

L.N. Mittala University, Dombivli
B.A. (Part-I) Eng. (H). Paper-II

Topic: THE RETREAT (Poem)
Critical Appreciation

Date: 15.4.2020

Dr. Hemant K. Thakur
Guest Teacher, Dept. of Eng.
V.S.J. College, Rajnagar
mobile NO- 9470883086

The poem, The Retreat has been composed by Henry Vaughan, one of the great metaphysical poets of the 17th century. He was much influenced by the poetry of Herbert. His collection of religious poems, Silence Scintillans appeared in two parts in 1650 and 1655. In few of his poems Vaughan is more melodious than Herbert. He, like Herbert, does not pray within a church, but beneath the sky.

The present poem is deeply rooted in the belief that man's life on the earth is not the best of his existence. He lived before he was born here and he comes to the earth with the memories of life that is behind him. It also suggests that childhood is the most glorious and spiritual state of existence when thoughts are innocent and pure, attraction for God and things heavenly are natural.

In the opening stanza of the poem the poet regrets for the by-gone days of Angel-Infancy when man is nearest to God and sees in beautiful sights of Nature like a golden-coloured cloud or a flower 'Some shadows of eternity'. It is in the vivid feelings of childhood that the sense of immortality is beautifully present. The feeling of immortality permits them the bodily covering of the soul.

The poet yearns to go over again the path of the life which he has covered since childhood

and reached that ~~state~~ state of life when he first
parted from the glorious company of attendant
angels, and where soon he could catch a vision of
the city of Heaven with its shady palm trees. But this
is a vain thought because after the gross experiences
of life it is not possible to regain the pure innocence
and the spiritual insight of childhood. Some people
want to advance in years and to gain experiences of
the world but it is the poet's desire to go back to
his glorious childhood by nullifying the experiences
of the intervening period of life. It is his faith that
when he would die, the innocence of childhood
would reappear to him in his life after death.

The style of the poem is very re-
markable. The lines have a rich musical quality
which makes the meaning very clear. There is also
a refreshing quality about the images chosen.
It is a highly suggestive style. We have to visualise
things in order to appreciate the charm of the
style. The expressions like, 'gazing ~~at~~ soul', 'the soul
being drunk staggering on the way', 'the ancient track
leading to the shady city of Palm trees' show how
rich is the poet's power of imagination and vivid
description.

— x — x —