Review

W. B. Yeats’ *Second Coming* and its manifestation in the recent anti-peace movement in Bangladesh

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W.B Yeats' poetry is rich in myth, symbols and imagery. His symbolic poems represent a variety of things. Yeats believed that ‘art and politics were intrinsically linked’ and used his writing to express his attitudes toward Irish politics as well as to educate his readers about Irish cultural history. His poems increasingly resembled political manifestos of the contemporary period. His symbolic poems also speak about the present social and political doctrine. Myth is used in Yeats's poetry to provide a rationale for social customs and observances by which people conduct their lives. The anti-Christ idea in “The Second Coming” is against humanity and in favor of present brutality on the strike of the people of Bangladesh. In this poem Yeats shows the religious and fundamental belief of different political and social groups. His poem “The Second Coming” is closely related with the present brutality, anti-peace movement and genocide in Bangladesh. The ‘Rough Beast’ in the poem ‘The Second Coming‘- a horrific, violent animal, a ferocious creature indicates the chaotic situation among the political, cultural, social and religious groups in the contemporary period. The poem is as like an Oracle described the recent fearful and destructive activities and thought in Bangladesh.

Key words: Anti-Christ, anti-peace idea and activities in politics, myth, religion, symbols, Yeats, “The Second Coming”, Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

W.B Yeats is one of the greatest lyric poets of English Language. Yeats started his poetic career by writing is poetic plays. His philosophical ideas are expressed through the careful use of myth, symbols and Imagery. Yeats was a master of the visual symbol. The emotional element and the symbols that drive in the poem “The Second Coming” are critical to consider upon first reading it. The qualities of his poetry are simple and lucid. His symbolic and mythical poems represent a variety of things (W.B yeats’s “The symbolism of poetry” (1900). The title refers to the Second Coming of Christ, as predicted in the Book of Revelation in the New Testament of the Bible. This book, also known as the Apocalypse, is one of the strangest, most violent parts of the Bible. It is also inspired more than a few “end of the world” panic movements throughout history (remember Y2K?). It depicts the return of Christ to conquer Satan and the forces of evil, before presiding over a thousand-year reign of peace on Earth. Yeats loved to use wild symbols in his poems, so it is no wonder that he was attracted to the Book of Revelation. Magic and occult theory is also important elements in Yeats's work, as many of the images found in his poetry are derived from his occult researches. "The Second Coming” is regarded as a masterpiece of Modernist poetry. "The Second Coming” symbolizes a terrifying picture of the future to come. "The Second Coming" has been well-received as one of the most evocative visionary lyric poems of the twentieth-century, widely praised for its technical excellence and extensive symbolic resonance (Abdul-Razzaq, 2008).
The mythical elements of the poem are related with the chaotic situation of a state where peace and justice is destroyed and the terrible creature is arrived to take away human right. In the poem Sphinx is a mythological monster. The name means "the demon of death" a terrible beast. This ferocious creature will incarnate to set the things right in a chaotic world where peace and justice is destroyed and(indiscipline will take place. Though in this mythical beast, the head is of lion and body is of man, but the idea expresses the similar premise, that is the hybrid creature combines the ferocity of a beast and wit of a man, which is also closely related with recent situation in Bangladesh ("Report: Asian Human Right Watch/ Bangladesh is far from transparency in judicial Department/ www.edailystar.com/ www.amardeshonline.com/9th January, 8th March-2013"). The word anti peace is closely related with the present anti-caretaker government view of the authority ("Caretaker Government banned bill through 15th Correction of Bangladesh Constitution/ House of the nation (Parliament of Bangladesh)/ Bill presented: 25 June 2011, Passed: 30 June 2011"). The country is going to a dismal way. The tide of blood is flowing over the street. The general people and civil society are making a demand for a peaceful solution but the authority is silent to re-establish caretaker government. In the poem "The Second coming", the sphinx is the symbol of anti-peace, anti-compromise and illegal movement. The ruling system of the ferocious monster is destructive and uncompromised in the world; this ruling system bears the recent destructive testimony in Bangladesh. The police are firing intentionally on the striker to kill them but their demand is logical and real. The whole general people of Bangladesh want the justice of war criminal but it should be ensure transparency following international law and giving human right support to the accuser ("International Crimes Tribunal, Bangladesh, established in 5th march 2010"). Besides, this people are giving strike to remove the police’s crime and ministry level’s bribe from the country. But authority is silent and they cannot call the general people to turn a peaceful situation. Their voice is that "everything is right and moral, the country is running correctly". The authority’s moral idea is immoral. People call this moral idea as Sphinx’s idea. Actually this activities and imbalance idea of the authority is as like the dreadful activities and idea of Sphinx that entered into the head of the authority to demolish the peaceful situation of the country. The authority cannot hear the moral speech and guidance of the civil society. The idea of Sphinx is immoral, destructive, anti-peace and chaotic that will of course demolish the right of the general people from the society.

ANALYSIS

The recent anti-peace movement in Bangladesh finds echo in "The Second Coming". Yeats's poem paints a grim picture of modern society where "the ceremony of innocent is drowned"; similarly the peaceful people in Bangladesh are tortured by the ruling authority. W.B Yeats's "The Second Coming" is an anti-Christ poem which discusses what destroys the peace of the world. "The Second Coming" Yeats's bleakly apocalyptic poem has long been irresistible to pundits. What historical era, after all, is not neatly summed up by his lament that "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity" But with its somber vision of looming anarchy, and its Bangladesh backdrop (the terrifying beast Yeats warns of "slouches towards Bethlehem"), "The Second Coming" is fast becoming the official poem on the recent brutality and anti-peace situation in Bangladesh ("Mass killing news of Bangladesh/ www.bdnews24.com/ 1st, 3rd March-2013"). This poem actually said about one hundred year ago about the dreadful and chaotic movement of the country. "The Second Coming" is viewed as a prophetic poem that envisions the close of the Christian epoch and the violent birth of a new age. For one thing, when he wrote the poem, World War I had just ended in Europe, and a lot of people were starting to take the idea of a "war to end all wars" more seriously. They were also worried about how to tell good and evil apart. Amid this pessimistic atmosphere, Yeats adds a sinister twist to the idea of the Second Coming in his poem, suggesting that the end of history might not be heralded by the return of Christ at all, but by the coming of the Antichrist—a symbol of violence and chaos in the world. Unexplained symbols! Falcon, sphinx, "rough beast," and Bethlehem: what's the connection? You figure it out! Yeats is not given any help. This is a trait that many of Yeats's most famous works have in common. He likes to take symbols from a variety of sources—the Bible, history, folklore, and his own plays; put them in the blender; and Presto (Weeks D (1948)/"Image and Idea in Yeats's "the Second Coming" PMLA. 63.1. 1948. 281-292). Print.) While critics acknowledge the work's internal symbolic power, most have studied its themes in relation to Yeats's A Vision. According to the cosmological scheme of A Vision, the sweep of history can be represented by two intersecting cones, or gyres, each of which possesses one of two opposing "tinctures," primary and antithetical, that define the dominant modes of civilization. Yeats associated the primary or solar tincture with democracy, truth, abstraction, goodness, egalitarianism, scientific rationalism, and peace. The contrasting antithetical or lunar tincture he related to aristocracy, hierarchy, art, fiction, evil, particularity, injustice, crime and war. "The Second Coming" is really two poems. The first eight lines are filled with the pointed aphorisms that pundits like so much, while the rest of the poem suggests the unpredictability of how history will unfold. This second, less quoted part is the one that speaks most directly to the grim situation of Bangladesh. The nation's hope and
aspiration may be destroyed. Yeats wrote numerous poems about Ireland's involvement in World War I. Yeats wrote "The Second Coming" in 1919, an especially dismal moment in history. The crying of the wounded people at the time of First World War was painful and their life was full of suffering and misery. At present the crying of the Bangladeshi families is very painful who have recently lost their nearest relatives and family member forever through the state genocide by police force ([Report: Human Right Organization (Odikar, Bangladesh)/98 killed by Genocide, a fearful condition in Bangladesh after liberation war in 1971/www.amardeshonline.com/ 6th March 2013]. Yeats believed that art could serve a political function: poems could both critique and comment on political events, as well as educate and inform a population. Europeans were shell-shocked from World War I, and deeply cynical. Yeats's homeland, Ireland, was lurching toward civil war. The old order in Russia had just been toppled by a revolution that Yeats—who had a fondness for aristocracy—feared would spread across the continent and the globe. In the first stanza the poet describes the state of the world its political upheavals, the chaos and cynicism of modern civilization, the haphazard brutality of contemporary culture, especially related to the recent situation in Bangladesh.

As for his politics, Yeats was hardly a democrat, and he did not care much for "progress"—which makes him an odd choice for people who hope to turn Bangladesh into a vibrant democracy. Yeats was attracted to fascism, and he rebelled as a youth against the adults' talk of progress by embracing its opposite. "I took satisfaction in certain public disasters, felt sort of ecstasy at the contemplation of ruin," he once wrote.

The first eight lines of "The Second Coming," as Ms. Vender's notes are the philosophical part of the poem. A rational, thinking observer—a pundit, of sorts—is describing the world in definite, if foreboding, terms. The first image with which are presented in the poem is an image of disaster; a falcon cannot hear the falconer. "The falcon cannot hear the falconer" paints a vivid image of disaster; a falcon cannot hear the falconer represents control but stands at the chaotic peak, while the coming of an antithetical image of disaster: a falcon cannot hear the falconer. "The falcon cannot hear the falconer" could mean a couple of things; perhaps nothing more than confusion, or a confusion that was once held back by civilization, but is now free, and ironically, binding at the same time. When some commit anarchy, others are bound by the consequences of the anarchist's actions and are paradoxically not free to be anarchic themselves. We also hear in Bangladesh that if opposition party comes to power they will bring the present ruling party under trial. At present ruling party and opposition party declared that they will bring one another under special tribunal for genocide ([www.amardeshonline.com/ Special tribunal will be establish for the judgment of Genocide in the Country (the main opposition party Leader)/ 14th March-2013]. Actually the nation of Bangladeshi is not clear who are responsible for genocide. The answer of the question is not clear to the nation. It is the destructive movement of 'Sphinx' in the country to destroy peace and spread the poison of death to the Greenfield of the country. Sphinx is all in all, he has no humanity; he is over limitation and he has no fear of tribunal for his illicit behavior. This unnatural animal enjoys the death of peaceful man. "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" describes an onslaught of destruction almost matter-of-factly (the history of Irish Civil War of 1916/Wikipedia). Other images include seas full of blood and drowning. Those who are "the best" of this society are apathetic, and those who are "the worst" are in your face with "passionate intensity". Yeats is picturing in this poem a society turned upside-down and headed toward self-destruction and chaos. The 'Mere anarchy' which is loosed (by whom?) like a plague or scourge then becomes a tide dimmed by blood, recalling the bloody seas of the Revelation of St John, the flood from the mouth of the serpent and the vials of wrath (Rev 8:8; 12:15; 16:1-4). The tide of blood in the street of Bangladesh reminds the same things after the liberation war of 1971 (www.ittefaqbd.com/ 2 February 2013). In the midst of such conditions, it is ruling authority's nature to look for change as like Rough beast and Sphinx. This change is fearful and harmful for the whole nation. The wit of this unnatural animal is like man but its behavior is like a beast. This image is of a fearsome creature, part man and part animal is already come to country to destroy democracy, compromise, morality, peaceful condition, normal life style and the normal changing way of government. This powerful creature does not like compromise. Its power and energy
is to drink the blood of the innocent people of the country.

But in the first eight lines, the poem suddenly becomes, as Ms. Vender’s notes, “oracular.” Like the Delphic oracle, this Yeats speaks cryptically. “Surely the Second Coming is at hand,” he says — but of course, “surely” here means its opposite: what follows is not certain at all. Yeats goes on to announce “somewhere in sands of the desert/ a shape with lion body and the head of a man” — an indefinite creature in an indefinite place. This poem also says that such type of beast is coming to Bangladesh that will reveal through the chaotic and anti-peaceful activities of the authority. In the midst of such conditions, it is man’s nature to look for change. Yeats is living in anticipation of a great change in the poem, which he encapsulated in the Christian concept of “the second coming”. The phrase, “the second coming”, stands as a symbol of its own, gathered from the history and consciousness of humankind back to the beginning of recorded time, referred to in the poem as “Spiritus Mundi”. In “The Second Coming,” the great beast emerges from the Spiritus Mundi, or soul of the universe, to function as the primary image of destruction in the poem (The great beast Spiritus Mundi/ Wikipedia). Yeats in “The Second Coming” tries to criticize the moralities that are dominating the society. The Christian people believe in the Second Coming, but the poet here uses ‘The Second Coming” symbolically and metaphorically. The writing moment of the poem was very chaotic and dismal. People were running to keep them in any safe place. The scarcity of food, water, shelter, treatment, and the pitiful crying of the poor and wounded people call Yeats to write the poem. Yeats began writing “The Second Coming” in January 1919, in the wake of the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia (the history of First World War/Wikipedia/online search). Yeats employs the vast and pitiless image to come instead of Jesus Christ, the savior of humankind. “The Second Coming” is fearful and disastrous. So, ‘the Second Coming’, here, is a punishment to the sinful society or state. Actually “the Second Coming” of anti-peace, anarchy and political tolerance in Bangladesh will destroy the normal organ of the country and lead the state to an uncertain way. Of course this way will be recognized as “The Second Coming”. ‘The Second Coming’ is a powerful brief against democracy, peace and fundamental right (“Report: Asian Human Right Watch/ Bangladesh is about to the Civil War/ 8th March - 2013”). The people are now seeking the peaceful way but the authority is in deep sleep into anarchy. The religious, logical, legal, loyal and cultural believe is about to end (“Long March for religious right, http://www.benews24.com/7 April 2013’). Bangladesh would have to look toward Bethlehem to see what “rough beast” arrived. Nature cannot stop this change. Time cannot stop it. Nothing can stop what is “slouching towards Bethlehem to be born”. The recent story of the Bangladesh is one of confident predictions that never came to pass: Overall, “The Second Coming” has been well-received as one of the most evocative visionary lyric poems of the twentieth-century and widely praised for its technical excellence and extensive symbolic resonance. This poem is recognized beyond time and limitation. The setting of the poem is easily mixed with the whole national dreadful history of the world. The poem is closely related with the recent anti-peace movement in Bangladesh.

CONCLUSION

“The Second Coming” has been accepted by most critics, yet the elusive nature of Yeats’ imagery has prompted varying interpretations of the poem or more specifically of the Russian Revolution, World War I, the Irish Civil War of 1916, Fascism, or communism. Usually, myths help to explain some very hard to explain aspects of life. They can open our eyes to new ideas, make us sympathize with others and even teach how to best navigate through life. But there are some myths that do just the opposite. One of the most negative and dangerous of modern Christian myths is the belief in the second coming of Jesus Christ. Such views typically emphasize the horrific and ominous nature of the beast, and associate with the recent brutality in Bangladesh. “The Second Coming” is one of five political poems of Yeats composed. Many scholars have focused on its political character and especially on the sphinx-like beast of the poem’s second half, seeing it as representative of the general forces of violence and anarchy. It is one of the most widely read and anthologized of all his poems, uniting the poet’s political and mystical concerns in an intense and visionary artistic whole. W.B Yeats’s “The Second Coming” is rich in symbolism. According to Yeats the symbols originates in a poets mind through divine inspiration. But Yeats asserts, “When a man writes any work of genius, or invents some creative action, is it not because some knowledge or power has come into his mind from beyond his mind?” In the poem, however, Yeats is talking about the second coming of Christ himself, not of a different God, though the second coming is diametrically opposite from the first view. Actually, ‘The second coming’ is a fearful thing. The poet here exhibits anti-Christ ideas and thoughts. It would destroy humanity, fundamental rights, justice, democracy, peace, happiness and normal life style of the general people ([BBC Bangladesh Voice/Without Caretaker government 1/11(emergency period) may come again in Bangladesh/www.dailynayadiganta.com/13th January-2013]). Yeats stands close to the recent brutality in quelling the head of a terrible demon. His philosophical ideas are expressed through the careful use of symbols and Imagery. This eternal myth and symbols really says about the recent anti-peace idea in Bangladesh.

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