



Christian's struggle and Quest for Spiritualism in John Bunyan's Pilgrims' Progress

R. Velu

Assistant Professor of English, D.R.B.C.C.C Hindu College, Pattabiram, Chennai, India

Received: 06 Jun 2023; Received in revised form: 11 Jul 2023; Accepted: 19 Jul 2023; Available online: 26 Jul 2023

©2023 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract— *John Bunyan was longing for Religion. Author makes the use of Allegory as a literary device which gives him more space to explore his Didactic aims. This religious fiction has given as an autobiographical element. Christian is protagonist. Knowledge is gained through travel by portraying Christian and his companions learning from their mistakes. Whenever Christian puts up with problems and difficult, he prays God Christian carries load on his back. He goes the place where is fenced on both side with wall which is called 'Salvation'. Christian's Wife Christiana also struggles in the second part. Not only Christian in his life struggles to attain salvation, but also his wife comes across problems like her husband. She thinks that Christian goes over the river. Christiana tells to her four children about her father and his struggle. Children fall into tears. Christiana prepares to follow her husband. The life of Christian and his struggle is to attain salvation. Though he comes across many problem, he is stubborn his religious goal. He comes across many struggles. It powerfully expresses the truth that the present life is a kind of Pilgrimage. Jesus Christ liberates a sinner from the power of sin when a man shows life time faith and devotion to him. The path of the Christian life is riddled with many problems hurdles and Obstacles. Christian fights against evil powers and gets victory.*

Keywords— *Christian allegory, Sermons, Cherubim and Seraphim.*

INTRODUCTION

John Bunyan was born in 1628. His education was the most primitive. He was Puritan preacher. He was rent by inner conflicts which he experienced as conflicts between the powers of good and evil- between God and the Devil. He was longing for Religion. He went to church yet, his problem and struggle with the evil and of his own imagined sinfulness.

Puritanism, a religious reform movement in the late 16th and 17th centuries that sought to "Purify" the Church of England of remnants of the Roman Catholics "Popery" that the Puritans claimed had been retained after the religious settlement reached early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Shaival Thakkar (2009) Pilgrims' progress has been translated into more than 200 languages. This has also been adopted into a Radio drama, films a T.V Serial, a graphic Novel. Puritan followed an extreme form of

Christianity. Author makes the use of Allegory as a literary device which gives him more space to explore his Didactic aims. The allegory of Christian and Christiana's Pilgrimage signify the conversion of an ordinary person into very religious person

This religious fiction has given as an autobiographical element. Christian is protagonist. Knowledge is gained through travel by portraying Christian and his companions learning from their mistakes. The main theme of this book is salvation, temptation. In this Research, Christian's struggle and Quest for Spiritualism has been discussed here. Krishna Boobala (2018) wrote in his Research Article "As I walked through the Wilderness of this world, I came upon a certain place where there was a den; and I lay down in that place to sleep and as I slept I dreamed a dream" with these lines, Bunyan starts his novel to elucidate his social and political background. It is almost changing period of England so he said England is a world

of Wilderness. The interest in Science began to grow; hence the faith in God began to disappear.

The Hebrew Christian cultural tradition is one of the Cultural foundations of English Literature. The British Writers grew up on the soil of Christian civilization unknowingly drew the materials from Christian culture. Christian culture refers to the Ideological value system with the Christian faith as the core as well as the social survival structure. Christianity originated from the Jewish religion of Israel.

The Characteristics of Christian culture is that it is a system of religious beliefs that believes in the existence of God and believes that Jesus Christ saves all human beings, that is, which believes that God is the true God of the Holy Trinity, namely, the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit, and has a set of meticulous theological system. The Bible is the core content of Christianity, on this basis Pilgrim's Progress was written. Religion and Literature belong to two different categories in essence religion is faith; Literature is to satisfy our aesthetic level. The Bible phenomena can be seen in *Paradise Lost* also which is written by John Milton.

Pilgrim's Progress is influenced by Conflicts sects of Protestantism. Christian is willing to abandon his family to achieve the ultimate goal of Salvation.

Quest and Struggle for Spiritualism:

John Bunyan dreamed Christian and his quest for knowledge reading book. He has burden, here author refers to Psalm 38:4 "My Iniquities overwhelm me, a burden to heavy for me. He walks solitary in the fields, and reading, praying. Now he is distressed in mind". Judgment is important in Christianity. Evangelist is one of the prominent role, points at Wicket Gate. Wicket Gate is here referred to from Matthew 7: 13, 14 from the holy Bible. Spiritualism guides to walk towards narrow gate. The Trouble comes from Obstinate, who is against Christian, who orders Christian to go back. The evil drives away Spiritualism from human being. Christian's ambition to attain salvation and to reach Heaven. There is no crying or sorrow, tears will be wiped. Cherubim and Seraphim are pivotal role in bible. Cherubim and Seraphim believe in the use of water and oil. Water has a type of healing power, because of the strength of baptism and the spirit of God that dwells within it. Christian says to Pliable about loving and holy. Christian not only struggles in spiritualism but also tumbles in slough of Despond alone yet, he endeavours. Help, is one of the allegorical characters, helps Christian from slough of Despond. Christian crosses and sees a man name is Mr. Worldly Wiseman, who is from Carnal Policy. Mr. Worldly Wiseman sees Christian's laborious going by observing his sighs and groans. Christian utters Evangelist frequently who is his mentor and guide. Pliable, who is his neighbor,

discourages him. Christian reaches the house of the Interpreter.

Interpreter: "... He can beget Children (I Cor.iv.15), travail in birth with Children (Gal.iv.19) and nurse them he when there is born...."

"..Said the Interpreter. I have showed thee this picture first, because the man whose picture this is the only man whom he lord of the place whither thou art going, hath authorized to be thy guide in all difficult places..."

Christian carries load on his back. He goes the place where is fenced on both side with wall which is called Salvation. He starts up to top of hill. He meets two men: Timorous and Mistrust. Timorous says that both are going to City of Zion which is difficult place. Though City of Zion is difficult place, Christian struggles because of spiritualism. Mistrust threatens Christian but Christian is stubborn to reach City of Zion.

"....to go back is nothing but death...."

"....I will yet go forward...."

Christian keeps on going and enters narrow passage. He sees Lion. He is afraid. Christian moves tumbling for fear of Lions but good heed to the directions of Porter. Charity asks Christian about his family, Christian says about family-wife and four children. His family averse pilgrimage. But yet, he struggles on his pilgrimage.

Next struggle of Christian is down to the foot of the hill. He goes forward with the help of Discretion, piety, Charity and Prudence. Now Christian is in valley of Humiliation, he is hard. He meets two men who are in the valley of the shadow of death. Men share the experience of the valley. They see the hobgoblins, satyrs and dragons of the pit. Christian wants to reach the valley. He goes on and comes across the flames reaches him, hears doleful voices, and rushing to and fro. Christian travels in disconsolate condition; he can hear voice of a man before him. He sees all the dangers.

Beelzebub is one of the prime characters in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Christian comes across Wind-tide. They are for hazarding all for God. God sends rain and sun shines. Author sees in his dream river which is rough. Pilgrims are discouraged because of rough way. Christian falls into a deep pit .whenever Christian puts up with problems and difficult, he prays God. He begs to hopeful for forgiveness. Christian adventures to go back. It is so dark and flood is high. He lies from Wednesday Morning till Saturday night---without breath, drink or light. His life is miserable. He begins to pray continuously. Christian asks about the way to the Celestial city. A shepherd says that the way is safe. Shepherd takes Christian upon the mountains and they reach to the top of a hill called Error which is steep. Again, they go to another mountain called 'Caution' next

hill is 'Clear'. Christian enters into very dark lane along with Hopeful into a very dark lane. Christian begins to tremble. Atheist confesses Christian that there is no place as you say. Though Hopeful travels with Christian, Christian struggles in his pilgrimage. Hopeful accompanies till last. After many struggle, Christian enters into the joy of Lord.

In the second part, John Bunyan shares that Christian's journey towards the Celestial country is dangerous sagacity wonders about Christian.

"...I also heard of the molestations, troubles, wars, captivities, cries, groans, frights and fears that he met with and had in his journey"

Christian's wife Christiana also struggles in the second part. Not only Christian in his life struggles to attain salvation, but also his comes across problems like her husband. She thinks that Christian goes over the river. Christiana tells to her four children about her father and his struggle. Children fall into tears. Christiana prepares to follow her husband. Like Christian, Christiana has companion such as Mercy. When she reaches to the slough of Despond, she says about her husband how he struggled. Christian's falling into the Slough of Despond symbolizes the religious doubts in the Restoration Period. Obstinate, one of the allegorical characters, did not like to be lenient and he gets back and pliable tries and goes back to home. At the Home of Pliable, Neighbours visit him and mocks Christian denoting his journey would be vain, through which Bunyan portrays the People's mind set towards a good deed. Christian goes to Hill where there is a heavy lightning. In the Hill Difficulty, he meets Formalist and Hypocrisy who come from the shortcut and could not attain their aim. The Hill difficult symbolizes the spiritual struggle. After facing many troubles, Christian gets into Heaven and poor boy called Ignorance could not provide his certificate and locked up and taken to hell by Angels.

Important Characters:

Faithful, Hopeful, Evangelist, Worldly Wiseman, Mr. Talkative, By-Ends, Money-Love, Flatterer, Atheist, the Monster Apollyon and Giant Despair, The Pilgrim's Progress depicts the Progress of the Protagonist from life of sin to his resolve to attain the eternal life, then to his Victories over various kinds of temptation, and his final triumph marked by his arrival in the Celestial City.

Compare Christian with the Pilgrims in the Canterbury Tales:

There are in all Twenty-Nine Pilgrims in the Canterbury Tales. The poet and the host also join the company and therefore the number comes to thirty two. John Bunyan, in his dream, narrates story of Christian. Chaucer narrates Pilgrims, in the Canterbury Tales, how they pass the night.

Their journey is to Canterbury. Christian journey is to the Celestial City. Chaucer and Bunyan are the narrators on their works.

I have discussed about the life of Christian and his struggle to attain salvation. Though he comes across many problem, he is stubborn his religious goal. He comes across many struggles. Obstinate orders him to go back but his determination over pilgrimage is stern. He tumbles in slough of Despond alone though no one helps

Some References from the Holy Bible:

John Bunyan approaches various Biblical texts and he simplifies the meaning so that their message has been difficult for the common folk to decipher, is easier to understand. Some chapters from The Holy Bible: Isaiah.Ixiv.6, Luke xiv.33, PS.xxxviii.4, Hebrews.ix 27, Job xvi 21, Ezek xxii 14, Matt iii 7, Gen xix 17, Tit I 2, Rev vii 16,17, Tit i 2, Rev vii 16,17, John xii 25, Mark viii 34, 35, John xii 25, Rom vi 23, Exod I 22, Jer xxxi 21, Job vii 15, Eccles x 15, Prov xiii 4, Zech iii 7

CONCLUSION

A close reading o the work suggests that the Author was probably using his literary works in order to express their views, either purely religious or somewhat politically minded but I have talked about the struggle and Obstacles in his journey. It powerfully expresses the truth that the present life is a kind of Pilgrimage. Jesus Christ liberates a sinner from the power of sin when a man shows life time faith and devotion to him. The path of the Christian life is riddled with many problems hurdles and Obstacles. Christian fights against evil powers and gets victory.

REFERENCES

- [1] <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Puritanism/>.
- [2] <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>
- [3] <https://www.sparknotes.com>
- [4] Shaival Thakkar (Saugata Bhaduri instructor) November - 2009
- [5] Yan, Zhou, 2018, International Conference on Culture, Literature, Arts and Humanities (ICCLAH)
- [6] Boobala, Krishnan, 2008, IJELLH
- [7] Heather-Ann Wickers, The Pilgrim's Progress and The Canterbury Tales (English Literature Essays), London School of Journalism