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IMAGINATION AND TRANSCENDENCE
IN BLAKE'S 'NIGHT'



S K Mishra

Associate Professor , Satyawati College, University of Delhi, Delhi.



ABSTRACT

The world of the poem Night is a world of benevolence and is independent of the worlds of everyday activity. If the “descending sun” shows the end of the day, then “the evening star does shine”. There is no sadness for the end of the day, on the other hand, “the evening star” or Venus symbolizing love, is shining in the sky. Here birds are “taking rest” in their nests and it is the time when everybody is seeking for his or her home. This is a world of imagination where all distinctions of day or of rational world disappear and the opposites become complimentary.



KEYWORDS : *Imagination, Higher World, Selfhood, Transcendence, Mystical, Metaphysical.*

INTRODUCTION :

The world of the poem Night is a world of benevolence and is independent of the worlds of everyday activity. If the “descending sun” shows the end of the day, then “the evening star does shine”. There is no sadness for the end of the day, on the other hand, “the evening star” or Venus symbolizing love, is shining in the sky. Here birds are “taking rest” in their nests and it is the time when everybody is seeking for his or her home. This search for home however acquires spiritual dimension.

The second stanza gives us a slight awareness of the higher reality where the moon is a source of “silent delight”. This reality is impartial and impersonal as the moon is smiling on night like a flower in high “heaven’s flower”. This “heaven’s flower’ conveys the sense of protective arch benevolent to everything underneath.

In this atmosphere the poet is bidding farewell to “green fields” and “happy groves” without any sense of pathos because it is in the world of night that angels pour “blessing” and “joy” and “joy without ceasing” on each ‘bud” and “blossom” and each “sleeping bosom”, that is, on young and old, and on plants and human beings all.

Now the dimensions of higher reality go deeper as the angels take care of both the world, that is, of sleeping as well as of waking. In other words their blessing is impartial for the world of innocence and the world of experience, if:

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They look in every thoughtless nest,
Where birds are cove'd warm.

then they also pour sleeping on the heads of those who are weeping instead of sleeping. The main effort of the angels have is "To keep them all form harm". The world "harm' here does not have simply the meaning of physical harm but a spiritual one as we see that "They pitying stand and weep" when they see wolves and tiger "howling for prey". They pity and weep not only for the "the sheep" or the inhabitants of sleeping world but also for the inhabitants of this living world tormented by their thirst. Both the sinner and the sinned for them become the objects of pity because both are sufferers, one is suffering from the carnal hunger and the other is suffering form carnal destruction. So these angels seek "to drive thirst away", and at the same time to "keep them from the sheep". But the sheep is to be killed in this world for the satisfaction of the thirst of the howling animals. No doubt these mild spirits have to lose their physical bodies but spiritually they will "inherit new worlds" where "the angels, most heedful / Receive each mild spirit". But there is no end to the suffering of the wolves because they would not be received in the spiritual worlds, and they will remain tormented by their carnal desires, so they are more to be pitied. So the angels are trying to protect the wolves also. Whereas in the redeemed world, "

And there the lion's ruddy eyes
Shall flow with tears of gold,
And pitying the tender cries
And walking round the fold.

The lion's ruddy eyes which represent his wrath shall flow with tears gold which are actually the tears of repentance. The word "gold" appropriately implies the purity of lion's heart coming out of repentance. Now he will pity the "tender cries" of the innocent animals. Thus in the redeemed world all kinds of distinctions will disappear and the lion and the lamb will exist together. And the lion will say

Wrath by his meekness,
And by his health sickness
Is driven away
From our immortal day.

The meekness and suffering of the lamb will redeem the lion while his health that is his (Lamb's) surrender of will, will drive away his (Lion's) "sickness" or "thirst". This has the symbolism of Jesus Christ rising from the grave in his health.

Thus the world of conflict will change into a world of harmony where the lion will lie down and sleep beside the bleating lamb, "Or think on him who bore thy name / Graze after thee and weep". This meekness of the lamb will inspire the lion to think of Jesus while he will also start following lamb's way of life which is meekness and surrender of will, this is what is meant by, "Graze after thee and weep", and the lion will also repent for his sins or the aggression of his ego. Here we cannot take these lines literally as the theme is transcended from the physical world and the poem acquires a mystical and metaphysical dimension. We see that it is lion who is going to get an opportunity to wash in "life's river" "and my bright mane for ever / Shall shine like the gold / As I guard o'er the fold".

After washing in life's river the lion will be purified and now it is he who will guard the lamb from

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spiritual dangers and his (lion's) glory will lie in this act of his which is symbolised by his expectation of his bright mane "shining for ever". Thus we see that the theme of return to home, which we saw in the beginning, acquires a metaphysical-cum-mystical transformation as now the lion and the lamb have got their true home and they are blessed forever.

"Night" is a world of imagination where all distinctions of day or of rational world disappear and the opposites become complimentary. This is Blake's immortal day and what we take as night is day and what we take as day is night as in our rational world we are so obsessed with our egotistical selfhood that we have no time to know ourselves, we have no time for Blake's higher world of imagination. For Blake it is in the transcended world of imagination that we are awake and blessed.

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