

## **Travelling to the vistas of peace and rest: A comparative study of spirituality and mysticism in Henry Vaughan's "Peace" and George Herbert's "The Pulley"**

**S. Alfred Pravin**

M.A English Literature

St. Joseph's College (Autonomous)

Tiruchirappalli

### **Abstract**

In this modern world people are perplexed by the word spirituality and religion. Religion is a set of organized beliefs and practices and spirituality focuses more on each individual's soul. Mysticism is an abstract term to comprehend. In Modern thinking it is recondite and explores a less than precise meaning. It has the sense of spiritual and or mystical symbolism, allegory, soul provoking and some in form of superstition. It urges the individual to transcendence the physical world, to achieve a third force which might convert the core and entity of life. Henry Vaughan and George Herbert poems are imbued with some strain of mysticism in their poetry. They have mystic matter and fact that give impressive quality while reading their poetry. This research article much elucidates on the mysticism and symbolism in Henry Vaughan's 'Peace' and George Herbert's 'The Pulley'. It further sparks light by Comparing how human mind attain and achieve divine's rest and peace.

**Key Words:** Mysticism, spirituality, symbols, Divine, Human, Transcendence, and Enlightenment.

Henry Vaughan is born on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1622, Llansantffraed, Breconshire, in Welsh. He is remarkable Welsh poet and mystic poet. His poetry imbibed with a wide range and deep intensity of spiritual values and intuition. He got his education from Oxford and studied Law. He was a metaphysical poet. He was gifted with writing poetry based on the nuances of nature. The romantic poet William Wordsworth has influenced by the writing style of Henry Vaughan. Though Vaughan borrowed phrase from Herbert and other Writers. Further he has borrowed the

same title of George Herbert for his poetry. He has practice medicine and continued to do so throughout his life.

George Herbert is a Welsh poet, orator, and priest of the Church of England. He follows the style of Metaphysical poets, and he is considered to be ‘one of the foremost British devotional lyricists’. He was born in wealthy family and got good education from Cambridge in 1609. He became a university public orator and allured the attraction of King James I. His poems are based on characterized by directness of expression and subtle conceit and overtones of religion. Richard Baxter said that Herbert spoke to God like one that really believeth in God, and whose business in the world is most with God. Herat- work and heaven- work make up his books. Henry Vaughan called George Herbert as “a most glorious saint and seer”.

Mysticism is an ancient Greek origin word with determined meanings such as “to close” or ‘to conceal”, mysticism refers to the biblical, liturgical, spiritual, and contemplative dimensions of early and medieval Christianity. During the early modern period, the term has related to “extraordinary experiences and state of mind”. In modern times, it has acquired with plethora of meaning, the aim at the ‘union with the absolute, the infinite, or God’. A lucid understanding of this term was given by William James, who stated that in mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness. Spirituality in modern concept dissociates by religion and seeks to grasp the searching of modern man for ethics and norms in a rapid technological and commercial world. In other words, “Mysticism is the way to return to our source of being and to eliminate the experience of alienation. From religious point of view it is a personal relationship with God which is the firsthand experience with God and it evolves the acceptance of the belief and/ or practice in God” (Underhill 9-10). This research mainly focuses on symbolism and mystic ideas in Henry Vaughan’s “Peace” and George Herbert’s “The Pulley” and how readers understand God’s role in their life.

“Peace” is a religious poem written by Vaughan and it comprises of spiritual, military and natural images. It also elucidates his only live experience in the time of war. He served in the army for several days. Throughout the poem, the speaker brings out the nature of heaven through different imagery and description. The very beginning of the poem lights the clues of external

world which filled with peace and exhilaration of God. He addresses to his soul that “There is a country / Afar beyond the stars,” (1-2) poet refers to the celestial world where heavenly bodies live. He has some enthusiastic imagination to define God and his avenue. It expresses poet’s inner beauty of mind and heart and elucidates his joy by describing the abode of God. Vaughan commences the poem with much description in order to instigate the feelings of the readers to experience the beautification of heaven. He knows that peace exists above the earth where heavenly bodies dwell peacefully. He wants to make the readers to corroborate that mystery by expressing the spectacle of heaven. “Sweet peace sits, crown’d with smiles,” (6) Peace gives joy and it is like a treasure that can be unfurled by God alone. Poet stresses the solution of man’s lounge in the world aimlessly in order to get peace and on how one could make life meaningful and joyful. Poet associates peace with God, because God is the one who gives peace, bliss and exhilaration provided one associate with divine body. Peace is a golden virtue and is associated with spirituality. It could be achieved and attained by those who associate themselves with divine and try to transcendence the carnal pleasures of the world.

Vaughan further gives an apt clue for the readers by telling, one who gives peace is “Born in a manger” (7). He further says that he was a gracious friend to his soul. The poet has achieved and got enlightenment by associate himself with God and his plan. Here, it helps the reader to imagine the nativity scene of Christ. Jesus Christ who born in a manger at Bethlehem and he is adored by kings, shepherds and cattles. “And O my soul awake!” (10) Poet asks his soul to be aware of the worldly pleasures and to be prepared to transcendence his mind and heart to achieve the perfect gift of life that is peace. Further he says that ‘pure love descend, / To die for thy sake’ (11-12) pure love refers to Jesus Christ, who showed and shared love by sacrificed his life on the cross for the redemption of the human. It could be the reason for the poet to uplift his soul and proudly says Christ is a confidant of his soul. Christ becomes an harbinger for the poet in order to show love for sick, poor, recluse, untouchables and defaulters. According to the poet, Christ shows the unconditional and perfect love to human. Love is a Spiritual and supreme quality and no external forces can sway or ruin love by its trivial effect. Love is the unification factor which binds the broken heart and moves human kind to new vistas of happiness. Man is in the search of love in the world, thereby attains peace and love by unify with God and dislikes the worldly

mortal pleasures. “There grows the flow’r of peace, / The rose that cannot wither,” (14-15) as for the poet, peace which is given by God is perfect, amazing and precious. Rose refers to Peace, love, sacrifice and freshness. In the poem, rose refers to peace which is bestowed by God to man. Peace has a power to bring solace and compassion towards the seekers and never brings disappointment or discomfort. It has gotten much power and potential to liberate the human beings from the clutches of ignorance and darkness. Vaughan uses the word “fortress” to show the mighty power of God, who provides rich peace in the time of trouble and melancholy. It is a perfect imagery which shows that God is the shelter in the troubled times of man.

The closing line of the poem stresses much on the significant characteristics of God. It follows “But one, who never changes, / Thy God, thy life, thy cure” (19-20) the character of God never changes according to the situation of man. God’s love never fades amidst the man’s impediments. The poet addresses to his soul that his soul’s God is Christ, he is the life giver and anecdote for the wounded and disappointed souls. All the above stated boons are possible for one who searches and unites with God. Man’s life in the earth is meaningless and worthless. Man unities with God, gives him a complete pleasure and peace. The poem states that one can achieve enlightenment by transcendence the worldly pleasure and unite with God and his plan.

“The Pulley” is a spiritual poem written by George Herbert. It has separated into sets of five lines. Each of them follows a structured rhyme scheme. This poem is an entirely a dialogue spoken by God or about God. The poem commences with recapitulate of the creation story. Herbert has some queries in the part of God. According to Herbert, God is one who bestows and blesses human with the joyful gifts such as knowledge, beauty, strength, wisdom and courage. These are the required blessings that one wants to sustain in this world and it is flowed from God to humankind profusely. Rest is a blessing that God resists to bestow upon humankind, because it is an unquenchable assert that God has in his treasure that cannot be given to man. In the world, every man has some asserts to rejoice and glad. Some people wander for miles as a Pilgrims to different shrines and temples and offers alms for the destitute. The reason for their offerings are to make God to forgive and give the golden gift called rest. This poem also unfurls the truth of why God, the eternal body resists the gift ‘rest’ to the humankind and further elucidates the true spirit of spirituality.

“Having a glass of blessings standing by, / “Let us,” said he, “pour on him all we can.” (1-2). The speaker of the poem brings out the truth that God is the supreme being who possesses all the gift that man can obsess in the world. Strength, beauty, wisdom, honor and pleasure are the gift that poured upon man by God. One can accomplish all these gifts from God except rest. “Rest in the bottom lay.” (10) God has a glass of blessing, in that significant gift has been laid for its time to come. It will not come all of a sudden, but wait for the command of God. Rest is the gift which is longed by many people. It is a treasure that remains in the cup of God. God’s decision of not giving to humankind is the twist that God has played in the creation of humankind. Poet describes the realistic condition of man in the world who wanders for receive rest from God.

“He would adore my gifts instead of me,/ And rest in nature, not the God of Nature” (13-14). These lines stress the reason for why God restrains to pour the gift on his Glass. If he gives rest to the humankind then man will praise the blessings and fail to adore God. It shows the true reason of which God restrains rest to man. True spirituality of man will explore when man is in the state of suffering, so God moves man to the state of affliction and disappointment.

God does not want to bestow rest upon the humankind, if so then one will become a loser either man or God. “Let him be rich and weary, that at least,/ If goodness lead him not, yet weariness” (18-19) God fills man with weariness in order to make him aware of his presence in his life. If goodness not makes him to think about God and his blessings upon him, then melancholy will stimulate one to think about God and his blessings. Somehow, God wants man to be united with him and blesses him with gifts. “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matt.11. 28) God is the treasure for all the gifts that can attain by human in the world. In the Bible, Jesus said to people that who are burdened may come to him in order, to receive rest from him. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,” (Jam 1.17) all the treasures and affluences are descended from God and not by hard work of man because God gives strength to the people who please him. Even in the time of suffering, God shows direction for the eternal bliss and peace. It shows the great character of God and his mercy and kind towards man. One could receive the gifts from God only by amalgam with divine’s will and care by transcendence the worldly pleasure and seek the presence of God. Man can attain the eternal

blessings from God by sacrificing and transcendence the physical pleasures of the world. Spirituality mould man and offer the best solution for the ignorance of man on God.

The select poems are based on the relationship between man and God. It also elucidates how man transcendence his physical pleasures and attain enlightenment in his life. “Mystery is something in which I am myself involved, and it can therefore only be thought of as a sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and initial validity” (Marcel 117). Man involved in mysticism, in order comprehend who his in him and what exists before him. For Christianity, suffering is the most of all mystery, where salvific sense is to be found by a personal participation in Christ. Both the poems discuss the man’s creation in the earth and the life of man in this mortal world, which is filled with weary, sad, war, cry and corruption. Peace and rest are the golden gifts of God. It would be received by man when man associates with God. This union, or mystical experience, with God would demand humankind loses all sense the self and be absorbed into God as one. It also gives the solution for all the problems that are faced by man in this materialistic world and bestows the possible way to attain the enlightenment from God, by travelling through the suffering and tribulations of the World. Spirituality is detached from religion and it gains a new meaning that, the way one associates himself or herself to God and pursues moral values and traits. By doing that one can transcendence all the carnal pleasures of the World and attain the everlasting gems of God, such as peace and rest. “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”(Isa. 40.31) by receive the blessing of God, man will be strengthen and transcendence the carnal pleasure. The union of God and man is accompanied by a heightened sense of ecstasy, esoteric, divine vision, sanctification, peace etc., Both the authors suggest that there is a way for humans to preserve their relationship with God by keeping their soul virtuous. People live in an unreal and uncertain world through spirituality they can experience enlightenment and self-reliance.

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