

# Study of George Herbert as a Metaphysical Poet

Mali Deepak Arjun

Assistant Professor, Smt. Parvatibai Bajirao Bagal Art's & Commerce College, Dondaicha, India

**Abstract:** George Herbert, one of the leading metaphysical poet, wrote in the seventeenth century. These poets were educated and intended to show their wit through poetry. Metaphysical poetry is a special branch of poetry that deals with the Pedagogic use of intellect and emotion in a harmonic manner. The basic praxis of metaphysical poetry is to highlight the philosophical view of nature and its ambience concerning human life. George Herbert was perhaps the most conspicuous. He was the saint of the metaphysical school. His work is often marked by metaphysical conceits. He uses many lyrical forms and often shows considerable artistry. The poetry of this school appeals to the heart, intellect indulging in far-fetched expression and conceited thought. Wit predominates in this school of poetry most of the metaphysical poets are often called mystical poets. In the poetry of George Herbert there is an expression of a communion with God. In George Herbert the orthodox Anglican addressing with intimate tenderness.

**Keywords:** Spiritual or Divine love, conceit, Wit, Far-fetched images.

## 1. Introduction

As a point of departure, English poetry maybe divided into different ages for the convenience of study; for instance, Anglo-saxon poetry, classical poetry, neoclassical poetry, metaphysical poetry, romantic poetry, modern poetry and so forth. Strictly speaking, metaphysical poetry does not represent to an age rather it is a distinctive school of thought that is distinguished with other trends of poetry by salient features that are recognizing points of the school poetry where George Herbert is religious poet. Besides George Herbert some other poets are also listed in the school like John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Robert Southwell, Richard Crashaw, Thomas Traharne and Henry Vaughan.

George Herbert wrote poetry in English, Latin and Greek. In 1633 all of Herbert's English poems were published in the temple: sacred poems and private Ejaculations, with a preface by Nicholas Ferrer. All of Herbert's surviving English poems are on religious themes and are characterized by directness of expression enlivened by original by apt conceits in which, in the metaphysical manner, the likeness is of function rather than visual.

### A. Genesis and concept of metaphysical poetry

The term 'metaphysical' refers to dealing with the different facets of nature or a philosophical view of the nature of things. Grierson depicts Metaphysical poetry as "poetry inspired by a philosophical concept of the universe and the role assigned to

human spirit in the great drama of existence". Donne and his associates and designed as metaphysical poet in so far as their poetic works have been enriched by the varied aspects of human life like love, religion, death etc. By way of demonstrating their impact on human life in a lively manner with the help of far-fetched imagery. Metaphysical poetry has sparkling capability to explore and express ideas and feelings about the terrestrial world and its diverse phenomena in a rational way to memorize the readers, making innovative and shocking use of puns; paradoxes and employing subtle logical proposition, the metaphysical has achieved a style that is energetic and vigorous unlike the rich mellifluousness and lilting over tones of the conventional poetry. Broadly speaking, metaphysical poetry was the revolt against the conventional romanticism of Elizabethan love poetry and so, the metaphysical group of poets was inclined towards amalgamation of heterogeneous ideas and desperate images, use of intricate rhythm, realism, obscurity etc. Rightly does John Bennet observed that in case of Donne, Herbert and his circle, the term "metaphysical" actually refers to style rather than subject matter. Metaphysical poetry was in it shay day up to mid-17th century until neo-classic is mentored to reign the literary realm and in the next two centuries metaphysical poetry went into total eclipse whereby Donne and his successors were discarded for displaying intentional obscurity. But 20th century ushered an unexpected revival of the metaphysical tradition where Donne and his group regained their lost favour and were studied with renewed interest and veneration by virtue of the modernist poet critic. T.S. Eliots celebrated "The Metaphysical Poets" in which Eliot Vehemently admired their stunning capacity for devouring and merging all kinds of experience: when a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience: the ordinary man's experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of a typewriter or the smell of cooking: in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes

### B. Georage Herbert as a religious Poet

#### 1) Concrete poem

"Easter wings" is a concrete poem. It can also be called a shape poem or a pattern poem. That is to say form and structure imply the content of the poem. By considering the form of it. One can find two pairs of wings. Thus, two stanzas are found which are related to one another, There is a contrast between two stanzas. The poet expresses the question of the deterioration of man's power, and goodness. What the poet asks

for is sublimation, soaring and ascending.

#### 2) *Spiritual poet*

Herbert's poems are characterized by a precision of language, a metrical versatility and an ingenious use of imagery or conceits that was favored by the metaphysical school of poets. His poems explore and celebrate the way of god's love as Herbert discovered them within the fluctuations of his own experience. Because Herbert is as much as ecclesiastical as a religious poet, one would not expect him to make much appeal to an age secular as our own, but it has not proved so. All sorts of readers have responded to his quite intensity; and the opinion has even been twentieth century meta physical poet.

When *The Temple* was published, it was popular but in the 18th century it wasn't as highly valued, and cawper called it "gothick [sic] and uncouth" (Eliot 10). Coleridge was "the first important critic who praised. *The Temple* on literary grounds" although his letter and posthumous writings placed emphasis on the need for religious inclination to fully appreciate Herbert's poetry, which of course is not true (summers 20-21).

#### 3) *Mysterious and Emblem*

Herbert was profound influenced by the genre of the emblem, which typically associated mysterious but meaningful pictures and mottoes with explanatory text. The first poem for review is "The Altar" (Herbert 1707) The poem is shaped like an altar. "The Altar" is one of his poems with the "Paradox" that as the work of a Christian poet, his poems ought to give fit praise to God but cannot possibly do so----- (George Herbert, 1707).

#### 4) *Use of Conceit*

George Herbert was considerably influenced by Donne. His work is often marked by metaphysical conceits; one of his poems Prayer, for example, consists of a mere string of images in which prayer is successively called the "the church's banquet". "God's breath in man returning to his birth," the soul paraphrase, heart in Pilgrimage, "Christside Piercing Spear",

exalted manna and so on. George Herbert's poem, 'The search', demonstrates, through differing lineal geometric conceits, and the subsequent use of specific circular conceits, the imperfect nature of love between a human persona and the divine God.

## 2. Conclusion

George Herbert is one of the most genius metaphysical poet. He is admired for his colossal contribution in metaphysical poetry. In his numerous writings he has added lots of mysterious, passionate feelings, and striking conceits etc. to highlight the nature and reality revolving around human lives. Herbert's deals with religion in his poetry. He writes in simple way. His poetry is not as complicated as Donne's poetry. He highlights the relationship of man to God. In organic unity is found in "Easter Wings". Herbert in "The Pilgrimage" talks about the vanity of human wishes, and the idea of death which is a road to man's expectations and goals. The poet realizes that in order to reach his goals, he needs to take another road, or set off a new journey. This journey is associated with his death. In dealing with religious ideas, George Herbert is a very successful poet.

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