

Melancholic note in ⁽³⁾ Elegy: Personal Gloom
of the Poet.

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Thomas Gray was the most popular poetic figure in English Literature in the latter half of the 18th century between Pope and Wordsworth. His was an age of tradition. He shared the classical taste of his age but his poetry contains the seeds of Romanticism. That is he began as a classicist and ended as a Romanticist. His 'Elegy written in the Country Churchyard' is a very popular elegiac poem. By virtue of this single piece, Gray stands at the head of all the English elegiac poets and holds for all ages to come his unassailable and sovereign station. Here, he deals with the simple life of the villages with all sincerity, tenderness and sympathy. Let us see the poem in a brief.

An elegy is a poem of grief, sorrow and sufferings of the poet expresses his feelings of despair and suffering at the lot of some unhappy people. Gray, in this elegy, pays a tribute to the village forefathers who were devoted to their work and spent their life far from the madding crowd. At the same time, there are ample references to his own gloomy life. So, the melancholic tone of the poem is abundantly peering throughout the poem.

The whole of the Elegy is coloured by a subtle note of melancholy that runs from the beginning to the end. It begins with the romantic invocation of Nature to create an atmosphere for the poet to set down his contemplation. He seems to have experienced the fascination of the stillness of the churchyard with heaps of ruined tombs around him.

The curfew tolls, the sun begins to sink and soon all the business of the day is over.

Darkness covers the entire land, silence reigns supreme, only occasionally broken by the droning of beetles. The tweeling of the sheep bells and the hoofs of the lovely owls seem to intensify the silence. The poet is left alone in the dark.

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day
The lowing herd wind slowly over the lea
The ploughman homeward plods this weary way
And leaves the world to darkness and to see."

The poet lingers in the churchyard noting the signs of approaching nightfall. His reflection on the life and death of the villagers is marked by a tone of sad and intense sincerity and the recognition of the dignity of the simple life. His close to the soil and sympathy with their fate make the Elegy look forward to the humanitarian enthusiasm. See the following lines:-

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear
Full many a flower is born to bleach unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

The presentation of the life of the country people is thoroughly coloured in the melancholic note.

The village forefathers lying in their graves are gone to the remote world of forgetfulness.

They are no more remembered the following lines show Gray's intense feelings for the villagers.

"For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn
Or busy housewife ply her evening care

No children run to kiss their sire's return
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share"

Gray is in a state of profound despair and gloominess. His mind is full of melancholic and pessimistic thoughts. He reckons the sad plight of the innocent and ignorant village folk. In fact, the melancholic mood of the elegy is but a reflection of Gray's own melancholic personality. It seems heavenly, that he has discovered his true soul. He comes to realise the futility of worldly pomp and show that make people face their lots. All worldly things are subject to grave.

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave
Awaits like the inevitable hour
The paths of glory lead but to the grave"

has not forgotten to speak about himself
elegy and through the fate of the vill
ers. He also mourns his own fate tow
concluding part of the elegy partic
the epitaph. He declares himself.

Here rests his head upon the lap of
A youth of fortune and to fame
Fair Science found not on his humble
And melancholy mark'd line for his

conclude the elegy in the superb exp
Gray's poetic genius. The feeling tha
ses the are so universal and an
sing so perfect that it soon becau
rooted in the English mind. The
poem lies in the poet's personal
ve approach to his subjects. It de
he required traits of great elegy
whole atmosphere is melancholic sy
poet's own life.