CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The seventeenth century was the age of “uncertainty in all spheres of life”. There occurred the change in values and attitudes of human being. It was the age of reason and intellect. Hobbes materialistic work was published but not welcomed. The age was divided into “things spiritual and material”. In this age, Donne wrote metaphysical poetry.

The metaphysician and the mystic, both aim for union with God, which Donne never experienced, yet he was spiritual and genuinely devout at the core of the heart. His religious poetry varies “from the thirteenth and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” but it manifests “a period of transition”.

John Donne is found struggling in his meditation from Satire III till his last days when he wrote ‘Hymne to the God Father’ where he has transformed himself. Donne’s poetry indicates “his ground tone of religious quest,” even when outwardly he seems mocking everything. He, at the root, explores “for the One” affirms “his discontent with the fluctuations of transitory passion.”
Even in his early poetry, Donne inspite of “his insistence on the physical” love, he fuses spiritual love in exuberance of theological and religious images. For instance his Extasy is a blend of “sensuall Extasie” and “mystical extasies”. The poem opens with the physical desires but reposes “with the spiritual”.

“Love’s mysteries in soules doe grow,  
But yet the body is his booke.”

‘The Funerall’ is a “meditation on death” where the poet’s “half mocking transformation” is shown by “a symbol of physical lust into a religious mystery”. With the death of his wife, Donne lives “in the spiritual realm” of the immortal souls. His Holy Sonnet 17 points out the way of his spiritual journey where his mind is settled “Wholly on heavenly things”.

Gosse thinks that the ‘Holy Sonnets’ were written after the death of Ann More but they were not written in the same period, in fact, each sonnet can be considered “a separate meditation”. Donne’s ‘Holy Sonnets’ exhibit “a more intellectual style”, as well as “a more passionate quality”. His ‘Holy Sonnets’ are the “meditations on love of God, on death--- and on the Day of Judgment”. The poem ‘Hymn to God the Father’ presents that the sin of human being is great but “the
mercy of God” is greater. It is “the saving love of God in Christ”. But before that he asks himself what he has done “for Christ”, and what he should do “for Christ?” Similarly, Donne pleads God to purify him. This purgation is seen where the poet in a colloquial with God speaks like a friend or like a servant to his master.

Donne suggests purgation through his “summary of sin and a reminder of its consequences”. It is purgation, because this becomes “part of a traditional colloquy with God after a visualization of the Day of Doom”.

Mysticism ends at a spiritual realization of God. “Such a realization” is “an experience of communion and union with God”. In Crashaw’s poetry, the root of this realization is faith, the blossom indicates love and the fruit shows union. It suggests “positive freedom and bliss, a direct communion with the divine”,

“Love thou art absolute sole Lord
Of life and death”²

Crashaw urges for purgation, as it is seen in the following lines:

“Onely thou art above, and when towards thee
By thy leave I can looke, I rise againe;
But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,

That not one houre my selfe I can sustaine;

Thy Grace may wing me to prevent his art,

And thou like Adamant draw mine, iron heart”.³

The soul itself being divine can therefore experience “God by Purity and devotion”. It is love of God that purifies “all evils” and illumination of the soul and offers the spiritual union with God. “The tranquil love” transforms into rapturous and ecstatic love. He who loves, knows God for God is love,

“Oh let mee then, his strange love still admire:”⁴

In Sonnet XVI, Donne experiences God’s Love and utters

“Thy laws abridgement, and thy last command

Is all but love; Oh let this last Will stand!”⁵

According to Indian Mysticism Prayer performs miracle and opens “the door leading to mystical experiences.” “A really prayerful man” doesn’t ask for blessings or “boons but feels as the child of God”. He prays “only to be guided by God” and relies on “God to save and bless him” according to His Will.

“But sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy sonne

Shall shine as he shines now, and here to fore;
And having done that, Thou haste done,

I feare no more”. 6

Crashaw wrote a poetry full of musical qualities as if it seems “the song of the nightingale” “bathing in streams of liquid melody”. His poetry is endowed with virtues. He was “an ascetic denying his senses all” secure “their homage to God”. Crashaw turned to “religious” poetry. Crashaw “changed his object, not his passion”. Crashaw loves God as he might have loved his beloved.

In the view of the mystic God’s touch of Love transcends the soul and offers “the sweet gift of the spiritual union of the Eternal Bridegroom and the Eternal Bride”. The remarkable thing is that the admires of the Father concept should not feel superior to the admires of ‘the Mother concept’ or ‘the bridegroom of God”. Margaret Smith says: “In the view of the mystic” God possesses yet transforms everything. He seems as the One in whom everything appears lost and also the One in whom everything appears found. Thus Mysticism becomes “the merger of the finite individuality in the Infinite Absolute, the merger of Time in Eternity, and the merger of Space in Infinity.” Crashaw addresses God vividly, never narrates about his personal sufferings but remains in ecstasy. Crashaw experiences illumination. His illuminated
mood reposes in the rapturous state of mind. Crashaw resides in the mood of ecstasy but never experiences union with God.

Marvell, on the other hand, wrote A Dialogue between the soul and the body where he points out not ill but the body health also vexes the soul for it enhances its departure. Marvell is a nature poet in which his soul takes flight and soars high in The Garden. Marvell seeks his mysticism in nature. The nature mystic finds the Face of Divinity in the mirror of nature. The beauty of Nature and the beauty of Man give “one continual message” and that is “yonder, yonder.”

“Casting the Bodies Vest aside,

My soul into the boughs does glide:

There like a Bird it sits and sings,

Then whets, and combs its silver Wings;

And, till prepar’d for longer flight,

Waves in its flames the various Light.”

It means, the soul remembers its home. He watches this “Home” “in flashes”. But he doesn’t require either faith or doctrine to reach him to God, because in his contemplation over Nature, he communicates God. The Divine Mind in Nature possesses “the doctrine of Beauty”. The Divine Mind watches only the vision of beauty and the habit of
watching beauty is cultivated till we watch “the alone Beautiful God Himself”.

“Thrice Happy he who, not mistook,

Hath read in Natures mystick Book.”

“The great mysticism” indicates the belief that nature and nature objects reflect “some spiritual truth or existence”. It is “an innate feeling” of Marvell that “everywhere in nature” we see “the imprint of God’s signature”. We feel that whatever we see has an order and meaning. But we have to understand it and this feeling that we are surrounded with truths which we can not understand leads to “indescribable awe sometimes”. Everything surrounded appears to be full of God’s reflex. But the need is to watch it where the poet tries to unfold the mystery. We are to see the smoothness of the whole harmony of the universe.

Marvell in the poem ‘The Mower against Gardens’ conveys the message of a “Wild and fragrant Innocence”; that is Nature is “plain and pure” in her original state. Things which seem scattered and loose represent “the form of meaningful patterns comparable to Mexican paintings”. Nature itself is a mystic book which the poet reads
in ‘light Mosaic’. Marvell experiences illumination while acknowledging nature’s mysticism and the form of God.

“Let others vainly strive t’immure
The Circle in the Quadrature!
Those holy Mathematicks can
In ev’ry Figure equal Man”

The noteworthy thing here is that Marvell calls the mathematics holy because it is about God. The Circle is the symbol of God which is found everywhere in nature. Marvell objects to those who try “to square the circle” which ultimately is the symbol of God and he opposes all those who will destroy “the harmony of God’s creation”.

Thus Donne being sceptic reposes in the assured faith and experiences purgation and for a while. Crashaw though tortured realizes ecstasy and experience illumination. Marvell’s “perfect bliss”, rapture is “an out of body experience” but that too can be considered illumination. Thus no poet of the three experiences union with God yet they are devout Christians at the core of their hearts.

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REFERENCES


