

Mystic Songs and Love Lyrics of Lalon and Donne: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Lalon Shah and John Donne are the two distinguished figures in the literary vista of the two parts of the world. Lalon Shah is basically a mystic Bangladeshi 'Baul' and Donne is a 16th century English poet. Though they are poles apart both geographically and chronologically, they share many things in common. Both of them drifted from prevailing religious views and traditional literary practices. John Donne and Lalon Shah have also a wonderful similarity regarding their life and persuasion of their poetic career. Both of them had to undergo bitter experiences in their lives which left a deep mark in their literary works. John Donne pioneered and popularized the metaphysical school of poetry whereas Lalon Shah is the founder of a very specialized branch of Bengali folk songs which were chiefly composed orally in his life time. Both of them exercised a tremendous influence over their successors and followers. Love, religion, faith, soul, God, death etc. are the recurring issues in their poems. One of the most distinctive aspects of metaphysical school of poetry is its abundant exhibition of metaphysical conceits. Mystic and love lyrics of Lalon Shah are also replete with metaphysical conceits. The aim of this paper is to make a comparative study between Donne and Lalon exploring various aspects like themes, philosophy, and style and of course investigating the use of metaphysical conceits in their love lyrics and devotional poetry.

Key Words: *Mystic songs, love lyrics, Devotional poetry, Religious conviction, conceits, Baul philosophy.*

Lalon Shah, (1774-1890) born and bred up at Seuriya, Kushtia in Bangladesh, is the creator, promoter and institutionalizer of an auspicious new genre of folk song. Lalon Shah, a wandering mendicant, used to compose his songs orally. Ahmed (2002), a renowned Lalon

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researcher, referring to Shree Bashanto Kumar Paul's article "Fakir Lalon Shah" which was published in the 'Monthly Probashi', states that when Lalon felt a mysterious drive in his soul to produce something. Lalon started to sing in his meditative fervent and his followers used to sing in a voice to share and memorize his enthusiasm of the overflow of his divine fringing. Among the mainstream folk songs in Bangladesh, Lalon's songs have occupied a permanent seat in the Bengali psyche for their magical melody and mystic milieu. Even after 120 years of his death, Lalon's powerful 'metaphysical' lyrics are astoundingly dominating in the superfluity of modern market-oriented culture and commercialization of music. Because of the excellence of Lalon's songs they have crossed the border of the country and have successfully been able to take cushion in the world literature and music market as well. His fellow 'Bauls', devotees and professional singers on radio and television are carrying out the duty of spreading Lalon's 'Baulism' and philosophy by singing his songs across the world over years (Haroonzaman, 2008).

Lalon is the best mystic and folk bard the country has ever produced. Lalon Shah is generally adored by his devotees and is widely known to the Bangladeshi mass people as the 'Baul Shamrat'.¹ Lalon's foster father and spiritual Guru Shiraj Shain inspired him to the Baul doctrine. Dimoc (1966) defines 'Baulism' in the following way:

"Man is the microcosm, containing the divine and all the elements of truth within himself. Realization of the divine means realization of one's true nature. And this state is a state of unity in which neither blow nor blessing, neither emotion nor non-emotion, neither sin nor righteousness, neither desire nor the abandonment of desire, makes the slightest difference. The existential condition, however, is one of separation, and the 'Baul' songs rest heavily upon the longing of man's soul for what Tillich calls "reconciliation" and upon the pain attendant to the assertiveness of the lower self, the senses, in hindering it."

Lalon founded a new community known as Lalon- Baul community. Basically, they are the devotees and followers of Lalon and his philosophy. With utmost devotion they passed some certain period of time either with their spiritual Guru, Lalon, in his lifetime or in the premise of Lalon's Akhra² after his death, memorized his songs and scattered throughout the country for the spread of his songs and philosophy. Haroonzaman (2008) says that 'Bauls' are, actually, a spiritual sect of saffron-clad, wandering minstrels who sing of joy and love and long for a mystical union with the divine. They hold the view that God remains unseen in the heart of man and no priest or prophet or ritual helps to find out Him. The 'Bauls' are in the opinion that both temple and mosques stand on the way to the path of truth hindering the search for God. They express the opinion that the search of God is a must for every human being for the spiritual union with God.

On the other hand, Donne (1572-1631), the father of the school of metaphysical poetry, who was born in London in a financially affluent Roman Catholic family, gave up his faith to embrace the Church of England and was educated in both Oxford and Cambridge but could

not avail of any degree because of his reluctance in taking the Oath of Supremacy required at graduation. Later he embarked upon legal education. His promising vocation started with joining Queen Elizabeth's last Parliament but his secret marriage with Anne More, the daughter of Sir George More, a Lieutenant of the Tower, brought about the ruin of his career amounting to his instant dismissal of his job. Further, his father-in-law left no stone unturned to corner him in all respects for a dozen of years. Donne summed up this incident in a small sentence "John Donne, Anne Donne and Undone." He underwent ups and downs in his life and finally could win the favor of the then kings through his literary compositions (Walton, 1927). Donne exercised a tremendous influence on his successors.

The term 'Metaphysical' refers to a group of seventeenth century learned poets which includes John Donne and his followers – Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Abraham Cowley, John Cleveland and a few others. Martz (1962) observes that Metaphysical poetry is a new kind of seventeenth century English poetry. Martz' observation is that Metaphysical poetry was 'fertilized and developed by the meditative tradition'. Eliot (1961) remarks that metaphysical poetry is a new genre of poetry with distinctive marks that include a blending of intellect and emotion, striking imagery, wealth of learning displayed in allusions, conversational tone and accent, colloquial language, rough meter, an array of moods, highly suggestive language, compact style, far-fetched metaphors called conceits, 'intellectual, argumentative evolution' and a 'passionate reasoning that knits the first line to the last'. Dryden (2004) in a derisive comment on Donne says that "He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires but also in his amorous verses..." Metaphysical poetry chiefly deals with some abstract ideas or concepts like death, religion, faith, God, soul, love and the like which do not have any concrete shape. In her compliments of Donne's technical originality Bennet (1963) comments that His subject –matter was, as has been seen, confines almost entirely various aspects of love and religion; but his imagery reveals the width of his intellectual exploration.

Both Lalon's and Donne's poems are highly philosophical and meditative in nature. Both of them mostly capitalized the theme of love, religion, soul, God, death etc. and ventured to philosophize those in their religious poems and love lyrics. Lalon plainly renders a concrete interpretation of what life is; the nature and function of human body and soul; the relation between God and human beings, the role of religion in determining the status of man irrespective of cast and creed; men-women relation and the theory of failure and success of mundane life in his Allatotto, Rasultatto, Shristitotto, Murshidotto, Attototto, Dehototto, Manushtotto, Montotto, Poromtotto, Jatitotto, Parapartotto, Chandtotto, Rooptotto, Premtotto, Gurutotto, and Baultotto songs. Actually, the greatness of a poet lies in his philosophical outlook to human life, nature and God. One of the eminent romantic poets S.T. Coleridge says, "No man was ever yet a great poet without being at the same time a profound philosopher."³ Every poem of Lalon is full of profound philosophy. Those who do not believe in Baul

philosophy cannot but recognize the literary value of Lalon's lyric and are deeply moved by his melody. A well-known intellectual of Bangladesh, Sirajul Islam Chowdhury is one such person. "I am a materialist. I believe in this world and the other one interests me but little. However, I love the music of Lalon for its sheer lyrical quality" (Haroonzaman, 2008). Even many of Tagore's songs bear the traits of Lalon's philosophy. Rabindranath Tagore was introduced to Lalon and developed a deep affinity towards the man at the time of his looking after his family estate at Kuthi Bari, Shilaidah, Kustia district. Tagore candidly admitted Lalon's influence over him in many of his lectures at home and abroad. He was influenced by Lalon's songs in such a degree that Tagore started collecting his poems. In his Oxford speech Rabindranath compared Lalon with the sage of Upanishad without mentioning his name. He says,-

The village poet evidently agrees with our sage of Upanishad who says that our mind comes back baffles in its attempt to reach the unknown being; and yet this poet like the ancient sage does not give up adventure of the infinite thus implying that there is a way to its realization." (Biswas, 2000).

Abu Ishahaq Hossain (2009) says,- "Rabindranath was seized by imitable style of Lalon, which deluged the language and thought of his great poetry 'Balaka' and 'Mukta Chanda'." Like the American poet Walt Whitman Lalon celebrates the freedom of the body and the soul. He was opposed to all casteism, sectarianism and colonialism. His philosophy of life was deeply imbued with humanism. Like Socrates Lalon also believes the most important thing in one's life is to 'Know Thy-self'. If one can know his self, he/she will be immersed with God (Shaheen, 2003). To Lalon all human beings are equal regardless cast and creed, rich and poor. Discrimination and differences among men are but made by mundane consideration. It bears no value in the life here after or with God since death levels us all alike. Love which is determinant of a peaceful living on the earth reigns supreme. Though he strived to quench his spiritual thirst by merging with the Divine entity which is a fathomless and constant source of inspiration for him, Lalon endeavoured to satiate his physical love in courting with his female counter part. He is a hermit with all flesh and blood. Many of his erotic and flare songs stand the testimony to his fond of carnal love.

On the other hand metaphysical poetry is saturated with love which is the supreme concern of Donne's mind, the preoccupation of his heart, the focus of his experience, and the subject of his poetry. The centrality and omnipresence of love in Donne's life launched him on a journey of exploration and discovery. He sought to comprehend and to experience love in every respect, both theoretically and practically. As a self appointed investigator, he examined love from every conceivable angle, tested its hypotheses, experienced its joys, and embraced its sorrows. As Joan Bennett said, Donne's poetry is "the work of one who has tasted every fruit in love's orchard. . ." (Bennet, 1973). Combining his love for love and his love for ideas, Donne became love's philosopher/poet or poet/philosopher. In the context of his poetry, both

profane and sacred, Donne presents his experience and experiments, his machinations and imaginations, about love. "Donne's love-poems take for their basic theme the problem of the place of love in a physical world dominated by change and death. The problem is broached in dozens of different ways, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, sometimes by asserting the immortality of love, sometimes by declaring the futility of love" (Martz, 1973). In any case, the overwhelming question for Donne, according to Martz, was "what is the nature of love, what is the ultimate ground of love's being?" (Martz, 1973). Andreasen (1967) has devoted a whole book to the subject of Donne's philosophy of love in which he deals with what he called "the central problem in Donne's love poetry: the nature of love dramatized in each poem and the attitude expressed by the poem toward that kind of love and toward the nature and purpose of love in general".

Donne is mostly Ovidist in intriguing playful, gay love, at times Petrarchist in perpetuating sexual pleasure and frequently Platonic in genuine and serious love. More importantly, transcending his predecessors' love theory, he emerges as a Neo-Platonic having the conviction that "Love, for Donne, was not body only, nor soul only, but soul and body working together in tandem" (quot. in Naugle). In vindicating his philosophy of love he brushes aside the misconception of the Mediaeval theory of corrosive effect of sexual love on life and energy. He purposefully attempted to unfetter the Renaissance ladies from the darkness of blind faith to the light of faithful credence. But eventually the emphasis on the synchronization of physical and mental love promotes into mystic love as they find way merging into spiritual love- the love of God. For Donne the union of both bodies and souls without union with God would be idolatry.

Lalon's songs and Donne's 'Holly Sonnets' bear the traits of mysticism. Lalon is a mystic poet and his lyrics are mystic songs in the sense that Lalon and his followers hold the view that God is hidden in the human heart and neither priest nor prophet, nor the ritual of any organized religion, will help man to find Him there. They believe that the God within them is the same God within all human beings. There is no beauty truer than God. Their songs are of joy, love, and of their deep longing for mystical union with the divine. Through their simple, meaningful songs which contain philosophy and aspirations to be merged with the Supreme Being, they seek to soothe, share and provoke thought (Haroonzaman, 2008).

Mysticism refers to beliefs and practices that go beyond the liturgical and devotional forms of worship of mainstream faith by engaging in spiritual practices such as breathing practices, prayer, contemplation, and meditation, along with chanting and other activities to heighten spiritual awareness. The central idea of mysticism is exploring, awakening, purifying and illuminating the self and to keep it free from all kinds of evils and earthly pleasures in pursuit of the unification with the Supreme Being (Louth: 2007). Mysticism is usually thought of as being of a religious nature, which can be either monastic or theistic. The objective of monastic mysticism is to seek unity and identity with a universal principle; while theistic

mysticism seeks unity, but not identity, with God. The immanence view of the universe is not projected from God, but is immersed in God (Underhill:1911).

Lalon's philosophy is comparable to the philosophy Persian mystic Sufis and Poets like Rumi, Jami, Hafeez and Ibnul Arabi and Socrates. Theistic mysticism has always been an integral part of the thoughtful Bengali psyche. That is why most likely the great mystic Sufis like Shah Jalal, Khanjahan Ali, Shahmakhdom, Mahi Sawar who proved more influential in the spread of Islam in Bangladesh. But Lalon Fakir is not a traveler in their paths. Lalon's songs speak about the special bond that exists between the creator and the creations. Rahman (2003) in one of his articles while illuminating Lalon's invention of a new folk genre points that Baul songs have a hippy (maddening) like attraction and they share many other branches of Bangla folk music traditions such as Kabi Gaan, Pala Gaan, Keertan, Harikeertan, Bhatiali, Bhauaia, Murshidi etc. Lalon Shah, born in an uneducated family, was deserted by his fellows when he was caught by small pox, a contagious disease on their way back from attending a Kheturi Mela⁴ held in the Bangla month, Magh. The ailing Lalon was rescued and nursed back to health by a Muslim couple. This incident left a deep mark on his life and thought. He started to show indifference to worldly life and led a life in meditation. Later coming in contact to Shiraj Shain, his spiritual Guru, he learned the subtle, deep and underlying meaning of love, religion, soul and God. Gradually, he conceived of and nourished a new concept of humanism, love, religion, soul and God which has profoundly been reflected in numerous songs composed and sung by him. A strong negation towards Hindu caste system grew and the idea of a religion which embraces all equally in its net of love and a God who remains hidden in human heart developed fervently in him which is now considered the Lalon-Baulism. He gave up faith in any traditional and established religion like so called Hindu religion and Islam. He settled in Seuriya, a village in Kustia district of Bangladesh became a traveling mendicant and loved to compose songs orally and sing before his ever increasing devotees (Rahman, 2003).

The creator is one and second to none and like the Sufis Lalon wants to immerse himself into the ultimate entity. Songs of Allatotto confirms Lalon's devotion to Allah. Allah is an amorphous entity but omnipresent. This philosophy is evidenced in Lalon's songs. Baulism believes that there is no beauty truer than the beauty of God in the universe that lives within our souls. Like another English mystic poet, William Blake, Lalon has the firm conviction that human beings are made after the image of God. So, he longs for a mystical union with the divine:

“O, how long will I
Wait to get the union of my beloved?
Like a swallow, I long for you every moment
O, my darling.⁵

To Lalon, God is mysterious and it is very difficult to know him. His mind is perturbed with the queries like “Who am I?”, “Who talks in me?” and “Who is that all powerful?” So, his quest continues even though he knows they live so close to each other. They are so closer yet they are so far. Like great metaphysical poets, comparing human soul to a mirror city where God dwells in, Lalon says:

Not a single day I could see him
So near is Arshinagar
There lives a neighbor (Haroounuzzaman, 2001)

Lalon continues his search for God as he wants to be united with his illusory neighbor. The amorphous, incorporeal lord appears to His creation in unending images like Ram, Rahim, Karim, Kala etc. ----- “Who knows what is he like?”

According to Lalon, if one can be merged with God, no sorrows will touch him in this life and the life hereafter.

“O the bird of mind, say Allah
No sadness will be with you.”⁶

Similarly Donne also seeks solace in the Divine in his sandiness and sickness. Towards the end of his life Donne continued to write his Holy Sonnets (1618) giving up writing love songs. While Donne was recovering his sick health he wrote private meditations, “Devotions upon Emergent Occasions. Donne was made the Dean of St. Paul’s in 1621 and could have made the Bishop, had his health permitted. Donne wrote his own funeral sermon, “Death Duel” and only a few hours ago of his death he composed “Hymn to God, my God in my Sickness.” The very title shows his urge for a mystic union with God (Walton, 1927). Rajimwale (2004) views in this way:

“One may call of Donne’s poems either love, religious or metaphysical poems. Of course, there is an evolution in his ideas and maturity in his vision, but love remains the basic proposition and has its appearance in most of his poems---.”

Donne treats the themes of sin, grace, and redemption in his ‘Holy Sonnets’ for his God, though loving, righteously will punish the transgressors the speaker very adamantly admits. The Devil lurks, ready to tempt him, and so he calls on God to make him strong enough to resist the Devil or purify him after he succumbs to temptations: in either case, the speaker suggests, punishment is necessary. Thus, one thematic treatment of divine love involves fear, and despair rather hope and trust. The speaker desperately wishes to go to Heaven and to escape Hell but generally presents himself as a lover. Metaphysics is the study of the ultimate reality beyond our everyday world, including questions about God, creation, and the afterlife.

The persona, however, of Donne's love poems speaks with passion, wit, and tenderness in seducing or praising his beloved. But in his 'Holy Sonnets' Donne turns to God in a very personal way, with a love passionate, forceful, and assertive yet fearful. Although not necessarily biographical in nature, the sonnets do reflect Donne's meditation on his religious conviction and address the themes of divine judgment, divine love, and humble penance.

Donne with all his sins, disqualification and infidelity aspires in a holy and happy union with God. In his Holy Sonnet no. 14 he compares his soul to a city which has been usurped by the evil, God's enemy. He passionately pleases to God to better, overthrow, bend, break, blow, burn, divorce, untie, imprison, enthrall and ravish him to take possession of his heart. He loves God dearly and wants to be loved in return. He is like a maiden who is betrothed to God's enemy. So, he will never be free until He imprisons him and he will never be chaste until He ravishes him. The theme of the poem is love of God and the desire to meet Him:

I, like an usurp'd town, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but O, to no end.

Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.⁷

Evidently the structure of Metaphysical poetry is a legacy of meditation. We have seen that meditation was not in the nature of a thoughtless effusion of prayer or a psalm or hymn. It was not a simple affection of an unthinking doxology. But it was a deliberately planned and graduated intellectual exercise that would finally raise the mind to a union with God (Ahmed 2003). Thus similitude, visualization, theological analyses, and the eloquent motions of the will have all fused into one perfectly executed design. And once again the process of meditation appears to have made possible a poem which displays this articulated structure, this peculiar blend of passion and thought (Martz: 1962).

Although human beings love transient physical beauty, it alone will never satisfy, and so they must also love spiritual qualities and ultimately the eternal and unchanging *imago Dei* which shines within the beloved; when people do love the image of God, their love helps them climb toward God; such love is lasting, because it is founded on something not subject to change; and because such love is selfless, sympathetic, and charitable, it produces an unshakable spiritual union between two partners-on which Donne placed his ultimate faith on. (Andreasen: 1967).

One of the most brilliant features of Donne's and Lalon's mystic songs and love lyrics is the use of conceits. Conceits harbouring on themes like love, death, soul, and god are both learned, witty, puzzling, dramatic and philosophical as well. A conceit is basically a simile or a comparison between two farfetched, dissimilar objects. In a conceit the most heterogeneous ideas are "yoked by violence together" (Johnson, 2004; p. 143). In Elizabethan age the use of conceit became a fashion. But there is an epic difference between a metaphysical conceit and the Elizabethan one. The most fundamental difference between the two is that the former is an organic part of the poem while the latter is a mere decoration or ornament of the poem (Bennet, 1963). In case of Donne, the use of metaphysical conceits in his love and meditative poetry became almost congenital. Donne's originality lies in his discreet use of fantastic conceits. Rajimwale (2004) notes that the most notable conceit ever employed by Donne is the comparison of two lovers to two arms of a compass joined in the centre in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning:"

"If they be two, they are two so
As stiff compasses are two:"⁸

This highly exaggerated comparison of two lovers with the legs of a compass startles and pleases us simultaneously. Lalon also enriches his literary works using all kinds of literary ornaments like simile, metaphor, conceits, personification, analogy, allegory. In one of his most famous lyrics which is frequently sung all over the world, he compares the human soul to an unknown bird and human body with a case:

How does the strange bird
Flit in and out of the cage?
If I could catch it
I would fether it under fetters of my heart around its feet.⁹

Through the exquisite conceit of the bird and the case Lalon superbly philosophizes human life. Nobody can ever say when our life will end and nobody has the least control over it. When the soul-bird flies away from the body-cage, our life meets a sad end on this earth. But nobody on this earth wants to sip the cup of death. So the poet feels the urge of fettering the soul-bird. This mystic-meditative song makes the heart of Lalon's readers scattered and the audience thoughtful. The soul- bird conceit is recurrently used in many of Lalon's poems and songs. In some of his poems Lalon compares human body with "Room" which is the glorious throne of God, where He resides gaily. Lalon's poems are full of profound philosophy. In another poem he warns the unconscious, oblivious, ignorant people against "death", the summon from God which does not discriminate between kings and the commons. He says:

When the net is cast
 All fishes will be caught
 The salmon and the shrimps
 Soon the summon will come
 And all the excitement end.¹⁰

Here Lalou analogizes the angel of death with a fisherman, death with the net of the fisherman and all human beings with fishes.

In one of his lovely love poems he makes an erotic analogy of love comparing a woman with a tree and her youth and love with its juicy fruits and the ardent lovers with bees which are akin to Donne's metaphysical conceits:

A juicy attractive fruit glistened
 In the tree of love
 The bees become insane to get it.¹¹

Donne, of course, uses conceits in its range and variety to persuade, define and to prove a point. In *'The Good- Morrow'* there are several conceits. The poem begins with a description of the time when the speaker had not yet fallen in love. In order to clarify his point the speaker compares the subconscious state of love to the innocence of a sucking baby. But in a Platonic vein, the speaker tries to prove the point that their earlier immature love is the stepping stone of their present love. Similarly, the unconscious love of the lovers has been compared to a farfetched image, the sleep of the "seven sleepers". Again the two lovers have been compared to two hemispheres and their souls' union to the union of the union of the hemispheres of the world.

The speaker thus mingles up the idea of the world of love with the geographical world. This geographical issue is again mingled with Donne's characteristic glass image. The speaker assumes that the face of each lover is reflected in the eyes of other which thus work as a mirror. Surprisingly the conceit takes an argumentative tone pointing that their face is better than the geographical hemisphere because it is pure and immune to decay. The North Pole is a cold region while the West is the symbol of death and decay.

The lovers' hemispheres have no such defects. The final conceit further clarifies the point by drawing upon a medieval physiological belief that if the constituents of an object are proportionately mixed, the object withstands decay and destruction. The two lovers' love is so similar that they have been immaculate, pure and permanent. This is a fine example of conceit used by Donne. In the poem *'The Good -Morrow'* Donne uses conceits to analyze the most unruly human passion, love. Here he explicates the nature of mutual love in conjugal life:

I wonder by my troth, what thou and I
 Did, till we loved? Were we not weaned till then?
 But sucked on the country pleasures, childishly?
 Or snorted we in the seven sleeper's den.

 Whatever dies, was not mixed equally
 If our two lovers be one, or thou and I
*Love so alike, that none doe slaken, none can die.*¹²

The outstanding quality for which Donne is acknowledged to be a distinguished poet from Elizabethan and Petrarchan tradition is his blending of passion and thought, emotion and intellect, and displaying of abundance of wits and conceits. His conceits which are akin to similes and metaphors are drawn from all branches of knowledge available in that age such as geography, history, myth, theology, cartography, medieval astrology, astronomy, philosophy, cosmology, medicine, law, physics, chemistry, mathematics, anatomy, nature, domestic life, contemporary art and science etc (Bennett: 32).

Donne likens his mistress to hemisphere,¹³ lovers and beloveds to the kings and their kingdoms,¹⁴ lovers bed to the centre of the solar system¹⁵, lovers souls coming out of the body out of ecstasy to two groups of battling armies who are negotiating for reconciliation and reunion,¹⁶ the lovers' blood sucking flea to their marriage bed and temple;¹⁷ he speaks of his mistress's hair as a viceroy,¹⁸ and her tears as coins or maps¹⁹ which is not also funny, witty and amusing but also hyperbolic and scholastic. Donne identifies his intellectual analogy with his emotion. Donne's use of metaphysical, fantastic and scholastic conceits is a part of an acrobatic show of his learning and intellectual enigma. Bennett (1963 :) in her "*Five Metaphysical Poets*" comments that :

"Donne had a different conception of imagery from that of these other poets. The purpose of an image in his poetry is to define the emotional experience by an intellectual parallel". She opines that Donne's 'conceits are not far-fetched rather they were a part of his everyday life."

Donne's conceits are staged in his 'poetic-dramas' in association with some other figures of speech such as pun, oxymoron, paradox, irony etc. Rajimwale (2004:) notes that:

"His (Donne's) poetry combines the elements of both passionate feeling and cool intellectual ratiocination making contraries co-exist in his poems, blending into one another and generating poetic tensions. Some of his major features have already been discussed earlier. He works his way through paradoxes, ironical juxtapositions, sarcastic allusions and remote intellectual associations of apparently discordant nature that is articulated in a tone of cynicism aimed more at shocking gentle sensibilities attracting them."

In the poem “Go and Catch a Falling Star” he compares women’s inconstancy with a set of incredible and improbable objects using phrases like a falling star, a mandrake root, past years, the Devil’s foot, mermaids singing, envies stinging whirl wind and strange sight. Donne’s cynical attitude to women has been expressed here and they are used to suggest the impossibility to find a true and honest mind. Dryden (2004:14) derogatively implicates that Donne perplexes the minds of fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with softness of love.

The comparison between two dissimilar objects in Donne’s conceits gives his poetry a dramatic quality because they combine and juxtapose the opposite of life. Every lyric of Donne is a piece of personal drama which has been expressed dramatically in the form of a dialogue. In his lyrics there is always a dialogue or at least a monologue. In “*A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*” the poet addresses his wife Anne More while in “*The Flea*” the speaker, in the air of talking to his beloved, is trying to draw his beloved’s attention to the blood sucking flea which he defines their marriage bed and temple. In “*The Sun Rising*” he is as if quarreling with the sun for disturbing their conjugal love. The virtue of colloquy amazingly helps to metaphysicalize Donne’s poetry. In his complementary comments on metaphysical poetry Idris Ahmed (2003) in Chapter II of his doctoral thesis says, “The Metaphysicals made poetry of a high order by dint of their imaginative depth and intellectual execution, which they modeled on the art of meditation and which form the distinctive features of their poetry, Namely (1) Emblem, (2) Colloquy and (3) Structure.”

Similarly, Lalon’s mystic songs also bear the traits of colloquy. In one of his Grurtotto songs in the form of a dialogue Lalon seeks the mercy of his Guru and fervently urges him to set his mind aright so that he can cross the ocean of life to go to the other world to meet his beloved or God.

“For God’s sake Guru
Bring my mind to the right track
Without your mercy
How to endeavor austerity?” (Harunuzaman, 2008)

Lalon tries to rationalize the importance of Murshid or Guru to search out God by placing various arguments. Murshids play a vital role of mediator for the mystic union with God:

“Reverent water of Murshid’s divine feet
If drunk, thirst will be quenched.”²⁰

Argumentative nature and syllogistic approach also greatly contribute to metaphysicalize Donne poems. In most of the poems of Donne in the beginning he places his arguments and

finally concludes his poems by proving his points. In “The Sun Rise” he presents his arguments before the sun why he should not disturb them, who are bound by true love. He also argues why the sun should shine over them. But finally he draws the conclusion of the poem guessing that though true love bind them both, fate is jealous and stars are hostile to their union and love-making:

Therefore the love which us doth bind
But Fate so enviously debars
Is the conjunction of mind
And opposition of the stars?²¹

God, soul, relation between God and human beings, love, death, afterlife etc. are the recurring themes of Lalons songs. One of the prominent Lalon researchers, Ali (2009) in his research paper, “Lalon Shaher Moromi Darshan” states that after attaining absolute knowledge, he (Lalon) travelled on horse-back to preach his doctrine. Lalon composed more or less 3000 love and religious lyrics. And the themes of these lyrics have been classified under a dozen of major divisions in his book by Ahmed (2002) in his book ‘Lalon Geeti Shamagra.’ They are Allatotto, Rasultatto, Shristitotto, Murshidotto, Attototto, Dehototto, Manushtotto, Montotto, Poromtotto, Jatitotto, Parapartotto, Chandtotto, Roptotto, Premtotto, Gurutotto, and Baultotto. His songs are intensely musical, hauntingly melodious and profoundly thought provoking which have a soothing effect whoever listens to them. Another renowned Lalon researcher of Bangladesh, Mr. Anwarul Karim says, “It (Baul Music) has caught the attention of the world for its majestic language, tunes and metaphysical approach to life.”(Karim, 2010)

Among Donne’s well known poems are Elegies, Anniversaries, Satires, Songs and Sonnets and Divine Poems. According to Eliot (1921), Donne’s innovative style, ingenuity of using elaborate metaphors, scholastic conceits, religious symbolism, flare of drama, wide range of knowledge, sharp wit, terseness of expression, emotional exuberance, simple and colloquial diction, in both of his love lyrics and religious sermons soon established him the greatest preacher and poet of the age. In the language of T.S Eliot (1921):

Donne, I suppose, was such another
Who found no substitution for sense?
To seize, clutch and penetrate;
Expert beyond experience.

Nots.

1. The emperor of the Bauls or the mystic bards
2. Lalon's cottage in his life time and shrine after his death
3. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*; (ed) W.W. Norton & Company, New York, London, 1983, P-212
4. Fair held in Kheturi
5. Translation: Abu Ishahaq Hossain; Lalon Shah: The Great Poet; Dhaka, 2009 P-102
6. Haroonuzzaman. Lalon; Adorn Publication , Dhaka, 2008, P- 25
7. Donne's Holy Sonnets (XVII): A Norton Critical Edition(ed) W.W. Norton& Company, New York, London, 2004. pp. 11
8. The Norton Anthology of Poetry (ed) W. W. Norton & Company, New York, London, 1983, pp-212
9. Translation: Abu Rushad; Songs of Lalon Shah, Bangla Academy, Dhaka` : Song no.16 , 1964
10. Ibid. song No.23
11. Translation: Abu Ishahaq Hossain; Lalon Shah: The Great Poet; Dhaka.pp-23
12. The Good –Morrow
13. The Anniversary
14. The Sun Rising
15. The Ecstasy
16. The Flea
17. The Funeral
18. A Valediction: Of Weeping
19. Translation: Abu Ishahaq Hossain; Lalon Shah: The Great Poet; Dhaka,
20. Ibid.
21. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*; (ed) W.W. Norton & Company, New York, London, 1983, pp-212

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