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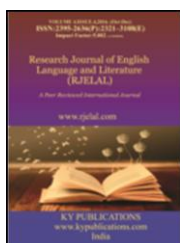
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USES OF METAPHYSICAL CONCEITS IN THE LOVE POEMS OF JOHN DONNE

Dr. MANISHA DWIVEDI¹, AMRITA SARKAR²

¹H.O.D. English Department, ²M.Phil Research Scholar

DR. C.V.RAMAN UNIVERSITY KOTA, BILASPUR (C.G.)



ABSTRACT

John Donne is known as the father of metaphysical poetry. John Donne is an extraordinary poet. He possesses the subtle insight of a seer and a metaphysical conception of the universe in which things stand in fundamental relationships to one another. He is the poet of intense feelings and emotional experiences. His love poems are metaphysical in nature. His use of metaphysical conceits makes his love poems as metaphysical love poem.

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INTRODUCTION

According to professor Grierson, Donne's life like his poetry, is a tormented one both his life and poetry bear traces of the complexity and tension of his mood and temper. His passionate youth, his aspiring middle age, his errors and conceits of taste, his uncertain approach to religion, his piety, are all aspects of his life which find a course in his poetry.

John Donne was born in London in 1572. He came of a rich family of Catholics. On his father's side he belonged to an old Welsh family and on his mother's side to the heywoods and sir Thomas more's family. His education could not be continued in oxford and cambridge because of his religion. He died on 31st of march 1631.

John Donne is credited with the honor of being the poet who broke the petrarchan tradition in England and created a new mode of poetry. John Donne is acknowledged as the master of metaphysical poetry and is admired for his talent.

Metaphysical poetry is highly intellectualized poetry marked by bold and ingenious conceits, incongruous imagery, complexity and subtlety of thought, frequent use paradox and

often by deliberate harshness or rigidity of expression Literally 'meta' means 'beyond' and 'Physics' means "Physical Nature". It was Dryden who first used the word, "metaphysical" in connection with Donne's poetry and wrote "Donne affects the metaphysics" and Dr. Johnson confirmed the judgment of Dryden. Ever since the word "Metaphysical" has been used for Donne and his followers. Donne's poetry may be called "metaphysical" only in as far as its technique or style is concerned. It is heavily overloaded with "conceits", which may be defined as the excessive use of over elaborated similes and metaphor drawn from the most far-fetched, remote and unfamiliar sources. But according to Grierson "Donne is metaphysical not only by virtue of his scholasticism, but by his deep reflective interest in the experiences of which his poetry is the expression, psychological curiosity with which he writes of love and religion"

In literature a conceit is an extended metaphor with a complex logic that governs a poetic passage or entire poem. By juxtaposing, usurping and manipulating images and ideas in surprising ways, a conceit invites the reader into a more sophisticated understanding of an object of

comparison. In other words, a conceit is a highly exaggerated, fantastic and absurd comparison.

The metaphysical conceit associated with the metaphysical poets of the 17th century, is a more intricate and intellectual device. It usually set up an analogy between one entity's spiritual qualities and an object in the physical world and sometimes controls the whole structure of the poem.

Donne was one of the greatest poets of love. Many love lyrics of Donne's are highly intellectual and give evidence of his scholarly bent of mind. His love poems are overloaded with conceits and far-fetched images, which may be defined as the excessive use of long drawn similes and metaphors. As in the poem A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning two lovers are compared to the two legs of a compass,

"If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two,
Thy soul the fixed foot maker no show
To move, but doth, if th 'other do'.
"And though it in the centre sit
yet when the other far doth roam
It leans and hearkens after it
And grows erect, as that comes home."

Here he says that his beloved wife is firm as the fixed leg of the compass and stays at home and he is like the moving leg of the compass he will complete his circle (i.e. journey) and will come back to his beloved. Thus the conceit of the two legs of a pair of compasses represents his emotion intellectually in a superb manner yet it is a conceit all the same.

In the poem 'The Flea' Donne compares the body of the flea to a temple and a marriage bed. As the beloved makes ready to kill the flea, lover asks her to stay and not to kill the poor creature. Their two bloods have been united together in its body, as they are united through marriage in a church. So its body is a temple in which they have been married.

"This flea is you and I, and this

our marriage bed and marriage temple is."

Secondly, the flea's body contains the blood of three creatures – his, here and its. So its murder by her will be herself murder, his murder and the flea's murder. Since its body is their marriage temple, its

destruction will also be sacrilege, that is destruction of a sacred thing:

"And sacrilege, three sins in killing three".

Evidently it is a conceit, a far –fetched comparison. But it is defensible on its own grounds.

Conclusion

Donne's excessive use of these metaphysical conceits, far-fetched images makes his love poems as metaphysical love poems: John Donne is one of the most genius and versatile English poets. He is admired for his great contribution in metaphysical poetry. John Donne is highly appraised all over the globe for his fantastic intellectual aptitude in describing the varied states of emotion and action of human beings.

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