

CHAPTER - IV

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

After having studied almost all major poems of Hope, I have now partly understood why critics and poets have labelled him with so many titles : a Romantic, a Classicist, a Satirist, a Philosophical and an Intellectual. All are partly true for Hope has written such a profound and brilliantly complex and ambiguous poetry that at one time or other he belongs to one of these titles. Though his poetic output is scanty-with barely three volumes of poetry and many of the poems reprinted, the total does not exceed the mark of a hundred, one wonders how a poet like Hope earns so many titles.

Poetry writing is a gift of genius. But this alone can not make a poet great. There are other things too which contribute to his greatness. One of them is the brilliant use of language. Hope is a great poet because he knows the way language functions. Moreover, he makes it to work in a way he likes. Imagery, which is an integral part of poetry plays a significant role in calling Hope a great poet.

In the previous chapter I have made a study of almost all major images used by Hope in his poetry. The study of these images has helped me to come with some impressions

and observations. The following are my findings :

1. Almost half the imagery used in Hope's poetry is sexual.
2. The images of island and desert predominate his early poetry which suggest loneliness and helplessness of man in 20th Century.
3. The imagery reveals that Hope bears an anti-romantic attitude towards love and sex.
4. The imagery reveals that his approach towards man is partially healthy when compared to art but unhealthy when compared to God or Nature. Hope, though not an atheist appears god favouring man through his imagery.
5. Hope's imagery reveals him to be a sex obsessed poet.

Now, I will justify my observations one by one. Firstly, of the 34 poems studied here, there are 16 poems bearing the theme of sex and using sexual imagery. Almost in all these poems Hope presents characters through sexual imagery. The imagery used reveals Hope's attitude towards sex which is disgusting and disdainful. It is seen through the glorification of sex. In 'The End of a Journey', for example, Hope describes the sexual intercourse of Ulysses with his wife who takes it to be a rape by a stranger :

There at last, his arms embracing her,
 She found herself, faith wasted, Valour lost,
 Raped by a stranger in her sullen bed.

One never expects such a sexual act of a married couple. The wife does not get any sort of pleasure but feels it a rape. It is however, Hope's disgusting attitude, towards sex that is revealed here.

In another poem, 'Imperial Adam' Hope, while presenting the sexual intercourse of Adam and Eve says :

Adam had learned the jolly deed of kind :
 He took her in his arms and there and then,
 Like the clean beasts, embracing from behind,
 Began in joy to found the breed of men.

Here, the act is compared to the act of beasts. The phrase 'clean beasts' suggests that the act is not dirty but merely the pleasurable satisfaction of appetite like that in animals. Hope's outlook here is little different but not healthy. suggesting mere satisfaction of appetites.

Other poems which treat sex as their subjects matter or deal with momentariness of sexual pleasure are 'Conquistador', 'The Lingam and Yoni', 'The Dream', 'The Trophy', 'Chorale', 'Pasiphae', 'The Young Girl at the Ball', 'The Meeting' and 'The Double Looking Glass', 'Circe', 'Ascent into Hell' deal with the same subject of sex but

through myth and legend. The imagery used in all the above mentioned poems is sexual and reveal Hope as a poet who takes interest in describing every picture through sexual imagery.

My Second finding is that the images of island and desert predominate the early poetry of Hope. Hope began his career as a satirist but also revealed imaginative sympathy for the pitiable plight of man in this century. The very title of his first volume of poetry bears in it the image of island as in 'The Wandering Islands'. The image of island is suggestive. It stands for loneliness, helplessness, isolation which automatically leads to frustration and despair of mind. The twentieth century man, like an island is helpless and caught in inescapable conditions. It is this image which crosses all barriers of nationality and becomes the image of every individual. Hope begins his longer poem with this image with a wit of reality :

You cannot build bridges between the Wandering
islands;
The Mind has no neighbours, and the unteachable heart
Announces it armistice time after time, but spends
Its love to draw them closer and closer apart.

This intolerable loneliness that is inescapable is perhaps nowhere expressed with greater poignancy than in the above lines.

This image of island again occurs in his early poem, 'Ascent into Hell' Based on a myth, the poem records

the inner struggle of Hope. Recalling his childhood memories
Hope feels lonely and in Solitude :

Memory no more the backward, Solid continent,
From island to island of despairing dream
I follow the dwindling soul in its ascent;
The bayonets and the pickelhauben gleam.

The image of island recurs in 'Circe' Where Circe,
the enchantress feels lonely in the wood :

And with her voice she disenchants the grove.
The lonely island and the Sounding beach
Answer with barks and howls, the scream of birds,
Her uncontrollable, aching cry of love.

In all these early poems Hope touches the theme of
man's loneliness and helplessness with the image of island.

The image of desert also bears the same meaning.
In 'Australia' Hope speaks about the 'Arabian desert of
human mind'. In 'The Dream' Hope describes the loneliness felt
by the lovers in their embrace who see 'Deserts of sand'
around them. Hope uses the two images of island and desert
because both places are faraway from man's life. One even can
not imagine of living on an island or in desert for the very
fact that life at these places is cut off from the rest of
the world. If one is caught in bad conditions here, one does
not get help from others and has to suffer or to die. The
world in which man lives today is an island and a desert.
Besides all the facilities at hand and people around, man is
lonely and isolated. He knows that there will be no rescue

for him. In the closer study I found that Hope while dealing with this theme, has intentionally but impressively made use of the two images to convey his feelings.

My third observation is that Hope through imagery emerges as an anti-romantic in his attitude towards love and sex. Almost in all his major poems Hope treats love and sex as merely pleasurable satisfaction of appetite. Love or sex never appears in a pure or sacred form nor does he look at them beyond biological need of man. This is the reason, why even such a delicate and beautiful feeling of love and sex creates a feeling of disgust and repulsion. The characters that involve in the act of love and sexual act come from Myths and from modern life. In 'Pygmalion', for example, Hope treats love as a savage being that eats man's flesh. There he says :

..... Now I see
The horror of Love, the sprouting Cannibal plant
That it become.

It is undoubtedly a distorted image of love. In another poem called 'chorale' Hope describes the momentariness of love and its pleasure. He sees it as a burden on the part of the beloved :

Now the wave recedes and dies;
Dancing fires descend the hill;
Love may not delay too long -
Is the burdon of their Song

Hope, like a Romantic never glorifies love. On the other hand he considers it as a means to pleasure body and not soul.

In 'standardization' Hope treats 'Love' merely as a birth giver through an agriculture image :

Love, which still pours into its ancient mould.
The lashing seed that grows to a man again,
From whom by the same process unfold,
Unending generations of living men

Love, like seed sown into womb just produces offspring. Is this a fair and pretty image of love ? Certainly not. There are a number of poems like 'The Gateway' 'The Dream' 'The Trophy' and others that deals with love but in an anti-romantic fashion.

Fourthly, the imagery reveals that Hope's attitude towards man is partially healthy and admiring one when compared to art but unhealthy when compared to God or Nature. This is but amazing of a poet like Hope who presents the vision of man from the world of Henry Clay to the world of Milton. Man, who at some time falls victim to lust and suffer like Henry, at some other time can become as great as Milton by his poetic genius. Hope cares for this genius of man in a number of poems. In 'Pyramis' for example, he

celebrates man's genius which creates imperishable monuments of art. He sees Milton and Swift as builders :

I think of other pyramids, not in stone,
The great, incredible monuments of art,
And of their builders, men who stood put aside
Consideration, dared, and stood alone,
Strengthening those powers that fence the failing
heart :
Intemperate will and incorruptible pride .

Hope sees works of literature more superior to other works of art. Here, he is not only glorifying Milton and Swift but paying a great tribute to the poetic genius which sometimes overcomes art.

In another longer poem 'Vivaldi, Bird and Angel', Hope reveals the same power in man. While describing the flute-concerto of Vivaldi, he asserts that man made music is not only equal but superior to heavenly music for it creates new universe :

As God in Eden saw his work and knew
It good and took his pleasure in that sight
Yet we musicians, perhaps, have more delight
Even than He : He saw the world he made;
We first review our works, then hear them played.

No where, other than in these lines I have found Hope glorifying man to the extent of God. The same feeling of pride and appreciation for genius occurs in 'William Butler Yeats'. By calling Yeats' works glass that reflect his

personality, Hope is not admiring his works but saluting all such works produced by other writers :

Was is not chance alone that made us look
 Into the glass of the Great Memory
 And know the external moments, in your book,
 That we had grown to be ?

Some other poems that celebrate man's genius are 'The Gateway' and to some extent 'Parabola'.

However, while admiring this genius on one hand, Hope criticises man on the other. He never admits that man can defeat God or Nature. He attacks man in his satires, more severely. In 'The kings' for example, he attacks modern man by calling him a tape worm. The image of tapeworm, an insect which feeds on others is suggestive of man's dependence of biological and physical needs on others :

Alone among the royal beasts of prey
 He takes no partner, no imperial mate
 Seeks his embrace and bears his clamorous brood.

Hope sees modern man as a beast of prey, who searches only for sexual pleasure and satisfies his biological appetite.

In 'The Martyrdom of st. Teresa' Hope attacks the ignorance of man. Transforming the tragic death of st Teresa into a comedy he lets her body be butchered by Death. Through

the image of death as butcher, Hope succeeds in attacking the so called belief of worshipers in saints :

She was so small a saint, a holy
Titbit upon the butcher's block -
Death chose the cuts with care and slowly
Put on his apron, eyed the clock.

In 'Standardization' Hope shows the superiority of Nature to man. Using an image of a manufacturer for Earth he says :

For there is no manufacturer competes
With her in the mass production of shapes and things
Over and over she gathers and repeats
The cast of face, a million butterfly wings.

The variety with which the earth produces things is beyond comparison of man.

In another poem, 'The House of God' Hope sees man as a domestic creature of God, a creature tamed and looked after by God like His Pet :

God's domesticated creatures
Twine and rub against his shins.

Here, Hope through the image of 'domesticated Creatures' humiliates man and shows the superiority of God. In 'The Trophy' Hope calls God a builder whereas in 'The Twenty Second Sonnet of Louise Label' he shows Nature superior to man in love. 'The Brides' also stamps Hope's generous and positive attitude towards Nature.

Whereas in 'Phallus' he looks at phallus as a generative force of God. The imagery used in all above mentioned poems shows that Hope favours God when compared to man.

My last reading of Hope through his imagery is that he seems to be a sex obsessed poet. This reading is the natural outcome of my first observation. When most of the poems treat sex as their subject matter, it is no wonder that Hope deals with them through sexual imagery. Though he renarrates many mythological stories he can not keep himself away from giving a sexual touch to them. Be it a story taken from Myth or from modern life, he intentionally presents it through sexual imagery. Poems like, 'The End of a Journey', 'Circe', 'Imperial Adam' are based on stories from Myths but while presenting them Hope uses sexual imagery. Poems such as 'Phallus' 'The Dream', 'Chorale', 'The Young Girl at the Ball', and 'The meeting' which are considered as modern in themes also employ sexual imagery.

I am aware of the versatile and complex personality of Hope. It would be an injustice to him to arrive at a definite conclusion and say a last word about his poetry and the poet. All my observations and readings are based only on the major poems which are discussed in the

previous chapter. However, in all these poems I have found Hope's imagery complex and abstract. The images of sex are used in maximum numbers and minimum number of images comes from the life of bird and insect. He draws equal number of images from Nature and from man's life. Taking all this in to consideration I feel a great respect for the poet. The way he treats classical and modern themes with such mastery and the way he appears sometimes an intellectual, a philosophical, a satirist and above all a modernist I see him as a sex-obsessed poet who consistently involves himself in developing any theme through sexual imagery.