

JOHN DONNE (17)

Donne is a love poet - or a poet. (seventeenth century).

It is common place of Donne criticism that he brought about a reorientation of English love poetry in the Elizabethan age. First of all Donne love poetry impresses us by its wide range and a complexity of attitudes. Secondly its speaking of conversational tone at once arrest our attention. Again critics have spoken of two worlds in Donne love poetry - the earthly or the mundane and the intellectual or the spiritual. The corpus of Donne's love poetry consists of songs, sonnets as well as of the elegies. Several attempts have been indeed made from time to time to clarify these poems either chronologically or in view of their attitude or tone. ~~the most~~ the best way of studying Donne's love poem is to emphasize the poet's attitude tone in his individual poems. First of all, there are certain poems which treat of love as physical passion. The love in these poems does not seem to be believing in the including value of love. Here, Donne appears to be just treating love in a mocking or somewhat casual tone. Next, there are certain poems in which the poet adopts an intellectual and sophisticated tone and makes way of platonic arguments in vindication of his opinion about woman and love. There is a tone of cynicism in some of these love poems. Finally there are certain mature love poems of John Donne in which the poet seems to be writing from a sense of personal urgency. In these poems the poet is celebrating mutual love and is speaking of the power of love in uniting two souls.

In our poetry selections almost of Donne's poetry have been suitably represented. It is true that the earliest phase of Donne's love poetry which consists of poems like "Aire And Angles" "go and catch a falling star" "Woman's Constant" "The indifferent love alchemy" etc are not meant for our study. Consequently it is not possible to throw proper light on the earliest phase of Donne's love poetry. However, one may choose the poem, "The Sunne Rising" as an example of Donne's early attitude to love. This poem has a kind of playfulness and light heartedness which one associates with Donne's love poetry of the first phase. For example, the poet addresses to the sun in irreverent tone. Before Donne the sun was always deified and was treated reverentially. But in Donne's poem the poet adopts a gay, good humoured and somewhat amusing tone. Contrary to the Petrarchan tradition, the sun is treated as a source of positive disturbance to the sleeping lover. By the time we end the poem, the sovereignty of love is established and the sun is asked to follow the whims of the lovers. However, this poem can't be classed with the earliest of Donne's love poems simply because in these poems the poet adopts a kind of attitude to women which is one of parody of the Petrarchan tradition. In these poems, there is a feeling that favour qualification in love is a waste of time, the energy and what is most objectionable, it amounts to slavery of women. Women are in constant and fickle mind as such they are not to be courted or wooed sincerely or passionately. But in the poem under study that "The Sunne Rising" we have a different theme.