

**NURTURING THE VALUES THROUGH EDUCATION AND RELIGION IN OLIVER GOLDSMITH'S 'THE DESERTED VILLAGE'****MR. KAMALAKAR BABURAO GAIKWAD**Assistant Professor,
MGV's M.S.G. Arts, Sci.
& Commerce College,
Malegaon, Dist-Nashik.**ABSTRACT:**

Oliver Goldsmith (1728- 1774) was an Irish novelist, playwright and poet, who is best known for his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), his pastoral poem *The Deserted Village* (1770), and his plays *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771, first performed in 1773). His poem *The Deserted Village*, published in 1770, expresses a fear that the destruction of villages and the conversion of land from productive agriculture to ornamental *landscape gardens* would ruin the *peasantry*. Oliver Goldsmith, as a conservative dreamer, wants to create an idealized picture of village life. Being an impressive writer, he wishes to teach the readers to value the things like modesty and community which we have lost in present era. He employs the mediums of teacher and priest, the most respected people in the community as an eye opener. Goldsmith wants to cherish and nurture the value system through education and religion. Goldsmith's belief in the superiority of the rural life finds expression in poetic style as well as subject. The poem elevates the image of the schoolmaster himself from a country teacher to an important and respected figure in provincial life. The poet projects the idealization of the pastoral landscape in *The Deserted Village* reveals a profound nostalgia for a now lost past for which the poet yearns. Present paper investigates the moral and ethical values of education and religion which helps us to comprehend and implement the same in society in which we live.

Keywords: The Village, Schoolmaster, Children, Value of Education and Religion, Villagers, Priest etc.

Mahatma Gandhi quotes,

"I believe that religious education must be the sole concern of religious associations."

As per this quotation, Oliver Goldsmith has attempted to imbibe the values of education on religion on the minds of his readers through his well-known poem, 'The Deserted village' through the portrayal of The Village Schoolmaster and the Village Parson (Priest) who were the backbone of the village Auburn.



The researcher intends to focus on various aspects of the poem for better comprehension. If we look at the structure of the poem, we visualize that the poem is written in heroic couplet, i.e. ten-syllable line is followed by another, with an end rhyme straight way. There is a balanced and symmetrical verse form, in which each two lines (twenty syllables in all) make up a kind of unit of meaning; the couplet. The couplets here are mainly closed couplets. Each couplet ends with a pause and is a unit of sense in itself:

"Full well they laughed, with counterfeited glee,

At all his jokes, for many a joke had he." (9-10)

The diction or vocabulary is carefully chosen so that no colloquial or vulgar words mar the effect of the poem. It has a modest and elevated tone. There are also some inversions of word-order. The pauses in the line create a graceful effect. The concluding line of the couplet breaks the line after the fourth syllable (4,6), so creating a symmetry:

"A man severe he was, and stern to view,

I knew him well, and every truant knew." (5-6)

The poem's jokes are gentle and wry. The tone of the poem is balanced and genial. The poem has its moral value in itself.

Before studying the poem in detail, we should try to understand the background of the poem. Oliver Goldsmith feels that England was becoming obsessed with trade and creating wealth, and that in this new imperial, capitalist England the ordinary rural poor were getting a raw deal. He wrote his poem to warn again "the rage of gain," in other words the useless over-accumulation of wealth that set wealth over people. The schoolmaster is part of that good world that he believes is being done away with, the "spirit" of England before the "spirit" of capitalism took hold. He creates an affectionate portrait that implies the modest, truthful, humble world of community that he admires best.

'The Deserted Village' is one of the best known poems of the eighteenth century England by Oliver Goldsmith. Goldsmith describes an imaginary ideal village 'Auburn', which he had observed. Returning to the village, he noticed the declined and ruined state of his village which has been idealized through the lens of time and memory. Initially this village was vibrant and alive but now Goldsmith observed it as deserted and overgrown. He remembers the good things of village life as well as humorous portrait of village school master. The reason of desertedness is that all people have emigrated and privatization of their land has done by the rich people. Therefore Goldsmith depicts this situation,

"Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide"

Goldsmith depicts the memory of an educated schoolmaster who occupies a position of reverence and awe in a rural village. The village schoolmaster is the affectionate and humorous portrait who reflects a respected figure from an idealized past. Goldsmith expresses a concern for the uncertain future of the country life in a time of growing

commerce and industry. The poem begins with a pastoral description of the schoolhouse and its master:

*Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way
With blossom'd furze unprofitably gay,
There, in his mansion, skill'd to rule,
The village master taught his little school (1-4)*

The portrait of the village is one of natural beauty, the blooming flowers unconcerned with the commerce and industry. The schoolmaster resides inside his 'mansion', and ironic reference to the simple building of the schoolhouse. This figures the schoolmaster as lord over his domain of young pupils and an imposing figure of intellectual prowess in the village. The presence of the schoolmaster in the village is remarkable. The village has the literate, illiterate, rustics and ordinary working class people. For the villagers, the schoolmaster is like a god. The school children have a great respect for him. They are quite scared of him. They laugh at his jokes, even if they are not funny.

Goldsmith portrays the schoolmaster as a respected figure of learning in a rural village in which basic reading and writing skills were the highest education many villagers attained. He is an awesome presence, a man deserving of respect and admiration. He is described thus: "A man severe he was, and stern to view" (5) who commands respect from his pupils. The children 'laugh'd with counterfeited glee' (9) at his many jokes, whether they were funny or not. Yet the schoolmaster is not a fearsome figure as the narrator is quick to point out: "Yet he was kind; or if severe in aught, / The love he bore to learning was in fault" (13-14). His faults, if any, are due to his dedication to education and learning rather than as character defects. The adults in the village are impressed with the way he can survey fields ("lands he could measure", 17) and how he can work out boundaries or the times of holy-days like Easter. He can even do more complex calculations ("gauge", 18). Of course, this is all ironic: the school-teacher isn't *that* knowledgeable – he just *seems* very knowledgeable to the "gazing rustics" (22). Goldsmith gently mocks at the village schoolmaster: He's a big fish in a small pond – it's very easy for him to impress the villagers with his learning, just because he can read a bit of Latin and knows how to do his sums. The parson, the religious leader of the village is the most respected man, but the schoolmaster loves a good argument with him, and keeps arguing even when he's obviously lost (19-20). On the other hand, this is a loving, endearing portrait. Here's a man who is really modest and doing a good job in a quiet and simple place: helping to spread a little literacy and numeracy among the ordinary people of the village, helping them out in doing calculations about "terms" and so forth. He's at the centre of a community – and Goldsmith is mourning the passing away of that community, the passing away of the village itself, now deserted. That's why the lovely yellow flowers on the furze are "unprofitably gay" (2) – there is now no-one about to enjoy their beauty. The schoolmaster is gone long ago, with all the children of his school. So, this is an affectionate portrait of a community that is no more, and the school-house now deserted. The affectionate portrait of the schoolmaster is a part of this world that has passed away.

The villagers are impressed with his ability to read and write, measure lands, do complex calculations, and mark the cycle of religious holy days. Adults and children alike hold his learning in awe; but this is an ironic passage which emphasizes the ignorance of the villages rather than the learnedness of the schoolmaster. In arguments with the parson, the



schoolmaster does not always triumph, but uses 'words of learned length and thund'ring sound' to further the argument, gaining respect from the audience of villagers as well.

While words of learned length and thund'ring sound

Amazed the gazing rustics rang'd around

And still they gaz'd and still the wonder grew,

That one small head could carry all he knew (21-24)

His basic knowledge and ability to read make him seem knowledgeable to the 'gazing rustics' (22), but he is not the intellectual god he is held up to be. His importance is relative only to their own ignorance. However, this is not a satirical portrait meant to reveal weakness or fault; the poet's admiration of the schoolmaster is clear. He is the source of education to the village, at times ruled by the 'love he bore to learning' (14) but doing a good deed in bring education to the common people and fulfilling a vital role in village life. In eulogizing the passing the schoolmaster, Goldsmith is mourning the passing of the community of which the schoolmaster was central.

Conclusion:

Thus Goldsmith's poem is more than a wistful nostalgia of his own childhood experience. His message is an explicit criticism of the decline of rural life in favour of urban centres. The revered figure of the schoolmaster and the parson is lost and forgotten, their value and respect is no more. Goldsmith stands against the ideals of the modern world: industrialism, commerce and materialism. The portrait of the schoolmaster and the priest is a tribute to that part of the world, the rural countryside, which is fading away to make room for capitalist enterprise.

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