of innocence and, to enter the realm of finality, he exclaims:

(5) : Blake's Apocalypse
(IA Study in Poetic Argument,) Harold Bloom.
London: 'Victor Gollancz Ltd.
1963. p. 75.
Blow, boisterous wind; stern winter, frown -
Innocence is a winter's gown;
So clad, we 'll abide life's pelting storm
That makes our limbs quake, if our hearts be warm.

(The P.W. -- Blake, p. 41)

Song by a Shepherd is another instance of recognition of
the glorious feature of innocence by a shepherd. The primal spirit
of innocence is joy and the shepherd realises its gracious
influence as instrumental for mitigation of corporeal misery. The
shepherd's realisation is almost prophetic as he is conscious
of the futility of the material aspects of life, and simultaneously
projects new conditions through innocence:

Innocence doth like a rose
Bloom on every maiden's cheek;
Honour twines around her brows,
The jewel health adorns her neck.

(The P.W. -- Blake, p. 40)

The realisation makes him delight incarnate and the shepherd
shines as a unique creation with his almost mystical vision and
imaginative perception of life despite worldly adversities in
life.

The cycle of Blake's creation of the common men includes
'natural man' and children of divergent categories and the poet's
children are his metaphysical discoveries in the realm of
materialism. The children are not indicative of the state of
immaturity, nor do they point to a particular stage in the course
of development of human life, but the Blakean children are human
entities complete in themselves with their indulgence and enjoyment
in life. They form a definite and inseparable unit in the chain
of creation, and maintain their integrity in their respective domain with their existent qualities. The children are common for their characteristic innocence, but they are quite happy in establishing a spontaneous relation with God and thereby retaining a greater force in life. Environmental insanitation, apathy of the realities of the world press them inhumanly, but they rise above all brutality and barbarism, shine ever and anon with their glory and regality.

The boy in the poem, The Chimney Sweeper, of Songs of Innocence set within the state of bondage and destitution, yet visualising life against the exploitation of the environment and the child of The Chimney Sweeper, of Songs of Experience encompassed by a sense of self-deception and deprival, singing 'the notes of woes' and suffering from harrowing experience in life perpetually without any hope for the vision of life are the objective realisation of despair and desertion springing from agony and anguish of child-psychology. The child of Innocence sees the glory of God, and finds life against death in the domain of soul, while that of Experience remains in the state of sufferance within the jaws of experience for ever. Thus the children who are the products of realism remain distinct with their organic and indigenous simplicities of life and testify to the poet's delineation of the children of common characteristics as they are within themselves.

Now, a thorough probe shows that Blake's conception of the common man proves beyond any conjecture that no external object or factor is contributory to, and congenial for,
formation of such idea in his mind. But his belief in the creative power of imagination and his consciousness that all true knowledge have enabled him to perceive that man is the supreme creation is of God and the common and innocent people possess in themselves simple but pragmatic qualities for establishment of a unity and relation with God for final absorption in Him. So the poet's understanding of the common man involves mystic and intellectual problems because he thinks that his shepherds and children are not only mere 'corporeal forms', but also imagination personalised. The humble and unpretentious conditions of their minds are free from earthly complexities, and, consequently, they have greater power of mind than what sense can demonstrate. The vegetative existence with its joys and sorrows, happiness and misery, prospect and despair, optimism and pessimism is the medium of assimilation with infinite in the realm of sublimity. The poet's process of treatment is dialectical one as it deals with the successive progression of preference for natural desires over imposed restraint, imagination over reason. So he does not consider the happenings of the universe in terms of finality, rather these are different phases for unification with the imaginative reality for the peaceful co-existence of the contraries. On the one hand, Blake introduces the theory of necessity for maintenance of an equilibrium between existence and subsistence, action and re-action of all things; on the other, he transforms the concept of reality into the concept of vision. Blake's treatment of the common man thus correlates matter and spirit, reason and energy — with ultimate preponderence of the later.

The shepherds of the poems, Song by a Shepherd, Song by
an Old Shepherd and The Shepherd have transcendentalised their natures as divine likeness in maintenance of their nearness with God. These shepherds indulge in the most ordinary demeanour consistent with their social locus standi, but never fail to comprehend the states of their existence as blissful in harmony with God. They maintain that the process of earthly life cannot be contradictory to spiritual thoughts, rather the incidents of the vegetative world are conditional parts of spiritualism. The functions of the mundane world are not only transcended in spirit but also are reflected in divine likeness between man and God. The pictures of the ordinary children of Songs of Innocence expound the idea of an inseparable relation between man and God for the maintenance of the continuity of life-force and the harmony in existence in the realm of sublimity. A careful analysis of their attitudes to themselves vis-a-vis their recognition of the power and influence of innocence will show that they postulate the existence of a benign power at every stage which prevents intrusion of, and drives away, all disharmony and ultimately brings in a spirit in material aspect to help attainment of spiritual delight and bliss. The children aspire for eternal relief as they consider themselves as God's images and the central theme of their comprehension is akin to the idea set forth in a passage of Milton:

\[\text{time may come when man} \]
With angels may participate, and find
No inconvenient Diet, nor too light Fare:
And from these corporal nutriments perhaps
Your bodies may at last turn to spirit,

(Paradise Lost, Book V, lines 493-497.)
and, accordingly, the poet's concept of the innocent children appears to be unique in the history of literature.

The figures of the children of *Songs of Experience*, on the contrary, emit a different meaning of life in cognisance of the inadequacy of the state of innocence. They combine in themselves sensibility of mind and rational realisation of the cross-currents of phenomenal actions to produce an interpretation of life. The sufferings of life with the eventual endurance are not simple and segregated parts of the chain of life, but form the inherent and integrated attributes of the life's cycle. So they realise the fundamental conditions of life through the stages of alienation between innocence and experience and the knowledge of experience identical with the knowledge of dread and anxiety necessitates the retrospective view of life for resolution of the crises of life into establishment of an equilibrium of relationship between man and God. Thus an idea of man as God's image is perceived in reliance upon the concept that human reality itself has a relationship with God. The ordinary children of Blake thus create a history — the history of transformation from a static stage of innocence to a dynamic development through experience and there prevails a pure tone of serenity at the end:

All human forms identified, even tree, metal, earth & stone. All
Human forms identified, living, going forth & returning wearied
Into the planetary lives of years, months, days and hours-
And then awaking into his bosom in the life of Immortality
And I heard the name of their emanations:
they are named Jerusalem.
(The P.W. — Blake, p. 841.)
In the sense in which Blake is a prophet and a poet, Burns is a peasant and a poet. The poet himself admits: 'I was bred to the plough' and the occupational instinct was so deep-rooted in him that he was inclined to the highest degree of indulgence towards the rustic people and their manners. Henry Mackenzie has called him the 'Heaven-taught ploughman' and the poet is a 'striking example of native genius bursting through the obscurity of poverty and the obstructions of laborious life', a 'rusticus abnormis sapiens'. So it is quite logical and consistent with these observations that the poet would deploy his genius and energy to speak of 'man, their manners and their ways'. The farmer-poet does possess the sagacity of outlook to realise the toils and the humble aspects of the life of the rustics, peasants and the like by virtue of his close association and correspondence with them and his accurate observation, subtle penetration and sincere celebration of the realities of life claim the privilege of thinking him as a poet: whose 'simple strains, artless and unadorned, seem to flow without effort from the native feelings of the heart'. And, again, as he is a poet of the ordinary people his poetry has neither the metaphysical speculation of Coleridge, nor the revolutionary theology of Shelley, nor the romantic sensuousness of Keats, but contains the pictures of his country-men with their reckless laughter, perpetual sadness, 'hopeless poverty and stoical endurance', and problems and pleasures. The figures are vivid and life-like, concrete and matter-of-fact with their sentiment and emotion, melancholy and pessimism, grace and weakness.

The 'peasant-poet' has an intimate and inseparable
relation with his men and women, and, consequently, has a considerable experience about their social position, their virtues and frailties. They are the very breath of his life, or, in other words, they form his life-force and the creed of his poetry and the sole interest of the poet centres round the affairs of the common people. As the poet is "bred at the plough-tail, his performance must be strongly tinctured with his unpolished, rustic way of life; but .... they are really his own, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human nature to see how a plough-man thinks, and feels, under the pressure of Love, Ambition, Anxiety, Grief, with all cares and passion, which, however diversified by the Modes and Manners of life, operate pretty much alike, .... in all species". (6) As a result, the poet has occasionally exercised his genius to reflect the conditions of the human world, which, he feels, has been made to mourn because of the sad lots. So it is due to the indulgence of the poet that the sentiments and manners of the rustic campers and the various feelings of their lives — hopes and fears, loves and griefs — find the superb expression in his poems. The poet's transcription has the touch of his heart, and, consequently the figures of the common people with their common features and characteristics appear to be transformed as if through a process of transmigration. His process is not only critical but also contains in itself some elements of history which goes to the

extent of establishing a relation between the condition and the destiny of life. So Burn's poetry of man is the history of man.

The poet's passionate feeling for the people in distress has its origin in 'the bursting cloud of family misfortunes' and he discovers the causes of misery in the diabolical actions of the oppressors. Man was Made to Mourn, A Dirge, gives a superb picture of 'the miseries of Man' who is 'prest with cares and woes' in life. In the poem Burn's interest does not concern a particular man but it involves the history of sufferings of mankind as a whole. The poet's prima facie, assigns 'mispending' of 'precious hours' and 'glorious, youthful prime' to the causes of 'Cares and Sorrows' in life, and realises that 'Age and Want', the 'ill-matched pair' 'on the edge of life' put man to the state of mourning. But, in fine, the poet finds the seeds of sufferance of man in 'Man's inhumanity to Man' and it is 'the will and pow'r' of man that 'make his fellow mourn'. The poet's analysis is objective and he sees into the hearts of the humble men, who are

O'erlabour'd ...,

So abject, mean and vile,


and find relief in death, 'the kindest and the best' of friends. The elemental quality of the poem is aptly suited to the purpose of delineation of the tragedy of life of the victims of oppression and cruelty, and brings in the fundamental issue of the inhuman sufferance vis-a-vis the stoical power of endurance of the common people as a natural course of human history.
In a Penitential thought, in the hour of Remorse —

Intended for a tragedy, the poet's thoughts are also tragic in tone in view of the sufferance of mankind:

my heart melts at human wretchedness;
And with sincere tho' unavailing sighs
I view the helpless children of Distress.
With tears indignant I behold th' Oppressor,
Rejoicing in the honest man's destruction,
Whose unsubmitting heart was all his crime.

(The P.W. -- Burns, p. 7)

The poet proceeds to the extent of harmonising his own state with that of the 'poor, despis'd, abandon'd vagabonds', and feels:

I had been driven forth like you forlorn,
The most detested, worthless wretch among you /

(The P.W. -- Burns p. 7)

And finally produces the wretched plight of the oppressed vividly and lucidly in reliance upon the inherent power of tolerance of the common people. The state of life of the victimised is not a matter of glory but it has the touch of calm feelings for absorption with the existent conditions with a passive sense of indifference free from hostility and resentment.

Some -- In the character of a ruined Farmer -- depicts the picture of a man who lives 'with sorrow, grief, and woe': he is 'friendless, forsaken, forlorn'. The man was once favoured with 'Fortune', but now he has no hope in life. So the state of remorse finds its final solution in the grave. The intensity of the farmer's appreciation of the conditions of his wife and children after retirement sets him astray, and he lives with
perpetual agony of mind:

For in this world, Rest or Peace,
I never more shall know /
(The P.W. -- Burns, p. 31.)

The man with the conditions of his mind is anguish incarnate, but his realisation has neither the violent passion for self-expression nor the eventual re-action against the order of his life, rather it is endowed with the spirit of sublimation in the realm of endurance.

Despondency, an Ode gives a gloomy and depressive picture of life. Here, again, the poet produces his man

Oppress'd with grief, oppress'd with care,
(The P.W. -- Burns, p. 186)

and life is a 'galling load' which
shall close ne'er,
But with the closing tomb /
(The P.W. -- Burns, p. 186)

It is a life of perpetual despair with the ultimate decay in doom. The solitary of the poem strives to forget the woes of life by

raising
His thoughts to Heaven on high. (The P.W. -- Burns, p. 187)

But he cannot be indifferent to the values of human life, nor can he detach himself from the earthly conditions, and, accordingly,

must cry here
At perfidy ingrate / (The P.W. -- Burns, p. 187)
The man with 'follies' and 'crimes' of the earlier life and
the 'fears' and 'tears' of the 'declining age' is despondency incarnate. The man is a product of objective realisation, and is true to the conditions of life completely and entirely with his misfortunes.

The poem *Jeremiah 15th Ch. 10k* appears to be a sequel to Despondency, an Ode in essence and spirit. The character of this poem is also 'a man of strife', an object of hatred and abuse. He is pessimism incarnate for his bad lot and the uncongenial conditions of life. The life is problem-stricken and 'Fortune quite discarded' him. In this poem also the man is complete and distinct with the perpetual sufferance in life without any hope of blessings or goodwill. The life is loathsome, yet free from hostile impulse, vile, yet well-defined with an almost stoical power of tolerance.

Now, an analysis of Burns's conception of mankind in general exhibits his strong sense of pessimism which springs from his 'rustic upbringing' and the misery and distress associated with it. The poet never aims at producing an unnecessary sober and serene atmosphere concerning the condition of human life, but presents it with all the actualities and realities, which culminate in visualisation of the gloomy prospect of life. But, at the same time, Burns never exaggerates the actual state of affairs, nor does he employ his poetic fancy in search of the ugly aspect of life, but is apt to portray his common man just as they are with their own salience and projection, because his vision of life is free from perplexities and complexities. He reckons sorrows in life as paramount, but simultaneously, appreciates its benign conditions.
The ploughman of the poem of that name and the miller of Dusty Miller -- all bear testimony to the poet's power of accurate observation and awareness of both the ugly and bright aspects of life. These figures remain as individuals within themselves to give conclusive evidence of the poet's correct interpretation of life within the existent situation. The dusty miller, as the very name implies, is in an ignoble condition, but the poet discovers a spirit of contentment in the figure of the miller and establishes him in his exactitude as distinguished with his rusticity and mean conditions of life. The ploughman is also no deviation from the concept of exactness and the poet reveals the elementary conditions of his life with a passionate feeling of heart. The ploughman's mind is 'ever true' and adaptable to 'wet and weary' and he possesses the serenity of mind in the maintenance of an inseparable and perpetual sense of sublimation with the existent conditions of life.

In Love and Liberty -- A Cantata, Burns introduces the characters of the common people of various colours. They include in themselves miserable beggars, an aged and maimed soldier, the 'doxy' of the soldier, a professional fool, the female vagabond, a professional fiddler, the tinker and a poet. They form a sort of miniature drama and each member of the ragged group shines as a living glimpse of reality with his or her special feature. The personality attributed to each member together with the related eventualities may be abnegation of the values of civilisation of any form, yet they form integral parts of the society through obedience to the social order by accepting the repressions of life with their
common enthusiasm. The beggars, as presented in the cantata, are not conventional beggars. They breathe an air of bacchic jovility, despite misfortune, and manifest the poet's idea of escapism and freeness from the stern realities in the crudest form. Their gait is heroic and the hardship in life cannot spoil their sturdy power of endurance. Their indulgence in the primitive elements for comfort serves as an element of revolt against the social order which is not conducive to their interests, and they resort to the means of begging for survival and to guard against the rapid elimination:

The last o't, the worst o't,
Is only but to beg.

Thus the beggars with their attitude of life are figures of fortitude free from any spirit of idealisation. They are neither symbolic of anything, nor do they theorise any special creed of life, but they are as they are with their poverty and insecurity.

The crippled soldier represents the figure of a man at the most defamatory and lowest level of the social order. The conditions of his life are miserable, yet he is not devoid of a popular ring of simple and lively joys of life. He inclines to a considerable scale to boastfulness which is not only crude but also vain, and derives pleasure out of it:

I am a Son of Mars who have been in many wars,
And show my cuts and scars wherever I come;
This here was for a wench, and that other in a trench,
When welcoming the French at the sound of the drum.
(The P.W. — Burns, p. 159)

The soldier's ecstasy of mind does not come to an end with the account of glory of his past career; rather the present situation of life finds its manifestation in discovery of a warm and
glaring spirit of joy on the slightest pretext:
I lastly was with Curtis among the floating batteries,
And there I left for witness, an arm and a limb;
Yet let my Country need me, with Elliot to head me,
I'd clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum.
And now tho' I must beg, with a wooden arm and leg,
And many a tatter'd rag hanging over my bum,
I'm as happy with my wallet, my bottle and my Callet,
As when I us'd in scarlet to follow a drum.

(The P.W.--Burns, p. 159)

The soilder's mental ecstasy serves as a cloak of the despicability of the conditions of life and he accepts it with a heroic attitude of fierceness of mind, which finds its expression in an intense delight. The soilder's state of mind is not complementary to the actual state of affairs, so the mental condition seems to be an anarchic outburst of pessimistic sensibility which encircles him with a halo of remarkability.

Then comes the soilder's 'doxy'. She is a woman of astounding boldness without any sense of respect for social atmosphere. The elemental qualities of her mind find pleasure in amorality renouncing social conventions. So, the woman indulges in primitive means for mental satisfaction and accomplishment of sexual career. Says she:

I once was a Maid, tho' I cannot tell when,
And still my delight is in proper young man:
Some one of a troop of Dragoons was my dadie,
No wonder I'm fond of a Sodger Laddie.

Sing, lallfc de dal &c. (The P.W.--Burns, p. 160)
There is another aspect of her character and it is the spirit of conviviality and jollity despite the gesture of disregard for morality and civility:

And now I have lived -- I know not how long,
And still I can join in a cup and a song;
But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass steady,
Here 's to thee, My Hero, My Sodger Laddie.

(The P.W. -- Burns, p. 161)

Thus the soldier's doxy is typical woman who drives the atmosphere from gentility to recklessness for self-maintenance against the indifference of the society, and is thus a revolt incarnate against the social order with her almost primitive and desperate attitude.

The professional fool with the critical and cynical feelings of a dispassionate jester, the female vagrant, who is also a thief, with the spirit of sublimation in the realm of orgiastic pleasure through recapitulation, the professional fiddler with the delicacy of sentiment and timidity of mind, and the tinker with his courage, boastfulness and vanity -- are all appropriate in the assembly of coarse and rough personalities. These figures are individualistic with the elementary qualities of characters, and emit the essence of distinction with the realities and actualities of their lives.

The poet introduced in the cantata is the supreme figure in the company. He thinks that a member of the common-folk can also be a bard, 'Homer-like,' and can flourish equally like men of elegance. Says the poet:
I am a Bard of no regard,
Wi' gentle folks an' a' that;
But Homer like the gloweran byke,
Frae town to town I draw that.
(The P.W. — Burns, p. 167)

The poet's attitude to the prevailing orders of the society is contemptuous as well as what may be called a product of the mixture of stoicism and epicureanism. He does possess the instinct of scornfulness and the sense of pride which help him to throw away the social conventions. The poet says:

I never drank the Muses' Stank,
Castalia's burn an' a' that,
But there it streams an' richly reams,
My Helicon I ca' that.

For a' that &c. (The P.W. — Burns, p. 167)

The poet's mind is full of vigorous instinct for sexual love and he accepts the bohemian attitude in the affairs of love:

But clear your decks an' here's the sex/
I like the jads for a' that. (The P.W. — Burns, p. 168)

The bard thus with his primitive attitude to life and its related phenomena symbolises the sentiment of a group of people who indulge in the com-on and mean elements of life to maintain their existence in the world of reality against uncongeniality and adversity.

Thus in The Jolly Beggar, Burns presents people of various colours at the highest point of anarchism, which originates from the acceptance of life with a heroic spirit of indifference to the apathy of the society. These people
177:—

profess an extreme view of society and life. Society, they consider, as a living organism. But they reject the idea of abiding by the terms of the social institutions as these continually attempt to impose traditional regulations on human behaviour to jeopardise freeness in life:

A fig for those by law protected /
Liberty's a glorious feast /
Courts for Cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the Priest.

What is Title, what is Treasury,
What is Reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'T is no matter How and Where.
A fig, &c.

With the ready trick and fable
Round we wander all the day;
And at night, in bran or stable,
Hug our doxies on the hay.
A fig, &c.

Does the train — attended Carriage
Thro' the country lighter rove?
Does the sober bed of Marriage
Witness brighter scenes of love?
A fig, &c.
Life is all a variorum,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about Decorum,
Who have character to lose.
A fig, &c.

(The P.v. -- Burns, pp. 168-169)

It is an archaic type of life where begging, canting, singing, cheating, hawking, revelling, and various other crude forms find their manifestation to vindicate an attitude to, and way of, primitive life against the refinement and culture of a civilised society. It is a world of reality with poverty and beggary, lust and drunkenness, squalor and filthiness and the agents of this world gather prominence for their industry, social forbearance, feeling of comradeship, independence and courage. Allan Ramsay's (1686 - 1758) presentation of rustic life has a great influence on Burns's choice of beggars and people of this standard. In a piece entitled 'Merry Beggars' in The Tea-Table Miscellany, Ramsay has introduced six beggars who are successively a poet, an 'attorney-at law', a soldier, a courtier, a 'gut-scraper', and a preacher. They all find happiness in begging and declare in a chorus:

Who'er would be merry and free,
Let him list, and from us he may learn;
In palaces who shall you see
Half so happy as we in a bran?

'The Happy Beggar' of The Tea-Table Miscellany also gives pictures of six female beggars and vagrants, one of whom sings:
A fig for gaudy fashions,
No want of clothes oppress us;
We live at ease with rags and fleas,
We value not our dress.

Burns's beggars and vagrants, alike Ramsay's people, repudiate the unpleasantness and hardship in life with a triumphant spirit of gladness, and confirm their demand for permanent position in the realm of human beings. The life of anarchy which originates from poverty and social insecurity achieves an everlasting settlement through heroic attitudes and a link is established between the two prominent qualities of life -- anarchism and heroism -- anarchism springing from the idea of setting aside the social conventionalities, and heroism coming into existence to adapt to the conditions of life.

Burns's characterisation of young women is somehow different in tone and temper, and depicts the intensity of his attitude towards their affairs. This is a sort of reflection of the attitude of a poet who considers sex as an object of sport, and finds a source of immense pleasure in dealing with the sexual affairs. The poet's idea of the common women is realistic and, consequently, he portrays them as instrumental for love for satisfaction of the passion, which is as much physical as spiritual.

The girl of the song beginning with 'My girl she's airy' with her rustic coarseness of habit and masculine feature, 'Young Peggy' with her physical appearance and mental vigour, the woman in the Song, Miss W.A. set against the background of natural beauty, Isabella of the poem, To Miss Isabella Macleod
with her lovely qualities, Mistress Jean of the poem, My Collier Laddie with the spirit of impetuosity all bear testimony to
the poet's accuracy of revelation of the indigenous qualities
inherent in the common girls. The poet discovers the elementary
creed of their lives, and celebrates them within their respective
exactitude without the touch of utopian idealisation or arcadian
dilly-dallying and as an eventuality of the vividness of
delineation, these figures shine as distinct with their organic
ingredients — physical and mental, emotional and passional.

Thus Burns's common man and woman include in theselves
people of various standards and categories and, accordingly,
his conception pf, and attitude to, them are diversified,
varied. But there is a definite unity in diversity as in all
cases the poet's "observation/on human characters are acute and
sagacious, and his descriptions are lively and just. Of rustic
peasantry he has a rich fund, and some of his sober scenes are
touched with inimitable delicacy". (7) A probe into the reasons
of his accuracy bears testimony to the fact that the poet's
heredity, agrarian background, and eventual rusticity of
character have contributed to a greater scale to his realistic
manner and the poet's continuous indulgence in the simplest
virtues and characteristics of the common people has found its
supreme manifestation in building up the "basic philosophy of
life — a philosophy which, while detesting the hypocrisy
of false pride often associated with the possession of great

(7) ibid., p. 165.
riches, accepts the lot of cheerful poverty, since happiness has its true seat in the individual heart:

Nae treasures nor pleasures
Could make us happy long;
The heart ay's the part ay
That makes us right or wrong". (8)

Burns's natural power of recognition of the phenomena of human life as they occur in the universe has enabled him to discover the dignity in endurance and the poet's personal misfortunes and hardship have caused transformation of this into a keen power of perception. The poet, as a normal corollary, has understood the fortitude, mental anguish, mental strength and vigour of mankind against the background of failures and disappointments as the outcome of magnificent endowments bestowed on him in abundance, and has identified himself wholeheartedly with his common people. A Penitential thought, in the hour of Remorse — Intended for a Tragedy and Man was Made to Mourn, A Dirge show the poet's glowing spirit of benevolence springing from his realisation of the acuteness of sufferance and stoical indifference thereto in life, particular and general, particular for an individual, general for mankind. Despondency, an Ode and Jeremiah 15th Ch 10V also flow in this direction in spirit and essence. It is definite that Burns's celebration of the characters of the rustics, farmers, man and woman in distress and destitution, professional men, beggars has neither the simplicity of Ramsay nor the

(8) : ibid., p. 140.
profundity of Fergusson, but it does possess the touch of his heart -- a heart which has been upbrought through perpetual misfortune and had found its relief in the expression of a feeling of compassion for the people who are victims of oppression and tyrannical cruelty of the society and its institutions. The poet, in conformity with his attitude to man, "sets out very clearly his view of his own life and perhaps all life -- a struggle in which misfortune comes from without rather than from within, the product of damned squinting stars rather than remediable defects of character". (9)

The fundamental question at issue for Burns's glorification of the common people lies in his conviction that the inhumanity of man to man is the prime cause for man's sufferance in the world and this conception penetrates so deeply into knowledge that it emits an essence of Shakespearean revelation of the miseries of life consequent on the tyranny of man. In A Winter Night the poet's conception finds its supreme manifestation when he says:

'Blow, blow ye Winds, with heavier gust /
'And freeze, thou bitter-bitting Frost /
'Descend, ye chilly, smothering Snows /
'Not all your rage, as now, united shows
'More hard unkindness, unrelenting,
'Vengeful malice, unrepenting,

(9) There was a Lad,
An essay on Robert Burns,
by Hilton Brown.
Hamish Hamilton,
p. 187.
'Than heaven-illumin'd Man on brother Man bestows /
'See stern Oppression's iron grip,
'Or mad Ambition's gory hand,
'Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,
'Woe, Want, and Murder o'er a land /
'Ev'n in the peaceful rural vale,
'Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale,
'How pamper'd Luxury, Flatt'ry by her side,
'The parasite empoisoning her ear,
'With all the servile wretches in the rear,
'Looks o'er proud Property, extended wide ;
'And eyes the simple, rustic Hind,
'Whose toil upholds the glitt'ring show,
'A creature of another kind,
'Some coarse substance, unrefin'd,
'Plac'd for her lordly use thus far, thus vile,

(The P.W. -- Burns, p. 245)

and the poet shines more as a redeemer than a portra...
man. This provides, as Wordsworth thought, 'an admirable copy of life', without the spirit of revelation of Shakespeare, rather Crabbe's estimation of ordinary figures anticipates Dickensian method of photography of characters. The poet is so accurate and delicate in his delineation of the essential conditions of human life that Crabb Robinson thinks 'he had an eye only for the sad realities of life'. The poet employs his critical mind to indulge in the description of the state in which the common people exist in their exactitude, and depicts the true pictures without any attempt to camouflage the stark realities under poetic fantasy:

*fields and flocks have charms*

*For him that grazes or for him that farms;*
*But when amid such pleasing scenes I trace*
The poor laborious natives of the place,
And see the mid-day sun, with fervid ray,
On their bare heads and dewy temples play;
While some, with feeble heads and fainter hearts,
Deplore their fortunes, yet sustain their parts:

*Then shall I dare these real ills to hide*
*In tinsel trappings of poetic pride,*


and the poet thus realises that 'Village Life a life of pain' and there people are 'O'ercome by labour, and bow'd down by time' and 'pine for bread'. The poet's attitude is far from any conventionality as it is oversadowed neither by any utopian vision nor by the spirit of acradianism and he thinks that
no 'light tales' can overpower their 'weighty griefs'. The common and ordinary people lead 'the simple life that Nature yields', and 'a long course of daily toil' consume their vitality and ultimately they go to the 'grave in pain' through 'slow disease'. It is a life of 'weariness' and 'shame' and no people of The Village can escape the stern realism of despicability, and live in disgrace and the poet narrates their position in exactness:

There children dwell who know no parents' care;
Parents, who know no children's love, dwell there /
Heart-broken matrons on their joyless bed,
Forsaken wives, and mother never wed;
Dejected widows with unheed tears,
And crippled age with more than childhood fears;
The lame, the blind, and, far the happiest they/
The moping idiot and the madman gay.
Here too the sick their final doom receive,
Here brought, amid the scenes of grief, to grieve, sad
Where the loud groans from some/chamber flow,
Mix'd with the clamours of the crowd below;
Here, sorrowing, they each kindred sorrow scan,
And the cold charities of man to man:
Whose laws indeed for ruin'd age provide;
And strong compulsion clucks the scrap from pride;
But still that scrap is bought with many a sigh,
And pride embitters what it can't deny.

(The P.W. -- Crabbe, pp. 6-7)
The Village contains pictures of people of different categories, who are distinct and vivid with their exact condition of life
and are exposed to the evils of the dreadful poverty and its associates. The figures are static in their positions with their fortitude and forbearance, and emit the essence of perpetual obsession without the hope of any remedy of the malady. The poet's consciousness of the tragedy of the village life pervades as he thinks that 'gleams of transient mirth and hours of sweet repose' cannot 'heal the bleeding heart'. The poor people have to accept the disgrace and vices of life as 'heaven's gift to weary men oppress'd'. So he finds no means to solve the crises, and ultimately, suggests cultivation of 'noble spirit' and 'nobler thoughts' to increase the power of mind and thus to cope with the situation.

Now, apart from The Village, the poet creates a panorama of ordinary people, who obsessed his poetic mind with the extreme consequences which spring from the essential conditions of their lives, and conveys the realistic pictures of 'masses of flesh' in minute details through tales after tales. The characters of The Borough and Tales are the poet's studies of the individuals with their social positions and ways of life, meanness, isolation, primal agony and anxiety and elementary passion and pleasure. These figures include in themselves the inhabitants of the Alms-House, the poor within their dwellings, other destitute and dismayful persons of The Borough, 'the various characters of villagers', and the sailor, the individual figures of The Convert, the farmer's daughter in The Widow's Tale, the characters of The Learned Boy and The Mother. Individually, each character of Crabbe shines as an epitome with stoic attitude to the pleasures and
pains of life, and, collectively they complete the cycle of a society wherein the poet himself remains as the protagonist. The poet conducts the survey of social phenomena and the characters of his poetry are the direct outcome of his study. But the interest of the poet is 'psychological ... rather than sociological'. His curiosity about individual is paramount and each figure is caught in the light of the social conditions and carried to the state of exactness to reveal the truth of life. The poet's psycho-analysis of the characters within the frame-work of their miserable condition is so sincere and accurate that the people breathe an air of 'morbid tragedy and ugly passions' without the touch of unreal sentimentality and airy idealism. The figures of Crabbe present a gloomy and pessimistic view of life, but, simultaneously, they are endowed with the supreme power of endurance which deserves sympathy and compassion for their final settlement within the existent conditions of life.

The poet's canvass of treatment is not limited but vast, and consequently, even the gipsies, who are considered as social outcasts, cannot escape his notice. In The Lover's Journey of The Tale, he provides a vivid and unique picture description of 'a gipsy-tribe' which includes in itself men and women, even children of different colours and appearances. The 'brown boys' indulging in childish caprice, the 'Train'd but savage' young girl with the 'vice implanted in her youthful breast', the 'elderbrother' with the attitude of offence, the father with his despicable conditions and 'dejected' manner, the 'negligently dress'd' mother with 'some touch of grace'
in 'her wild face' and with 'an infant at her breast', the old woman with her 'Solemn and dull' look, 'the worn-out grandsire', 'the young ruffians' — all live a life of 'shame and grief', 'punishment and pain' without 'a hope, a comfort', but they are distinct and living with the elementary conditions of life — stoic indifference to, and calm endurance of, the hardships of life. They have to pass through 'strange course of misery, vice, deceit', but they sustain their 'fierce passion' till they approach the end of life and thus shine as objects of wonder in the chronicle of the common man.

Now, the analysis of Crabbe's treatment of the common people brings in the most salient feature of its freeness from escapism. The poet's treatment is original and the critical acuteness is transcended with individual life, but there is no vagueness and ambiguity in the presentation of the characters and accordingly, the mode of description seems to be the process of transformation of the ordinary figures into something distinguishable and strange. But the distinction of exactitude and the strangeness of experience not only reveal the truth of life of the humble and low people but also numb the sense-organs and

The soul and its powers,

And every sense and every heart (The P.W.-Crabbe, p. 445)
tremble and stand 'shivering' in an 'ague fit' and the figures of the common people remain as they are within the realm of exactness and justness without any scope for metaphysical speculation or philosophical persiflage.