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Question - Discuss after Tillyard, the view that "Milton's Lycidas is fundamentally one of his personal poems."

Answer - Tillyard thinks that critics have not adequately taken note of the fact that Milton's Lycidas is 'fundamentally one of his personal poems', the real subject-matter of the poem is not Edward King or the poet's attitude towards King or his grief on his premature death as Milton himself. If this view of the poem be taken, it acquires a new unity of purpose and we understand the *raison d'être* of his digressions, especially the one of the "corrupt clergy". The view that it is one of the most intensely personal poems of Milton, is further strengthened by the formal perfection of the poem and the apparent absence of evidence of deep personal grief over the death of Edward King. Let us go into further details about these personal

elements:

- (a) King and Milton had many things in common, they were college-chums, both were young and imaginative and were imbued with high ideals and aims in their poetic career. So it was natural for him to think of what 'Fate' might have in store for him. Everything is uncertain. Nobody can overrule the decrees of 'Fate'. So the agonising thought of his own premature death, suggested to him that, what he intended to do for King by commemorating his name in verse, might be done for him by the gentle 'Muses'. He is led to think of some future poets who may wish him peace in his grave in an elegy after his own death.
- (b) In the very opening lines, he strikes a personal note by referring to his own immaturity as a poet before embarking on the work of a verse composition on Edward King

and not to King himself. He apologises to his readers for turning to poetry before the maturity of his poetic genius and risks writing premature poetry. 'mourn' he must for King. If a similar fate overtook him he incidentally expects to be mourned in return.

(c) The thought of the premature death of King brings to his mind the possibility of his own premature death which would undoubtedly mean the frustration of all his poetic ideals, aims and ambitions, he has tenderly cherished so long. He is, however, consoled by higher spiritual thoughts about the true meaning of fame. He consoles himself with the thought that love will judge him aright and assign to him his legitimate recognition as a poet.

(d) Incidentally, while talking

about St. Peter's participation as the chief mourner among other mourners, the poet is led to refer to his own struggles with the "Corrupt clergy" of the time. He is, however, confident that their days are doomed, as the two-headed engine will ultimately deal with them a final blow.

- (e) The poet finally emerges into a state of calm and tranquillity after his brief excursion into the deplorable state of the Church in England under the fostering and sobering influences of 'Nature' and is confident about the ~~can~~ certainty of eternal life.

The end. //

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