CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
Gerard Manley Hopkins was one of the most remarkable poets of the Victorian age. He has been hailed as a 'major' poet. Critics like I.A. Richards, William Empson and F.R. Leavis have championed him as the 'classical example of the modern poet.' Leavis observes:

He is likely to prove, for our time and the future, the only influential poet of the Victorian age and he seems to me the greatest.

Many of Hopkins's poetic qualities claim our attention. His remarkable rhythmic skill, his superb gift of image-making and his skilful handling of words add to the energy and expressiveness of his language.

Hopkins's real strength, however, originates from the fact that he brought poetry much closer to living speech. He seems to have fulfilled

3 Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry, p. 194.
the dream of holding poetry as the "language uttering complex words that were meanings as words". His strength is bound up with the immediacy of his relation to words. What impresses us most is his power of using the resources of words to the utmost, and creating rhythm with a view to evolving patterns of sounds and stress that, to use his own phrase, 'fetch out' the meaning in syntax. We are moved by his strongly individual qualities of temperament and character, by his honesty, candour and precision and by his exactitude and self-exactingness in expressing his solitary experiences. Few poets other than Shakespeare have Hopkins's power of expressing the mysterious extremes of feeling, both the exciting 'otherness' of natural power and beauty and the terrifying 'otherness of despair'. And probably no other poet has expressed so convincingly the mystery of selfhood, which in one of his finest prose passages he

himself described as:

that taste of myself, of 'I' and 'me' above and in all things, which is more distinct than the smell of walnut leaf or camphor, and is incommunicable by any means to another man.  

Hopkins was one of the most gifted Englishmen of his generation. He belonged to a middle class family with strong artistic interests. He went up to Oxford as a scholar of Balliol in 1863, where he impressed Benjamin Jowett, then the Regius Professor of Greek, who called him 'the star of Balliol'. Hopkins won a first class in Greats in 1867. During his Oxford days, he wrote some remarkable verse and prose including a philosophic dialogue on Beauty. Thus a brilliant career as a writer and scholar lay open to him. However, Hopkins at an early age had made up his mind to become a Roman Catholic. While at school, he was much influenced by Walter Pater and Henry Newman, and so in 1866, much to the dismay of his parents and friends, he was received into the Roman Catholic Church by Newman. Hopkins submitted himself

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wholeheartedly to the rigorous discipline of his Order, giving up all prospects of worldly career. He abandoned his literary works and burnt most of his early poetry. For seven years he wrote no verse (except for a few trifles) but devoted all his energies to the tasks imposed on him by his superiors.

In 1875, however, at the suggestion of one of his ecclesiastical superiors, he composed an ode on the "Wreck of the Deutschland", a German ship which had foundered in a snow-storm off the Kentish coast with five men on board. This incident had moved Hopkins and so with the permission of his superiors he wrote the ode. This poem was his first ambitions experiment, and in it his technical resources are deployed at great length. He composed this ode in a new metrical form, of which he had been meditating for some time. "I had long had haunting my ear the echo of a new rhythm which now I realised on paper", he wrote to Dixon. 7 When he sent the manuscript to

Bridges, the latter was at first astonished and repelled by the Deutschland ode. The Jesuit journal called The Month, to which he had sent it, refused to publish the poem. Hopkins, however, continued with his experiments. He knew what he was trying to do and even without encouragement and in complete isolation, he carried on on his chosen path.

Dixon was anxious to arrange for the publication of some of Hopkins's poems, but Hopkins considered it to be against the Jesuit principle. Dixon admired his poetry greatly.

He once wrote to Hopkins:

Bridges struck the truth long ago
when he said to me that your poems
more carried him out of himself
than those of any one. I have again
and again felt the same, and am
certain that as a means of serving,
I will not say your cause, but
religion, you cannot have a more
powerful instrument than your own
verse.8

8 Abbott, Correspondence with Dixon (OUP, 1935), p. 100.
But Hopkins was totally reconciled to the Jesuit principle and had no longing for fame. He wrote to Dixon:

When a man has given himself to God's service, when he has denied himself and followed Christ, he has fitted himself to receive and does receive from God a special guidance, a more particular providence. This guidance is conveyed partly by the action of other men, as his appointed superiors and partly by direct lights and inspirations. If I wait for such guidance, through whatever channel conveyed about anything, about my poetry for instance, I do more wisely in every way than if I try to serve my own seeming interests in the matter. Now if you value what I write, if I do myself, much more does out Lord. And if He chooses to avail himself of what I leave at His disposal He can do so with a felicity and with a success which I could not, then two things follow; one that the reward I nevertheless receive from Him, will be all the greater, the other that then I shall know how much a thing contrary to His will and even to my own best interests I should have done if I had taken things into my own hands, and forced on publication.

This shows Hopkins's profound faith in God.

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9 Abbott, Correspondence with Dixon, p. 93.
Hopkins was nevertheless hopeful about the people's favourable reception of his poems. He once wrote:

Solomon says, there is a time for everything, there is nothing that does not someday come to be, it may be that the time will come for my verses.10

The time for his verses did come, although twenty-nine years after his death. In 1918 Robert Bridges brought out the first edition of _The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins_. Many reviewers found his poetry strange and difficult to understand, but there were critics who were impressed by the poet's essential qualities. The book was generally considered as a gracious but somewhat costly monument to Hopkins's genius as a poet.

In 1930 appeared the second edition, which the younger generation literary enthusiasts not only welcomed but also admired. The next decade saw the growth of Hopkins's fame. The inimitable quality of his individual manner came to be

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10 Abbott, _Correspondence with Dixon_, p. 95.
recognized in due course of time.

Hopkins has been related to and placed alongside of many excellent poets. According to Middleton Murry, "Hopkins is most like Shelley".\textsuperscript{11} Charles Williams thinks him to be akin to Milton.\textsuperscript{12} And E.E. Phare is of the opinion that he has some affinity to Wordsworth.\textsuperscript{13} Hopkins reminds us of John Donne and other Metaphysicals, especially Crashaw and Vaughan.\textsuperscript{14} Moreover, Hopkins has been mentioned in one breath with Walt Whitman, and a curious likeness has been discovered between him and Patmore. But, as Peters puts it, "it would be a hopeless task to keep on comparing Hopkins to other poets, for every good poet can be like another only in accidentals, each poet being essentially his own species".\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Aspects of Literature, (London, 1921), p. 55.
\item \textsuperscript{12} The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins (London, 1930), p. xiv.
\item \textsuperscript{13} The Poetry of G.M. Hopkins: A Survey and Commentary (Cambridge, 1933), p. 15.
\item \textsuperscript{14} J.E. Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry (Minnesota, 1959), p. 100.
\item \textsuperscript{15} W.A.M. Peters, Gerard Manley Hopkins: A critical Essay Towards the Understanding of his Poetry (Cumberlege, 1948), p. xvii.
\end{itemize}
Hopkins himself once said that any likeness with others cannot but be superficial. It is with the Metaphysicals that he has unmistakable affinities.

The Metaphysical revival, begun in the early part of the nineteenth century, increased in vigour and importance in the twentieth century. Douglas Bush has called the Metaphysical revival 'the main single factor in effecting the modern revolution in taste'. Mario Praz, too, has expressed similar views. According to him, "the revaluation of the Metaphysicals has been an earthquake in the English Parnassus reshaping the outline of its summit as if it were a volcano". He has also noted the significance of the revival in helping to popularize common speech rhythms. Hopkins and T.S. Eliot were foremost in shaping the revival.

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16 House (ed.), Journals and Papers, p. 201.
19 Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, p. 32.
Hopkins had a deep understanding of the significance and function of poetic language. In his work, Catholic dogma and symbols take on a new life and meaning. Unlike Donne, he delighted in finding relationships between abstract thoughts and sensuous experiences. He felt God's presence very directly, particularly in out-of-door beauties. To him the world is 'word, expression, news of God'.

Many of Hopkins's characteristic metaphors depend on an incarnational and sacramental view of reality and on a knowledge of traditional Christian Symbols. Despite differences that separate Hopkins and the Metaphysicals, his fundamental kinship with them is an important and distinctive element in his poetry.

The primary quality of Hopkins's poetry is energy. Energy was precisely what English poetry lacked during the Victorian period. Hopkins's poetic

energy came from his close observation of and excitement about nature. He viewed the natural world in its most detailed and particularized forms and the poetry caused from this excitement resulted in his exuberant nature poetry emphasizing the grandeur and glory of God and His creation, but at the same time we see the personal combat he underwent between the sensuous artist he naturally was and the aesthetic Jesuit he had chosen to become which resulted in his dark personal poems of spiritual crisis. Nature was to Hopkins what the Sacraments are to all Christians 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace'.

Only a sensitive man like Hopkins can see this sign and, understanding its meaning, can glorify God for the meaning behind the appearance and for the appearance itself.

Nature reveals itself not simply in one way but in a variety of ways. In Hopkins's terminology, this difference - this individual distinction is

'inscape', and the energy which determines its individuality and keeps it distinct is 'instress'. He coined these two terms because he found old ones inadequate for his purpose and incomensurate with his genius, which was startlingly original. Geoffrey Grigson has called Hopkins's poetry 'a passionate science'. Hopkins observed and recorded not only with the scrupulous exactness of a scientist, but also with the passionate excitement of an inspired poet. His journals, written from 1866 to 1875, show how minute and exact his apprehension of everything was.

Hopkins was a religious and not merely a devotional poet. Religion, for him, was the total reaction of the whole man to the whole of life. Man, he held, was created to serve and praise God. As Hopkins did both with complete sincerity, so too his disappointments, protests and revulsions were stated with complete candour.

On the one hand, we find Hopkins as a passionate observer of Nature in all its forms, and, on the other hand, we find him experiencing agonizing spiritual desolation. Hopkins had bowed his will to the discipline of his Order and struggled always to do his best as a parish priest, as a teacher and as a man of God, yet he so often felt that he had failed. This clash of personality and will, aggravated by periodic bouts of ill-health, sometimes led him to despair and tension. The result is to be found in his so-called 'terrible sonnets' of 1885, such as "Carrion Comfort", "No Worst there is None", "I wake and feel the fell of dark", "Patience, hard thing", "My own Heart let me have more pity on", and so on. There is energy in them but it is that of struggle and not exuberance.

It is difficult to ignore the emotional conflict which forced Hopkins's poems into being. We find in them the sensitivity and control of a true artist. Hopkins was a serious and dedicated craftsman. His technique, though based on much
scholarly inquiry into Latin, Greek, Welsh and English metrics and vocabulary, was not mere invention in the void. It was carefully formed and perfected by the poet. Only in these meters and these words could he best say what he had to say. Hopkins's poetry is written in a language of excitement. It is very much heightened language and 'passing freaks and graces' only add to its individuality. Hopkins was one of the few great linguistic innovators in English language, besides Shakespeare, Milton and Joyce. He used the full resources of the English language, and when those resources seemed to be inadequate, he invented and employed specialised words. His rich use of alliteration, internal rhyme, assonance, dissonance and invented compound words reveals the energy of a man whose mind enjoyed all the cognate and sound-linked shades of language. Like Shakespeare, he forced language into his own mould, making words serve as new parts of speech. At times he ruthlessly omitted some functional words such as definite and

25 Abbott (ed.), Correspondence with Bridges, p. 89.
indefinite articles and relative pronouns. All this he did to attain the desired poetic effects.
As for his metrical technique, through his Sprung Rhythm he tried to prove that language does not need to be forced into a Procrustean bed of meter. He expressed his views on this issue in a letter written to Bridges:

Why do I employ Sprung Rhythm at all? Because it is the nearest to the rhythm of speech, the least forced, the most rhetorical and emphatic of all rhythms, combining, as it seems to me opposite and, one would have thought incompatible, excellence, markedness of rhythm that is rhythm's self and naturalness of expression.26

Technically, Hopkins was both an innovator and a restorer in rhythm and language. C. Day Lewis feels that Hopkins was a "true revolutionary poet, for his imagination was always breaking up and melting the inherited forms of language, fusing them into new possibilities and hammering them into new shapes".27 The purpose of Hopkins's poetry

26 Abbott (ed.), Correspondence with Bridges, p. 46.
was to employ his mind and senses with such concentration and to force into words the very essence of the subject he contemplated and was writing on. 28

Hopkins was a daring and original thinker on aesthetic problems. While he was still at Oxford, he was much affected by the teachings of Walter Pater, which he developed far more successfully than Oscar Wilde and the 'aesthetic' school. He found a powerful stimulus in the doctrine of the medieval scholastic philosopher Duns Scotus, especially his principles of 'individuation' and haecceitas or 'thisness'. It is the specific nature of a thing which makes it differ from everything else. Hopkins regarded it as a true bond between the creature and God. In this doctrine he also found a means of reconciling his intense delight in the beauty and 'inscape' of material things and his equally intense religious experiences. Thus he achieved a unity founded on a tension between opposites, and the apprehension of

this unity finds the typical expression in his poems like "Pied Beauty". But it may be noted that from his early days the poet seems to have been impressed not only by the sensuous richness of the world as he saw it, but also by its spiritual emptiness.

The adventure of the inner life, for Hopkins, was not merely a 'voyage' but a reconstruction. He found there an 'uncreated light' which would give meaning and shape to the 'ruck and reel' of the material universe. It was here that the rigorous ascetic discipline of the Jesuit training came to Hopkins's help. By his submission to that discipline he both gained and lost as a poet. He gained the enormous advantage of a disciplined inner life, which was at the same time enriched by the traditional symbolism of a church of age-old majesty and authority, enabling him to escape both the anarchic individualism of a Whitman and

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29 V. de Sola Pinto, Crisis in English Poetry 1880 to 1940 (London, 1951), p. 58.

unlovely Calvinism of a Kipling. But by becoming a Jesuit, Hopkins cut himself off from the main stream of contemporary English life and thought.

So far as formal features are concerned, the total effect of Hopkins's poetry is one of revolutionary innovation. To the young poets he has had the appeal of a great original craftsman. He brought into poetry high standards of integrity, concentration, musicality and formal beauty. Poets can learn the possibilities of language from Hopkins and the ways in which rhetoric can be used in a different way from that of the Elizabethan dramatists, Donne, Milton and Yeats. Charles Williams asserts that:

poets will return to him [Hopkins] as to a source not a channel of poetry; he is one who revivifies, not merely delights, equivalent genius.

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31 Collins, English Literature of Twentieth Century, p. 61.
32 Poems, p. xxxviii.
33 Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. xvi.
Dylan Thomas came closest to learning directly from Hopkins, while Hopkins's influence on W.H. Auden, C. Day Lewis and George Barker has been rather superficial and somewhat dangerous. The uniqueness of Hopkins's life, his vocation and his personality sets him apart as much as James Joyce of *Finnegan's Wake*. Hopkins tried to carry out, single-handed, a revolution in poetic art. He tried to incorporate the unity of life by integrating spiritual and sensuous experiences, and adopting sweeping reforms in technique which would give fresh vitality to the language and meter of English poetry. The greatness of his poetry can be judged from the impact it made on poets and critics who did not share the religion which inspired and governed all that Hopkins wrote.

During the last few decades Hopkins's fame has been spreading, and he is now being accepted as an important English poet. Yvor Winters, for instance, writes: "If one were to name the twelve or fourteen best British poets of the nineteenth century, Hopkins would certainly
deserve a place among them, and I think his place will be permanent." Opinions may differ as to Hopkins's merits as a poet, but his innovations in the technique and medium of poetry have greatly influenced the modern English poetry. His technical inventions are remarkable. His deliberate originality and daring innovations in language have occasionally earned him even downright denunciations. Robert Bridges, for example, draws our attention to his 'purely artistic wantonness', 'definite faults of style' and 'ellipses and liberties of ... grammar'. Most critics have, however, recognized many good qualities in Hopkins's poetry, despite its baffling oddities. Hopkins stands as the most individual of English poets. He deserves due praise for his originality and innovations. His poetry is full of gross violations of grammar such as an advertant omission of the relative pronouns, confusion of parts of speech, coining of strange compounds and reduction of a normal sequence of words to a mere jargon. His originality is

undeniable. It would be worth our while to consider some of the significant aspects of his linguistic creativity.

Hopkins was passionately concerned with the verbal and formal aspects of poetry. It was his keen interest in form, style and technique that obliged him to make a conscious use of stylistic and technical devices. He was a man of rare character and intelligence and possessed an originality which was radical and uncompromising, demanding a varied and novel medium. His search for a language flexible enough to render the actual movement of the drama of his consciousness, drove him to stylistic innovations and frequent 'deformations' of the English language. All these peculiarities have made his poetry difficult and forbidding. To understand his poetry one must try to understand his language of poetry.

There has been a long-felt need for a critical examination of his poetry as poetry and of its language in an objective way. The purpose of the present study is to attempt an analysis of his
chief stylistic characteristics. The analytical frame - work chosen for it is largely based on the linguistics:oriented approach to style, without being highly technical and hair - splitting. It is hoped that an adequate study of Hopkins's poetic style would be able to describe, interpret and interrelate the outstanding linguistic features of his language. The convergent patterns, recurrent deviations and consciously chosen optional transformations of his style will also be highlighted along with its typical syntactic and lexical features, including metaphorical and rhetorical devices.