CHAPTER-III

BACKGROUND STUDY OF THE COMPOSITION OF SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND SONGS OF EXPERIENCE AND OTHER WORKS

In order to assess the background study behind the composition of Blake’s ‘Songs of Innocence’ and ‘Songs of Experience’ and other major works it is worth considering the essential socio-political background that was largely functional to the creation of these works. The socio-political happenings which were responsible to a large extent for the shaping of Blake’s creative mind, were Howard’s Prison Reforms in 1774, American Revolution in 1775, Declaration of Independence in 1776, Treaty of Paris in 1783, French Revolution between 1789 to 1799, War with France in 1793, Abolition of Slave Trade in 1807, Second War with United States in 1812 and Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Actually in 1789, the year of the French Revolution, William Blake published his Songs of Innocence as the first volume to be produced in the form of illuminated printing and he reissued it in 1794 in a similar manner with the addition of Songs of Experience to form a single book. The first part seems to set out an imaginative vision of the state of innocence while the second one displays how life challenges, corrupts and destroys it. In Songs of Innocence Blake seems to be drawing his symbols from the Bible while in the Songs of Experience he exercises his talent in using the symbols of his own making and therefore its meaning stands far more elusive. Rousseau’s Social Contract (1761) proves to be the prelude of the French Revolution which finds its motivation from the opening words of Rousseau’s book which states “Man is born free, and every where he is in chains”. Thomas Paine's
the Rights of Man (1791) turns out to be the text book of popular radicalism. Some of his sentences like "Man has no property in man", or "There is a morning of reason rising upon the world" became widely popular. His assertion that the people had the right to alter any existing government at their pleasure and his violent attacks on British Monarchy forced people to think in terms of a new dawn of Socio-Political system. William Godwin (1756-1836) published his Political Justice in 1793. This book is actually a criticism of existing society, a system of social ethics and a series of prophecies for the future. In fact, in his early works written when he was sufficiently young, Blake seems to go back to the Elizabethan Song-Writers for his models but eventually for the greater part of his life he was essentially the poet of inspiration alone, following no voice but something which he seemed to hear in his own mystic soul.

Blake executed some small experimental plates in 1788. Then he attempted to sketch the twenty-seven plates of Songs of Innocence, dating the title page 1789. And thus Blake made the path clear for initiating the series of his famous Illuminated Books. The urge to produce his poems in this form was actually due to his typical form of mind that gave more importance to the life of imagination than the life of this mundane, material world. This philosophy demanded the identification of ideas with symbols which could be translated into visual images. The lyrical poems of Blake have materials enough to be accepted without the addition of visual components. Blake, actually, made his early copies of Songs of Innocence with very simple colouring. And then he soon went on elaborating the theme and method. By using pigments of unknown composition Blake was rapidly developing a philosophical system, expressed in symbols of increasing complexity and thus invented a
method of printing his plates in colours. After giving his *Songs of Innocence*, a complete shape, Blake composed *The Book of Thel*, an allegorical poem of irregular metre. However, Blake's increasing awareness of the prevailing social injustice directed his thoughts to the composition of a series of lyrical poems, forming the sequence known as *Songs of Experience*. However, the notion that Blake had already contemplated a second set of antithetical poems, embodying experience, while composing the *Songs of Innocence*, proved to be entirely false. The Innocence poems were, in reality, the products of an unspoiled mind in a state of innocence. In fact, the *Innocence* was converted into Experience by virtue of public events and private emotions. Blake was actually placed at a very critical stage of his life. He was very much concerned with the problem of Good and Evil. Blake was deeply moved by the feelings of pity for the sufferings of mankind. The streets of London was the living witness to the limitless tragedy of humanity. And out of this dark and dismal experience Blake's *Song of Experience* found its origin.

Blake first took the help for his colour printing method by executing some of the Experience plates. Then Blake went back to the use of water-colour. The year 1794 marks the title page of *Songs of Experience* and no separate copies of these poems are believed to be issued by him. These poems were always combined with the *Songs of Innocence* in a single volume, "Sheweing" as he asserted on the general title page, 'the two contrary states of the Human soul'. The character marked in the designs for Experience proves to be more severe than it is in those of Innocence, where the outlines are sometimes softened by additional engraved lines. And a more delicate beauty is attributed to the decorations of the title-page. And ultimately a time came when Blake thought in terms of issuing the
poems in a combined series. Then Blake managed to make some rearrangements, transferring a few poems from *Innocence* to *Experience*. As a result Blake had to vary the order of the plates in successive copies of the book. Blake composed one poem 'A Divine Image' and he etched a plate for it. Blake did never use this in any copy of the book; this is only revealed in an un-coloured print.

In fact, Blake was thirty years of age when he began to write *The Songs of Innocence*. The state of spontaneous and effortless happiness is effectively explored in *The Songs of Innocence*. In fact the process in the development of Blake's mind deserves both careful analysis and attention. Blake started with poetry — poetry that was obtained not from the sluggish streams of his time. With mellowing impulse he went back to the freshest sources in English poetry and expressed his feelings in imitation of Spenser, Milton, Shakespeare and Old Balladints. Blake had got the clarity and freshness of mind to such a degree that he learnt to distinguish his own thoughts from that of Pain's or Godwin's or that of any other, who patronized the publisher Johnson. The sign of the next change can be noted from the songs, included at the end of the grotesque drama, *An Island in the Moon*. The frame of Blake's mind reached a stage of culmination when Blake was living at Felpham. Here emotional and intellectual understanding left its place for what may be termed as "Spiritual Vision".

Blake's time witnessed the philosophers who were of opinion that the rational education could avoid the state of experience. They were convinced about the fact that the pains of self-consciousness were actually due to ignorance which could have been prevented. Blake turned down the opinions of these philosophers, called Deists, as fatal. Blake saw the inevitable association of Deism with
Behaviouralism. According to Blake, 'Moral Law' was placed at antithetically opposite pole to that of imagination. All such religions were virtually the "Religion of Hypocrisy" and they were despised by Blake.

As far as Blake's other creations are concerned, The Book of Thel stands between The Songs of Innocence and The Songs of Experience. And that actually marks the position of Thel. It is between two states. Innocence stands on the threshold of Experience.

Blake had written the Songs of Innocence at a time when he found himself committed, for his study, to the soul of man. He could not have gone back and amused himself with art in the fashionable manner of his contemporaries. Blake simply lacked the ability to turn back from any path that the pursuit of his genius had led him to. Even before Blake could finish the Songs of Innocence he came to find that man was a dual creature with contrary principles embedded in his nature. And then the two principles find expression in his The Lamb and The Tyger. Religion appeared to uphold the Lamb; but as far as The Tyger was concerned religion bade men hide their eyes. This could not satisfy Blake who perhaps anticipated Thomas Hardy:

"If way to the better there by, it exacts a fall look at the worst"².

However, in attempting a survey of the back-ground of the composition of the Songs, it becomes relevant to examine the main trends of the eighteenth century. In fact, the eighteenth century had been an age of classification. Insects, plants, animals and the races of man were divided into genera, species and sub species. It was
commonly supposed that this would lay bare the Divine Order or rational structure beneath the face of nature, but the result was entirely contrary. Intensive study of individual specimens only revealed their differences, encouraging speculation about the conflicts of opposing forces and the mysterious process of growth and maturation. Intensive intuition solved the problems which empiricism had brought to the surface. The mechanistic and static conception of creation was replaced by something organic and dynamic. The old idea could not be maintained in the light of increasing knowledge whether of the history of the political institutions, or of religions or of the arts. In 1812 Friedrich Schlegel wrote that the best theory of art is its history.

So something that found its beginning as a penetrating inquiry into the assumptions of the Enlightenment, conducted by philosophers like Herder and Kant, suddenly acquired a greater urgency and a more general significance in the 1790s. The sense of historical consciousness was largely sharpened by the course of the French Revolution. The idea of personal and political liberty got much more complicated. It demonstrated the frailty of reason and the force of passion, the insufficiency of theories and the power of circumstances to shape events. As an artist, Blake could not remain passive to the shock of the intellectual and political upheavals of the late eighteenth century. The yardstick of judging the works of art, literature and music was spontaneity, individuality and inner truth. The 'artist's sensibility' and 'emotional authenticity' became the distinctive feature of Romantic Art. Instead of reflecting on the timeless, universal values of classicism, the Romantic Art proved to be unique in the expression of the artist's own living experience. The attitude of doubt and scepticism that began in the eighteenth
century suddenly acquired deeper and more perplexing significance in the 1790s. Old orthodoxies were shaken; old certainties were undermined. The logical order of the universe had to be maintained. The work of art — painting, poem, novel or musical composition — came to be regarded not simply as a reflection of reality or the embodiment of an immutable or rationally conceived ideal but as an insight into the life or things and perhaps, a means of lightening the burden of mystery. An expressive theory of art replaced the age-old mimetic theory. Aesthetics, for the first time in Western thought, moved from the periphery to the centre of philosophical systems. The Romantics accepted the individual sensibility as the significant faculty of aesthetic judgment. The artistic revolution began in the 1750s and reached its climax in the early 1790s. During these years the Christ in him i.e. his creative imagination, had arisen from the tomb and the garments of theological faith which had so long disguised it, were thrown away. But Blake had the talent to absorb and fuse everything he borrowed from Swedenborg or Boheme into his own artistic personality. Others had spoken to theologians and magicians whereas Blake had spoken to poets and artists.

The death of Robert Blake in 1787 proved to be instrumental in the composition of the Songs in illuminated form. Blake nursed his brother with so much of care and affection that he is said to have slept for three days continuously when Robert virtually died. Immediately after the collapse of Robert Blake, William Blake developed an affair of disagreement with the partners of the print-shop resulting in the 'end' of the printing shop. And Blake, then, moved to Poland Street where he composed the Songs. It is believed that one night, a form resembling his brother Robert came to him and taught him how to engrave his poems upon copper and
how to print illustrations and decorative bordering upon the same pages with the poem. In later years he wrote to a friend, "Thirteen years ago I lost a brother, and with his spirit I converse daily and hourly in the spirit and see him in remembrance in the region of my imagination. I hear his advice and even now write from his dictates".

Blake's own illumination probably reached its height between his twentieth and twenty-seventh year, between the close of his purely literary activity and the shutting out of the light of the spirit "as by a door and window shutters" was coming upon him, in Boheme's beautiful phrase "like a bursting shower". In accordance with the opinion of Mr. Glecknov, the Songs are built upon the idea that the soul moves from "unorganized innocence" to "the higher innocence". Blake's procedure is to refute natural religion by showing the logical impossibility of its assertion that the religious sense in all men owes its origin to these same impressions. Blake indulges in an attack upon the eighteenth century form of Deism that was built upon the psychology of Locke. But as they do have moral and religious ideas, they must have extra-organic perceptions deriving from an extra-organic sensibility which Blake calls "the poetic or prophetic character". Blake, in his attempt to identify man's extra organic sense with the faculty that happens to be responsible in the production of poetry and prophecy, advocates that morality and religion owe their origin to the same spiritual capacity as poetry. This faculty is possessed unconsciously by the children and it is this faculty that inspired the piper of the songs to "Sing a song about a Lamb". Blake was convinced that it was not Innocence but Experience which implied the more illusory state of the soul. The lone idea that influences Blake's attitudes and intentions is the
conception of the relationship between innocence and experience. And this relationship finds its base on two forms: the systematic and the biographical. The systematic account is actually based on the notion that Innocence was composed to represent a state of the soil which, by itself, is not adequate and demands an opposite state "Experience" for completion.

But the biographical account serves to prove that Blake originally wrote the Songs of Innocence as a complete and independent work. The biographical account implies that if the Songs of Innocence was originally composed as a complete and independent work, they should be realised in the realm of a larger, schematic context. The most forceful argument that supports the ideas that the poems of Innocence implied a contrary set of poems from the beginning is that they themselves imply their own inadequacy and incompleteness.

Now, it may be noted that Blake made various kinds of experiments in the Elizabethan manner. Most of his attempts in this vein are set in an idealised version of the countryside and celebrate emotions and activities which, like those of the Songs of Innocence, tend to be purified of all complexity and taint. If we compare the "song by an old shepherd" with one of Blake's Innocence Poems, Chimney Sweeper, we can see the direct linear descent of the Songs of Innocence from the early pastorals. Blake himself seems to describe this development in his "Introduction" to the Songs of Innocence and he decided that if the new kind of song is to be religious, it is to be played on the same pipe as before. The inspiration was a brilliant one. This exploited the natural association between pastoral imagery and Christian Symbolism. And Blake is found careful in not putting stress on the Swedenborgian
distinction between naive innocence of children and the wise innocence of adults. Blake, in the *Songs of Innocence* enriches his point of view with Wordsworthian flavour. One may carefully observe the fact that all objects and events in the natural world have a corresponding meaning in the spiritual world. Blake may have derived his idea from Swedenborg and found that innocence is a manifestation of spiritual insight. The most effective fusion of the natural with the visionary landscape finds expression in *The Echoing Green*. The course of natural life is represented by natural day from 'dawn' in stanza I to 'dawn' in stanza III. In the middle stanza we are in the middle of life, in the world. And Blake presents both extremes of worldly life in the words of the "Old folk tales" who watch the children at play. *The Songs of Experience*, composed about 1793 and published in 1794, displays the same kind of self-satire and revolutionary naturalism found in the Lambeth Books of 1793 and 1794. The voice behind the poems of *Songs of Experience* is the voice of a reformer whose indignation is roused by the confrontation of unnecessary barriers to a state of life in which man could be joyful, titanic and free instead of being unhappy, restricted and downtrodden. Most of the poems are poems of psychological satires which implicitly advocate a psychological revolution. The fundamental satire is always psychological because the source of all human ills is false metaphysics. *The Songs of Experience* are generally called the poems of disillusionment — disillusionment in the prevailing social and religious order that had been accepted in the *Songs of Innocence*. Amidst the infinite possibilities and explorations of life the *Songs* express nothing but disillusionment. The satirical and parodic conception of the *Songs* left its way to a much broader, philosophical conception. In the systematic unity,
implied by the title of the songs, Blake advocates that Innocence is as permanent and as necessary to human existence as Experience.

However, in the lone poem The Tyger Blake mingles parody with philosophical and tonal comprehensiveness. The poem acknowledges the value of The Lamb but reserves its underlying satire for those who take it for granted that only lambs and angels are holy. This underlying satire, however, remains secondary to the affirmation which the poem projects in its brilliant and complex way of the divinity of both the tiger and the lamb. Both are found necessary to the richest of possible worlds in this poem.

However, it was quite evident that the spiritual loneliness of Blake was a phenomenon of his age. To Blake, the spiritual world was a continuous source of energy. And Blake had the complete pragmatism of the artist. It has often been remarked that Blake's early lyrics recall the Elizabethans. In accordance with the opinion of Blake, poetry is allegory addressed to the intellectual powers. In fact, it is quite impossible to understand Blake without understanding the Bible through Blake's own eyes. The other source is Ovid's Metamorphoses. Blake seeks to relate their symbolism with his own. If one examines this, one emerges from a haze of suggestive allusion into a new kind of poetic thought. An inner logical discipline is found. Blake wrote a brilliant criticism of Chaucer. And this refers not to a technique of mystical illumination but to a lost art of reading poetry. The fact is that Blake had carefully read and annotated Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding. Locke, along with Bacon and Newton, is constantly in Blake's poetry a symbol of every kind of evil, superstition and tyranny. Whatever influence Locke had on Blake was clearly a negative one. One may expect Blake's attitude to have some points in common with idealist
Berkeley. In fact Blake is quite ready to admit that the true method of knowledge is experiment but he insists that everything depends on the mental attitude of the experimenter. Blake protests against the implication that man is material to be formed by an external world. The artist is bound to find the formless and unselected linear series on sense-data, very different from what he wishes to form. The composition of "music" is an imaginative ordering of the sense experience of sound. For Blake, the acquiring of the power to independently visualize sense-experience was a painful effort to be achieved by relentless discipline. But at the same time one must note that the senses are the basis of all art. No painter ever painted an abstract idea; he paints only what he can visualize. And art owes its vividness to the fact that concrete is more real than general. And it is in this context that one must appreciate the fact that though Blake is an eighteenth century phenomenon even in Philosophy, Locke's reputation can perhaps be left to take care of itself.

But as the artist develops he becomes more and more interested in the art and more and more impatient of the help he receives from nature. The fall of man began with the appearance of an independent object-world and continued in this state of generation, where we begin life in helpless dependence on Nature for all our ideas. Blake calls this independent nourishing force in nature as the female will. In the realm of poetry one may come to find Dryden and Pope adopting a heroic couplet and using it as a medium to stretch all the ideas to form a well-organised and harmonised creative essence. The artist cannot achieve complete control of his medium without complete freedom to do that. Blake felt that art is infinitely great and therefore he fought against every tendency that spoilt the art. And it is this attitude that brings Blake
much closer to medieval art than to the Renaissance. Blake was prepared to give a tolerant and sympathetic reading either to Swedenborg’s *True Christian Religion* or to Paine’s *Age of Reason*.

The Bible had a major role to play in shaping the creative personality of Blake. The Bible proves to be the archetype of Western Culture and the Bible with all its derivatives provides basis for most of our major art: for Dante, Milton, Michelangelo and Raphael. The most complete form of art, Blake thinks, is a kind of cyclic vision which like the Bible sees the world between the two poles of fall and redemption.

In Western art this is most clearly represented in the miracle-play-sequences and encyclopedic symbolism of the Gothic Cathedral, which often cover the entire imaginative field from creation to the last judgement and always fit integrally into some important aspect of it. The poet expresses himself in a lyric only by dramatizing the mental state or mood he is in. But to create one must balance and harmonise one's inner feeling. Blake's engraved lyrics are grouped around the Primary division of states into those of innocence and those of experience. And it is particularly in his conception of the creation and Fall that Boheme influenced Blake. The three 'principles' mentioned by Boheme are as follows:

The first Principle is God conceived as wrath or fire. God expressed as light becomes the second principle. Redemption thus involves not only the escape of the visionary power from the selfhood, but also a complete rejection of natural religion and the whole fallen order of nature.

So, to understand Blake's thought historically, one must keep in mind an affinity with the Renaissance traditions -- the
imaginative approach to God through love and beauty in Italian Platonism. In these traditions again, one should distinguish certain elements which, though found in the vicinity of Blake's type of thinking, were either condemned or ignored by him. The idea that one can create a larger humanity from nature, the notion that the Bible is understood only by an initiated imagination -- all seem to be typically Blakean.

The two major incidents - the French Revolution and the American Revolution — had some significant importance in shaping and forming the mind of Blake. Blake regards French Revolution as merely an inevitable sequel of a far more crucial event that was shaping the mentality of Blake. If one turns from human history to nature, one sees that revolution, in the sense of a renewal of energy and power, is not haphazard but cyclic. The most fundamental effort of the imagination in this vegetable world lies in the endeavour to see in the death of a man or in the decline of a day and year, an image or reproduction of the Original Fall and in the return of human and natural life an image or prototype of the ultimate resurrection. As Blake never abandoned his belief in the potential imminence of an apocalypse, he did not, like Wordsworth or Coleridge, alter the essentially revolutionary pattern of his thinking. And it is in this context that one may note that while within the individual form of life Orc insensibly merges into Urizen, yet as states of existence Orc and Urizen, youth and age, are eternally different things. They represent the two contrary states of the soul which Blake calls innocence and experience. This aspect of their relationship brings the commentary to another group of minor prophecies. This group includes the two engraved sets of lyrics, Songs of Innocence, and Songs of Experience.
Historically, the *Songs of Innocence* descend from the pastoral convention, the vision of life as a simplified rural existence. This history exhibits a series of crisis in which a sudden flash of imaginative vision, as in the French Revolution, bursts out and is counteracted by a more ruthless defence of the status quo and subsides again. The evolution comes in the fact that the opposition grows sharper each time and will one day present a clear-cut alternative of eternal life or extermination. And this merging of imagination and time is the axis on which all the thought of Blake, the poet and the painter, revolve and fuse into a unified whole.

In fact Blake was fully aware of the economic consequences of the division of Labour and the artistic value of the prints. The Industrial Revolution posed a sharp crisis for the artist. At the juncture many artists inevitably saw the danger of transforming their designs into a mechanical system which would destroy their individuality. In the 1780s Blake seems to have attempted to put across millenarian ideas in a covert fashion by sending paintings with apocalyptic subjects to Royal Academy. Actually Blake's invention of a process which combined text and design by means of a relief-etched copper-plate may be seen not as an act of personal liberation but as a liberation of all the artists from the tyranny of mercantile economy. And the prophecies of Blake in the 1790s are marked by a sense of urgency, for they attempt to interpret the course of the French Revolution as it actually unfolds. And Blake noted with severe concern that in this Deistical World hypocrisy reigned, materialism triumphed as the Divine was relegated to the realm of Mystery. Men were divided from each other and politics became the other name of corruption. And the arts were found to be imitative. And against this eventful but significant socio-political
context, Blake sought to dominate human history until the advent of revolution. And in 1789, Blake published his *Songs of Innocence*. By this time Blake reached the doctrine of contraries, and both the title of the book and some of the poems in it imply a sequel about a contrary state. *The songs of Experience* were etched in 1793, and in the following year Blake issued a combined edition with the subtitle 'Sheweing the Two contrary states of the Human soul'. After the composition of *Songs of Innocence* Blake had to undergo a period of dark frustration. And this reduced innocence to illusion and converted Experience as the ultimate reality. Thus the Songs of 1794 constitute a single work. The *Songs of Experience*, hereafter, was never published independently; it was published as a single work along with songs of Innocence. And thus Blake managed to break the circle of conventional illustration by drawing some imaginative forms in his own mind. So this attempt largely contributes to the sense of higher mystery which surrounds the *Illuminated Books*. So the readers were inevitably drawn towards the objective of seeking spiritual meaning behind the surface.

*Jerusalem* happens to be one of the most remarkable poems of Blake. The poem with its touching description of England’s green and pleasant land establishes itself almost as the mark of a national poem. In the 1780s the image of Jerusalem as a city of innocence establishes itself as an innocent emblem far from the dismal and dark picture of the then scenario of London. But with the closing of the decade at the out
break of French Revolution in 1789, justice could make its re-entry into England too.

During this time Blake used to meet Joseph Johnson at his residence at 72, St. Paul's Churchyard. And it was here that he greatly enjoyed the opportunity of meeting some of the remarkable activists of his era, including Thomas Paine, the revolutionary journalist, William Godwin, the political philosopher and Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the earliest feminists. Among these three Paine was the most influential person who arrived in Philadelphia in November 1774 just before the first shots were fired in the War of Independence. Paine also became famous for his pamphlet named *Common Sense*, which inspired the Americans to
fight for liberty against the British. But when Paine reached London, he found the government vehemently attacking the savagery of the mob of Paris. Paine defended their cause and wrote the famous pamphlet *The Rights of Man*. He believed that 'All men are born equal' and set out his vision of a just society. Meanwhile Paine got involved in some controversy and Blake himself warned him to flee. Blake put his hand on a soldier and stated if he did not start for France immediately he would be a dead man. Paine listened to Blake's advice and crossed over to France.

However, the report of massive bloodshed on the street of Paris dimmed the enthusiasm of many dignified personalities inclusive of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the lake poets. Blake, also, got disappointed with this terror and rejected the idea of revolution for ever. At this time England jointed the alliance of foreign-powers, determined to destroy the new French state.
Very soon the radical writers along with their publishers got silenced. Johnson declined to publish the second edition of *The Rights of Man* for fear of being prosecuted. Blake, himself, left aside his own assignment on French Revolution. *Political Justice*, by William Godwin, published in 1793, manages to escape prohibition because of its high price that prevented the poor class from buying it. But still a new flame of protest echoed itself through the path of P.B. Shelley in 1792 — the year of publishing *The Rights of Man*. In fact P.B. Shelley was the torch-bearer of the new message of enlightenment that could manifest itself through the creative works of the poet. Shelley’s short life found some involvement with Blake who retreated to the total political silence by the time. Shelley died in 1822 when his ship sank in the bay of Leghorn in Italy, five years before Blake’s death. But before his death Blake could share the love and enthusiasm of common people who, in turn, shared his love for the world of imagination, far away from the world of sheer logic and
In a year of industrial unrest and demands for political reform, workers demonstrated throughout the north of England. In Manchester, a peaceful crowd was charged by cavalry at the Massacre of Peterloo. But there were technical achievements too: while the first steamship to cross the Atlantic was completing her voyage, gas pipes were being laid for street lighting in London.

A Year in the Life 1819

Child labour in the mills
Children as young as six were employed in the cotton mills, winding dangerous machines for up to 10 hours a day. Several Factory Acts, including one in 1819, were passed to improve children's conditions. But it was only in the 1840s that there were properly enforced.

New mining machinery
This painting, created around 1839, shows a pit head using steam-winding gear to raise the coal. The Industrial Revolution was accelerated by technical innovations such as this.
reasoning. The disciples of Shiloh, like Blake himself, got disappointed with the idea of capitalism and industrialism which was taking over the country. The technological achievements that were the factors of disappointment to the imaginative section of society were a source of pride, as well as employment for the vast majority of population. By this time the laborers of England were enjoying the touch of the world's first system of urban gas-lighting. An even more alarming reminder of the hazards of the new technology came from Paris. Madam Blanchard who had undertaken to let off fireworks from a balloon over city, was killed when the balloon caught fire. A delicate pieces of spectacularly brilliant attempt actually left no doubt of the deplorable fate of the aeronaut. This incident stirred the mind of Blake to a great extent.
In fact this is the time when the textile industries of the midland and northern countries were hit by a severe slump and employers started cutting off the wages of the working classes. To stop the protest the authorities responded by stationing a detachment of cavalry in the town.

The discontent springing from the economic causes became less and less convincing. It went much deeper – the constitutions become rotten to the core. On 16th August a large mass of crowd of around 60,000 people assembled at St. Peter’s Fields in Manchester to hear the celebrated radical speaker Henry Hunt demanding just such a reform.

The consequence was simply touching. A huge mass of crowd inclusive of men, women and children were simply cut down and mutilated. It is not that the radical reformers got disappointed but also many moderate men were deeply shocked. But in the country, as a whole, there was no real danger of armed insurrection. For the most
part the aspirations of the radicals were as idealistic as those of the visionaries.

In fact the supposed revolutionaries were a good deal less feverish than the authorities. In London there was indeed a secret directory of thirteen men planning to kill the members of the Cabinet and take over the capital; but in the country as a whole there was no real danger of armed insurrection. A total of nine convictions in Lancashire for illegal manufacture of pikes constituted the only conceivable evidence of revolutionary intentions. For the most part the aspirations of the radicals were as idealistic as those of the visionaries. There was as much chance of the new Jerusalem being built in England as there was of the guillotine being set up there.

So, it is found that all these events had a great impact upon Blake’s mind which was essentially a very sensitive one. And inevitably his major works clearly showed this unrest which was ultimately brought to a serene tranquility by Blake’s prismatic imagination.