

B.A. PART I ENGLISH HONS. PAPER II

Go and Catch a Falling Star-John Donne

Dr. Dil Mohan Sah

R.M.W. College, Nawada

"Go and catch a falling star" is one of the finest love lyrics of John Donne. It has been taken from his collection "Songs and Sonnets". In this poem we have a cynical reflection on the fickleness of fair mind where it is possible to get a constant woman "at the next door", but it is almost impossible that she continues to remain so throughout her life.

However, the poem is highly lyrical in vein and straightforward in texture. The entire tenure of the poem is that one can attempt many and impossible thing, perhaps there truly impossible is to find a chaste and loyal woman. This poem consorts rather oddly with Donne's love poetry, for it forms a striking contrast to a exhilaration and joy that finds more frequent expression in the other poems. Its notable feature is the close approximation achieved between the rhythm of poetry and of conversation.

Strictly speaking, the song presents three stanzas, each is remarkable in its own way. The opening lines prefigures the difficulty of life when he tells his listener to go and catch a falling star or to impregnate a mandrake root or tell him where all the past years have gone, or tell him who made a deep incision in the devil's foot, or teach him to hear the Mermaid's song, or to control stinging envies to find which winds help in the progress of an honest mind. Speaking further in same vein, the poet says that if his listener is carried away to see strange sights and invisible sights, he should ride ten thousand days and night, till his hair has turned white due to age. Only to return and to tell the poet of all the strange experiences that have befallen him. In this way, the theme of the poem is to be found in the last line of the second stanza-"No where/Lives a woman true and fair".

Thus the poem deals with the inconstancy of fair women. After suggesting a number of possibility the poet asks the hearer to find him a woman both "true and fair". In the concluding stanza, the poet asks his friend to tell him about the women who are chaste and fair and also to write a letter so that he would be able to learn the chastity of her. It is a rare thing to find a woman who is true and fair in the life of the poet. According to him women are scarcely reticent in their emotional responses. Their love is mostly emotional, short lived and temporal.

In fact, the poem is full of imagery and thought balanced in rhythm and cadence as well as in the metaphysical style.