

## The Human Abstract

William Blake

PITY would be no more  
If we did not make somebody poor;  
And Mercy no more could be  
If all were as happy as we.

And mutual fear brings peace,  
Till the selfish loves increase;  
Then Cruelty knits a snare,  
And spreads his baits with care.

He sits down with holy fears,  
And waters the ground with tears;  
Then Humility takes its root  
Underneath his foot.

Soon spreads the dismal shade  
Of Mystery over his head;  
And the caterpillar and fly  
Feed on the Mystery.

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,  
Ruddy and sweet to eat;  
And the raven his nest has made  
In its thickest shade.

The Gods of the earth and sea  
Sought thro' Nature to find this tree;  
But their search was all in vain:  
There grows one in the Human brain.

### About the Poem

This poem offers a closer analysis of the four virtues- Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love- that constituted both God and Man in "The Divine Image". The poet says that Pity could not exist without poverty, and mercy would not be necessary if everyone was happy. This poem satirizes each of these virtues, showing what happens to them when calculation replaces spontaneity and self-righteous morality usurps innocent joy and understanding.

### **Glossary:**

mutual: reciprocal

snare: trap

baits: food to attract animals as prey

humility: humble behaviour

dismal: mood of gloom or depression

### **1. Choose the correct alternative:**

(a) 'If we did not make somebody poor;'

What will not be left then-

(i) pity

(ii) love

(iii) distress

(iv) happiness

(b) Circle the words depicting emotions:-

(i) cruelty

(ii) deceit

(ii) pity

(iv) ruddy

(c) What are the factors that cause poverty?

(i) injustice

(ii) unemployment

(iii) population

(iv) all of the above

### **2. Answer the following questions in 15-20 words:**

(a) What does cruelty do?

(b) What does 'humility takes root' mean?

(c) "Soon spreads the dismal shade of mystery over his head;"

What does 'mystery' here refer to?

(d) What does caterpillar and fly symbolize here?

### **3. Answer the following questions in 30-40 words:**

(a) How are 'mutual fear and selfish love' related to each other?

(b) "And waters the ground with tress" Explain.

(c) Why has the shade of the tree of mystery been called thickest?

### **4. Answer the following questions in 150 words:**

(a) How are these two matched poems related to each other in content? How is human being depicted in 'The Song of Innocence (The Divine Image) and how is he/she depicted in 'The Song of Experience' (The Human Abstract)?

Do we find both aspects working in an average human being?

(b) Discuss the central idea of the poem.