



NOTES:

UNIT: II (poetry-i)

GOD MADE THE COUNTRY BY William Cowper

About the poet: William Cowper (1731-1800) was born in November, 1731 at Berkhamsted, UK. He was shy and sensitive and his life was plagued with misfortunes of different kinds. However, he wrote some remarkable poems. In his work, there is some note deeper in feeling. There is a blend of the old and new with much of the form of the old and something of the spirit of new. The present poem is an example of the type. It is an extract from 'The Task', Book 1.

Substance: In this poem, the poet highlights a bitter criticism of the artificial life style of the rich and powerful aristocrats of the town. The village is the place where nature's real beauty lies. What god created for men to live in is found in village. Health, virtue, happiness etc. are in the village. Whereas, the townsmen only know the artificial beauty. They are completely dependent upon artificial objects such as chariots, sedans etc. the poet conveys a message that we should know what we really are and also to realize what we should be and how to develop our own qualities. In the countryside one can feel the groves that give shade to the pensive travelers, the beauty and the effects of the moonlight, the natural music of the song birds. In the town the artificial lamps darken the moonlight, the noise in the town scared and mute the song birds to sing. The townsmen hold swords instead of fan and fight or kill among themselves and do harm to the country for their own sake. Even the enemies could not have done the harm they have done to the country. They have turned the whole umpire into a broken structure soon to fall down.

Word meaning:

country-village

virtue-good and excellent qualities free from sinful waysholds out-distribute

groves- wood of small size

chariots- carriages drawn by horses

sedans- palanquin

fatigue- exhaustion

contrives- plans or manages to do with some skill

pensive- sad

eclipse- darken confound- defeat

notes- song; **thrush**- English song bird ; **mute**- silent; **mirth**- merriment

plagues- causes trouble

mutilated- damaged or broken severely soon to fall- about to break down.

Lines 1-5:

Paraphrase: God made the village and man made the town. If it is so then there is no wonder that health and virtue are the two things that make life's bitter miseries, which everyone feels in his life, sweet which are found in plenty in the village and they are least threatened in the fields and groves of the villages.

Lines 7-11:

Paraphrase: The poet addresses those rich and powerful people who are born in town and always carried about in chariots and sedans that they know nothing of fatigue. What they know is the tiresome caused by idleness. They know nothing of real and beautiful scenes except those artificial things. The poet asks them to realize their natural habitat which is in the village. They should know that they can only shine and achieve greatness in the village. The mindsets of those aristocrats to harm others can only be removed in the village.

Lines 12-20

Paraphrase: In the village one can find the groves which were planted to give comfort in their shade to the tired traveler at noon. In the evening, the moonlight comes slipping through the sleeping leaves of the trees. The villagers only wish to get the moonlight which is cool and calm. They also enjoy the harmonious songs of the song birds. The villagers feel happy even though they don't have bright lights of the town (which they feel that they only eclipses or darkens the natural light). On hearing the noise of the town, the thrush feels scared and departs and the nightingale stop to sing.

Lines 21-26

Paraphrase: The rich and the powerful people in the name of merriment does a lot of harms to the village. Foolish actions are also done. (In the name of power) they hold swords in their hands (that actually should hold a fan) and harm the country more than an enemy could do. Their foolish activities have turned the strength of the country into a broken structure soon to collapse.