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Discuss John Donne as a Love Poet with Reference to His “The Canonization”, His One of the Best Love Poem

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Abstract

The present research work deals with John Donne as a love poet with special reference of his famous love poem “The Canonization”. “The Canonization” is published in 1635 in a single volume called “Songs and Sonnets”. It is Donne’s famous collection of love poems. These poems give us day-to-day picture of a resters temperament, experiencing all moods of a passionate lover. It is obvious that Donne knew women of various characters from the shallowest to the most sensitive. But the central relation of his life was with his wife, Anne Moore. Indeed, his best poems are those which show the fulfillment of a happy married life. In this poem, the poet shows his great love for his wife, Anne Moore. In this essay, we discussed John Donne as a love poet and the critical appreciation of his famous love poem “The Canonization.”

Keywords: Love Poet, the Canonization

Introduction

John Donne was born on 22 January 1572 and died in 31 March 1631. He was a famous English poet and a Derrick in the Church of England. He is considered the pre-eminent representative of the metaphysical poets. His poetry is noted for its vibrancy of language and inventiveness of metaphors.

Dryden was the first to use the epithet – metaphysical poetry – to cover the poetic works of Donne, Vaughan and Cowley etc. “Donne affected,” Complained Dryden, “The metaphysics, not only in his satires but in the amorous verses” Dr. Johnson borrowed Dryden’s ideas and in his “Life of Cowley” called Cowley a poet of metaphysical school of Dome. Donne was the representative of this school and the other scholars were Robert Herrick, Richard Casew, John Sucking, Abraham Cowley, George Herbert etc. Donne revolted against the sweetness of Elizabethan verse and artificiality of its style. According to T.S. Eliot, “Passionate thinking” and Combination of “Thought and feeling” have been the hallmark of Donne’s poetry.

Donne’s reputation as a love poet rests on the lyrics written at several periods of his life but published in 1635 in the single volume called “Songs and Sonnets”. His love poetry represents a surprising variety of mood and attitude to the emotion of a lover. Donne’s love poetry is quite remarkable for being frankly sensual and passionate at the same time. His “Songs and Sonnets” gives us day-to-day picture of a resters temperament of a passionate lover. The opening of many a poem is dramatic in its passion. He begins his “The Canonization” with: “For God’s sake hold your tongue and let me love,”

His best love poems centre on the fulfillment of a happy married life. His love poetry celebrates the best in conjugal love. George Saintsbury writes, “To some natures, love comes as above all things, a force quickening the mind, intensifying its purely intellectual energy. Opening new vistas of thought abstract and subtle, making the soul intensely wondrously alive of such was John Donne.

Discussion

‘The Canonization’ belongs to Donne’s collection of love poems ‘Songs and Sonnets’. Love has been an object of fun and hair splitting with the metaphysical poets. In “The Canonization”, the poet talks of love like a mystical full of contempt and rebuff for those who argue against love.

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In second stanza, there is a lot of hyperbole, can sighs turn into 'sea storms' or 'tears' cause floods or the 'heat of passion' causes plagues. Donne uses these metaphors to laugh at the patriarchal style of making love. The poet says that nobody is harmed by his love-making. His tears have not caused any flood. The poet's making of love does not affect or disturb even the flow of social life.

Thus the poet deals with secrets of love which raises it from physical level to the spiritual plane. He gives a series of metaphors to express his mystical experience of love. He says, "We are tapers too, and at our own cost die and we in us find the eagle and the dove."

The lovers are like tapers and flies which enjoy being consumed to extinction. They die at their own cost. They have both 'Eagle' and 'Dove' in them. Perhaps, the legend of the phoenix would adequately describe the love of the poet and his beloved. The phoenix is a mystical bird and only one bird is supposed to be living at a time. Though they are two, they are one, of the neutral sex like the phoenix. As the phoenix is reborn from its ashes, the lovers are reborn after indulgence. In fact, Donne treats physical love like divine love like my story of the phoenix, their mystery of love will command respect.

Just as the saints are canonized for their love of god, they will be canonized for their love for each other. The canonization which leads to the lovers being regarded as the martyr saints of love will make them a model of love and others will "beg from above a transformed into peace". The lovers need no mention in history books or any monument or inscription.

The poem is a fine example of metaphysical poetry and at its best. The chief devices of metaphysical poetry – argument, colloquial rhythms and use of paradoxes, for – fetched imagery are employed with perfection. The poem consists of five stanzas of nine lines each. The first and the last line of the stanza end with the word 'love' which shows Donne's intensity and devotion for his wife. The poem acquires the quality of hymn from the Bible.

In the treatment of love, most of Elizabethan poets followed the style of Petrarch. On the other hand, Donne is neither Petrarch nor Platonic in the treatment of his lover and his beloved. Donne says, "It cannot be love till I love her that loves me."

He does not place the beloved on a high pedestal of perfection. For him, love is a "two-way traffic". In his poems he has amalgamated "thou" and "I" into "We".

Donne's love poems raise the metaphysical question the relation between the spirit and the senses or between the body and the soul. In his poem "The Ecstasy", he examines the idea whether physical relation would strengthen or weaken their love. He argues that their body surrender to each other would be like mixing the base metal with the precious metal. It would strengthen their spiritual love.

He has made the beautiful uses of metaphor and similar in his poems to prove his point. He says, "We are tapers too, and at our own cost die." The poet says that they are like tapers and flies which enjoy to be consumed to extinction.

The legend of phoenix would adequately express the feeling of a lover and his beloved. Donne successfully argues that physical love and spiritual love are the two sides of the same coin. Love becomes the main theme when the lover says that we will be known as saints of love in future in his poem "The canonization". "And by these hymns, all shall approve canonized for love"

Donne's love poems are full of passions but on the same time, seeking for permanence of true love. Donne knew that the physical attraction is short lived. True love has to be independent of any external object otherwise it would not be true love.

Conclusion

Thus it is to be concluded that the poems which Donne wrote on the experience of loving, where love is returned, are the most original and profound contributions to the poetry of human love.

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