

Significance of the spider and the bee episode in The Battle of The Books(B.A.part2 Eng. Hons paper iv 2018-21)

Dr. Vishnulok Bihari Srivastava

. Prof., Deptt. of Eng. ,R.M. College,
Sasaram ,V.K.S.U. ,Ara

Swift has contributed significantly to the repertory of satire. He is considered as one of those few satirists of the 18th century who have added substantially to the coffer of satire. 18th century literature is largely confined to the depiction of political intrigues and conspiracies which gripped the English court. The prevailing condition at the court provided a fertile ground for the emergence of satire. All major artists of the period including Pope, Dryden and Swift used it as a weapon in their arsenal to hit their target whether in prose or in verse form. There is a marked difference in the handling of their subject matter. Pope's satirical works are light in tone compared to Swift. While Pope and Dryden gave a gentle treatment. In the verse satire Absalom and Achitophel portraits the politicians involved in an attempt to alter the succession to the English throne in mild tone Swift on the contrary worked as the stroke of the hammer .In the Rape of The Lock the incident involving a stolen lock of hair between two lovers and compared it with the kidnapping of Helen of Troy is portrayed by Pope in a more gently style than Swift. In his pamphlet The Modest Proposal Swift has suggested of send the infants of Ireland to the

slaughter house to curb the menace posed to the country by the growing population to bring the sluggish economy back on track.

Swifts satirical finds an outlet successfully in his satirical work *The Battle of The Books*. Under the garb of the battle between two sets of books Swift has launched a tirade of vilification against the modern writers who very mistakenly take themselves as the original authors contributing significantly to the coffer of literature forcing the Ancient masters to the secondary position having nothing substantial to contribute. Swift has laughed at the tall claims of the modern authors sarcastically taking recourse to the allegorical episode of the spider and the bee. Allegory is a literary device to satirize human follies using two layers of meaning- the apparent or literal meaning and the hidden meaning. Under the garb of the hidden meaning the author expresses his real intension. In this way, the hidden meaning becomes primary and the apparent meaning becomes secondary. Swift's *Gullivers Travels* appears to be the story meant for children but actually it is a sharp criticism on the functioning of the royalty through the successive voyages of Gulliver.

The battle of the ancient and the modern books was fought in the two selves occupied by the ancient and modern books of the king's library. The background of the battle was prepared by the caretaker of the library, Mr. Boyle who wrongfully arranged the ancient books in the shelves of the moderns. While cleaning the books the dust particles fell into his eyes which led to the grave mistake. Swift has very dramatically introduced the episode of the spider and the bee to ensure the superiority of the ancient books over the modern books. While the two warring factions were locked in a pitched battle a bee managed to venture into the library and occupied the shelves of the ancients whereas the shelves occupied by the moderns was captured by the modern. In this way the battle between the ancient and the

moderns was transformed into the battle between the spider and the bee whereas the former served as the moderns and the later served as the ancients.

The spider claimed himself to be far superior to the bee in the sense that it had occupied its own citadel, the web carved out of its own efforts. The bee on the contrary has no longer carved out its own shelter and roams hither and thither in search of a proper hideout. The spider also claims that the bee is itself incapable of producing anything out of its own effort whereas the spider produces venom and wax which are its original contribution. The bee has to depend on the flowers to prepare its meal. In this the spider showers bucketful of praise on him calling him the original contributor. The bee listens to the arguments of the spider very patiently and reacts sharply that it produce worthless things which do not serve any purpose. The bee on the contrary asserts that though he does not claim to have produced anything out of its own effort and seeks the assistance of flower to produce its meal but whatever it produces, honey and wax is of great significance. In this way , the bee overpower the spider forcing him to bite the dust.