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A CRITICAL OBSERVATION ON HUMANISTIC APPROACH TO JUSTIFY THE WAYS OF GOD TO MEN IN ROMANTIC PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this article is show the delineation of the relationship between the divine power and individual man in romantic period. Its comparison with other ages and poets is also discussed here. In Paradise Lost (1667), John Milton was intended to justify of act punishment given by God as the only way to purify the soul of the sinners. He presented it as the proper process of maintaining the order of the cosmos as well as the living world in a righteous way.In the Romantic period of nineteenth century William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and others treated the point in different ways. The position of God or divine authority was also rethought in the age whereas the celestial affair between God and man had been turned from sin-punishment binary to prayer and mercy parameter. Consequently, a new way of justification was originated on this matter on academic stand point. Qualitative methodological way is adopted for the article on textual interpretation and critical analysis.

Keywords: *Divine, God, Human, Love, Nature.*

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After the death of Queen Elizabeth I (1553-1603), there were two dominating groups in Britain on religion and political perspectives having tremendous impact upon socio-literary grounds. These were Puritans and Cavaliers though Puritanism was originated in the sixteenth century but was flourished in this era. The Puritans were extreme protestants who were not satisfied with the changes brought about during the reign of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Elizabeth I. They were called puritans because of their intention to purify the English church in more protestant way and were against the monarchy. On the other hand the Cavaliers supported the king Charles I and his policies. However due to extreme rebellion of Puritans, England faced the Civil War between 1642 to1660 and consequently origination of Commonwealth Government beheading King Charles I in 1649. It was not confined within political aura but some litterateurs were keenly associated with it and the most notable name is John Milton. Being an ideal Puritan, Milton supported the killing of King for the sake of nation and throughout his literary career in some poems, pamphlets, essays he expressed his notion of purifying the socio-religious and liturgical aspects of the time. However, the most profound outburst was *Paradise Lost* (1667), one of the brilliant literary epics of the globe. Milton's delineation of his religious faith, pure devotion to the authority of God, stern religious standpoint exposed the Puritan notion. It got reflected in his declaration of the intention of writing the epic as, "I may assert Eternal Providence, And justifie the wayes of God to men." Milton treated God as the supreme power in the cosmos having authority upon the living creatures.

Before the arrival of Romantic period, Robert Burton in *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) offered two separate conditions of religion in England as he observed that :

> Not that there is any excess of divine worship or love of God, that cannot be, we cannot love God too much… busying our selves about impertinent, needless, idle and vaine ceremonies ..Some of us againe are too deare, as we think, more divine and sanctified then others, of a better mettle, greater guifts, and, with that proud Pharisie, contemne others in respect of our selves. (Bambarough 337-38)

However, In this situation, the romanticists had gone beyond this parameters. They were also not confined within the concept of Deism to observe the natural world on reason to find its creator, but they felt a direct rapport between the divinity and man and nature made the connection where the presence of God might be felt that originated the romantic selfhood. Both Words- worth and Coleridge invented the mystery of the creator of the universe in nature that became supernatural in the poetry of Coleridge. Here supernaturalism acted as the medium to make people understood the mystery of divine power, it's will and impact upon human life whereas human perception towards nature and the creator might be sublimated from the ordinary to extraordinary level. In the question of 'justifying the ways of God to men' Coleridge wanted to make a bridge directly between

God and Man through the mediums of mercy, forgive and redemption. Rather than focusing the role of God as the judge of human action he gave priority on the divine discretion of setting back men to the path of virtue and righteousness through their repentance, prayer and introspection. Thus the divine intervention upon human actions had been changed from puritan notion to romantic treatment offering priority upon love and humanism. Love for mankind was the melody of romanticism that was vested upon the divine role also turning the face from a wrathful judge to a benevolent guide who would forgive after offering punishment. Here the doctrines of thinks and philosophers are also compatible in this regard. The influences of French revolution and Rousseau are remarkable that advocated for human emancipation from all bondages. On spiritual level sin and misdeed may be treated as the bondage or obstacle before emancipation. God here appeared as the friendly guide who would relieve the fellows from sufferings after enough punishment. Love and mercy are connecting live between God and his/her creations. *However to Rousseau the world of nature was the divine land of purity without the social corruption, It again made individual perception of the divine authority in an aesthetic bond that got reflected in Confessions (1789) and Reveries of solitary Walkers (1792).*

In order to discuss the above noted points on literary perspective, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner of Samuel Taylor Coleridge would be a suitable choice to analyze the matter. The intention of the poet was not to offer a mere gothic story of an ancient mariner who was punished for killing albatross, but he focused on the way of redeeming men from their downfall and destruction. However he employed several Christian allegory and symbol having tremendous appeal upon readers. The poem is started with the beginning of a ship voyage and it ends with the conclusion of the journey. This journey consisted some gruesome nightmarish experiences of the mariner and his crew due to their sin of killing the holy bird Albatross. But on symbolic perspective it's to be said that according to Christianity life is a trial and our destination is depended upon. After getting passed we reach to the heaven but we may doom to Hell if we fail. There is affinity between our body and our actions. The mariner failed in the trial of life as he cheated with the albatross. Here the ship may be compared with human body and the mariner with the soul who was going to the land of destruction. The soul compelled the body to be doomed. The entire crew of the ship was punished for the heinous crime of the mariner. As per Christianity the body of a failed man in the trial of life should be removed from his place that was also asserted in Genesis of Caedmon as, "for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Hamilton 204). Then the soul may be made pleased or be punished. In the poem also the spirit of the mariner was won by 'Life in Death' and he had suffered a lot. The presentation of Albatross is also important that basically symbolized Jesus Christ. The Albatross rescued the mariners from the howls of storms and mists in South Pole. It remind the poet with the incredible prosperous happenings due to birth of Jesus Christ as the lean became strong, blind could see, deaf could hear, mute spoke etc. Similarly the mariners were saved from fanatical turmoil as narrated in the poem that "At length did cross an Albatross/Through the for it came/As if it had been a

Christian soul/We hailed it in God's name (Sen 104)." The bird guided the crew to the right path in the snowy sea as Lord Jesus directed his followers the right way of life. In this regard a quote should be mentioned from Philippians to clarify the matter that, "Our citizenship is in heaven./And we eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ"(Sadiku,2013,p.65)But the crew in the poem could not go to the blissful destiny for killing the divine representative albatross that offers another reference of Christianity as like the cross of Christ the bird was killed by cross bow. But killing the bird the mariner repented saying, "instead of the cross Albatross/ About my neck was hung". Such repentance was found in the mind of the killers of Jesus. Basically wind is the power of nature that controlled the ship on the sea. Here the poet's intention is to personify the wind as the wrath of God that was "tyrannous and strong". This is the eternal punishment for the sinner .Coleridge's treatment of moon in Ancient Mariner is significant that is the byproduct of his notion of Secondary imagination. Moon here stood for the divine qualities of love and forgiveness to mankind. It's narrated in the poem that "From the sails the dew dips drip/Till clomb above the eastern bar/The horned moon, with one bright star/Within the nether tip (Sen 116)." The sea was glittered after the arrival of moon in the sky, even the dead bodies of the crew were seemed to be "happy living things" in moonlight. In spite of having literary importance the Moon contained also symbolic meanings. Moon in here opposed to Sun, the second part of Christian God. While Sun is angry Moon is calm and benevolent even to the sinners for their redemption. The presentation of day and night was made for same purpose whereas the day is tumultuous and night is soothing. The mariners found the blessings of a mother with reference to Mother Mary, mother of Jesus Christ as it's mentioned in the poem, "To Mary Queen the praise be given, She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven" (Sen 124).

The dice game between 'Death' and 'Life in Death' on the deck of the skeleton ship is symbolic in connection with the stern, angry face of God and the calm and delicate loving face of God of New Testament. The victory of 'Life in Death' in the dice game announced the triumph of the benevolent God. According to Bible, God only becomes wrathful when the divine order is denied forcefully, that's why the mariner was punished for killing the Albatross that breaks the connection of all living creatures and the God. It depicted the equality of all the living beings created by Almighty that provokes the conception of 'one life'. The mariner only got retribution when he offered love and compassion towards the snakes in the sea that's another living creature of God. It asserts that sinners only may be pardoned in exchange of love to the all living creatures as the expression of the mariner to the snakes are narrated in the poem that:

O happy living things! No tongue

Their beauty might declare:

A spring of love gushed from my heart,

And I blessed them unaware:

Sure my kind saint took pity on me,

And I blessed them unaware (Sen 122).

The exchange of blessings between god and human is depicted here by Coleridge as after loving the snakes the mariner could pray to the divinity and got sleep from Mother Mary. The divine interpretation is delineated by the two holy voices heard by the mariner who were Justice and mercy. At least the Mariner got relieved from turmoil and he prayed to the God. No doubt it depicts the love, forgiveness of the God even to the sinners if they surrender to the Almighty. Here the prayer of Jesus Christ to God during his crucifixion is notable as, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"(Exil 66). In Milton's *Paradise Lost* Adam and Eve were expelled and it was recovered by the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God in *Paradise Regained* (1671). So it was again divine interpretation having no human role. But in Ancient mariner direct rapport is created between God and the mariner as he got the divine mercy after earnest prayer. Consequently power of prayer is given prominence before sacrifice. In The Book of Leviticus, the third book of the Torah and of the Old Testament, there are detailed description of several sacrifices of blood under the supervisions of priests like Bloody Reality, Burnt Offering, Peace Offering, Guilt Offering etc. Innocent bulls or lambs were immolated as the atonement of human sin. But in Ancient Mariner, Coleridge offered a more acceptable and humanistic way of redemption that is prayer to the Almighty. There is no question of blood but only mercy and love. Even the sinner (mariner) may pray to the God without any medium (priests). Instead of taking blood of animals as per Leviticus, but love for animals or all living being is the way of relief in the poem. Here Coleridge depicted the notion of ultimate whole, a central unity of all human being to the ultimate creator that connects the mariner, the Albatross, the snakes to the Almighty. Coleridge's believe in the power of prayer was asserted by his friend Thomas De Quincey in *Tait's Magazine* as he opined that, "he told me as his own particular opinion that the art of praying was the highest energy of which the human heart was capable; praying, that is, with the total concentration of the faculties"(The Victorian Web,n.d.). *The Romantic poets intended the assimilation of individual self with the endless supreme power. In this process the tune of unity of a supreme one had been found as the creator of all.*

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