

## **I .Introduction**

### **John Donne's Autobiography**

John Donne, a seventeenth century icon, was born in London in 1572. He was a son of a prosperous city tradesman John and Elizabeth Donne. In his name there is the combination of his parent's name. From the beginning of his life he was badly suffered from the sense of fatherlessness. When he was only four years old his father died in 1576. He was born in the family who believe in Roman Catholicism. Perhaps because of his family background he was greatly influenced by Roman Catholicism from his childhood.

Roman Catholicism is a religion which had been devalued by the atrocities of Mary Tudor's reign and it was 'suppressed and afflicted' since Elizabeth Act of Uniformity. Indeed his maternal relations included the famous and persecuted Heywood and Rastell families and more distantly the hero-martyr Sir Thomas More himself. His early education was attended by a private tutor. He never attended any formal education in his earlier life. Later he studied three years in Oxford University and even in Cambridge University also. In 1591, possibly after the journey to Italy and Spain, he returned to London, entering first Thavies and then Lincoln's Inn, where he remained at least until 1594. During this period at the Inns he led an intense existence, as a student not only of law but of theology, languages literature, drama, people, love - in short, of life; and it was during this period also that he first became known by his contemporaries as "a great writer of concerted verses", circulating among them the first two of the satires, the majority of the elegies, the Epithalamion made at Lincoln Inn and an infinite number of songs and sonnets.

During the late nineteenth century he served in two naval expeditions in 1597 and 1598 respectively, which took him to Cadiz and the Azores. He also wrote fourth satires during that period. He became a private secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, the Lord keeper. He remained at

the post of secretary until 1602. In 1602 he wrote fifth satires. Before his resignation from the post of private secretary of Thomas Egerton, he became a member of parliament for Barkley, Northampton in 1601. This shows that John Donne was not only interested in art and religion, but also in politics and social service.

Seventeenth century brought some successes in John Donne's political life. He became private secretary, most importantly; he became a member of parliament representing the people of Barkley Northampton. But the beginning of the seventeenth century was the period of his moral degradation. His secret marriage with Anne More put him from favor and until his ordination in 1615 he was forced to live mainly as patronage. He was disturbed by the life at court time and again during this period. But he never pushed him back to remain idle. He pursued further his study of law and theology and wrote prolifically. He published the *Latin verses on Volpone* (1607), the prose *pseudo-martyr* (1610) and his *Ignatius conclave* (1611), the first and second 'Anniversaries' in 1611 and 1612 respectively. In 1613, he published the Elegies upon the untimely death of Prince Henry. His most important prose are *Biathanatos* (1607/08) and *Essays in Divinity* (1604). He also wrote the remainder of songs and sonnets, elegies and epithalamion, and number of the Epicedes and obsequise and Divine poems.

There were some happiest moments in John Donne's life during that period. No doubt to become a member of parliament was one of the happiest occasions in his life. But there were the periods where he should be happy with himself. He married to the one whom he loved more. In 1603, his daughter Constance was born. Next year in 1604, he traveled to Italy where his wife gave birth a small male child. In 1610, John Donne obtained Honorary M.A. from Oxford University. This was the time he published pseudo-martyr with the co-ordination to Cambridge University Press. Then he continuously published many books further. In 1614, Donne again

became a member of parliament for Taunton, Somerset. But this happiness went under shadow because of the death of his two children in the same year.

Donne religious life was the most successful as well as full of criticism. He was accused of not remain under any one special religion constantly. During his childhood he was greatly influenced by Roman Catholicism but later in his life he changed himself and moved to Anglicanism. Critics say he had changed his religion not once, not twice but many times. In this regard Julian Lovelock writes:

Donne's conversion from Roman Catholicism to Anglicanism has no single date: rather it was gradual process, began at the inns and continued up to his ordination and ever beyond. Nevertheless his service with the lord keeper points to at least a passive acceptance of Anglican doctrine and between 1606 and 1610, he may actually have collaborated with Thomas Morton (Dean of Gloucester and late Bishop of Durham) in the writing of attacks on Roman Catholic Church. (17)

John Donne many times changed his religion. He forgot scarifies of his relations for the Roman Catholicism, he hurted his family's faith and he threw the faith of his admirers. He had double standard but nobody suspected on him. Lovelock further says:

But in spite of his undoubted faith, Done seems to have taken orders for selfish than spiritual reasons: he was bent on preferment and James I, who saw him as a 'Learned Divine' and a potentially 'powerful preacher' had made it clear that he would only give it to him with in the church[. . .]King was true to his word and within two months of his ordination Done was appointed a royal Chaplain-in-ordinary and made a Doctor of Divinity at Cambridge. (12)

His greed to become a royal chaplain Donne sacrificed his original religion and the faith of his admirers. But his manner really shocked the people.

In 1617, John Donne suffered another great loss with the death of his beloved wife. After the death of his wife, Donne gave himself wholly to the service of the church. In 1621, he was elected and installed as Dean of St. Paul's, a post which he holds until his death. In 1631, he took his last breath in this earth and paved towards the heaven. During the time from his ordination to his death he wrote the remainder of the divine poems and the prose.

John Donne's life was full of ups and downs. His struggle from his childhood never ended until his death. He lost his father in the very beginning of his life than started to lose his kins in quick intervals of time. He saw his father's, mother's, sister's, wife's and his children's death in front of him. He faced trouble from court because of his second marriage. Despite these troubles, he became a member of parliament in two quick successions. He became dean in St. Paul but most importantly he established himself as an icon, an evergreen literary figure in the history of English literature.

### **John Donne's works**

John Donne has written many impressive proses and poetry in his life. His prose writings are based on religious matter. Among his proses, '*Pseudo-Martyr*' (1610), '*Ignitius his conclave*' (1611) and '*Essays on Divinity*', which was published post-humously in 1651, are very famous. During the later half of his life he wrote many articles attacking Roman Catholicism and these articles also became very famous. But it is verse writing which led him towards the peak of the writers. He has written lots of religious poems called 'divine poems'. He has written some very famous and heart breaking elegies like '*Anniversaries*'. His famous elegy written on the death of Prince Henry in 1613 is one of his greatest elegies. His poetry collection "*Songs and Sonnets*" is one of the greatest books of his entire career where we can find some of his best elegies, love poems and sonnets.

John Donne is named as the father of metaphysical poetry. Metaphysical poetry is highly intellectualized poetry which came into existence during the seventeenth century. It is marked by bold and ingenious conceits, a comparison between seemingly two dissimilar things or objects for only one similarity. Metaphysical poems are very complex while reading perhaps because of these conceits and subtlety of thought. We can find frequent use of paradoxes and often deliberate harshness or rigidity of expression. Metaphysical poetry is chiefly concerned with analyzing the feelings. It is a blend of emotion and feelings with intellectual ingenuity. Such blend is naturalized by unusual conceits. These conceits seem quite contradictory and completely opposite to each other. This type of comparison is quite different from the similes, which have been practiced since many years before. And the use of conceits brought a kind of revolution in poetry writing tradition.

Conceit is the most remarkable feature of metaphysical poetry in working out the theme or argument of a text. While talking about conceits George Saintsbury says:

A conceit is a comparison whose ingenuity is more striking than its justness, or, at least is more immediately striking. All comparisons discover likeness in things unlike: a comparison becomes a conceit when we are made to concede likeness while being strongly conscious of unlikeness. (15)

As Saintsbury we can find some unusual comparisons, for example Donne compares a virgin woman with a poisonous snake. This comparison seems quite unlike but it gives meaning that like poisonous snake if you touch a virgin woman, she will badly punish you. These types of meaning are difficult to get for readers. To get meaning a reader should read them with great concentration. Only the thinking mind can reach to the depth of such intellectualized metaphysical poetry.

John Donne is named as a revolutionary poet in the history of English literature.

In his writing, he always challenged earlier poetry writing tradition. He violated the concept of rhythm, rhyme, meter, etc. in his writing. His writings became unique in comparison to his contemporaries. Some critics find some similarities in his writings with other metaphysical writers but it is different from the traditional writings. Metaphysical poetry is taken as a weapon to attack the earlier tradition of poetry writing. For that John Donne and other metaphysical poets share some writing strategies. Julian Lovelock in this regard says:

Obviously Donne did to some extent share a common background with the other metaphysical poets and indeed was a major influence for them: like them he was pressured by that harsh, uncomfortable, curious age which had outgrown its medieval heritage and sought to replace it with new philosophies, new sciences, new world and new poetry. (14)

John Donne and other metaphysical poets were really interested to change the medieval tradition of poetry writing. That is the reason Donne uses harsh expressions, conceits, satires, wits and paradoxes. He violated the earlier decorative writing tradition and tried to create new kind of writing, new philosophy and new world. His writings are very difficult, irregular and harsh. He doesn't follow accent or any figures of speech. Most of his poems are anti-metrical. This shows how deliberately Donne violates the metrical patterns. For same issue Ben Johnson says, "Donne for not keeping accent deserved hanging" (51). But Johnson accepts that John Donne is one of the greatest figures in the history of English literature.

Some critics find an image of reality as a counterpart of earlier artificial rhetorics in John Donne's writings. In his case book on John Donne, Julian Lovelock writes:

An age of conscious change, such as the metaphysical poets lived in, is always an age of reaction: it sets act, however, naively, to shatter myths and replace them with 'truths'. Metaphysical poetry reflects these realism breaking from the elegant

but artificial rhetorics of what is often loosely termed the Petrarchan tradition in favor of a more colloquial language and tone, a tightness of expression and the single minded working out of a theme or argument. (15)

John Donne, to create reality in his poetry violated the tradition of writing which was based on artificial rhetoric. Through his colloquial use of language, his tightness of expression, broken verses he brought a kind of revolution in his writings.

Arnold Stain also finds some irregularity and complexity in John Donne's writings. He traces out the unstable attitudes, sudden changes in tone of his poetry. Stain further says:

A major initial problem, as in many of Donne's poems is that we have no given tone, no stable attitude or defined position from which we can follow a clear development. Things appear in violent motion from the very beginning, and when the explosive dissonances of the first stanza come to an end, the sustained intensity and dazzling nimbleness of effects will have imposed an impression on us that cannot end as abruptly as the stanza. (157)

Donne's writings are not systematic but different from the others. In every lines, every stanza, we can feel something new in sudden appearances. Irregularity, rupture and unspculatedness not only make Donne different from others but also make him revolutionary.

"Wit" is another regular feature found in John Donne's poetry. He brings humour with wits and satires. His witty satires go parallel with roughness of his writing which gives a sense of revolt against the earlier tradition of decorative writing. John Donne's witty satires are targeted to his special audience of middle class society like himself. A. Alvarer says:

Donne's first and most formative audience was made up of the young, literary middle class intellectual, elite who, like Donne himself, were to become the leading professional men of the time.... The universal monarchy of wit, 'men of

intellect and wide, varied talents, who, like the subjects in any other monarchy, had language, customs, conventions and interests in common. Donne was their king, that ruled as he thought fit.' But that merely meant that he was more powerful, more authoritative than the rest. He was not apart from them. Instead he was apart from the professional poets. (17)

Donne's writings are targeted to the special elite class audience like himself. His wit, which ruled the whole thrust of the people based on their taste. And most importantly his writings are not professional but for entertainment. That is the reason he uses wits and satires in his writings.

Rupert Brooke finds some kind of intellectuality in John Donne's poetry. While talking about Donne he opines:

He is the most intellectual poet in English; and his intellectualism had, even, sometimes a tendency, to the abstract. But to be the intellectual poet does not mean that one writes about intellectual things. The pageant of the outer world of matter and the mid-region world of matter and the mid-region world of passion come to Donne through brain, soul, and heart in different proportion from the ordinary prescription. This does not mean that he left less keenly than others; but when passion shook him and his being acted for utterness, to release the stress, expression comes through the intellect. (25)

Donne's intellectuality is the result of passionate desire or passionate experiences. To release his stress he expresses his passion through the intellectual expression. 'Wit', 'Satires', etc. become the means of his expression in his poetry.

### **Love in John Donne's poetry**

Literally love is meant as a strong feeling of deep affection for somebody or something. It also means as sexual affection or passion or its sense of great enjoyment of something. It is an



abstract term with very close affinity to heart. Love possesses some special virtues of sympathy, kindness and reverence. These virtues are felt and exposed in course of love. So, love is a kind of sensitive experience of an individual. Love is an essential quality for human being. Love is always untouched by worldly manners like hatred, jealousy, envy and fierceness. It is really immeasurable, boundless and infinite in itself.

John Donne presents two types of love in his poetry. One is spiritual love and another is physical love. Spiritual love is the love which always comes from the depth of inner heart and reaches to the level of soul. It is very far from the physical and worldly pleasure. It is connected to something divine or to the God. Spiritual love is also known as sacred love not only because of its connection to the God but also it is considered to be something holy or virtuous. We can sense a kind of mutual respect between the lovers. It pertains to soul rather than physical appearance. It remains very far from the worldly hate, jealousy, envy, crime or any sort of ugliness. Spiritual love always seeks great virtue and devotion. It should be pure and clean and most importantly very far from the physical attraction, sexual desire, sin and lust. So, it is eternal and divine.

Physical love means the love which is guided by the erotic desire aroused from physical attraction, or physical beauty. It is completely opposite to the spiritual love. It always focuses on the physical pleasure and materialistic pleasure. The people who believe in physical love think sex as a biological need. So, they never hesitate to establish sexual relationship between two. In such love, the love begins from the physical attraction or physical beauty which leads to the erotic desire and sexual intercourse is the final stage of this love. Spiritual people take this type of love as profane love because of its focus on mere physicality and lust. For them sex is a sinful act.

Love is major theme of John Donne's poetry. We can find two types of love: spiritual and physical love in his poetry. Different critics have different opinions about the presentation of love in his poetry. Some critics say that John Donne does not prefer to illustrate sex in his poetry that means he is not in the favour of physical love. Rupert Brooke says, "There are poems in which Donne attempts to sing a love perfectly in harmony with the moral law [...] Donne never for long gets rid of a medieval sense of the sinfulness of sexuality" (122). That means he does not go beyond the concept of spiritual love. During the medieval period sexual matters were banned to talk about and even in the level of religion sex was taken as a sinful act and this impacted in John Donne's writings. But C.S. Lewis does not see mere spirituality in Donne's poetry. He says:

I trace in his poetry three levels of sentiments. One of the lowest levels (lowest, that is in order of complexity), we have the celebration of simple appetite, as in elegy XIX. If I call this a pornographic poem, it must be understood to use that ugly word as a descriptive not as dyslogistic term. I mean by it that this poem, in my opinion, is intended to arouse the appetite it describes, to affect not only the imagination but the nervous system of the reader. And I may as well say at once – but who will willingly claim to be a judge in such matter? That it seems to me to be very nearly perfect in its kind. Nor would I call it an immoral poem. Under what condition the reading of it could be an innocent act is a real question: but the poem itself contains nothing intrinsically evil. (92)

Lewis states that the emotional desires or erotic kind of writings arouse sexual appetite. But he does not judge them either good or bad or moral or immoral. But one thing is clear that in Donne's writings we can find the illustration of physical love or sexual appetite or desire.

Lewis finds some qualities of modernism in Donne's poetry through his treatment of sexual love. He even finds dandyism within Donne himself. For him Donne's poetry is really interesting and easily graspable for modern readers. He further says:

The sentiments of Donne's love poems are easier to describe than their manner and its charm of modern readers easier to explain. No one would deny that the twentieth century so far has shown an extraordinary interest in sexual appetite and has been generally marked by a reaction from the romantic idealization of that appetite. We have agreed with Romantics in regarding sexual love as a subject of overwhelming importance, but hardly in anything else [...] as practical philosophers, we are living in the age of sexual experiments. (121-22)

Donne's expression of sexual appetite or sexual desire in his poem not only makes him a modern writer but also helps to provide what modern readers want.

Rupert Brooke also traces out the smell of romanticism in some poetry of John Donne in terms of his treatment of sexual love. The treatment of sexual love is blended with serious intellectuality. Dryden also finds sexuality in Donne's poetry decorated with similar kind of serious intellectuality. He says, "Donne perplexes the mind of the fair sex with the nice speculation of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with softness of love" (22). Although Donne mixes the matter of sex with the advance philosophical ideas, he definitely presents sex in his writings. And John Bennett also says, "the greatness of Donne's love poetry is largely due to the fact that his experience of the passion ranged from its lowest depth to its highest reaches" (142). It means desire, passion are prominent in Donne's writings.

Louis Martz sees the different types of movement in Donne's poetry. He says, "*The Funeral* had moved from thoughts of fidelity to cynicism. *The Relique* moves from cynical to an affirmation of miraculous purity in human love"(79). He notices expression of spirituality and

immortality in *'The Anniversaries'* and in *'Valediction: Forbidding mourning'*. Talking about "A *lecture upon the shadow*", he says that, "their love has been accompanied by shadows in the two senses; it gives worries for them" (79). C. A. Partridge, while talking about the flea says; "Donne version is certainly erotic, possibly the point of vulgarity [...] involves the transmission of the amorous insect into the symbol of he desired union" (25).

From above illustration it became clear that John Donne talks about the two types of love and blends them in poetry. But the question here is does he treat them equally? Or he gives privilege one over another thinking them as the binary opposites. In my opinion John Donne blends two types of love: spiritual love and physical love. He emphasizes equally to both. The concept of sin in sex is definitely a cultural concept. Love cannot be perfect without the perfect blending of spiritual and physical love with equal status. The concept of binary between spiritual and physical love needs to be ruptured. That is what Donne has done in his poetry. By giving equal treatment for spiritual and physical love, Donne has ruptured the concept of binary opposition between these two. For Donne, both forms of love should go parallel for the perfection. Rather than binaries, they are complimentary to each-other.

## II. Theoretical Modality

### Introduction to Deconstruction

To say deconstruction is this or deconstruction is that is to go against the whole thrust of Derrida's thought. While talking about the exact definition of deconstruction Derrida himself has said, "any statement such as deconstruction is 'X', automatically misses the point" (21). Of course to define deconstruction is not possible because deconstruction does not believe in any singularity, fixity or ultimateness. While talking about deconstruction, Alex Thomson says:

Deconstruction troubles out notions of definition because of its intense concern with singularity: with what makes things individual or unique. Governed by something like principle of respect for singularity, it makes more sense to think of deconstructions in the plural: a series of responses which seek to be as faithful as possible to their various objects, whether a particular text, author, or historical event. (299)

Thomson makes point that deconstruction which always puts question mark on singularity can be taken its existence as a plural in itself. That means everything from its existence cannot be fixed. It becomes rather dynamic or fluctuating. Thomson further says:

Deconstruction is very interested in the ways in which identity is never simply complete or given but it is the product of these kinds of decisions and assumptions. Rather than seeing the world in terms of specific, fixed and concrete entities, deconstruction sees it in terms of dynamic process of differentiation[...] the ideality of written or verbal signs - that which allowed them to be repeated, used and understood in new context, to mean things quite different from what was originally 'intended' by them. (300)

Thompson also emphasizes on contextual differences of an event and its impact. Same thing can be understood differently. That is what Derrida always focuses on multiplicity, plurality and dynamic nature. While talking about the nature of deconstruction M.H. Abrams says:

Deconstruction as applied in the criticism of literature, designates a theory and practice of reading which questions and claims to ‘subvert’ or ‘undermine’ the assumptions that are adequate to establish the boundaries, the coherence or unity and the determinate meanings of literary text. (55)

Deconstruction always questions the already established norms, tradition, Truth, knowledge, unity and most importantly it questions the concept of center but his focus is only in literary text or literature. Deconstruction never believes in singularity, fixity, static nature and concept of absolute truth.

Deconstruction is not a critical theory in itself. It is a critical thought which came into practice since 1966, when a French thinker Jacques Derrida presented a paper on ‘structuralism’ in Johns Hopkins University, America. Although he was invited to give his lecture on structuralism he questioned the entire faith of structuralism by picking out its own weaknesses. Derrida’s main focus was not on Saussure and his structuralism. He was focusing on anthropological structuralism of Claude Levi-Struss. In this regard Hazard Adam says:

The target of “*Structure Sign and Play in the Context of Human Sciences*” is explicitly the anthropological structuralism of Claude Levi-Struss, but it quickly became clear that Derrida was always really concerned with what he saw as a deep philosophical problem in history of western metaphysics” (1116).

Structuralism is a critical theory propounded by Swiss philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure, who sees structure in everything. According to Hazard Adam, “An abstract structure guides concrete manifestation of the things” (717). During the middle-half of the 20th century, structuralism was

at the peak of the development. Although the concept of structure had been practiced since the time of Aristotle it secured its position from 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Saussure focuses on language, Claude Levi-Struss took the side of structural anthropology. Derrida propounded his new thought critiquing them both.

Jacques Derrida was greatly influenced by two German philosophers, Martin Heidegger and Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche's "skepticism" helped Derrida to question the concept of authoritarianism and ultimate truth and Heidegger's concept of ontology helped Derrida to question in the concept of 'knowledge' and 'identity'. Through their influence, Derrida not only questioned the authoritarian tradition on criticism but also questioned the entire western metaphysical tradition. He called western metaphysics "logo-centric" and accused it for creating the concept of center and margin. Derrida says, "All western thought based on the idea of center and margin, a truth, an ideal form, a fixed point, an immovable movement, an essence, a God, a presence.... guarantees all meaning" (21). He gives examples of Christianity. Westerners believe that Christ and Christianity are in the center and others are marginal. They created the hierarchies like west/others, male/female etc. These binaries are creating conflict in society stating the need of quick dissolution or rupture. Derrida by taking the notion of structuralism says, "meaning of a sign comes in opposition to another sign but not in isolation" (1116). Here, it raises the point that if a sign functions in differential relationship then how can they be superior or inferior or in center and margin.

### **Beginning and Development of Deconstruction**

The formal beginning of deconstruction was in 1966, when a French thinker Jacques Derrida delivered his lecture on structuralism in Johns Hopkins University, America. He was presenting the paper on structuralism but all of a sudden he came to the establishment of new

critical thought by depicting weaknesses of structuralism itself. There, quite unexpectedly, he cast the entire history of philosophy in the west in doubt. As Jim Powell writes:

At this lecture given at the Johns Hopkins University entitled 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences', he has caused a stir in American Academia. His thought struck a new chord that caused many previous philosophers to be re-assessed, and it set a tone for the thought to come. (6)

His lecture on structuralism changed the whole western philosophical thought by putting it into question. It gave the birth of a very brand new era in the field of intellectual history.

In the field of literature also he puts question mark on already established tradition of authoritarian criticism and canonical writings. Now, he focuses on multiplicity, plurality and reader based criticism and that new style of reading came to be known as 'deconstruction'. After that day, the days of Derrida or the days of deconstruction began. In this regard Jim Powell says:

From there Derrida became the philosopher of the day, the new *infant terrible*, the new philosopher punk, of French intellectualism. And then after the American debut of Johns Hopkins, deconstruction and Derrida took America by storm, turning much of the world views topsy-turvy. (6)

Derrida's new thought brought a dangerous storm in the western metaphysical world. It challenged the Christian religious principles, its values as well as the westerners' concept of so called superiority. Whole western philosophical thought and its tradition came into the deep trouble because of its challenge.

In the very beginning Derrida's aim was to attack on the Levi-Struss's structural anthropology. But later he turned towards the language and also the whole of western metaphysics. In 1967, Derrida showed his domination in writing by publishing three very famous historical books on deconstruction. These famous books are: *Writing and Difference, Of*



*Grammatology* and *Voice and Phenomenon*. Since then, the new intellectual movement he spawned, known as deconstruction, has gained both admirers and detractors worldwide. It brought the global change in the way many thinkers think. Later in his life, Derrida published more than twenty books on deconstruction. He also presented numerous papers on deconstruction which helped to spread the brand new thought in the entire world.

### **Influence of Heidegger and Nietzsche on Derrida**

Derrida's main influence was German philosopher Martin Heidegger. He was greatly influenced with the Heideggerean 'ontology' which questions the concept of 'knowledge' and 'identity'. Even the word 'deconstruction' was taken from Heidegger's '*Destruktion*'. In this regard Jim Powell says, "The word 'deconstruction' Derrida uses was brought from Heidegger's concept of '*Destruktion*', his call for the loosening up of the old tradition of ontology - the study of ultimate rock bottom reality - through an exposure of its internal development" (16).

Derrida also borrowed from Heidegger the practice of crossing out (X) the terms after he has written them. But the main thing what influenced Derrida was Heidegger's question mark on fundamental philosophical concept such as 'knowledge', 'truth' and 'identity'. In Heideggerean philosophy of "Ontology" he questions on the existence of being itself without its own realization. He says existence depends on time and moment. So, every time truth and knowledge is in inconsistency. By putting this notion in consideration Derrida questioned the concept of established truth.

Fredrich Nietzsche was another main influential figure for Derrida. The concept of "skepticism" and in the reversal of binaries, they are together. What is skepticism then? Skepticism is a branch of philosophy which questions the concept of pure or absolute knowledge. It says that no knowledge is absolute, unquestionable, trustworthy, certain, complete, or knowledge does not have its perfect form. It also questioned about the existence, about the

ultimate reality and certain religious beliefs. It is not attainable by certain methods or media. To get knowledge we have to continue to test changing hypothesis. Knowledge always changes with time and situation. In *Dictionary of Philosophy*, Dogbert D. Runes writes:

It is a proposition about a method of obtaining knowledge: that every hypothesis should be subjected to continual testing; that the only or the best or reliable method of obtaining knowledge of one or more of the above kinds is to doubt until something inducible or nearly inducible as possible is found; that wherever evidence is indecisive, judgment should be suspended: that knowledge of all or certain kinds at some point rest on unproved postulates or assumptions. (517)

Knowledge, which is formed by testing a hypothesis is always changing. It is a continuous and always unproven. From here Derrida's concept of 'play' develops. While talking about Derrida's and Nietzsche Jim Powell says:

Derrida shares with Nietzsche skepticism about philosophy in general but specially its style and its truth claims. Derrida, like Nietzsche, is aware that we are prisoners of our perspective. Both reverse (and re-reverse) opposite such as subject/object, truth/error, moral/immoral. Both Nietzsche and Derrida write in a style that emphasizes the dance of thought on the playground of knowledge - a dance that is playful, waltzing between extremes such as absolute certainty and absolute doubt. (14)

Derrida brought some concepts of Nietzsche in his critical practice. The concept of the rupture of the hierarchical binaries whatever Derrida emphasized more was brought from Nietzsche.

## **Rupture of the Hierarchy: Emphasis on Complimentary Nature**

The trend of establishing hierarchical binaries has been practiced since last hundreds of years. It has carried a stigma among the people in the world. In fact, this widely avowed inherent nature of binary opposition – the system of privileging one of the poles of opposition at the expense of the other has invited a dangerous crisis not only in the socio-cultural practice but also in the concept of binary itself. Among such binaries one of the most visible binary oppositions in the practice is ‘spiritual love’ versus ‘physical love’. In fact, not only the binary of spiritual versus physical love but also all the binaries in practice like center/margin, male/female, west/east and many others are in the need of urgent denaturalization because these are practiced in a hierarchical relationship. These hierarchical binaries are self-contradictory, too restrictive, confining and unrealistic. While talking about the significance of those hierarchical binaries Sedgwick says:

[. . .] First, term ‘B’ is not symmetrical with but subordinated to term ‘A’ but, Second, the ontologically valorized term ‘A’ actually depends for its meaning on the simultaneous subsumption and exclusion of term ‘B’, hence, third, the question of priority between the supposed central and the supposed marginal category of each dyad is irresolvable unstable, an instability caused by the fact that term ‘B’ is constituted as at once internal and external to term ‘A’. (10)

The value and the meaning of one pole of binary is determined with another pole of it. So the same thing can be applied in the context of spiritual and physical love. Here the concept of superiority and inferiority, center and margin does not have any value. These are cultural constructs and never free from the problem with them. So, rather than treating them as opposites their interactive role should be taken into account.

Jacques Derrida also sees the problem in the concept of binary opposition. For him the concept of binary opposition creates the concept of center and margin, which obviously gives birth to hierarchical consideration. He says, constructing center means excluding or neglecting the proper existence of others. For him, “In doing so, they ignore, repress and marginalize others” (23). In Derrida’s view to establish the center means to emphasize the totalitarian view. Totalization or the centralization in the “field is in effect that of play, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite... a center which asserts and grounds the play of substitution” (1123). This play of substitutions is a movement of supplementary for Derrida. In the same regard he further says, “This distribution of supplementary allowance - if it is possible to put it that way - is absolutely necessary in order that as the whole, the available signifier and the signified that aims at, may remain in the relationship of complementary” (1124). In the same way, we can take the relationship between spiritual and physical love as complementary. That complementary helped to create something new at the expense of perfect love.

By definition, spiritual love means the love full of devotion, faith and out of erotic desire. It comes through the level of soul. Physical love means the love guided by physical appearance, physical need and erotic desire. So, these both come under the concept of sacred and profane love respectively. But only the sacredness which is given more privilege in expense of profanity, cannot give the full happiness to the lovers. They need sex because it is physical or biological need. That means the concept of profanity and sacredness are clearly culturally constructed where nature i.e. physical or biological need is kept under the culturally constructed rules of morality and sacredness. Sex is of course a biological need but sex without love and devotion also become barren. A professional sex- worker cannot remain happy because of the lack of sacredness and we have seen many saints involving in sexual propagandas. That is the thing Donne wants to express. John Donne takes the shelter of written language to express the desire

because the society does not allow him to express himself freely. Language becomes the means of expression of desire. How language becomes the means of expression of desire is clearly stated in Judith Butler's essay on 'Desire'. Here he writes:

[---] Language is bound to founder on the question of desire, that it is forced to seek modes of indirection, and that the writings of and on desire that we might consider are ones which seek, in the end, to cancel themselves as writing in order better to approximate the desire they seek to know. (370)

Language becomes the means of indirect expression of desire because society stops to express desire freely in their speech. Butler finds a complementary relationship between language and desire. He further says:

A tension emerges between a conception of language that is said to form or produce desire – and without which desire itself cannot exist – and a conception of language that is the vehicle through which desire is displaced that founders in every effort to present and communicate desire. It may seem at first that these are contradictory views, but I would suggest instead that the relation of language to desire is one that has assumed the status of an apparently necessary ambivalence. (370)

Physical love is guided by passion and erotic desire. But passion is natural for human being. It is something spontaneous or unstoppable. About the spontaneity of passion Paulo Coelho says, "Passion makes a person stop sleeping, working, feeling at peace" (121). It means passion is not only natural but also unstoppable. He further says:

Profound desire is that desire to be close to someone. From that point onwards, things change, the man and woman come into play, but what happens before – an attraction that brought them together – is impossible to explain. It is untouched

desire in its purest state. When desire is still in its purest state the man and woman fall in love with life, they live each moment reverently; consciously, always ready to celebrate the next blessing..... When the moment comes, they do not hesitate, they do not miss an opportunity, they do not let slip a stylish *magic moment*, because they respect the importance of each second. (135)

Profound desire leads to love somebody. Desire comes through physical attraction and at last they reach the magic moment of sex. So, sex which comes under physical love is necessary as a complementary to spiritual love for the perfect love.

The concept of hierarchy between spiritual and physical love is definitely a social or cultural construct. The higher class or elite people who abused the lower class people for sex, never wanted to come out of that bitter truth in front of the public. So, they put sex under the shadow of so called morality principle and repress it. They made religions in their favor with their power. Michael Foucault in this regard says:

The notion of 'repressed sex' is not only a theoretical matter. The affirmation of sexuality that has never been more rigorously subjugated than during the age of the hypocritical, bustling and responsible, bourgeoisie is coupled with the truth about sex.... To say sex is not repressed, or rather the relationship between sex and power is not characterized by repression, is to risk falling into a sterile paradox. (8)

So, the concept of sin in sex is socially or culturally constructed concept. Binary between spiritual love and physical love is also a culturally constructed concept. Love cannot be perfect without the equal participation of these two forms of love. These binaries need to be ruptured. In John Donne's poetry, he also has given equal treatment for spiritual and physical love that means he has ruptured the concept of binary opposition between these two. For him both forms should

go parallel for the perfection of love. They are complementary with each other rather than hierarchical binary oppositions..

### **III. Reading Against the Grain: Love and Sexuality in John Donne's Poems**

#### **Spirituality and Sexuality: Binary Oppositions**

John Donne was Seventeenth century English poet. It was the period when religion, especially Christianity, was dominating the world through its religious principle. But there was one important thing in seventeenth century religious practice that the period was greatly influenced by the medieval period. Because of the impact of medieval period the society made some extreme rules to be practiced. In the field of literature also medieval period has great impact. It is true that religious practice determines the literary writings. The mystery plays, morality plays of sixteenth century or seventeenth century's '*Essays on Divinity*' all are the examples of religious impact in the field of literature. Sexuality is one of the issues which is always in the light of any social or religious practice. During medieval period 'sex' used to be taken as a sinful act in the society. Love was divided into two parts: spiritual love and physical love. It was believed that spiritual love is aroused from the inner heart and reaches to the level of soul, is of primary importance of that period. Physical love, which is aroused from the physical attraction and through erotic desire reaches the physical contact, is given secondary value. It becomes clear that they were taken as binary oppositions in the society. John Donne also presents two types of love: spiritual and physical love in his love poetry. It seems that he was greatly influenced by religious practice because from his autobiography we know that he has written many religious articles. His *Essays on Divinity* is also an example of his religious impact. But how did he present love in his writings becomes an issue to research on. After reading his texts it is found that he presents the two types of love in his writing not as hierarchical binary oppositions as the contemporary religious practices did, rather treats them as complementary to each other. In his love poems he seems to state that with the perfect blending of spiritual and physical love, love becomes eternal. That is why spiritual love and physical love are not binary



oppositions but complementary to each other. That is what goes completely against the grain of contemporary religious practice or social practice.

### **‘The Flea’**

In one of his famous love poems ‘*The Flea*’, John Donne presents both forms of love: spiritual and physical love as complementary to each other for their eternal effect. In the poem, the little blood sucking insect is taken as a symbol to express their erotic desire. That flea sucks the blood of two lovers and makes it one. This scenario shows the erotic desire of two lovers which represents through the act of sucking of blood by that flea. Contemporary society puts boundaries upon any physical contact between two lovers. Society, because it is guided by religious principles, takes sex as a sin or matter of shame. It has stopped the lovers to love physically. But the flea does not feel any sort of shame. It does not have the concept of shame also. It does not have fear of society. Rather than feeling shame it really enjoys its act. Poem goes in this way:

It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee,  
And in the flea, our two bloods mingled bee;  
Thou know'st that this cannot be said  
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maiden head,  
Yet, this enjoys before it wooe,  
And pamper'd sews with one blood made of two  
And this, alas, is more than we would doe (Lines 2-10)

The narrator expresses his erotic desire with the help of flea because society does not allow him to express directly. He says to his beloved that the flea has mingled their blood and made them one. And now nobody can say this is sin, or shame and loss. Here perhaps he wants to love her physically but invisibly in the eyes of society. He says whatever he would do after their marriage

the flea has done already. From here it becomes clear that the lovers want to love each-other physically because they love each other in the level of heart and soul. But the social rules are stopping them. There lacks something in their love which gives a kind of dissatisfaction. Because of that dissatisfaction they are not having completeness in love. Their love is not becoming eternal. Mere spiritual love could not give them the way to eternity. The reason they cannot have physical contact is only the society. Society takes sex as a sin or matter of shame and lust. So we can say that through the concept of sinfulness sex, society has created a kind of hierarchy between spiritual love and physical love. Spiritual love is taken as superior and given more privilege and physical sex as inferior and less privileged. Without physical love their love has become barren and they are not enjoying it. They want to love each other physically and society stops them. That is the reason they are expressing their desire through the medium of flea, a blood sucking insect.

In next stanza we can see the word 'living walls'. To whom that living walls refer? Of course, the living walls mean religion, society, community. They are stopping them from loving each other physically. They are creating a kind of boundaries. The poem goes in this way:

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,  
Where wee almost, yea more than maryed are.  
This flea is you and I and this  
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;  
Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,  
And cloystered in these living walls of Jet. (Lines 9-15)

The pair thinks that a flea is collecting three lives within one. But their assimilation is not in the way they wanted. So they think it as a spare. They think that what happened there through this flea is generally the thing the married people do in the society. Unmarried lovers are not allowed

to do this. But they imagine that the flea is the combination of both of these lovers and the place where their blood is mingled is perhaps their marriage bed or marriage temple. Although the society, their parents created a wall between their physical and spiritual love they are now unified. We can see that how they are keen to have physical attachment but the society does not allow them. That is the reason their love is incomplete and they are not enjoying it. Society, by creating a hierarchy stops to take their love to eternity. John Donne through their desire to love physically wants to state that spiritual love and physical love cannot be hierarchical binary oppositions. They are complementary. If one lacks between two forms of love cannot be completed or eternal. Society constructed the concept of hierarchical binary oppositions between them two.

### **‘Love’s Alchemy’**

The same issue is raised in another John Donne’s important poem ‘*Loves’ Alchemy*’. There also with his compact writing, John Donne gives the hints that he wants to blend spiritual love and physical love with equal privilege. He states the need of equal participation of them both for its eternal effect. To blend them both is to make the way to eternity. If we need to blend them for eternal effect then how can they be a binary opposition or superior and inferior. In the poem John Donne writes:

Some that have deeper digged love’s mine then I,  
Say, were his centric happiness doth lie:  
I have loved, and told,  
But should I love, get, tell, till I were old. (Lines 1-4)

In general reading these lines just seems to ask question about the happiness of love and speaker’s quests to know that even during his old period he could love same way or not. But in deep reading we can find that Donne challenges those people who favor mere spirituality in love.

He asks the people, who claim themselves that they have greater experience of spiritual love that do they know where the centric happiness lies. Donne can tell it but he fears will he be able to tell it till his old days.

If we see in the history we can find 'dig' is a standard sexual term in renaissance slang, and the coarse physical concreteness of that image is developed by a pun on the word 'centric' which refers also to a women genitals. He questions the spiritualists whether they know the happiness and satisfaction aroused through the penetration of vagina. If they do not know it then how can they know the real meaning of love? Here the target is on the male people perhaps during that period. Women were kept under shadow and these men Donne says claimed themselves as spiritualists but actually on the surface level they were only male. The use of penetration of vagina seems quite odd but Donne seems to address both lover's pleasure and satisfaction. And in these lines the speaker seems to be in confusion that whether he could continue his love, his pleasure till his old age. He says he has loved, got and told about where the real happiness lies. At present the speaker seems to be young and his love is perfect because he can love both spiritually and physically but when he becomes old he might not be able to love physically. So, the real happiness or real pleasure will be lost. That makes him fear about life's pleasures. If he will not be able to get pleasure and happiness then their love may not reach to eternity. Here also in different way John Donne wants to show the need of physical and spiritual love at the same time to reach eternity. In the absence of one there is no meaning of another. Neither mere physical love is perfect in itself nor spiritual. Then how can they be superior or inferior. They are complementary to each other. Here also he ruptures the concept of binary oppositions between spiritual and physical love.

In the above paragraph John Donne is talking about the need of physical love because he thinks age factor does not affect the love spiritually. But now he shifts his pendulum of love

towards the need of spirituality also. That is why he goes against the courtly marriage system where he does not find love in the level of soul. He finds love in the level of body only. That is the reason he does not believe in courtly love system. He says that through courtly marriage people can have physical relationship because society accepts the physical relationship only after they get married. But he believes that their physical relationship leads them to happiness and eternity because the courtly marriage is not enough to give real experience of love. That courtly marriage is only the marriage between bodies not between the souls. It may give sudden pleasure but it cannot give real pleasure in life because their love remains only in the level of body but not in soul or spirit. They cannot be faithful to each other, nor can be pure devotee. For real pleasure in love, there should be the equal presentation of spirituality and physicality. John Donne writes:

Ends love in this, that my man,  
Can be as happy' as I can; if he can  
Endure the short scron of a bridegroom's play?  
That loving wretch that swears,  
'Tis not the bodies marry, but mindes,  
Which he in her angelic finds. (Lines 15-20 )

In this poem the speaker raises the question that could a man remain happy with his loveless marriage? He thinks no because the loveless marriage is the marriage between the bodies not the souls. If only the physical beauty or angelic appearance guides their marriage then there lacks the real love, real faith and respect between the couple. Without faith and respect or without spirituality love cannot be perfect or eternal. That love never gives happiness or joy in their life. The narrator is happy because he loves his beloved truly. They both have equal faith and respect to each other and even if they marry then that marriage is not only the marriage between bodies but between the souls also. Soulless physical love never becomes complete or eternal. There

should be both physicality and spirituality in love. That means it should be in the level of bodies as well as mind. With these opinions John Donne ruptures the hierarchy between spiritual and physical love in this poetry.

### **‘The Ecstasy’**

John Donne takes physical love as a result of faith, respect, intimacy and the means of propagation. In his poem ‘*The Ecstasy*’ he expresses the same idea. He begins the poem with such setting that two lovers are holding each other tightly and having physical attachment. That physical attachment not only shows their intimacy and respect but also gives a way to something noble creation. He begins the poem with these lines:

Where, like a pillow on a bed  
A pregnant bank swel’d up, to the rest  
The violets’ reclining head,  
Sat we two, one another’s best;  
Our hands were firmly cemented  
With a fast balme, which thence did spring,  
Our eye-beames twisted, and did thread  
Our eyes, upon the double string,  
So to’ entergraft our hands, as yet  
Was all the means to make us one,  
And preture of an eys to get  
Was all our propagation (Lines 1-12)

The speaker shifts from physicality to spirituality. In the beginning he talks about the mere physical attachment between the lovers. The setting shows that they are having sexual relationship but towards the end he justifies that their physical attachment is not for mere

physical pleasure but for something noble effect. It means it goes to something positive, spiritual which leads to eternity in the sense that the two love each other physically and spiritually and want to create some new effect in their love. He presents the scene of physical attachment which also is the effect of their spiritual love. They love spiritually, they have faith in each other, they are the good devotee, so they love each other physically. In the poem the two lovers are so static like a statue. They are like a pillow on a bed and unmoved as a pregnant woman taking rest. Their eyes are assimilating with each other. All these things are enough to say that they are having physical relationship. And at last it becomes clear that it is for something new creation or for propagation. Here John Donne clearly states that mere spirituality is not enough to something newness in love. Physical love leads to something new creation. But without the faith or devotion they cannot love each other physically. If both forms of love mix then, that love moves towards the eternity. For this reason spiritual love and physical love are complementary to each other. So, they are not binary oppositions.

Towards the end of that poem John Donne says, body should be united with soul. He writes, "So soul into the soul may flow... Though it to body first repair." (Lines 58-59) Body or physical contact raises a kind of intimacy and love reaches to the level of soul. Previously he says spiritual love encourages physical love and now he says physical love increases intimacy and love reaches to the level of soul. Anyway one thing is clear that spiritual love and physical love are complementary to each other. John Donne in this poem attacks the spiritualists who always talk against the physical love. He puts them on the rank of weak people because they do not know the mystery of bodily union. He further says:

To'our bodies turn wee then, that so  
Weake men as love reveal'd may tooke;  
Love's mysteries in souls doe grow,

But yet the body is his booke. (Lines 69-72)

John Donne suggests those spiritualists who believe the real mystery of love lies in soul, should know that it really lies in the body. That is the reason he says body is a book of mystery. To know that mystery one should go through the level of body.

### **‘The Relic’**

There is no doubt that John Donne wants to blend physical love with spiritual love. But one thing seems quite amazing. Even after the death he wants his beloved’s belongings with his corpse into his grave. He thinks from it their love not only reaches to the eternity but also their soul and body will be together forever. And when their grave is dug up again to place another corpse, the people will get these belongings. Then they will know that the grave is the grave of two lovers. They will know that the value of love not only lies in the bed or body but also in the level of soul. They will know the real love is the combination of body and soul both. Similar ideas are expressed in John Donne’s famous poem ‘*The Relic*’. There he writes:

When my grave is broke up again

Some second ghest to entertaine,

(For graves have learn’d that woman-head

To be to more than one a bed)

And he that digs it, spies

A bracelet of bright hair about the bone,

Will he not let’us alone,

And think that there is a loving couple lies. (Lines 1-8)

By taking cultural reference of seventeenth century where graves used to be broken to keep another corpse, he states that when people break that grave they will find a bracelets of his beloved hair around his wrist. Then they will know that the grave is the grave of a loving couple



and they will not separate them. Another important point Donne has expressed is that womanhood does not mean only a thing to share a bed. They are more than that. It means he does not see woman as a source of mere physical pleasure, he has great respect and honour towards them. And this respect shows a sense of spirituality. So for him eternal love is the perfect blending of spiritual love and physical love. In above lines John Donne also accepts the fact that even the graves are not sacred and suggests in the last few lines above perhaps someone would think that the erotic symbol would indicate some loving couple have arranged for a last carnal assignation. Another point is the above lines give the real picture of contemporary society in the sense that its treatment of women is quite unrealistic or partial. They take woman as a source of physical pleasure. Society takes manhood as a source of superiority. They never gave respect to the womanhood. John Donne by not taking woman as an inferior or as the source of pleasure only bed, gives lots of respect to them. Here by treating them as equal participants in either love relationship or in sexual relationship, he ruptures the binaries between male and female. And next he respects his beloved and wants his hand tied with hair's-lock as bracelets from which people on the one hand know that he wants to preserve his physical attachment with his beloved and on the other hand even after the death their soul is living together with their body. They will stop breaking graves thinking that loving couple are lying there. And they will respect their eternal love. Here he ruptures the binary between spiritual love and physical love in the sense that even after his death the lover wants to love physically as well as spiritually by which their love will be eternal.

John Donne thinks sex is natural and biological need. Desire to have sex is natural instinct. Rules of society have sealed that natural flow of sex. When two people fall in love truly, they do not care whatever society says about their relation. They can love each other physically or spiritually. Otherwise their relation cannot be fruitful or eternal. That natural desire which can

be fulfilled in faith and belief is obstructed by culture or society. If lovers want to make their love eternal through their spiritual and physical love then why should the society stop them from reaching it. And if without blending of two love remains incomplete, then how can a society put these two forms of love in hierarchy. So sex in love is natural. The concept of sinfulness of sexuality is social construct. Spiritual love and physical love are complementary. Same idea is expressed in '*The Relic*'. Here John writes:

Our heads ne'r touched the seales,  
Which nature, injur'd by late law, sets free:  
These miracles we did; but now alas,  
All measures, and all language, should passé,  
Should tell what a miracle she was. (Lines 29-33)

John Donne says that human law puts prohibition on the things which are originally free in nature. They never touch each other's body. They never break the seals of society but now something miracle happened. That miracle makes them to go against the social rules. That miracle is their love, their faith in each other. Now they move beyond the boundaries imposed by society or religion.

Two important points are raised here by John Donne. One is sex is natural instinct inside the human being and culture always tries to prohibit it because sex is taken as sinful act. Another point is that something miracle leads them to break the prohibition of culture. That miracle is nothing but the speaker's beloved, her beauty, her faith and devotion. Here also John Donne ruptures the binary between spiritual and physical love by saying that sinfulness of sex is the social construct. If anyone loves other spiritually he naturally wants to love him/her physically because sex is a natural instinct. Here also two people love each other spiritually and that spiritual love makes the way to physical love. Then only their love becomes successful because

then only they get pleasure and enjoyment in love. And that pleasure and enjoyment make their love something divine or eternal.

### **‘Woman Constancy’**

John Donne has tried to express same ideas in different ways. Through different scenarios he states the need of both spiritual love and physical love for the perfection in love. In the absence of either form no love becomes complete. So, he by showing them complementary ruptures the so called constructed binaries between spiritual and physical love. In one of his best poems ‘*Woman Constancy*’, he uses slightly different ways to talk about. In this poem, a woman, who is in love with a person, does not seem happy and comfortable. She loves him very much. She is extremely devoted towards him. Here, we can find the glimpse of her spiritual love towards him but not vice-versa. They both love each other physically. They spend whole day together. Because she loves him both spiritually and physically she wants something from him. At the end because of some reason she is not confident about him. So, she wants to know the truth whether he loves her truly or spiritually or not. In the poem she asks him to say truth in this way:

Now thou hast lov'd me one whole day,

To morrow when thou leav'st, what will thou say?

Will thou then antidate some new made vow?

Or say that now

We are not just these persons, which we were? (Lines 1-5)

In the poem, their love has just begun from one whole day. And they had some oaths in their love. She is in fear now whether he really loves her or not. After having sexual intercourse for a whole day with some oaths of real love, the beloved is not confident about her lover's devotion. So she wants to know his answer with devotion and acceptance. She fears he could say past is

past and present is different. Whatever, they had in past was just for pleasure. If that happens, their love will be barren. She believes they have loved physically but not spiritually. That means their love is in the level of body not in soul. So she wants to take it in the level of soul. She knows there lacks something that is faith and devotion or in other words spiritual love. From her pleading question it becomes clear that neither physical love nor spiritual love is complete in itself. These two should be equally presented in love. Otherwise love cannot be perfect or eternal. That is what John Donne wants to express here. If they are equally important for eternity and function in complementary nature they cannot be binary oppositions.

### **‘Confined Love’**

John Donne presents similar idea in his another poem ‘*Confined Love*’. In this poem John Donne has presented a sorrow of divorced beloved. There she is in trouble because her lover, by giving false promises abuses her physically. They love physically but later they are divorced. The speaker of the poem, a female character, searches same devotion from her lover but could not find. There lacks spirituality in their love. Without spiritual love physical love cannot move towards the perfection or eternity. Now she realizes that males think themselves superior and womanhood as inferior. Her lover also did the same thing. One thing here is clear that her abandonment from her lover is only because of the lack of faith and devotion or what we call spirituality. At present the speaker has anger upon that man and all the males because they make women as an anger wreaking platform. They never respect a woman. That is the reason her love becomes unsuccessful. Anyway the reason is nothing else but lack of spiritual love. Donne writes:

Some man unworthy to be possessor  
Of old or new love, himself being false or weake  
Though his paine and shame would be lesser,

If one woman-kind he might his anger wreak. (Lines 1-4)

In above lines anger is taken as a very keen erotic desire. Those men, who do not have respect for female and use womankind as a place to fulfill their erotic desire are shameless creature. They give their pain to womankind because they treat them as an inferior creature. They lack spirituality. That is the reason they possess false love. Without spiritual feeling mere physical love cannot give perfection in love. Towards the end of this poem the speaker compares these unworthy, shameless men with the beast. The poem says:

Beasts doe no joyntures lose

Though they new lovers choose

But we are made worse than those

Who e'r rigg'd faire ship to lie in harbors. (Lines 12-15)

Here, the speaker even puts those faithless, shameless, false people, who destroy the love relationship, even in lower rank than the beasts. Even the beasts do not leave their friends after joining to new love. She says we are worse than those who even destroy the good ship or tie the conditioned ships for their personal benefits. Here, some heartless people are compared with beasts because they lack the faculty of respect or honor. They come with very nice oracles and fall in love with woman to fulfill their erotic desire and leave their lovers alone. Their love becomes unsuccessful and gives others trouble because they lack spirituality. Mere physical love cannot be perfect in itself. We need the perfect blending of spiritual and physical love for its eternal effects. That lacks in this poem. Here also John Donne challenges the concept of binary opposition between spiritual and physical love showing their complementary nature.

### **'The Undertaking'**

Similarly, such issues can be found in Donne's another poem '*The Undertaking*'. There also the speaker is suffering through the profanity in love. And she is in the quest of platonic

love. It seems that her lover is attached to some newly found beauty and leaves her. But that poor beloved is waiting or begging the bravery from her lover. That bravery is nothing but to hide his profanity. She wants to see the virtue in her lover. She wants to go beyond the desire of physical beauty and mere physical love. She says:

But he who lovelinesse within  
Hath found, all outward loathes,  
For he who colour loves, and skinne  
Loves but their oldest clothes.  
If, as I have, you also doe  
Vertue' attird in woman see,  
And dare love that, and say so too,  
And forget the Hee and Shee. (Lines 13-20)

How strongly the narrator expresses her disagreement with the mere physicality in the context of love. She wants to see the same virtue inside her man also. Towards the end of the poem Donne writes:

And if this love, though placed so,  
From prophane men you hide,  
Which will no faith on this bestow,  
Or if they doe, deride:  
Then you have done a braver thing  
Then all the *worthies* did.  
And a braver thence will spring  
Which is, to keepe that hid. (Lines 21-28)

Towards the end of the poem the beloved wants to hide the profaneness inside her lover. Here, hide does not mean to keep inside which can come out anytime. Hide means to throw out because if that profanity remains within the man there remains no faith, no shame, no devotion, and no respect. She suggests her lover to become brave to hide all the negatives or profanity and remain virtuous like her. In the beginning she has done all these things and declares her a virtuous woman. She says her bravery to hide the profanity and now she wants her lover to do the same thing. If they do so, they will forget him and her and remain one on both levels: physical and spiritual. And that would be the true love between them.

### **‘The Message’**

Likewise, the problem exists between the two lovers in John Donne’s another poem ‘*The Message*’, where the speaker wants her heart, soul back from the lover. The speaker is suffering from the separation of a selfish lover and asking to return all things which are stolen by the lover. The message begins in this way:

Send home my long strayd eyes to mee,  
Which (oh) too long have dwelt in thee,  
Yet since there they have learn’d such ill  
Such forc’d fashions  
And false passions  
That they be  
Made by thee  
Fit for no good sight, keep them still. (Lines 1-8)

Narrator wants her innocent eyes back because now her eyes, perhaps it is insight, has learnt all the ills her lovers did. Her eyes have been such passionate forces which compelled her to love but that passion became false. She is victimized by that forceful passion. In the same way, she

asks back her heart also because it is not worthy of the man and he has broken the faith and oaths. The situation here is quite complicated because it seems that her lover by giving her false oaths fulfilled his own erotic desire. But now he leaves her. She is begging her eyes and heart back because she knows he was liar. And she knows that his love was false. The poem ends with these lines:

Yet send me back my heart and eyes,  
That I may know, and see thy lyes,  
And may laugh and joy, when thou  
Art in anguish  
And dost languish  
For some one  
That will none,  
Or Prove as false as thou art now. (Lines 17-24)

The beloved wants her eyes and heart because he had given false oaths and lies. And then she says she can laugh in her lover's anguish and also see him languishing and suffering, hence enjoy it. And now she also wants to take revenge in her lover's troubles. Here in this poem, there seems lack of faith and devotion. It lacks spirituality. Their passionate love ends in great rivalry because there lacks the spiritual love. Only physical love cannot reach eternity. Instead it can reach to the destruction. That is the message John Donne wants to deliver.

### **'A Feaver'**

Perfect example of combination of spiritual and physical love can be seen in Donne's another poem '*A Feaver*', where a lover is showing his devotion, respect to his dying beloved. He is pleading to stop the death of his beloved because he thinks after the death of her; he cannot love any other woman. His love is only for her. Neither he can enjoy his life nor he can celebrate



any moment because he thinks when he even thinks to celebrate with other women he will remember his beloved. It makes him so poor in himself. Here their love is eternal or divine in the sense that they love each other both spiritually and physically. In the absence of his beloved, that man shall hate other women for physical love otherwise there is no reason to hate them. He cannot celebrate because when he will be ready to celebrate with other women he will remember her. It shows how eternal their love is. That eternity became possible because of the blend of both spirituality and physicality. And if she dies there is no possibility of physical or spiritual love. That is the reason he wants to save his beloved. Donne begins his poem 'A Feaver' with these lines:

Oh doe not die, for I shall hate  
All woman so, when thou art gone,  
That thee and shall not celebrate,  
When I remember, thou wast one. (Lines 1-4)

The speaker not only rejects the relationship with other women of any sort, he equally imagines that after the death of his beloved the whole world will vapour with her breath. He says:

But yet thou canst not die, I know,  
To leave this world behinde, is death,  
But when thou from this world wilt goe,  
The whole world vapors thy breath. (Lines 5-8)

His love towards her is so strong that he cannot even accept her death in the beginning. He thinks even if she dies, she goes to another world; this whole world will vapour with her breath. His feelings towards her are so strong that every time when she takes breath, he thinks her breath is mixed in atmosphere. That is why he cannot love other women and cannot celebrate with them.

But he will always feel the lack of her physical body or physical love. The ending of the poem is also a perfect example of the complementary nature of spirituality and physicality where he says:

The beauty,' and all parts, which are thee,  
Are unchangeable firmament.  
Yet 'twas of my minde, seising thee  
Though it in thee cannot persever.  
For I had rather owner bee  
Of those one houre, than all else ever. (Lines 23-28)

Physical beauty of the beloved attracts the narrator which makes him to love her. Her beauty is evergreen and his mind is seizing all these things. He thinks he is owner of her beauty only for one hour, because she is dying. But that one hour will help him to remember forever. That means the love seems to begin from physicality, develops with spirituality and now is moving towards the eternity. If there were not spirituality and physicality then there would not be any possibility of eternity. Then how can spirituality and physicality be hierarchical binary oppositions. They are complementary to each other.

### **'Loves Dietie'**

In '*Loves Dietie*' John Donne compares the ancient love and modern love. During the ancient period loving and betraying was not in practice. But it can be found more prominently in modern world. Modern love is full of destiny. There is a smell of selfishness in modern love and pure devotion in ancient love unless one of the pair betrays. The lines begin in '*Loves Dietie*' in this way:

I long to talke with some old lovers ghost,  
Who dyed before the god of love was borne:  
I cannot thinke that hee, who then lov'd most,

Sunke so low, as to love one which did scorne. (Lines 1-4)

In the poem the narrator is betrayed by his lover (beloved). And because he loved her most, he is not being able to forget her. So, he wants to ask the ghost of old lovers that even if anyone betrays you, you love her/him as you did in past. During the modern period, love does not arouse from the depth of heart or soul. It only arouses from the physical attraction, and erotic desire. That leads them only to physical love not to spiritual. Only physical love cannot make love eternal but it leads to the destruction. Perhaps his beloved had a destiny or selfishness which led to love him but when she got it she vanishes. Because of that betrayal he tired and he says:

Love may make me leave loving, or might trie

A deeper plague, to make her love me too,

Which since she loves before, I am loth to see;

Falshood is worse than hate; and that must bee

Of see whom I love, should love mee. (Lines 24-28)

He is saying that love makes him leave loving and face great trouble. Now he finds falsehood gives birth to hate. He now hates his beloved and finds answer of his previous question that whether he should continue loving those who betrayed him. Of course not he says he should love that girl who loves him also. There should be faith and devotion in love. False love is not love it is mere physical satisfaction for short period. To make love eternal there should be spirituality in love. Body and soul only give perfection in love. That means physical love and spiritual love should be combined for love's eternity.

### **'Negative Love'**

In one of the Donne's love poem ' *Negative Love* ', he talks about the mere physical love and its effects. There, love arouses from the physical beauty of beloved. The narrator knows that

not only eyes but mind also should engage in love. He knows it but the others do not. Their love is guided by erotic desire or fire of instinct. The poem begins:

I never stoop'd so low, as they  
Which on an eye, cheeke, lip, can prey  
Seldom to them, which soare no higher  
Then the vertue or the mind to'admire,  
For sense, and understanding may  
Know, what gives fuel to their fire. (Lines 1-6)

The narrator is happy within himself that his love is not guided by mere physicality. But there are some people whose love is guided by the beauty of eyes, cheek and lip of their beloved. The erotic desire gives fuel in their love, not of virtuous mind. He knows their love cannot be eternal because they do not love spiritually but only physically. Physical love and spiritual love are complementary. In the absence of one, love cannot be perfect or eternal. In this way, here also John Donne ruptures the hierarchy between spiritual love and physical love.

When we read John Donne's poem we can easily find that he gives many temporary conclusions in his poems. Even in the same poem, in one part we find lack of spirituality and in another part lack of physicality. Both of them play same role. Because in the absence of one, another cannot be complete. They work as the two wheels of same cart. This makes clearer that he never prefers one form of love over another. It is said that his best poems are not those which move in either extreme in his answer, but they are rather those in which the physical and spiritual are made to work together through the curiously shifting and winding manners that mark Donne's movement towards truth.

## **'Love's Growth'**

We can find such characteristic in his love poem '*Loves Growth*'. Here he shifts from one form of love to another. The poem begins with these lines:

I scarce beleve my love to be so pure  
As I had thought it was,  
Because it doth endure  
Vicissitude, and season, as the grasse;  
Me thinkes I layed all winter, when I swore,  
My love was infinite, if spring make' it more. (Lines 1-5)

With such an opening we might expect that the lament the fact his love has decayed because he does not believe his love is so pure, but unlike that what worries him, what proves the instability of his love, is the fact that it seem to be increasing as a grass and becoming infinite. He thought his love is as barren as winter but it became beautiful spring. Here the growth of love might be the result of the blending of spirituality and physicality. Now he tries to find out the real nature of love. He writes:

But if this medicine, love which cures all sorrow  
With more, not only bee no quintessence,  
But mixt of all stuffles, paining soule, or sense  
And of the sunne his working vigour borrow,  
Love's not so pure, and abstract, as they use  
To say, which have no mistresse but their muse,  
But as all else as elemented too,  
Love sometimes would contemplate, sometimes do. (Lines 7-14)

He says love can be the medicine to cure all sorrow of two lovers. It is mixture of soul and sense. That means love is the blending of spirituality and physicality or we can say perfect love is the blending of spiritual love, which is guided by soul and physical love, which is guided by sense. Here through speaker John Donne says, those people who do not have their mistress say love is pure and abstract in itself. But love is not so pure and abstract as they think because love can be the source of enjoyment and pleasure. But he does not reject the fact that love can be something abstract thing or contemplating and something concrete, which can be seen in action too. That abstractness refers to the spiritual love and concreteness refers to the physical love. Here also John Donne logically becomes able to rupture the hierarchy between spiritual love and physical love. To give perfection both forms of love are necessary. So, spiritual love and physical love are not binary oppositions but complementary to each other.

### **‘Aire and Angles’**

John Donne says physical beauty is the main source of human love. For him physical beauty raises the erotic desire and it leads to physical love. But to reach to the level of physical love they should love spiritually also as in previous poem we saw that because of the lack of spiritual love, love relation could not reach its extreme and also found that because of the lack of physical love, love became incomplete. In one of his famous love poems ‘*Aire and Angles*’; John Donne has depicted the same scenario. Here the speaker says to love someone does not mean to love him/her spiritually or mere physically. There should be love in two levels: body and soul.

Donne writes:

Love must not be, but take a body too,  
And therefore what thou wert, and who  
I bid love aske, and now  
That it assume thy body, I allow,

And fixe it selfe in thy lip, eye and brow. (Lines 10-14)

The principal idea here is that body should not be the guiding principle in love. But it is one of the factors to be considered. A lover should know who his beloved is and what she does and beloved also should do the same thing. Then they can go to the body. They can love physically. But mere physical beauty should not guide the love. Here also John Donne quite cleverly shows the need of physicality and spirituality in the love relationship. In general reading it seems he wants to emphasize on physicality more. But towards the end of this poem he talks about the purity of human love. That means here he seems to state the need of spirituality. Here he writes:

Then as an Angell, face, and wings

Of aire, not pure as it, yet pure doth weare,

So thy love may be in my love sphere;

Just such disparitie

As it twixt the Aire and the Angells puntie,

T'wixt womens love, and mens will ever be. (Lines 23-28)

Donne talks about the purity of love. People think angelic love is pure love. Angelic means abstract in itself. But the pure love for Donne is the twisted love between men and women. Love between Airs, an abstract and Angle, a concrete is compared with the love between men and women because the love between men and women gives two meanings. One meaning is illustration of different sex indicates the physical love as secondly, that physical love is not possible without their faith and belief as in '*Aire and Angles*'. So here also John Donne becomes able to rupture the hierarchy by stating their equal need.

### **'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning'**

In one of his love poems John Donne compares the two different lovers: dull slumber lovers, who only believe in physical love and spiritual lovers, who believe in love between souls

and shows the need of both for eternal effect in love. Here also he emphasizes on their complementary nature and ruptures the social hierarchy between spiritual and physical love. We can find such comparison in his poem '*A Valediction Forbidding Mourning*'. In that poem, Donne begins his lines by praising the virtuous men. Then he moves to state the need of physical love. He writes:

So let us melt, and make no noise,  
No teare-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,  
T'were prophanation of our joyes  
To tell the layette our love (Lines 5-8)

Two lovers want to melt in each other in the poem. They want to forget everything and enjoy in their physical love. Although physical love is taken as a profane love, they want to love physically for something new or divineness or for eternity of their love or to show their loyalty. Here, they want to combine both physical and spiritual love for the eternal effect of their love. That means both forms of love are equally important for something noble in love. Here also John Donne by presenting them equally wants to ruptures the hierarchy of spirituality and physicality. Later in this poem those two lovers talk about the difference between their love and other slumbary lovers. They say:

Dull sublunary lovers love  
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit  
Absence, because it doth remove  
Those things which elemented it. (Lines 13-16)

Those sublunary lovers are guided by their sense or mere erotic desire. Their soul which could lead their love towards absence or something divine or eternal is full of sense. So the elements which help them to go to eternity are removed. They lack the spirituality in love. Then without



spiritual feelings nobody can reach in the perfection in love. They can have bodily pleasure because their love is bodily love but they lack soul, they lack spirituality. In the absence of spirituality, no eternity is possible in love. That is why spiritual love and physical love are complementary to each other for its eternal effect.

### **‘The good-morrow’**

. In ‘*The good-morrow*’ John Donne depicted the innocence child love which later reaches to the pure erotic desire. Here the lovers begin their love through the spiritual love and later they want to blend it with physical love. In ‘*The good-morrow*’ John Donne ends the poem with the conclusion that to make love always alive, they need to blend their body and soul equally. They need to love physically as well as spiritually. Then only their love will not die means it will reach to the eternity. He writes:

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,

And true plain hearts doe in the faces rest,

Where can we find two better hemispheres.

Without sharp north, without declining west?

What ever dyes, was not mixt equally;

If our two loves be one, or, thou and I

Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none can die. (Lines 15-21)

Two lovers want their physical bodies to make one, their two hearts to one, two loves to one and in fact they want to cross all the boundaries which are symbolized by ‘north’ or ‘west’ created by society. They want to love each other physically by which their hearts or spirits or souls also can assimilate into one. They want to be one not only physically but also spiritually. They think it leads their love towards the eternity. It remains immortal forever.

After reading John Donne's poems it becomes clear that he blends two types of love: spiritual love and physical love equally in his poems. He does not prefer one over another. He demonstrates through his poems that the concept of superiority or inferiority between spiritual and physical love is a social construct. In reality they are not binary oppositions but they are complementary to each other. Without the equal representation of both these forms no love can be eternal. So, John Donne goes against the social norms stating the need to rupture the concept of binary oppositions between spiritual and physical love. He truly ruptures the binaries which we have seen above in this chapter. In every poem illustrated above, John Donne ruptures the concept of hierarchical binary oppositions and treats them as complementary to each other. That is why there is no superiority, no inferiority and they are given equal privilege. From this study it becomes clear that John Donne goes against the grain of contemporary society by deconstructing the concept of sinfulness of sexuality which was prominent thought during seventeenth century.

#### IV Conclusion

The concept of the hierarchical binaries oppositions have been practiced through out the beginning of human civilization . But such practices always remain the matter of discussion among the people. This widely avowed inherent nature of binary oppositions has produced a dangerous crisis not only in the socio-cultural practices but also in the concept of binary itself. Among these binary oppositions one of the most debatable binary is the binary between spiritual and physical love. That concept of binary between spiritual love and physical love constructed socially. The so called elite or higher class bourgeoisie, created the hierarchy between spiritual and physical love. Throughout history we find that bourgeoisie always abused the proletariat people. They abuse the female of society to fulfill their erotic desire. To keep it secret they make the rules against natural sex. They themselves create the concept of sinfulness of sexuality by which no female can take out their pleadings of sexual abuses in front of society. They continue to corrupt the female secretly and for the world or society they become great by constructing the rules against sex. From here the concept of binary oppositions comes into existence and practice. Modern theorists show great interest in that matter. Post modern theorist Jacques Derrida propounded his new critical thought '*Deconstruction*' which helped to deconstruct the already constructed binary oppositions. But John Donne, a great seventeenth century metaphysical poet, was aware of the fact that the concept of binary oppositions are social construct. So in his love poems, he ruptures the binary between spiritual and physical love by presenting them as complementary to each other.

In John Donne's poems illustrated above, we can find the two lovers loving each other. For some lovers, their love becomes very sound and successful and some lovers face difficulties and troubles. Donne by picking out the causes of success and failure in love, shows how love should go. And he also ruptures the concept of hierarchical binary oppositions between physical

and spiritual love. To rupture the binary opposition between spiritual love and physical love, he goes through three different ways in his writings. In some poems he has shown the failure in love because of the lack of spiritual love. In other poems he has shown the failure in love because of the lack of physical love. And there are some poems where he has shown the presence of both spiritual and physical love to state the need of blending of these two for eternal effect in love.

In some poems John Donne presents the characters who are victimized by the falsity in love. The lovers giving false oaths, become able to have sexual relationship but after that they leave their beloved and never come back. In most of the poems, female character's frustration is shown. That frustration arouses because of the lack of male's devotion. Their love cannot reach towards the eternity because they only love each other physically but not spiritually. The incompleteness of love is the result of lack of spirituality. He takes Spiritual love and Physical love as complementary to each other.

In some poems he has presented the situation that the two lovers, who love each other very much, could not love them physically because society does not accept their any kind of physical attachment. Here John Donne gives the message that the desire to have physical love is natural process the society does not let them to go through their nature. In this situation, many lovers express their desire through many alternative ways and sometime they even break the boundaries of society and love each other physically. He shows here the unpleasant moment of lovers because of the prohibition of society to love them physically. They are frustrated and even cross the boundaries of social norms. That means mere spiritual love does not give satisfaction to the lovers. If they love each other spiritually as well as physically they will remain happy with each other and their relationship will be eternal. Love cannot be eternal without the blending of spiritual love and physical love. That's why they are complementary. If they are complementary

to each other they cannot be hierarchical binary oppositions. Here, also John Donne ruptures the concept of binary opposition between spiritual love and physical love.

In third type of poetry John Donne shows the happy life of the lovers because of the presence of both spiritual and physical love. He presents both spiritual love and physical love as complementary rather than binary oppositions.

In this way, John Donne through his poems says that the concept of hierarchical binary oppositions between spiritual love and physical love is social construct. The so-called elite people bourgeoisie created that concept to hide that corruption or their sexual abuse to the proletariat women. This concept of hierarchy is constructed for their own benefits. In reality, desire for sex is natural. Spiritual love and physical love are not binary oppositions but they are complementary. If one form of love lacks, no love can be perfect. During the seventeenth century sex used to be taken as sinful act. So, spiritual love and physical love were supposed as hierarchical binary oppositions. By showing their complementary nature John Donne ruptures the hierarchy between spiritual and physical love which goes against the grain of contemporary period.

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