QUEEN ELIZABETH-I IN THE POETRY OF SPENSER AND RALEIGH: *A CRITICAL STUDY*

ABSTRACT

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QUEEN ELIZABETH-I IN THE POETRY OF SPENSER AND RALEIGH: A CRITICAL STUDY

Queen Elizabeth-I was virtually an institution, surrounded by many creative luminaries. Very few rulers of the world, legendary or otherwise, can stand comparison with her. Sixteenth century England witnessed the dynamic reign of this phenomenal Queen, a woman, who with her sheer grit and wit could assemble round her men of equally dynamic character. As Norman Council writes, "Arthur's chivalric quest for the Faerie Queen[e] in the poem represents the movement of British history toward its apotheosis, Elizabeth Tudor."[1] Her courtier-poets highlight not only her womanly, virginal, and monarchical attributes, but also her diplomatic skills, and literary interests and abilities.

But much of the verses written on Queen Elizabeth-I have not so far received adequate critical attention. Hence, the research attempts to make a critical and investigative study of the enigmatic persona of the Queen, her influence on the literary scene of the times particularly, though not exclusively, through the verses written overtly and indirectly on her. Letters, journals, drama, historical and contemporary records have also been cited to provide greater insight. In the attempt to make a more comprehensive study of the topic, reference has also been made to a number of other miscellaneous verses of varied length from such writers as Sir John Davies, Peele and Lyly, while major emphasis has been on Spenser and Raleigh: Spenser, because he was the major poet whose magnum opus, *The Faerie Queene*, has as its focal point of discussion The Tudor Queen as 'Gloriana'. Raleigh's account is significant for being largely representative of two perspectives: of the aristocracy, and the personal in virtue of his close link with the Queen.

The study is divided into the following chapters, though they may at times tend to coalesce into one another:

Chapter-I:	Introduction
Chapter-II:	Elizabeth: The Legend
Chapter-III:	Elizabeth: Muse of Poets
Chapter-IV:	Elizabeth: The Spirit of the Epoch
Chapter-V:	Conclusion.

Chapter-I: INTRODUCTION - "*A knowledge pure it is her worth to know...*"
(*'Song'*, Sir Walter Raleigh)

This chapter begins by looking at the impinging impact of Renaissance and its corollaries, Reformation and Humanism. It traces briefly the historical events leading to the religious break with Rome and its connection with the Tudor line of succession. It narrates Elizabeth's progress to power until the peak is reached when she becomes so pivotal to her people that Carter and Mears writes, "England under Queen Elizabeth is an inspiring theme."[2]

The growth in power and centrality of her role in all spheres is next touched upon:

> **"'I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman,**
> **/But I have the heart and stomach of a king',"[3]**

Emphasis is laid on Elizabeth's seen and unseen presence in the poems of Spenser and Sir Walter Raleigh:

> *It pleased your Grace upon a tyme*
>
> *To graunt me reason for my ryme,*
>
> *But from that tyme until this season,*

I heard of neither ryme nor reason.[4]

This candid reminder of Spenser to the Queen illustrates the above point. Raleigh's 'romantic involvement' with the Queen also deserves mention:

O! hopeful love, my object, and invention,
O! true desire, the spur of my conceit,
O! worthiest spirit, my mind's impulsion,
O! eyes transpersant, my affection's bait;
O! princely form, my fancy's adamant,
Divine conceit, my paines acceptance,
O! all in one! Oh, heaven on earth transparent!
The seats of joys and loves abundance! [5]

Besides, Elizabeth's relations with other poets of the time in general and the above-mentioned poets in particular, and how their lives and activities were directly linked to her are also discussed.

Chapter-II: Elizabeth: The Legend –"*Stories and fables do describe no such...*"
('*Oracle from a Device*', Robert, Earl of Essex)

Chapter-II has attempted to reveal the person behind the persona projected historically and through literature. In order to do so, first the focus is placed on the larger than life image that was projected by her as well as by her courtier-poets. Historically, we see in Queen Elizabeth a woman who continued throughout her life the programme she had laid down for herself in the initial years of her reign.

Elizabeth's character apparently remained unchanged after assuming power as Queen. The contention of this research is that the formation of this character was significantly affected by her traumatic childhood. Historical accounts testify that Elizabeth's childhood days were spent in being in and out of exiles depending on the whims of Henry VIII, her father. Declared as the daughter of a witch, and hated by her older half-sister, Mary, Elizabeth was periodically banished to the Tower, only to be again reprieved by her father. The young Elizabeth was starved of love, more specifically fatherly and sisterly love. Brotherly love she acquired from her younger brother Edward though he did not live long, and Catherine Parr, her father's sixth wife, proved to be a kind-hearted and loving woman providing her with the much-needed motherly love of which she was deprived of when barely three years old. Her insecurity, dissembling nature, tyrannical love and fickle mindedness are shown to be related to these childhood experiences.

The perspective in which Elizabeth desired to be chiefly evaluated is as an upholder of religious peace and harmony. As the pivotal centre of power, Elizabeth started replacing the unseen figure of the divine in her people's mind. The Queen herself had once remarked,

> **"'It is said that I am no divine. Indeed I studied nothing else but divinity until I came to the Crown, and then I gave myself to the study of government...'"[6]**

At this point, we come to the realisation that Elizabeth's youth and physical beauty had only a peripheral impact on the poets and her people. What impressed them was the larger image of the Queen. Spenser writes:

> *Her face so fair as flesh it seemed not,*

But heavenly portrait of bright angel's hue,

Clear as the sky, withouten blame or blot,

Through goodly mixture of complexions due;

And in her cheeks the vermeil red did show

Like roses in a bed of lilies shed,

The which ambrosial odours from them threw,

And gazers' sense with double pleasure fed,

Hable to heal the sick and to revive the dead...[7]

Her ministers and counsellors too tried their best to maintain her unblemished image and any wrong advertently or inadvertently committed by the Queen was instantly covered up, as the order for the killing of Mary, Queen of Scots testifies. According to the Queen's chief poet, Edmund Spenser, she was 'like an angel in all form and fashion.'[8]

It becomes interesting to speculate on Elizabeth's enigmatic character behind the queenly mask. From all the writings on her, we are made aware that she was a normal human being with flaws. She emerges as a Cleopatra-like person. In her study, *The Tudor Women*, Alison Plowden has demonstrated how the Royal Virgin "never lost her eye for an attractive man and enjoyed male company, so long as it was on her own terms."[9] She was, no doubt, successful in tackling any male chauvinism or aggression. But how much of it was play-acting? As a woman, did she feel the need of a husband and probably a child? The following words of the Queen appear to speak tellingly of her vulnerability:

'"Do not upbraid me with miserable lack of children; for every one of you, and as many as are Englishmen, are children and kinsmen to me...".'[10]

It is said that the reputedly famous affair with Robert Dudley did not culminate in marriage because of intrusion of genealogy. Another view advanced is that Elizabeth's chief courtier, William Cecil had vehemently opposed this match because, apparently, royalty and commoner could never marry. What is therefore implied is that courtiers such as Dudley and Raleigh could not afford to disclose their affections publicly; a theme that forms a recurrent motif in Raleigh's poems:

> *... those desires that aim too high*
> *For any mortal lover,*
> *When reason cannot make them die,*
> *Discretion will them cover.*[11]

Elizabeth-I was successful in reigning for nearly forty-five years and this can be viewed as a triumph of character.

Chapter-III: Elizabeth: Muse of Poets – "*...she the Queen of Muses is...*" (*Idea, The Shepherd's Garland*, Michael Drayton)

This chapter explores the concept of Elizabeth-I as the Muse of Poetry. But first the singular importance of the court as a major institution that dominated sixteenth century poetry is taken into account. Michel Foucault (as cited in Gary Waller's *English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century*, Longman, London and New York, 1986, p.14) views the sixteenth century court as a place where " 'power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.'"[12] This observation seems to have some basis since Queen Elizabeth-I was

the source of this power, and as suggested by many, the centre of all the poetry. Spenser, her chief poet, writes:

At last yledd with farre reported praise,
Which flying fame throughout the world had spread,
Of doughtie knights, whom Faery land did raise,
That noble order hight of Maidenhead,
Forthwith to court of Gloriane I sped,
Of Gloriane great Queene of glory bright,
Whose kingdomes seat Cleopolis is red..."[13]

Elizabeth's kingdom is here compared to 'Faery land' where, it is told, she served and supervised her people as Gloriana, the Virgin Queen. 'Cleopolis' signified London, the seat of power, to which many of the Queen's would-be courtiers and poets flocked, to seek for advancement and fame. In the lines below, Raleigh is projecting the Queen's pristine and symbolic image:

A flower of love's own planting,
A pattern kept by nature
For beauty's form and stature,
When she would frame a darling.

She as the valley of Peru
Whose summer ever lusteth,
Time conquering, all she mastreth
By being always new.[14]

Reference is also made to the system of patronage, which was widely popular. But, except for Spenser, Elizabeth, as is known, did not directly patronise any other poet. She left this 'business' to her wealthier lords and ladies amongst whom were the Earl of Leicester (as the poet George Gascoigne's patron) and Sir Walter Raleigh (who was also Spenser's patron since it was Raleigh who first introduced him to the Queen's court).

Her unattached status and her state of continued virginity provided the poets the inspiration to compose the various poems on her:

To your faire selves a faire ensample frame,
Of this faire virgin, this Belphoebe faire,
To whom in perfect love, and spotless fame
Of chastity, none living may compaire:
Ne poysnous Envy instly can compaire
The prayse of her fresh flowring Maidenhead;
For thy she standeth on the highest staire
Of th' honorable stage of womanhead,
That ladies all may follow her ensample dead. [15]

It is hard to imagine a monarch, till date, who has been eulogised and glorified to such an extent as Queen Elizabeth. Many transfigurations of the Queen are recorded in Elizabethan poetry. It is found that her poets left no stone unturned to magnify the virtues and assets of their suzerain delving deep into the myths and legends of yore. In *The Faerie Queene*, his classic creation, Spenser assigns her with two specific tributary titles: As Queen she was Gloriana, and in her private

person (for her Virginity) Belphoebe. In the 'Letter to Raleigh' Spenser had written of Elizabeth thus:

> **'...she beareth two persons, the one of a most royal Queene or Empresse, the other of a most virtuous and beautiful Lady...'.**[16]

She likewise appears in several prototypes: She is referred to as Eliza, Queen of Shepherds, Tanaquill for her Learning, Mercilla for her Mercy, Cynthia for her poetic powers, and Una for her Truth. Elizabeth even attracted the epithets of the Virgin Mary: as Rosa Electa (i.e., chosen by God, especially for eternal life) and Virgo Beata (meaning, beatified or blessed virgin). Fulke Greville describes her stately aspect and universal appeal:

> *Under a throne I saw a Virgin sit,*
> *The red and white rose quarter'd in her face;*
> *Star of the North, and for true guards to it,*
> *Princes, Church, States, all pointing out her grace.*[17]

The role of Elizabeth, however, was not just that of the inspirer but also of the inspired. Personalities such as Sir Walter Raleigh and the Earl of Essex were distinguished courtiers and brave knights who, in return, apparently inspired and ennobled the Queen with astounding acts of valour - exploring the New World, defeating the Spanish Armada, to name just a few. There seems to be a ring of truth in Dryden's statement that the original of every one of Spenser's Knights was then living at the court of Queen Elizabeth-I. Perhaps, what the poets and courtiers were therefore doing "was imitating the queen who practised... artistic self-fashioning on the grandest scale."[18]

A little known aspect of the Queen was her poetic ability. She too reflected in her writings the Petrarchan attitude to courtly love. Like a veritable Petrarchan Mistress, Elizabeth writes:

When I was fair and young and favour graced me,
Of many was I sought their mistress for to be.
But I did scorn them all and answered them therefore,
Go, go, go, seek some other where,
Importune me no more.

How many weeping eyes I made to pine with woe,
How many sighing hearts I have no skill to show,
Yet I the prouder grew, and answered them therefore,
Go, go, seek some other where,
Importune me no more.[19]

Likewise, the Petrarchan strain is clearly noticeable in the poems of Raleigh with its intermingling of compliment and complaint. A brusque character, apparently he failed to hide his genuine sentiments under a cloak of artificiality. Unable to disguise his feelings for his beloved Queen, the poet pleads:

Wrong not, dear empress of my heart,
The merit of true passion,
With thinking that he feels no smart,
That sues for no compassion;
Since, if my plaints serve not to prove

The conquest of your beauty,

It comes not from defect of love,

But from excess of duty...

Silence in love bewrays more woe,

Than words, though ne'er so witty;

A beggar that is dumb, ye know,

Deserveth double pity.

Then misconceive not (dearest heart)

My true, though secret passion,

He smarteth most that hides his smart,

And sues for no compassion.[20]

Thus, ritualistic display of slavish and lavish affection for the Queen was a common occurrence. But verbosity and affected manners appears to have suited personalities such as Queen Elizabeth and Raleigh. Such exaggerated statements of emotions, opulence, and verbosity of the times apparently provided the vital impetus for the development of such pageants and entertainments that were likewise performed extravagantly during the reign of Henry VIII who had himself loved taking part in the banquets and country revels hosted in his honour, and liked appearing as the 'outlaw' character Robin Hood. In the pageants and entertainments sponsored by Elizabeth's courtiers can be included the Inner Temple Revels of 1562 and Kenilworth entertainment of 1575 that were performed for and before the Queen while on her country progresses. Interestingly, these pageants, that seemed to possess a piquant charm, chiefly allegorised her courtiers' sexual and amorous passion for their Queen. In the Pageant performed in

Kenilworth, George Gascoigne, disguised in the character of a 'savage man' and pleading for Leicester's suit, it seems, addresses Elizabeth in a language replete with sexual innuendo:

> *" ' Had I the bewties blasé? Which shines in you so bright...*
> *But comely peerelesse Prince,*
> *Since my desires be great:*
> *Walke here sometimes in pleasant shade, to fende the*
> *parching heate, ' "*[21]

In fact, the Queen was not without her faults. Spenser, though ever ready to praise the glories and virtues of his Queen, does not forget to remonstrate her for her errors of judgement. In the lines below, we see the poet making a case for Raleigh, who appears as Timias in *The Faerie Queene*. This relates to Raleigh's banishment to the Tower, by Elizabeth, for probably slighting her and marrying one of her maids-of-honour, Elizabeth Throckmorton:

> *... it fell to this unhappy boy,*
> *Whose tender heart the faire Belphebe had*
> *With one sterne looke so daunted, that no ioy*
> *In all his life...*[22]

After this episode, Raleigh was excommunicated and ostracised from Elizabeth's circle of favourites His impression of the Queen, likewise, seems to have undergone change

> *A queen she was to me, no more Belphebe,*

A lion then, no more a milk-white dove;

A prisoner in her breast I could not be;

She did untie the gentle chains of love.

Love was no more the love of hiding...[23]

The poet appears to have realised that Elizabeth, as his own 'Belphebe' was an unachievable prize of love. As a humble courtier, he can just woo her as a subject to a queen and not as a lover to a beloved. She may have untied 'the gentle chains of love' but he does not relish the prospect of wallowing in self-pity because of unreciprocated love. The poet-lover therefore appears to be easily subjugated when faced with the greater persona of the queen. This larger than life persona does not give the whole picture. There is sufficient indication that there lurked another face behind this mask of a hard-headed and flinty-hearted queen. For example, a more sensitive side to her character is revealed in the following lines:

My care is like shadow in the sun,

Follows one flying, flies when I pursue it,

Stands and lies by me, doth what I have done,

His too familiar care doth make me rue it.

No means I find to rid him from my breast,

Till by the end of things it be suppress.[24]

In these penetrating lines, the Queen probably records the feelings she experienced as a woman, and whose love and passion her favourite courtiers such as the Earls of Leicester and Essex could not understand.

From the discussions of this chapter, it thus becomes apparent that Queen Elizabeth served not only the role of the inspirer to her court-poets and gallants, but was often also reciprocally inspired by the actions and deeds of those whom she inspired.

Chapter-IV: Elizabeth: The Spirit of the Epoch - *"Her name recorded I will leave forever"*
***(Colin Clout's Come Home Againe*, Edmund Spenser)**

Chapter-IV focuses on the achievements of the Elizabethan Age with special reference to Queen Elizabeth, "that great Spirit, which doth great kingdom's move".[25] Elizabeth's courtiers and subjects were not less ambitious than their Queen. Their bravado, pluck and gutsy determination to achieve great miracles mirrored that of their monarch. Since Spenser and Raleigh reflected much of the Queen's vision and ambitions, this chapter further discusses the realisation of their collective ambitions. Emphasis is laid on the vital connection between economic prosperity, the Court, and literature, and the subsequent increase in the diligent and serious-minded writing is shown as the natural outcome of the above with specific focus on the Queen's catalytic role in all this.

Besides, this chapter discusses Elizabeth's accomplishments as ' "princess of great wisdom, learning and experience".'[26]Her personal achievement as translator of works like Boethius *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (1593) is further brought to light.

As a co-sharer of the spirit of the epoch with the Queen, Spenser's achievements are studied taking into account his works such as *The Faerie Queene* and *Colin Clout's Come Home Againe*. Reference is made of the struggle and

subjugation - mental and intellectual, which, the poets experienced in their desire for achievement and advancement as this Spenser poem suggests:

Full little knowest thou that hast not tride,
What hell it is in suing long to bide:
To loose good dayes, that might be better spent;
To wast long nights in pensive discontent;
To speed today, to be put back tomorrow,
To feed on hope, to pine with feare and sorrow...
To fret thy soule with crosses and with cares;
To eate thy heart through comfortlesse dispaires;
To fawne, to crowche, to waite, to ride, to ronne,
To spend, to give, to want, to be undonne.
Unhappie wight, borne to desastrous end,
That doth his life in so long tendance spend![27]

Moreover, in this chapter is studied the importance and achievement of Raleigh in the field of poetry with greater emphasis laid on his fragmentary epic, *Ocean's Love to Cynthia*. The chapter further touches upon England's stupendous victory over Philip's Armada, a turning point in English history, made possible because of the spirit of participation, which the Queen enthused in her soldiers. Another aspect considered in relation to Elizabeth is that it was during her reign that England laid its first giant step into becoming a colonial power with the establishment of the East India Company in 1600. The above points are shown to be variously highlighted by Elizabeth's poets:

Then came the Queen on prancing steed,

Attired like an angel bright:

And eight brave footmen at her feet . [28]

By Love she rules more than by Law,

Even her great mercy breedeth awe:

This is her sword and sceptre:

Herewith she hearts did ever draw,

And this guard ever kept her.[29]

The chapter ends by pointing out the successful attempt made by the Elizabethan poets to record their Queen's name for posterity such as this magnificient vision of Shakespeare predicting the success of Elizabeth's reign:

She shall be lov'd and fear'd.

Her own shall bless her,

Her foes shake like a field of beaten corn,

And hang their heads with sorrow.

Good grows with her.

In her days, every man shall eat in safety

Under his own vine what he plants: and sing

The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours.

God shall be truly known and those about her

From her shall read the perfect ways of honour,

And by those claim their greatness, not by blood...[30]

Chapter-V: CONCLUSION – "*Best jewel that the earth doth wear*" (*Hymns to Astraea in Acrostic Verse*, Sir John Davies)

The information and perspectives relative to Elizabeth-I and her poets advanced in the earlier chapters are now summed up. It is in this chapter that the unravelling of the enigma that was Elizabeth is clearly stated and an attempt made to arrive at a comprehensive description of her and her times. Elizabeth-I left behind a valuable legacy for her successor James-I: the unity of her nation. And her poets, chief among whom were Spenser and Raleigh, have given Elizabeth a pride of place in the history of literature as well as in the annals of mankind. The contribution of these two poets to the rich mine of English literature and history is therefore worthy of praise and commemoration. Time has also not been able to erase Elizabeth's image of a perfect Virgin Queen that Spenser and Raleigh had built through their treasure-trove of poems and writings. As Alison Weir remarks, Elizabeth would have been greatly delighted and pleased by the Latin epitaph in her magnificient tomb that describes her as:

> "'The mother of this her country, the nurse of religion and learning; for perfect skill of very many languages, for glorious endowments, as well of mind as of body, a prince incomparable.'"[31]

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QUEEN ELIZABETH-I IN THE POETRY OF SPENSER AND RALEIGH: *A CRITICAL STUDY*

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

OF

NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
SHILLONG

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23rd **June, 2006.**

I, Neeta Lagachu, hereby declare that the subject matter of the thesis is the record of the work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form the basis of any award of any previous degree to me or, to the best of my knowledge, to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of writing this study I have incurred many debts, none of which can be calculated or adequately repaid.

In particular, I express my deep sense of gratefulness to my supervisor Dr. Utpala Sewa, Department of English, NEHU, Shillong for her invaluable guidance and support. To her I owe a large intellectual debt, which can be acknowledged but not repaid. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. S.N.Singh, former Reader, Department of English, NEHU, Shillong for his constructive academic advice and support. I also specially thank Prof. (Mrs.) T. Ao, Dean, School of Humanities and Education, NEHU, Shillong and Dr. Esther Syiem, Head of the Department of English, NEHU, Shillong for their moral and academic support.

I owe a special debt to the Office Staff of NEHU, Shillong for their prompt help whenever required.

I would further like to thank the Principal, Dr. P.C. Borah and several of my colleagues in C.K.B.Commerce College, Jorhat for their support and encouragement.

A number of organisations have also assisted me in the endeavour. The British Council Library, Mumbai deserve special mention, for quite a lot of materials used in the present study were not easily available elsewhere.

My family, as ever, have been patient and helpful, while I was pursuing my research. I express my heartiest love and reverence to my father, Mr. K. Lagachu (Retd. Sr. Auditor) and my mother, Mrs. L. Lagachu, who have always motivated and helped me for the completion of my work, and who heartily wish me success. I also owe my love and respect to my parents-in-law, Mr. N.N. Taye (Retd. General Manager, ONGC) and Mrs. A. Taye, for their understanding and support.

My special love and thanks to my son, Abhijeet (Victor), my elder sister Geeta (Bai), my brothers Lakshmi Nandan (Oiter) and Abhinandan (Datty), and above all, to my late sister Sunita (Baby), who is my constant inspiration.

My all love and care to my husband, Mr. M.K.Taye (Material Management Officer, ONGC) for his invaluable help and practical guidance (especially in the typing of the scripts), encouragement, moral and emotional support.

Shillong,
The 23rd June, 2006.

Neeta Lagachu 23/06/06

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION:

"A knowledge pure it is her worth to know..."
(*'Song'*, Sir Walter Raleigh)

The Elizabethan Age swam in a sea of glory and discovery. The extraordinary cultural and intellectual awakening, commonly known as the Renaissance, had happened many years ago in Italy with the recovery of ancient classical texts and artifacts. This discovery and recovery infused life and spirit in the minds and hearts of the people. In England, the impact was felt extensively in the reign of King Henry VIII. Since the influence was more on the spiritual and the intellectual rather than on the visual arts (example of this last type being the works of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo), the movement is termed as 'Humanism' in England. Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), written in Latin, is a humanist dream for a radical transformation in institutional arrangements, especially in educational and church reforms. Latin, the study of which was only a male prerogative, has to be now taught alongside Greek and English.

It is important to note that the seed of Reformation was sown around this time. Non-conformists like Thomas More and John Fisher were cruelly beheaded, who, along with Martin Luther of Germany, had raised their voices against the corrupt clergy. However, the English Reformation came about for the purely selfish motive of Henry VIII. The near absence of large-scale religious discontent

in the country at the time shows that the King had a different axe, a very personal one, to grind altogether. His first wife, Catherine of Aragon, had given him no male issue. Henry VIII was adamant about securing a divorce so that he could marry his new love-interest, Anne Boleyn. Since the Catholic religion did not permit divorce, the King, after usurping the title of the Head of the Church of England, promptly married Anne Boleyn, Queen Elizabeth's mother, after terminating his marriage with his first wife. He was excommunicated for this act by the then Pope, Clement VII. This was the beginning of Protestantism in England.

When Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1558, England was reeling under religious persecution and bigotry. This fact did not deter the young queen who henceforth went on to script the turning point in the history and culture of England. The reign of Queen Elizabeth I is therefore often referred to as ***The Golden Age*** of English history. Her 45-year reign saw the emergence of England as a nation of tremendous political power and unparalleled cultural achievement. Since much of this English renaissance can be directly attributable to Elizabeth's personal character and influence, and her long reign, it becomes befitting to identify the last half of the sixteenth century in England as the Elizabethan Period.

The Tudor Queen's tastes in fashion set the standard for the aristocracy and the rest of society; her love of music, drama, and poetry created an

atmosphere in which many of England's greatest writers found encouragement and financial patronage. It was mainly due to Elizabeth's leadership that England experienced the true cultural reawakening or renaissance of thought, art, and vision which had begun in Italy a century earlier. Elizabeth's court was a magnet which attracted the most talented individuals of the era, and, at the Queen's direction, Oxford and Cambridge universities were reorganized and chartered as centers for learning and scholarly endeavor.

The prosperity, confidence, optimism, and vigor which characterized Elizabeth's court and reign had seeped into the various spheres of Elizabethan life and this can be seen in the literature, music, architecture, and fashion of the period.

The greatest literature produced during the Elizabethan Period falls into two categories: poetry and drama. Edmund Spenser (who created the grand epic poem of homage to Elizabeth, *The Faerie Queene*) and William Shakespeare are the leading examples of these two forms of literature respectively of those times. The pursuit of a literary life was considered as an admirable and worthy endeavor, and poets shared their work with each other and at court, vying for the praise and patronage of the Queen and the aristocracy. Queen Elizabeth was herself a naturally gifted woman not only in the political but also in the literary field. She wrote good poetry: the following poem is a typical example:

Oh fortune, thy wresting wavering state
Hath fraught with cares my troubled wit,
Whose witness this present prison late
Could bear, where once was joy's loan quit.
Thou causedst the guilty to be loosed
From bands where innocents were inclosed,
And caused the guiltless to be reserved,
And freed those that death had well deserved.
But all herein can be nothing wrought,
So God send to my foes all they have thought.[1]

The last years of Elizabeth's reign were not always politically smooth: in fact, by the 1590's there was at least one serious threat of rebellion, as well as a series of bitter Parliamentary conflicts. But Elizabeth was steadfast as a monarch and held things firmly in control until her death in 1603. She was succeeded by her cousin, King James-VI of Scotland, who united the two nations as King James-I.

England during the reign of Elizabeth-I was a country of tremendous ambition, achievement, promise, and zest. The accomplishments and spirit of the age are traceable to many sociological and cultural factors, but foremost among these is the leadership of the forceful, resourceful, and shrewd Queen Elizabeth I.

Her death marked not only the end of the Tudor line, but of a glorious era in English history.

Queen Elizabeth became the object of intense celebration for her many subjects amongst which were the poets and courtiers whose presence added to the glamour and glitter surrounding the Queen. Dramatic and non-dramatic poetry achieved the highest recognition and support during the Elizabethan era. Elizabethan poets writing in the Renaissance climate included stalwarts like Spenser, Raleigh, Shakespeare and Chapman. This spirit of composing poetry was especially fostered and encouraged by Queen Elizabeth- I who was like an earthly deity safeguarding not only the shores of England but also enhancing her 'Queendom's' poetic wealth.

The Queen had the knack of a crafty politician and an unwavering tenacity to save herself and thus her country from falling into the abyss of ruin. Queen Elizabeth was wedded to England, her only *paramour*. Like a devoted and dutiful wife, she even sold her lands and jewels for the wars especially in Ireland, which were dragging on so incessantly after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. A poet, speaking as a bridegroom and in England's name rightly remarked:

I am thy lover fair,

Hath chose thee to mine heir,

And my name is Merrie England.

Therefore, come away

And make no more delay.

Sweet Bessie give me thy hand. [2]

Elizabeth not only served the present but also prepared the ground for the whole future of her race. The Queen was the sunrise and sunset: the promise and the fulfillment to her people. Shakespeare encapsulates in King Henry VIII:

She shall be

A pattern to all princes living with her,

And all that shall succeed [3]

Queen Elizabeth was a naturally gifted woman not only in the political but also in the literary field. Considering the marginalized existence of women within the family and social setting, Elizabeth, from her early childhood, was perfecting the art of surviving in a man's world: polishing her education and discreetly learning the ropes of statesmanship. She was confident of her capabilities:

As for mine own part, I care not for death; for all men are mortal, and though I be a woman, I have as good a courage answerable to my place as ever my father had I am your anointed Queen. I will never be by violence constrained to do anything. I thank God I am endued with such qualities that if I were turned out of realm in my petticoat, I were able to live in any place in Christendom. [4]

Elizabeth epitomized energy, emotion, and essence Her inviolate person was like a magnet drawing many men including foreign aristocrats (like the Duke of Alencon) to her side. One of her ardent admirers was Spenser whose *Faerie Queene* is a tribute to Elizabeth. as Queen, as Woman, and as a Virgin. For Spenser, there was no other ideal more perfect than Queen Elizabeth Sir John Davies too in his dedication to the Queen articulates that the latter needed no 'support' from anyone because God 'Almighty's hand' was constantly guiding her:

Like heaven in all; like th' earth in this alone,
That though great states by her support do stand,
Yet she herself supported is of none,
But by the finger of the Almighty's hand; [5]

The Queen seems to be habitually associated with the elements Despite being stationed in the English court, the impact of her power and policies were being felt across the proverbial seven seas How can we forget that the seeds of colonization were sown under her tutelage? She is compared to the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, or some 'Airy Angel' or the other. Davies writes.

To that clear Majesty which in the north
Doth, like another sun, in glory rise;
Which standeth fixed, yet spreads her heavenly worth,

Lodestone to hearts, and lodestar to all eyes; [6]

Elizabeth's reputation swept through the whole world, especially to countries like France and Spain whose leaders, blue-blooded or otherwise seemed to be quite enamoured by the Queen's presence and personality. It is well known that Philip II, the orthodox Catholic King of Spain, had ardently courted Queen Elizabeth even if the reason may have been more political rather than romantic·

To that great Spirit, which doth great kingdom's move,
The sacred spring, whence right and honour streams,
Distilling virtue, shedding peace and love,
In every place, as Cynthia sheds her beams; [7]

Were Elizabeth and her age so picturesque that the poets had to write down their impressions and that too so profusely? The Queen was not an immaculately perfect being. She was famous for her irascible and violent temper and did not make any attempt to disguise it. Raleigh's banishment to 'The Tower' is a case in point. The disenchanted voice of Thomas Campion rings ominously true:

Where are all thy beauties now, all hearts enchaining?
Wither are thy flatterers gone with all their feigning?
All fled; and thou alone still here remaining.[8]

The lines come very near to denigrating the female monarch on her loss of beauty and admirers with the onset of age. The question now is, can such a magnetic and majestic figure feel 'alone' in life? The Queen might have experienced the pangs of loneliness in her single statehood once in a while despite being surrounded by a galaxy of well-wishers. Elizabeth, the poetess, speaks Hamlet-like:

I grieve and dare not show my discontent,
I love and yet am forced to seem to hate,
I do, yet dare not say, I ever meant:
I seem stark mute, yet inwardly do prate.
I am and am not, I freeze and yet am burn'd,
Since from myself my other self I turn'd. [9]

E.M.Forster has called Elizabeth '"a public virgin"' [10] who exploited her virginity for the very practical purpose of ruling her royal domain. Is this view justified? To be the guardian of a realm at the young age of twenty-five, and then to realize that her country needed her much more than she needed a husband and a family, is itself sufficient proof that Elizabeth I had the making of a great responsible ruler within her:

Here is my hand,
My dear lover England,
I am thine both with mind and heart,

For ever to endure,

Thou mayest be sure,

Until death us two do part.[11]

The above verse speaks a great deal about the Queen's feelings. It amounted to a sacrifice of her personal wants in order to save a country faced with hostile and powerful nations from all sides. It would not be far-fetched to say that Elizabeth herself created the image of an exceptional Queen and the aura surrounding her for the adulation of her people. Nothing could escape her eyes. She was what she made of herself:

When she did well, what did there else amiss?

When she did ill, what empires could have pleased?

No other power effecting woe or bliss,

She gave, she took, she wounded, she appeased.[12]

Elizabeth-I had reigned for an inconceivably long period of time. As we are aware, both her half-brother Edward and her half-sister Mary could wear the crown just for a brief span of time due to their untimely deaths. It was her strong constitution and her equally strong will that helped the Queen to become a successful, a long-reigning monarch. All political coups to overthrow her were then and there crushed to the ground by her knights and protectors like

Walsingham. Every brave feat carried out for the Queen reflects the selfless service of her loyal subjects. The unswerving love and allegiance of the people to the Queen is recorded thus:

> *Envy hath fled my soul at sight of her,*
> *And she hath chased all black thoughts from my bosom*
> *Like as the sun doth darkness from the world....*
> *So in the ample and unmeasured flood*
> *Of her perfections are my passions drown'd.* [13]

Her consummate skill for acting and her ability to turn the tide of events into her favour would give many a modern politician a run for his money. She gave England peace and security even as she took most of her loyal ministers away from their hearths, from their family and friends. Domesticity was never in the cards for this self-willed and single-minded female and though unsuccessful (as in the case of Raleigh and Leicester) she tried her best not to make her cabinet succumb to it.

Elizabeth's powerful ministers like Lord Burleigh and the Earl of Leicester could not subdue the Queen's more dominant personality. Her authority and individuality remained intact all through her reign:

> **'I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, /**
> **But I have the heart and stomach of a king.'**[14]

Elaborating on her masculinity, Lyly, in *Campaspe,* which was first staged in 1580, seems to be identifying Elizabeth simultaneously with 'Alexander' as well as the latter's lady-love, i.e., 'Campaspe' (Refer to Philipa Berry's *Of Chastity And Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen,* Routledge, London and New York, 1989, pp.111-122). A.O.Meyer rightly points out "that even as a young woman and 'in all moments of peril', she had 'a masculine and statesmanlike greatness which made up for all that was petty in her character'." [15]

Elizabeth's periodic public appearances and visits throughout the kingdom was a ploy to keep her image alive in the minds and hearts of her people and in this, she met with a very unreal success. Her personal interaction with the common man helped the Queen in carving a permanent place in the hearts of 'all' men:

Here comes amazement's object, wonder's height,
Peace's patroness, heaven's miracle,
Virtue's honour, earth's admiration,
Chastity's crown, justice' perfection,
Whose train is unpolluted virginity,
Whose diadem of bright immortal fame
Is burnisht with unvalued respect,
Ineffable wonder of remotest lands... [16]

She acted out her role to such perfection that her subjects saw the unseen figure of God reflected in her person. Consequently, she came to be regarded more as a celestial entity that lived, breathed and mixed with mortal man.

Poetry emanated and originated in the Queen's court, and she represented 'the Heavenly muse' herself: Elizabeth was transformed into the fountain and source of all inspiration. Spenser wrote as a perfect courtier:

> *But where shall I in all Antiquity*
> *So faire a patterne finde, where may be seene*
> *The goodly praise of Princely curtesie,*
> *As in your selfe, O soueraine Lady Queene...*[17]

The courtier had a big role to play during Elizabeth's reign. His sometimes not-so-playful deceptions and dissimulations allowed the courtier not only to enliven the court but also to further his own ends, either to cement his position at court or for some other personal favour. The following was Spenser's reminder to the Queen when Lord Burleigh deprived him of his reward (a gratuity of one hundred pounds), which Elizabeth had sanctioned in happiness for some poems written to her:

> *It pleased your Grace upon a tyme*
> *To graunt me reason for my ryme,*
> *But from that tyme until this season,*

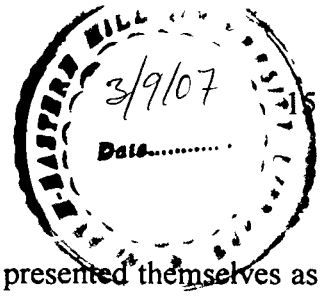
I heard of neither ryme nor reason. [18]

The poem produced the desired effect and the Treasurer was sharply reprimanded for his misbehaviour, and was asked to rectify it.

The manners and behaviours at court were highly affected and very decorous. In the many pageants enacted before the Queen, the sixteenth century courtiers in their ornate costumes and theatrical postures were, in a way, expressing their romantic involvement, assumed or otherwise, with Elizabeth:

O! hopeful love, my object, and invention,
O! true desire, the spur of my conceit,
O! worthiest spirit, my mind's impulsion,
O! eyes transpersant, my affection's bait;
O! princely form, my fancy's adamant,
Divine conceit, my paines acceptance,
O! all in one! Oh, heaven on earth transparent!
The seat of joys and loves abundance! [19]

Through their masculine perspective, the poets tried to define and decipher the indescribable elusiveness that was 'Elizabeth'. As a subject of the female monarch, the poet kept his distance not without letting her know of his complete allegiance to her. But being a woman as well as a virgin, Elizabeth-I became the



object of idealized love. The courtiers, therefore, usually presented themselves as knights of romance in the chivalric tradition. Raleigh writes:

To seek new worlds for gold, for praise, for glory,
To try desire, to try love severed far,
When I was gone, she sent her memory,
More strong than were ten thousand ships of war [20]

The poets Spenser, Raleigh, Sidney, Lyly, Leicester, Essex, Gascoigne and many others were amongst these courtiers. The Royal Court became a platform where they could woo the Queen and catch her attention. And in this game of love-play and word play, the courtier-poets, to reiterate, were not governed by any altruistic tendencies. George Peele gives a graphic and ideal, but very real presentation of the Queen, '*the brightest jewel*' of England and '*the knights she led*'

Under the glorious spreading wings of Fame,
I saw a virgin queen, attired in white,
Leading with her a sort of goodly knights,
With garters and with collars of Saint George:
" Elizabeth" on a compartiment
Of gold in bysse was writ, and hung askew
Upon her head, under an imperial crown.

She was the sovereign of the knights she led. [21]

Court behaviour was a very intricate art. A courtier had to watch his words and actions with care while wooing his beloved. One never knew whether his suit would be spurned, acknowledged or accepted. And when it came to wooing their highly volatile and fickle suzerain, the courtier-poets had to be always circumspect. The courtier had to always put up with the vacillations and mood-swings of his much-loved Queen while pleading his suit. Sir Robert Naunton commented once on Elizabeth's treatment of Raleigh thus:

> "She tossed him up (out) of nothing, and to and fro to greatnesse, and from thence downe to little more than to that wherein she found him a bare gentleman." [22]

It will be a mistake to picture the Queen's relationship with her courtiers as purely platonic. As elaborated later in the thesis, we will see that the poems deal, in some cases overtly, with sensual, sexual and erotic themes and these themes has definite regal suggestions. In the following lines we see Spenser's 'Eliza' clad only in the glory of her own skin:

See, where she sits vpon the grassie greene,
(O seemely sight)
Yclad in Scarlot like a mayden Queene
And Ermines white. [23]

It may have been just wishful thinking on the part of the poet since approaching the Queen to seriously court her openly was something that no soldier of love dared to undertake. The poet was writing what he imagined and fantasized: himself as a knight (Spenser's many knights may be different facets of himself while the Queen's persona seems to be reflected in the different female figures) in shining armour and the Queen, a damsel in distress. And history proves that poets like Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Philip Sidney were Elizabeth's veritable knight-heroes, protecting and safe-guarding her interest. Also, some of the topics dealt in the poems may have been beyond the bounds of reality but no one could stop the poets from dreaming. The poet was courtier, suitor, lover, all rolled into one.

Spenser has written at the beginning of his Book of Courtesy in *The Faerie Queene* thus:

> *Then pardon me, most dreaded Soueraine,*
> *That from your selfe I doe this vertue bring,*
> *And to your selfe doe it returne again:*
> *So from the Ocean all rivers spring,*
> *And tribute back repay as to their King.* [24]

By 'this vertue', Spenser meant courtesy and courtesy implied courtship. And to get the ball of courtship rolling, one had to be well-versed in the art of dissimulation and prevarication. The poets and courtiers achieved perfection in

this art for they did not have to look far for a mentor. The Queen, as role model, was ever present in their midst. The cajoling and wheedling nature of courtly rhetoric can be marked in almost all the Renaissance poems. The following is an example:

Rose of the queen of love beloved;
England's great kings, divinely moved,
Gave roses in their banner;
It showed that beauty's rose indeed
Now in this age should them succeed,
And reign in more sweet manner.[25]

The mental nourishment, which Queen Elizabeth provided her poets, can be gauged from the many poems written of her. The Queen intellectually stimulated Raleigh in the composition of such works as *The Ocean to Cynthia*, which now remains only in fragments totaling about five hundred lines. In the above collection, Raleigh addresses the Queen as a disgruntled lover investing the lines with experiences of undulating emotions – from long-forgotten joys to present despair underlined with an almost religious yearning for hope, for freedom:

She is gone, she is lost, she is found, she is ever fair. [26]

Raleigh's other best-known surviving lyrics, shorter in length, are *The Lie, Nature that washed her hands in milk, Methought I saw the grave where Laura lay* and *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd* (an answer to Marlowe's *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*). Besides the above, Raleigh's contribution in the area of prose-work cannot be overlooked. The pieces include an account of Sir Richard Greville's encounter with the Spanish fleet in *A Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Isles of Acores,* and then we have *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana,* and the unforgettable *History of the World.*

In *The Ocean to Cynthia,* Raleigh talks at length of the disruption of feelings experienced by him because of the glaringly unjust treatment meted out to him by his Queen:

Describe her now as she appears to thee,
Not as she did appear in days fordone;
In love, those things that were no more may be,
For fancy seldom ends where it begun. [27]

Elizabeth, it can be assumed, could not digest the fact that her poet-courtier could feel 'affection' for someone other than herself. Her command to banish Raleigh to the Tower (1592-1595) points to a jealousy which a woman feels of another when she perceives herself threatened, i.e., when the object of jealousy is one and the same. This was in regard to the developing love-affair between Sir Walter Raleigh

and Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting whom the poet clandestinely married. Raleigh wrote to Robert Cecil:

> **"' My heart was never broken till this day, that I hear the Queen goes away so far off, - whom I have followed so many years with so great love and desire, in so many journeys, and am now left behind her, in a dark prison all alone...'."** [28]

The sojourn in the Tower must have been anticlimactic for Raleigh, after having already served the Queen heart and soul for more than a decade. After this episode, the poet passed through a difficult period while trying to be in the good books of the Queen once again. He undertook many expeditions including the one to Guiana but Elizabeth-I had still not forgiven him, probably for slighting her, the Queen, in favour of a mere maids-of-honour.

> **'I have had good experience and trial of this world...I know what it is to be a subject, what to be a sovereign, what to have good neighbours, and sometimes meet evil willers. I have found treason in trust, seen great benefits little regarded.'**[29]

From the above speech of Elizabeth delivered to the parliamentary delegation in 1586 we come to know that the last years of Elizabeth's life and reign were not always politically smooth. In fact, in the 1590's, the Queen witnessed threats of rebellion, internal rivalries between courtiers as well as serious Parliamentary conflicts. But as a monarch Elizabeth was dedicated and unfaltering till her death in 1603. Her cousin, King James VI of Scotland, who united the two nations as King James I, subsequently succeeded her.

Hence, during the reign of Elizabeth-I, England was a country of tremendous ambition, achievement, and promise. She not only gave back internal political and religious stability to her nation in the wake of **"Bloody Mary's"*** reign, but she even directed England's course towards becoming a powerful force among European nations. Both Spain and France felt the effects of England's growing strength and audacity under Elizabeth's rule. Furthermore, Elizabeth shrewdly perceived that she could gain great political mileage from her status as an unmarried monarch, and throughout her reign various political alliances via marriage were hinted at but never finalized

The Renaissance spirit of her reign reached its peak further because of Sir Francis Drake and his circumnavigation of the globe (1577-1580) which added to the nation's prestige and competitiveness in navigation and exploration. However, the pinnacle of England's power at sea was accomplished with the glorious defeat of the mighty Spanish Armada in 1588, which opened the nation's door toward becoming a world power. More than a decade later, in 1599, England entered the arena of world trade and colonization, which it would dominate for the next three hundred years with the chartering of the East India Company.

*('Bloody Mary' was the Mary of the last four years of her life A staunch Catholic Queen in a religiously divided country, Elizabeth's older sister had 283 heretics burned at the stake in a misguided effort to bring England back to the religion that had been her only constant comfort in a life filled with uncertainties Otherwise, Mary was quite affectionate towards the young Elizabeth)

Elizabeth's words therefore rings ominously true:

> **"I may not be a lion, but I am a lion's cub, and I have a lion's heart"[30]**

Elizabeth was an enormously admired monarch, one of modern era's first true cult figures. The following of "Gloriana," or "The Virgin Queen," as she was eulogised, was extensive. According to many writers, her every public appearance became an occasion for grand spectacle, great pageantry, and huge crowds as elaborated later in chapter III.

The accomplishments and spirit of the age can be traced to many sociological and cultural factors, but foremost among these is the leadership of the forceful, resourceful, and shrewd Queen Elizabeth I. Her death marked not only the end of the Tudor line, but of a glorious era in English history.

The Tudor Queen in her last speech in parliament in 1601, known as the **"Golden Speech"** said the following words:

> **'To be a King and wear a crown is a thing more pleasant to them that see it, than it is pleasant to them that bear it. I were content to hear matters argued and debated pro and contra as all princes must that will understand what is right, yet I look ever as it were upon a plain tablet wherein is written neither partility or prejudice. There is no jewel, be it of never so rich a price, which I set before this jewel; I mean your love. Though God hath raised me high, yet this I account the glory of my reign, that I have reigned with your loves. I have ever used to**

set the last Judgement Day before mine eyes, and so to rule as I shall be judged to answer before a higher judge. You may have many a wiser prince sitting in this seat, but you never have had, or shall have, any who loves you better. It is not my desire to live or to reign longer than my life and reign shall be for your good.'[31]

The absolute domination of the female monarch in all spheres of life must have challenged the individuality and identity of the poet-courtier as well as other male courtiers. This in turn must have propelled the poets to portray the ambiguous but varied images of the Queen. Therefore, in the main body of the thesis, attempts has been made to write of Queen Elizabeth's seen and unseen presence in the poems of Edmund Spenser and Sir Walter Raleigh; her relations with other poets of the time in general and the above-mentioned poets in particular. It has also been attempted to critically examine the pivotal role played by the Queen in the life of the poets and how their activities were directly linked to her.

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CHAPTER II

ELIZABETH: The Legend

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"Stories and fables do describe no such..."
('Oracle from a Device',* Robert, Earl of Essex*)

The court was a place for courtship as well as worship and it had only one idol. The focus of reverence was England's 'anointed' Queen, Elizabeth-I. Her court was, if not heaven, then nearest to heaven to the charmed circle flocking around her. The Queen appears to the contemporary reader as nothing less than an enigma and there is a curiosity to go behind all that euphoric account, to attempt to understand the persona behind the queenly mask and to see her from a broader perspective. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to reveal the truth behind the larger than life image projected by Elizabeth herself as well as by her courtier-poets.

Historically, we see in Queen Elizabeth a woman who continued throughout her life the programme she had laid down for herself in the initial years of her reign. This research contends that the formation of this character was significantly affected by her traumatic childhood. Elizabeth learned early that 'life' was another name for 'compromise'. Her personal experiences gathered from the licentiousness of her father, and the fact that it was her own father (Henry VIII) who was instrumental in the execution of her mother (Anne Boleyn) and her mother's cousin (Katherine Howard), must have left her an embittered

soul where marriage and its concomitant conjugality were concerned. Because of her experiences in early childhood, Elizabeth hungered for adoration, for affection, most especially from her father Henry VIII. Historical accounts testify that her childhood days were spent in being in and out of exiles depending on the whims of Henry VIII, her father. Declared as the daughter of a witch (Anne Boleyn), and hated by her older half-sister, Mary, Elizabeth was periodically banished to the Tower, only to be again reprieved by her father. Probably, Henry VIII banished Elizabeth to the Tower because she served as a constant reminder of his guilt (he had ordered for the execution of his second wife, Anne Boleyn). What motive can we see in a king imprisoning his young daughter whom he seemed to hate and love in equal measure? Was it to save her from the ills of court politics, from being poisoned? In not demonstrating his love publicly, did Henry VIII save his second daughter from early death? It will not be wrong to say that the King must have noticed the 'spunk' and sparkling spirit of Elizabeth. He must have compared and contrasted her with his other two ineffectual offsprings, Mary and the young Edward. Whatever the conclusions we draw, of one thing we can almost be certain, the young Elizabeth was starved of love, more importantly fatherly and sisterly love. Brotherly love she acquired from her younger brother Edward though he did not live long, and Catherine Parr, her father's sixth wife proved to be a kind-hearted and loving woman providing her with the much-needed motherly love of which she was deprived off when barely three years old. It becomes relevant to mention here that her insecurity, dissembling nature,

tyrannical love and fickle-mindedness may be better understood when related to these childhood experiences.

The lack of love during her early days was made up in huge measure once she reached her twenties. Her poets and courtiers were not always untruthful: often they were only echoing the sentiments in the hearts of her many loyal subjects:

> *Her face so fair as flesh it seemed not,*
> *But heavenly portrait of bright angel's hue,*
> *Clear as the sky, withouten blame or blot,*
> *Through goodly mixture of complexions due;*
> *And in her cheeks the vermeil red did show*
> *Like roses in a bed of lilies shed,*
> *The which ambrosial odours from them threw,*
> *And gazers' sense with double pleasure fed,*
> *Hable to heal the sick and to revive the dead...*[1]

Elizabeth's reign lasted for forty-four years and four months. The Queen herself may not have had envisaged this even in her wildest imagination. But before being Queen, Elizabeth had to undergo many testing times to protect and safeguard her reputation. She had a difficult time in repulsing the sexual advances of her step-father, Thomas Seymour (Catherine Parr's fourth husband). Elizabeth

then found herself embroiled in one dangerous political plot after another. She was accused as one of the conspirators scheming against Queen Mary's wishes to marry Prince Philip, son of Emperor Charles. Thomas Wyatt who was subsequently beheaded staged this rebellion. Elizabeth's popularity and Thomas Wyatt's declaration of her innocence, as he went to his death on the block, somehow saved her life. With such experiences, this Tudor knew that laws and rulings of justice could not be dispensed with in a haphazard and careless manner. Life had taught her many things very early in life. This young and beautiful Queen, as Spenser charmingly visualizes, arrived at the right time 'to heal' and 'to revive' her people who were 'sick' and being literally dropped 'dead' because of a religion (whether Catholic or Protestant) they did not want. The citizens probably felt that their religion did not warrant so much bloodshed such as that took place during Mary's reign. Hence, their open and joyous welcome of Elizabeth, who did not seem to have any rigid views on matters of faith and religion, to the English throne.

As suggested in the poem below, with her coronation England was blessed with peace and happiness. Elizabeth became the guardian angel whose 'many gifts' transformed the whole atmosphere of her country. Her sensible administration and prudent handling of delicate situations endeared her to many. Diana-like, she symbolised the veritable vessel of purity and integrity:

She giveth laws of justice and of peace:

And on her head as fits her fortune best,

She wears a wreath of laurel, gold and palm;

Her robes of purple and of scarlet dye:

Her veil of white, as best befits a maid:

Her ancestors live in the House of Fame: [2]

An important aspect to keep in mind while attempting an understanding of the image of the Queen put forth by the Elizabethan poets is that Elizabethan poetry was essentially aristocratic and cosmic. Moreover, the many elevated conceptions of the Queen were deliberately encouraged by Elizabeth in order to bring order to potentially disruptive situations (religious and political) faced by England in those times. Elizabeth's society had clear-cut class demarcations. It was a convenient way of inviting and compelling reverence from inferior to superior. As also is the case in that celestial society of God where angels are given preferment according to their hierarchical rank:

They passing by, were guided by degree

Unto the presence of that gracious Queen;

Who sat on high that she might all men see,

And might of all men royally be seen,

Upon a throne of gold full bright and sheen,

Adorned all with gems of endless price...[3]

The poets worshipped Elizabeth with the zealous fervour of a religious fanatic. Her devotees untiringly composed poems glorifying her charismatic reign. Elizabeth-I earned glory not only for herself but also for her knights, especially those whom she favoured. In the letter to Raleigh, Spenser specifically writes:

> **'In that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our sovereigne the Queene, and her kingdom in Faery land-'**[4]

Her poetic worshippers therefore sang many hymns to celebrate her beauty; her Queenly, maidenly and womanly virtues; as well as her power over nature. Elizabeth-I became an 'emblem', an iconic being that had seeped into the minds and thoughts of the Elizabethans:

> *Praised be Diana's fair and harmless light.*
>
> *Praised be the dews, wherewith she moists the ground:*
>
> *Praised be her beams, the glory of the night,*
>
> *Praised be her power, by which all power abound.*[5]

This beautiful Raleigh-lyric confers the Queen of England and her court with glowing accolades. The incantatory verse adds to the magical timelessness of Elizabeth's world. The lyric is deliberately designed to create another-worldliness and to instill unquestioning reverence and subordination in the minds of her subjects. An object of deification Elizabeth-I was far above the ordinary mortal – a queen, a virgin, and a goddess in many forms. Amongst her midst 'crept little angels'[6] and,

> *Seemed those little angels did uphold*
> *The cloth of state, and on their purple wings*
> *Did bear the pendants, through their nimbless bold:*
> *Besides, a thousand more of such as sings*
> *Hymns to High God, and carols heavenly things,*
> *Encompassed the throne on which she state:*
> *She angel-like, the heir to ancient kings*
> *And mighty conquerors, in royal state,*
> *While kings and keisers at her feet did them prostrate.*[7]

Most likely, it was not an easy task for Elizabeth to preserve her independence and identity. Being surrounded by hard-core politicians (some in the garb of harmless courtiers) like Burleigh and trading wits with them must have stretched her cunning charm to the limit. She no doubt tackled some of the male chauvinism and aggression with her 'angelic' disposition. As the above

paragraph suggest, her aim was to surround herself with a galaxy of admirers, which included courtiers and councilors who in turn were surrounded by foreign ambassadors and envoys representing the powers (especially Catholic powers) of the continent. The Queen was the common center, the *prima donna*, coordinating and harmonizing the grand ballet of life. She was the one calling the shots with confident cunning. And this she accomplished by making full use of her feminine wit and beguiling wiles. She was a mysterious woman who was instinctively enigmatic.

The Queen could easily pull the wool over her subjects' eyes by using her charm and position. But again, how much of it was play-acting? As a woman, she must have needed a husband and probably a child- to be loved and to love. Did the love and passion she showered on her subjects and the worship and loyalty they repaid her make up for the martial 'bliss' she had missed? Was there regret and repentance from her side during the fag-end of her life? We can just surmise:

There did she sit in sovereign majesty,
Holding a scepter in her royal hand,
The sacred pledge of peace and clemency,
With which High God had blessed her happy land,
Maugre so many foes which did withstand.
But at her feet her sword was likewise laid,

Whose long rest rusted the bright steely brand:

Yet when as foes enforced, or friends sought aid,

She could it sternly draw, that all the world dismayed.[8]

The love and allegiance that was earlier bestowed upon the church was, during that time transferred to the person of the sovereign. The people could not find unity and peace in the religious turbulence of the time. Hence, Elizabeth started replacing the unseen figure of the divine in her people's mind. The Queen herself had once remarked:

' It is said that I am no divine. Indeed I studied nothing else but divinity until I came to the Crown, and then I gave myself to the study of government...'[9]

It would not be wrong if we say that Elizabeth ruled her realm with a divine dispensation. During her reign of almost half-a-century, the godly Queen was successful in giving her country and her people the unity and continuity that they were craving for so long This accounts for the singular affection, which the people developed for their suzerain Another thing that we can be reasonably sure of is that Elizabeth-I hated even the thought of war. It is not that being a woman she was naturally squeamish. Nonetheless, the unpleasant years before her coronation must have made her extra conscious of the unpredictability and precariousness of her position as a monarch. Her life, as history proves, was

consecrated to her people and therefore the fear of death did not loom large over the mind of this Tudor Queen. The war with Spain had to be fought despite her not wanting to do so because 'foes enforced'[10] it.

It is very difficult to give a definite estimate of Queen Elizabeth's character but a compelling question comes to mind: How did she become such an epoch-making individual? She must have understood very early in life that it was much safer wearing the crown and proving herself and her people worthy of it as soon it was possible. No right thinking person can forget the pall of doom and the lurking fear of death which hanged over the head of this 'heretic' during the reign of her Catholic sister, 'bloody' Mary. Queen Elizabeth came like a 'bright angel' to offer a semblance of peace and happiness to an England discontent both in religion and politics. One can almost sense the Queen's physical presence in Spenser's poem. The latter's insistent emotional imagination and vivid imagery helps in producing the pictorial effect in his poems. Spenser, the poet of chivalry and romance, had to say this of his Queen:

Upon her eyelids many Graces sat
Under the shadow of her even brows,
Working belgardes and amorous retraits;
And every one her with a Grace endows,
And every one with meekness to her bows.

So glorious mirror of celestial grace,

And sovereign monument of mortal vows,

How shall frail pen describe her heavenly face,

For fear, through want of skill, her beauty to disgrace?

So fair and thousand thousand times more fair,

She seem'd, when she presented was to sight;

And was yclad for heat of scorching air,

All in a silken camus lily white... [11]

According to her poets, Elizabeth-I was endowed with heavenly qualities. She was the mirror image of the heavenly graces as the many metaphors on her suggest. This portrayal of the Queen in its many celestial aspects was required in order to add to the beauty, the dignity and aura surrounding the Queen, thus enhancing the people's conception of her. A paragon of perfect virgin 'queenship' to her poets, her fair countenance and demeanour did not leave much room for shortcomings. In fact, she was like a "white lily", spotless and virtuous. Her ministers and counselors tried very hard to maintain her unblemished reputation and any wrong advertently or inadvertently committed by the Queen was quickly covered up, as the order for the killing of Mary, Queen of Scots testifies. In this way, the grandeur and glory of the Queen is kept intact.

The high regard, which the countrymen bore for their Queen, is to many extents justified. We know that when the young Elizabeth came to the throne, the country coffers were empty and England did not possess a military power of which she could be proud. And all around, many powerful and hostile nations were eyeing England as a potential territory. The poet's exaltation of the Queen is therefore not mere exaggeration. To have rescued England from falling into deeper waters was not only commendable but also worthy of praise. At this juncture we cannot forget that Elizabeth was only a young woman of twenty-five though her knights like Walshingham and Burleigh were ever-present guiding, protecting, and stepping on the brakes whenever necessary. They were very solicitous to their queen, bowing and kneeling before her in abject devotion and handling her almost with kid gloves at times.

Whether we call it dynastic propaganda or ritual, the Elizabethan crowd loved glorifying the Queen as a cult figure. Her regular stately progresses to visit old, worn-out castles along with her flamboyantly dressed knights must have been eye-catching and also worth watching. This vision is recorded thus:

All over her a cloth of state was spread,
Not of rich tissue nor of cloth of gold,
Nor of aught else that may be richest red,
But like a cloud, as likest may be told,

That her broad spreading wings did wide unfold;

Whose skirts were border'd with bright sunny beams

Glistering like gold, among the plights enroll'd... [12]

When reading passages like the above we sometimes forget the advanced age of the Queen whom the poets always seemed to picture as evergreen. We realize that Elizabeth's physical beauty had only a peripheral impact on the poets. What they noticed early on was the larger image of the Queen. The heraldic vision of Elizabeth-I as Mercilla in Book V of Spenser's epic, *The Faerie Queene* represents the Tudor queen as a legendary figure: the spiritual transcending the actual. In the above lines, the Royal Lady's canopy of state is pictured as a metaphorical cloud clothing her splendid brilliance. The image is symbolic but Elizabeth did wear richly pleated and priceless garments at court.

Now have we present made

To Cynthia, Phoebe, Flora,

Diana and Aurora,

Beauty that cannot fade.

A flower of love's own planting,

A pattern kept by nature

For beauty's form and stature,

When she would frame a darling.

She as the valley of Peru

Whose summer ever lusteth,

Time conquering, all she mastreth

By being always new. [13]

In the above poem, Raleigh is projecting the cosmic image of his Queen. Elizabeth is seen as to be associated with the moon and its other feminine aliases. She is Cynthia, Phoebe as well as Diana. Her pristine image remained intact throughout her reign. It is unlikely that the magnificence of "this moon" will ever be eclipsed for she had unparalleled power over the oceans, and was reigning over a kingdom which in the future will emerge as a clever and strong nation almost ruling and colonizing the vast world. Like the moon, Elizabeth was constant to the earth (i.e. her realm) and her subjects, shedding the light of her justice and guarding her feminine power. The Tudor Queen is also hailed as the 'Flora', the Queen of Flowers, filling fragrance and beauty into the life of her people. She is again 'Aurora', the Goddess of Dawn bringing hope and succour to her people. Her beauty is such that it can never fade or wither. She is a never fading flower grown and planted in the garden of her people's heart. Their love shaped and gave renewable beauty to her image and reputation. In fact, to her poets, she symbolized perpetual spring.

Elizabeth's virginity sparked off literally a paean of praises from her courtier-poets. Did she deserve all this attention? What can one read in her public declaration of her personal virtue, her spotless maidenhood?

> **'And in the end this shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a Queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin.'[14]**

It is no secret that her virginity became a valuable political asset. The open flaunting of her maidenhead (virginity) may seem to go against her favour but what do we have to say about the abstract idealistic value attached to it. Like earlier times, virgins are worshipped (even sacrificed) and accorded higher respect even today. One could call it the chauvinistic or romantic instinct in man but virgins are honoured and revered almost as saints. With the Reformation therefore we see Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, gradually replacing the Virgin Mother (Mary) in the minds and hearts of nearly all her subjects. The focus of their worship and devotion was for sometime directed to this earthly divinity that had arrived as an answer to all their prayers. The Queen herself had once remarked:

> **'It is said that I am no divine. Indeed I studied nothing else but divinity until I came to the Crown, and then I gave myself to the study of government...'[15]**

The perspective in which Elizabeth desired to be chiefly evaluated is as an upholder of religious peace and harmony As the pivotal center of power, the Tudor Virgin started replacing the unseen figure of the divine in her people's mind Elizabeth, no doubt, stood out amongst the Kings, Queens and religious leaders of her time De Maisse, a Frenchman, had then remarked: ""a great prince, whom nothing escapes ""[16]

During her reign, Elizabeth Tudor was to an extent successful in providing religious harmony and peace to her people. From the very beginning her countrymen expected and hoped that their new queen will fight for the Protestant cause, and which Elizabeth did so but without fostering any religious dissent Her religious temperament allowed her to tolerate the Catholic religion. In her coronation entry to the city of London in 1559, the new queen was compared to the biblical Deborah who, with God's help, has come to save the country from war and persecution

> *In war she, through gods aide, did put her foes to flight,*
> *And with the dint of sworde the bande of bondage brast.*
> *In peace she, through gods aide, did always maintaine right*
> *And judged Israell till fourty yeres were past.*[17]

The Queen's good judgement and happy rule had kept England ('Israell') safe and in peace for more than four decades This same theme, on Elizabeth as an active upholder of peace, was again highlighted during the Queen's visit to Norwich in 1576 Here, Deborah appeared again and told the queen to:

> *Continue as thou hast begun, weed out the wicked rout,*
> *Uphold the simple, meeke and good, pull downe the proud and stout.* [18]

It becomes interesting to speculate on Elizabeth's enigmatic character behind the queenly mask. From all the writings on her, we are made aware that she was a normal human being with flaws. She emerges as a Cleopatra-like person In her study, *The Tudor Women*, Alison Plowden has demonstrated how the Royal Virgin "never lost her eye for an attractive man and enjoyed male company, so long as it was on her own terms "[19] She was, no doubt, successful in tackling any male chauvinism or aggression But how much of it was play-acting? As a woman, did she feel the need of a husband and probably a child? The following words of the Queen appear to speak tellingly of her vulnerability:

> **"Do not upbraid me with miserable lack of children; for every one of you, and as many as are Englishmen, are children and kinsmen to me..."[20]**

The Queen's single state was cause of great anxiety to her nobles. Some critics have put forward the view that Elizabeth remained a spinster out of necessity and not of choice. They opined that this Tudor found out early her inability to conceive. Both Elizabeth and her elder sister Mary were luckless in this regard: one being married and not being able to produce an offspring, and the other remaining unmarried all her life. Mary's many attempts at conceiving when she was married to Philip II, the King of Spain (once she falsely believed herself to be pregnant) bore no fruit. Being a woman, Mary probably could not disguise her pain. What cannot be dismissed is the thought that faced with such a genuine problem, what step would Elizabeth have taken? She did not want to leave anything to chance or be a loser. Elizabeth did not want to venture into unknown and unexplored territory, even if that territory was her body. She had seen the fate of her mother and step-mothers at not being able to produce sons. And even if she had been married and produced one, it was guaranteed that her position as Queen and Monarch would have been shaken. It is a harsh truth that if there is an heir-apparent, be it one's own son or one's own flesh and blood, shifting of loyalties and allegiances automatically ensue. This can happen even in the case of the most perfect of monarchs. It may be another reason why Elizabeth-I stayed away from marriage. We know that till the last, she abstained from naming her successor. Her throne was hers and no one else's, if not for eternity at least till she was alive. She did not want to announce the name of an heir at her own peril. As it is, her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, was a constant thorn in her flesh, time and again

planning and carrying out secret coups to dethrone her. The order for her execution was given as a last resort to safeguard her rule.

> *Some call her Pandora: some Gloriana: some Cynthia, some Belphoebe, some Astraea; all by several names to express several loves.*[21]

With these few words Thomas Dekker has beautifully expressed the people's impression of their Queen. Elizabeth-I was loved, adored and glorified, all in equal measure In order to prove their individual love and admiration for their Queen, Elizabeth's poets and courtiers gave her several names and each name had a special significance depending on the nature of feelings, which the poet-courtier felt for the Queen For Peele, Elizabeth bore many distinguishing characteristics of the higher beings

> *She giveth arms of happy victory,*
> *And flowers to deck her lions crown'd with gold.*
> *This peerless nymph, whom heaven and earth beloves,*
> *This paragon, this only, this is she,*
> *In whom do meet so many gifts in one,*
> *On whom our country gods so often gaze,*
> *In honour of whose name the muses sing;*
> *In state Queen Juno's peer, for power in arms*
> *And virtues of the mind Minerva's mate,*

As fair and lovely as the Queen of Love,

As chaste as Dian in her chaste desires [22]

From the above poem we find that the Tudor monarch symbolized wisdom (Minerva's mate'), love (Venus, the 'Queen of love') and chastity ('Dian') She is also represented as the upholder and protectress of the institution of marriage and as the guardian of women ('Queen Juno's peer'). That Elizabeth was wise is indisputable her more than forty years of rule proves this Many poets have waxed eloquent about her as a symbol of love and chastity this maybe so But that she was a protector of marriage and women does not seem to hold much water There is a probability that in the role of a Queen, she may have advised, when solicited, some of her lady subjects in the matter of safeguarding a marriage But in spite of being a woman Elizabeth kept herself aloof and did not develop much friendship with her kind She understood early that she was safer with men and could interact better with them Her intelligence and wit could be sharpened more in the company of men. Perhaps, she was also instrumental in causing the death of Amy Robsart, her favourite Robert Dudley's first wife. She was a woman and had a woman's jealous instincts. She may not be married to her chief courtiers in the true sense of the term. But courtiers like Sir Walter Raleigh and the Earl of Leicester and many others may have felt like being encased in wedlock when they were in the Queen's court. It is also true that she brought happiness and victory to her country. She was a 'paragon' (her decision to remain

single all her life shows it) endowed with 'many gifts' and hence able to usher in her country into a golden era

Spenser's 'Belphoebe' appears to bear close resemblance to a sensuous temptress

And in her hand a sharp boar spear she held,
And at her back a bow and quiver gay,
Stuft with steel-headed darts, wherewith she quelled
The savage beasts in her victorious play,
Knit with a golden bauldrick, which forelay
Athwart her snowy breast and did divide
Her dainty paps; which, like young fruit in May,
Now littkle 'gan to swell, and being tied
Through her thin weed their places only signified.
Her yellow locks, crisped like golden wire,

About her shoulders weren loosely shed,
And when the wind among them did inspire,
They waved like a pennon wide dispread,
And low behind her back were scattered:
And whether it were art or heedless hap,
As through the flowering forest fast she fled,

In her rude hairs sweet flowers themselves did lap,

And flourishing fresh leaves and blossoms did enwrap.[23]

If Elizabeth is Belphoebe, then this poetic description gives us a picture of a very erotic and womanly queen. The poet has evoked a very beautiful setting where we see the young queen arming herself with bow and arrows in order to subdue her enemies ('the savage beasts'). Spenser also highlights her youthful shape, 'her snowy breast and...her dainty pap', which has just began to swell 'like young fruit in May'. Elizabeth-I was born a redhead though she was in the habit of wearing wigs. The 'yellow locks' in the above poem can be misconstrued as Spenser's ignorance of the real colour of his Queen's hair. Whatever the colour of Elizabeth's hair, the sensuous unfolding of words from the poet's pen is remarkable. The beautiful language with which he has sensuously worshipped the Queen—'In her rude hairs sweet flowers themselves did lap, / And flourishing fresh leaves and blossoms did enwrap'—gives us a glimpse of a sincere devotee chanting praises of his goddess. This is undiluted adoration.

Elizabeth's affair with Robert Dudley took an early start and went on for a very long time. There are those who consider that this affair was never consummated. But, the Queen's constant companionship with Dudley before the pre-coronation period and her promoting this less-than-royally-bred courtier to the high position of Earl after she became queen seems to speak a different language.

At such times, one is led to doubt her image as 'a vestal virgin'. No sooner did she sit on the throne then the question of her successor and hence her marriage cropped up. This issue sat not only on the national conscience but on the international conscience as well. Her councilors were publicly on the lookout for a befitting consort for their Queen, a consort who will look after England's interest as well as bless the Queen with a male heir. The English Queen had a tough time in making her countrymen understand her disinclination towards matrimony. She had more than once told her people that her life was in the hands of God and if He so desires, she is even prepared to taste the marital life. But she prevaricated that until such time comes, until she finds a husband whose love for her country's preservation equals her own, her country's people had to be satisfied with an unmarried Queen. There seemed many a time when in trying to trick her people with her mystifying words; she ended in almost tricking herself. When the pressing issue of her marriage had cropped up, Elizabeth gave this dissembling speech:

> **'...I will never break the word of a prince spoke in public place for my honor's sake, and therefore I say again I will marry as soon as I can conveniently, if God take not him away with whom I mean to marry or myself, or else some other great let happen...'**[24]

And a few words later adds:

> **'... There have been some that, ere this, have said to me they never required more than they once might hear me say I would marry...'**[25]

Having no conjugal obligations and being young when she inherited such absolute power, Elizabeth must have decided secretly to enjoy life in her own way. She must have been sexually attracted to any one (or many) of the dynamic, powerful and handsome men rotating and revolving in orbit around her Sir Francis Walsingham, Sir Walter Raleigh, the Earl of Leicester, Robert Cecil. Sir Christopher Hatton and the Earl of Essex, to name just a few. The soft spot she had for both Leicester and Essex has been directly or indirectly alluded to in a few works of Elizabethan writers. Lyly opens Leicester's heart in the character of 'Endymion' thus:

> *The time was, Madam, and is, and ever shall be, that I honoured your Highness above all the world: but to stretch it so far as to call it love, I never durst. There hath none pleased my eyes but Cynthia, none delighted mine ears but Cynthia, none possessed my heart but Cynthia. I have forsaken all other fortunes to follow Cynthia, and here I stand, ready to die, if it please Cynthia. Such a difference hath the gods set between our states, that all must be duty, loyalty, and reverence: nothing (without it please your Highness) be termed love. My unspotted thoughts, my languishing body, my discontented life, let them obtain by princely favour that which to challenge, they must not presume, only wishing of impossibilities: with imagination of which, I will spend my spirits, and to myself that no creature may hear, softly call it love. And if any urge to utter what I whisper, then will I name it honour.*[26]

The above passage is worth mulling over Elizabeth and Leicester appear to have played the game of hide-and-seek where their love affair was concerned, if there was one In the eyes of Elizabeth's countrymen, Robert Dudley was just a commoner and their Queen should not be entertaining any thoughts of marrying him Dudley, perhaps, had proposed the Queen several times though every time he was rejected. William Cecil had vehemently opposed this match. Therefore, there was always an ever-present friction and antipathy between these two favourites, the left and right hand of the Queen But Elizabeth relished all the attention she received from the opposite sex Her sex became her strength to survive in a man-dominated world By using her female power (her femininity) and sex appeal she managed to manipulate the men who served her and succeeded in making them feel fiercely protective of her She inveigled herself into the hearts and affections of her courtiers with steely resolve without losing her power and prestige Her words to the Venetian ambassador attest this

'My sex cannot diminish my prestige.'[27]

She therefore became a much loved queen, a legend in her own lifetime who could readily assume the many allegorical and mythological roles assigned her by her gallant and chivalrous courtiers, writers and poets. She was the '*Rosa electa*', the chosen rose, the only real love of her people, a female deity who was being referred to as 'Her Sacred Majesty' in Acts of Parliaments by the end of her reign In the passage quoted above from Lyly's *Endimion*, we see the Earl of

Leicester pleading his passion and loyalty to Elizabeth hiding behind the persona of Endymion In all likelihood, the Earl was besotted with his Queen but as implied in the passage, he dare not call it love for the world to see 'Cynthia', i e , Elizabeth, 'delighted' not only his senses ('my eyes' and 'mine ears') but also possessed his heart He is 'ready to die, if it please Cynthia' The vast difference between their positions will always keep them apart Royalty and commoner could never marry It was not politically right We can only conjecture whether thoughts of geneology entered the Queen's mind in her decision to not marry Leicester (if she ever thought of marrying) But the courtier's 'duty, loyalty, and reverence' towards Elizabeth throughout his life speaks volumes of his love After his first wife's (Amy Robsart's) death, he did remarry but that was later in his life when he saw no tangible reciprocation coming from the Queen's side Some Elizabethan critics have written that Robert Dudley was basically a social climber It will be foolish to completely disagree with this view But one must remember that Dudley was a friend to Elizabeth even before she was crowned Queen And it was after being crowned Queen that she created Dudley Earl of Leicester and in which ceremony, it is told, she publicly displayed her affection by tickling her lover's neck But courtiers like Dudley and Raleigh could not disclose their affections openly

those desires that aim too high

For any mortal lover,

When reason cannot make them die,

Discretion will them cover.[28]

For them, 'silence' was 'a suitor'.[29] They could not wear their 'true' hearts on their sleeves. The Queen was 'Cynthia', the moon, whom her subjects could admire and be passionate about from afar but cannot be touched. She was like an immortal being and unapproachable. Her courtiers must have had entertained erotic fantasies of this unattainable lady as the veiled meanings in the poems disclose. Catherine Bates is right when she says that 'being a courtier' and 'playing the lover' came to mean the same thing during Elizabeth's reign. If courtship implied love, then flattery and dissimulation became the language of love in Elizabeth's court. Even if emotions were genuine, spontaneous display of it was not encouraged. The courtiers and silent admirers of the Queen had to either temper or sublimate their desires. This resulted in the elevation and transfiguration of the Queen into a cult, and romantic ideal. In the *Hymnes of Astraea,* Sir John Davies idealizes the Queen thus:

Rudenesse it selfe she doth refine,
Even like an Alychymist divine;
Grosse times of yron turning
Into the purest forme of gold...

In her shall last our State's faire Spring,
Now and for ever flourishing,

As long as Heaven is lasting.[30]

Despite the artificiality and insincerity of the Tudor court and despite the exotic and exaggerated codes of manners, Elizabeth was not cut off from her people. It must have been this very quality, which attracted the people to their sovereign. They saw in Queen Elizabeth the manifestation of Divine Order on earth, as a guardian and upholder of their own secular religion. Poets associated Elizabeth with eternity and beauty. She had the power to appeal to man's immortal mind. Erotic and Christian feelings intermingle in most poems on her. The divine is imaged in the human and the human is imaged in the divine. Elizabeth is represented as a figure linking earth and heaven.

The focus of the Elizabethan entertainment on the queen as an active figure was not confined to the aristocracy. But in courtly entertainments classical and medieval chivalric imagery rather than biblical images were used to present the idea of Elizabeth as a warrior queen. What is worth noting is that in none of the poems do we notice Elizabeth being portrayed as a weak, frail and simpering female. Her portrayals are true to life. Poets loved combining the idea of female militancy with the theme of chastity when depicting the image of the English Queen. To her courtiers, Elizabeth was the reincarnation of the Roman goddess Diana, their royal huntress, armed and well-equipped with the weapons and powers to defend her realm.

Elizabeth's courtiers used her name and position to enact and legitimize their own ambitions of heroic adventure as courtly servants. One such courtier was Sir Walter Raleigh who was a born adventurer. He entered the court of the Tudor monarch in 1575 and was imprisoned briefly in 1577 for allegedly involving himself in a violent quarrel with an influential courtier, Sir Thomas Parrot. He soon found favour in the court once again. His military skills and heroism helped him in the suppression of the Irish rebels in 1580 after which he returned to England. The Virgin Queen recognized his services and was impressed by this splendid and flamboyant personality. Wealth and honours were lavished on him as a trusted admirer and counselor of Elizabeth. He was in favour at the English court for one glorious decade, from 1582 to 1592. Raleigh was also successful in founding a colony in one of his many voyages to America. He named it *Virginia*, after the 'virgin' ruler of England. He was knighted in 1585, in the meanwhile holding many important posts, like Captain of the Queen's Guard, under the English crown. During a sojourn in Ireland, he met Edmund Spenser and both became literary friends. In 1592, the Queen was very offended at his secret nuptial with Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of Elizabeth's maids-of-honour. She herself had favoured him and hence Raleigh was out of her favour again for sometime. Only after he had defeated the Spanish fleet and captured the Spanish city of Cadiz did the Queen relent much pleased at this victory. He was appointed the Governor of Jersey in 1601. But power and glory did not stay long with Raleigh. After Elizabeth's death in 1603, he was implicated in a plot against the

then King (James I) in favour of Arabella Stuart, also a claimant to the throne. He remained in prison for over twelve years, was released, and after many more fatal adventures, to prove himself, was again re-imprisoned and finally cruelly executed on 29th October 1618, an old man already nearing his grave.

Poems like Raleigh's *Ocean to Cynthia* reflect the artificial drama played out by poets and courtiers in the Tudor court with the Queen as the only audience in mind. When any courtier found himself out of royal favour, more often than not, he just had to compose complimentary poems in order to win back the Queen's affection. Further, if one had the gift of the gab and was willing to write and recite poems with servility then a courtier had not much to worry and, in the meantime, we are able to understand the Queen more closely as a legendary character. Therefore, courting and paying court was just a ruse for gaining political mileage and to an extent, sexual stimulation.

'Ladyes are courted for beautye, not for vertue'[31]

This is what Lyly had to say and his sarcasm is not lost on us. Robert Greene is much more cynical. According to him,

> *'It is a Courtiers profession to court to everie dame but to bee constant to none'*[32]

It may have been true in most cases but the love between Elizabeth-I and Robert Dudley seemed to have taken a very fantasy-like turn. These two partners in love apparently immersed themselves in an intricate amorous behaviour by using the love techniques of teasing hints, innuendoes and subtle physical touches. They seemed to have enjoyed an almost perfect emotional communication where hearts and minds are primed to each other. In fact, Dudley was chiefly responsible in elevating the Queen to a cult-figure. He was among the few new aristocrats who started the idealization process.

The Queen did not mind being wooed and courted because she herself was a great wooer. She started her wooing process from the very first day of her reign. The English crowds were utterly smitten by her loving replies and answers during the coronation pageant through London in the 14th of January 1559. Elizabeth had a fondness for martial men. Her relationship with several of her favourites like Robert Dudley, Sir Christopher Hatton and Sir Walter Raleigh prompted a great deal of speculative gossip. In Raleigh's poem 'Walsinghame', we see a devoted courtier-poet praising the impossibly inaccessible ideal that was the Queen:

'As you came from the holy land

of Walsinghame,

Met you not with my true love

By the way as you came?'...

'She is neither white nor brown,

But as the heavens fair,

There is none hath a form so divine

In the earth or air' [33]

In the seventies and the eighties, Raleigh was seemingly inseparable from the Queen. His handsome looks and regal bearing was what made Elizabeth attracted towards him. But this attraction gradually died down. The poem below reveals his disenchantment and disillusionment with the court life as terrifyingly real. Despite having served his Queen for so long, he was deserted at a time when he most needed her:

'She hath left me here all alone,

All alone as unknown

When sometimes did me lead with herself,

And me loved as her own'

'I have loved her all my youth,

But now old as you see,

Love likes not the falling fruit

From the withered tree [34]

Courting became synonymous with the desire for power and authority. The whims and vagaries of the court, established more especially in her relations with her male courtiers, were not just frivolous distractions somehow removed from the serious business of government but the very stuff of power. The Queen's numerous amorous stratagems with her suitors and courtiers cannot be said to be pleasure filled games for mere vanity. One must admit that the political relation between Queen and courtiers was highly sexualized. Courting the Queen was first and foremost a metaphor for the majority of Elizabeth's courtiers. It was as if the courtiers are permanently on the verge of entering a sexual relationship with Elizabeth but this relationship could never actually materialize. The courtship is suspended and arrested at the moment between an offer and an acceptance thus creating and ritualizing the tense drama of social, sexual and political relation that existed between Elizabeth and her male courtiers.

Several poems, court shows and entertainments at this time reveal the figure of a courtier-lover who is compelled to readjust, reinterpret and re-examine his relation to the Queen. He is forced to give a more purified meaning to his physical desire. Men like the Earl of Leicester and the Earl of Essex tried their best to figure out this predicament in their pageants before the Queen. Taking advantage of the very practice of courtship at court, Elizabeth's courtiers not only expressed sensitive issues at court but also tried to manipulate or to advice the Queen on questions of domestic or foreign policy. Another card they tried playing

was how to legitimize sexual desire and handle their subordination to a female ruler. The pageants and entertainments, discussed later in chapter III, basically presented the relation between Queen and courtier in terms of sexual love and passion. Elizabeth took every opportunity that came her way to flaunt her virginity. And she was aided by her courtiers like the Earl of Leicester in the building of this image of an 'untouched' queen. Their life-long friendship and relationship proved advantageous for both. The Queen may have considered Robert Dudley her soul mate but that the latter genuinely reciprocated it is questionable. Many of the writings on Leicester seem to show the picture of a Casanova-like character. His sexual and marital relationships with Amy Robsart, Douglas Howard (Lady Sheffield) and Lettice Knollys (Countess of Essex), all beautiful women, negate the idea of his unswerving love for his Queen. While he was courting or having an affair on the sly with one of them, we find that he was also simultaneously courting the Queen with an apparent devotion. Leicester married the ambitious but beautiful widow Lettice, Countess of Essex, in the spring of 1578 at Kenilworth, the castle that Elizabeth had presented him in 1563 when her very person was ignited with love for the courtier. The marriage, said to be a happy one, took place without the Queen's knowledge. Even Leicester's acting prowess could not save him from the Queen's wrath. He had feigned many an illness in order to escape to his house and manor of Wanstead in Essex where he could visit Lettice for brief spells of 'honeymoon'. As Alison Weir puts forward, by late April Elizabeth found out about his betrayal and it was most

probably because of this that the Queen sent an envoy to France to open negotiations for her marriage to Francis, Duke of Anjou. Leicester stayed away from the Queen and the court for more than two months after his secret marriage. His intention was to give Elizabeth time to adjust to the situation and perhaps make her realize how lonely and alone she would be if she carried out her threat of boycotting him from her life, because the Earl knew that he was Elizabeth's emotional strength. During Leicester's absence from court, another of Elizabeth's favourite, Sir Christopher Hatton, became her scapegoat, her 'punching bag' so to say. She vented all her pent-up anger and frustration on Hatton, apparently emotionally blackmailing him and implying by her words that she would be unable to bear if he should go Leicester's way and betray her by marrying someone else, that too after having sworn undying loyalty to her. She also gave to understand by her words that if things were in her hands she would jump at the chance of marrying him. Hatton, genuinely worried and confused at this state of affairs wrote to Leicester on 18th June 1578:

> "'Since your Lordship's departure, the Queen is found in continual and great melancholy; the cause thereof I can but guess at, notwithstanding that I bear and suffer the whole brunt of her mislike in generality. She dreameth of marriage that might seem injurious to her: making myself to be either the man, or a pattern of the matter. I defend that no man can tie himself or be tied to such inconvenience as not to marry by law of God or man, except by mutual consents on both parts the man and woman vow to marry each other, which I know she hath not done for any man, and therefore by any man's marriage she can receive no wrong. But, my Lord, I am not the man that should thus suddenly marry, for God knoweth, I never meant it.'"[35]

The above passage conveys to some degree Elizabeth's desperation at losing someone she loved. In this instance, the woman in her must have rebelled against the queen in her. She must have at times felt that she had paid a heavy price for the calculated compromise which she had effected in her life, i.e., her single statehood. Hatton's distress and the Queen's feverish reaction at Leicester's betrayal tells us that the Elizabethan court drama of courtship was not simply a theatrical pastime but genuine play of human feelings did also take place. Despite the Earl's desertion, the Queen did not stop waiting for his letters, and for his return. She had reconciled herself to this turn of events by behaving towards Leicester as if nothing had happened. From this period onwards, though Leicester still remained her favourite, a certain degree of coldness had entered their relationship. Elizabeth behaved as if Leicester's unfortunate marriage had not taken place and the Earl played along with this fantasy. The Queen's earlier affection towards her cousin Lettice was now replaced by a deep hatred and she decided not to have anything more to do with her. Though Elizabeth had forgiven him, Leicester realized that life would not be smooth-sailing from now on. Caught in a conflict of loyalty between his wife and his queen, both strong women, he must have wished for a far simpler life. The Queen became more cantankerous after this incident and was more careful when it came to granting favours to Leicester. The latter still continued to shower expensive and unique gifts to Elizabeth; such as the gold clock he presented her at the New Year of 1579, and when she suffered from terrible toothache, it was again Leicester who

sat up all night soothing her and taking care of her. But despite all this, the easy camaraderie and intimacy of the earlier years was lost. Shared private jokes and loving personal messages became very few and far between. Elizabeth also took care to see that Leicester had few opportunities to visit his wife. All these actions of the Queen proves Shakespeare's adage that 'hell had no fury like a woman scorned'. Meanwhile Lettice with the help of her family made sure that Leicester married her for a second time and this time without any secrecy. She also made doubly sure that her husband did not have anything more to do with Douglas Howard and his presumably illegitimate son by her, also named Robert Dudley. Leicester, not willing to face the wrath of his current passion (Lettice) pressurized his earlier wife (Douglas Howard) to deny that they had ever been married. He even arranged a husband for her, a blue-blooded widower who was also a rising courtier named Sir Edward Stafford whose late wife, Rosetta Robsart was a relative of Amy, Leicester's first wife. Though fond of his son, Leicester never acknowledged his legitimacy during his lifetime. No one could guess the exact reason for his silence in this matter. Elizabeth was kept in the dark about this second marriage ceremony to Lettice for obvious reasons.

Thus, the treasure trove of sixteenth century poetry would not have been so beautifully written without the presence of Elizabeth-I. She endeared herself to the people by her sheer magic, charisma and presence. Her subjects adored and admired her and she gradually became a glorified figure. She served her people

more as a common human being rather than a Royal Queen. Her countrywide processions and progresses attest to this fact. Elizabeth's role as muse of poets is dealt with in the forthcoming chapter.

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CHAPTER III

ELIZABETH: Muse of Poets

ELIZABETH: Muse of Poets

"...she the Queen of Muses is..."
(Idea, The Shepherd's Garland,* Michael Drayton*)

The reign of Queen Elizabeth brought about a turning point in the field of literature. Many great literary figures like Edmund Spenser and Sir Walter Raleigh are associated with this era. They were poets who with the strength of their pens achieved numerous accolades not only for themselves but for their Queen as well. This chapter explores the concept of Elizabeth-I as the Muse of Poetry. Elizabeth was an inspiring force, a veritable vessel of learning herself. Her knowledge of Latin, Greek, Spanish, French and the Italian language left many scholars of the time speechless. She made sure that the talent (for poetry and the arts) of her people did not go to waste. She fulfilled the ambitions of many of her subjects like Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, and the Earls of Essex and Leicester, to name only a few. She acceded to their desires to go to the sea and fight the battles and wars for her country with poise and equanimity, with confidence in herself and in her people. For her poets, the majestic Queen and her circle of able and capable courtiers and knights itself were the source and material for their poems. Their daring escapades and the fanfare with which they treated their magnificient queen is recorded for posterity in their works. There must have been many things that the poets wanted to say but were left unsaid because of political and social constraints.

The court was a major institution that dominated sixteenth century poetry. As Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, had written, "'the Court measured the temper and affection of the country'"[1] of the time. And the Elizabethan poet became the blatant spokesman for the Court celebrating its values, ideals and varied activities. Poetry was one of the medium by which a courtier could gain access to the Queen. Her court became not only the seat of power but also of cultural dominance. Michel Foucault (as cited in Gary Waller's *English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century*, Longman, London and New York, 1986, p.14) views the sixteenth century court as a place where "'power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.'"[2] And Queen Elizabeth-I was the source of this power, and as suggested by many, the center of all the poetry. Spenser, her chief poet, writes:

At last yledd with farre reported praise,
Which flying fame throughout the world had spred,
Of doughtie knights, whom Faery land did raise,
That noble order hight of Maidenhead,
Forthwith to court of Gloriane I sped,
Of Gloriane great Queene of glory bright,
Whose kingdomes seat Cleopolis is red,
There to obtaine some such redoubted knight,

That Parents deare from tyrants power deliver might.[3]

The poet talks about the spreading fame and popularity of England's Elizabeth-I whose dynamic rule was enhanced further by the presence of brave and daredevil knights. Her kingdom is compared to 'Faery land' where she served, supervised and inspired her people as Gloriana, the Virgin Queen. 'Cleopolis' in the above poem signified London, the center of power, to which many of the Queen's would-be courtiers and poets flocked, seeking for an introduction with the female monarch. We see Spenser's Red Cross Knight hastening towards Cleopolis looking for another knight to help him out from the power of 'tyrants'. Attention can be drawn at this point to England's Order of the Garter whose head is the Virgin Queen. The knights' collar and ribbon (their insignia) display a figure of St George killing the Dragon and their star is the Red Cross. Many daring and knightly courtiers like Walsingham, as we know, peopled Elizabeth's court. Being the seat of power, her subjects (mostly councilors, merchants and foreign ambassadors) naturally directed themselves here looking for avenues for advancement. Decisions were made and unmade here. Courtiers and statesmen, ambassadors and suitors many a times had left the Queen's court (i.e., 'Cleopolis' or city of fame and glory) to fight wars like the war of Cadiz or to attack enemy forces like the Spanish Armada. Some like Anjou's 'love'-ambassador, the French, Jean de Simier and the Duke of Anjou himself had arrived and left Elizabeth's court playing their part in the Queen's love-game, and

some had left the English shores taking the image of a holy and heavenly queen in their hearts.

The poetry of the age was almost entirely the germination and product of some members of the upper strata of society like the aristocracy, the landed gentry and ambitious men who left their fathers' profession to experience University life and who were also looking at avenues to climb up the social ladder, depending largely on the system of patronage. Raleigh, Spenser and Peele can be cited as examples. Therefore, hidden interplays of power that structured the society are at work in the poems. The Virgin Queen was an institution in itself. We cannot minimalise her majestic hauteur and the glamour with which she commanded obedience. Her instinctive and astute grasp of political realities added with her ability to work hard (she regularly attended the meeting of the Privy Council) made her accomplish the most impossible task of reigning over England for forty-five long years.

Her words were like a stream of honey fleeting,
The which doth softy trickle from the hive,
Able to melt the hearer's hearts unweeting,
And eke to make the dead live again alive.
Her deeds were like great cluster of ripe grapes,
Which loads the branches of the fruitful vine,

Offering to fall into each mouth which gapes,

And fill the same with store of timely wine.

Her looks were like beams of the morning sun,

Forth looking through the windows of the east,

When first the fleecy cattle have begun

Upon the pearled grass to make their feast.

Her thoughts are like the fumes of frankincense,

Which from a golden censer forth doth rise,

And throwing forth sweet odours, mounts fro thence

In rolling globes upto the vaulted skies.

There she beholds, with high aspiring thought,

The cradle of her own creation,

Amongst the seats of angels heavenly wrought,

Much like an angel in all form and fashion...[4]

In the above lines, Spenser uses the language of a courtier to pour forth the endless virtues of his Queen. The language of poetry reflected the language of the court, which was the cultural and literary hub in those times. When reading the works of Spenser and Raliegh, we come to know about the enormous power, which the court and the patronage system exerted over the language and matter. By composing lines like the above, Spenser wanted to make a place for himself in the very elite inner circle of the Queen's. Poets like him sought patronage,

especially in the way of finance, not only from their monarch but also from any rich gentleman or lady. Lord Grey and the Countess of Pembroke were two others who offered their patronage to Spenser. Hence, it worked both ways, i.e., both patron and poet achieved benefits out of this arrangement. Richard Green rightly called such poets "'*patrons and prince pleasers*'"[5] but Spenser as Colin Clout does talk of the Court and its princely inhabitants in a somewhat disparaging manner despite the fact that the Queen and the court had made him richer in the way of wealth and prestige. In reply to Thestylis' thought-provoking question about Colin's return from Cynthia's court to pastoral land, '*Why didst thou ever leave that happie place,... ?*'[6]. Spenser using the shepherd as his mouthpiece remarks that he left the court because it violated the Christian virtues of charity and sharing, *'each one seeks with malice and with strife, To thrust downe other into foule disgrace.'*[7]

English society during this time was divided into three classes. The rich and the royalty lived on inherited wealth. And there were those, chiefly the poets and those aspiring to be courtiers, who lived on patronage. The rest which constituted the majority belonged to the poorer and hence, weaker sections of the society. Elizabethan poets like Spenser and Thomas Churchyard were financially weak. Career options being limited, they had no other way but to seek favour and rewards from the high echelons of society, the court and its patrons. And favour did not come for free. Poets therefore composed poems and songs in honour of

their patrons. Spenser dedicated his *Faerie Queene* to Queen Elizabeth-I and for this he was paid a handsome reward. In a sense, these poets became flatterers and sycophants and as such the genuineness of their poems could be doubted. One should however not forget that the times were like that. It was out of necessity and not of choice that writers like Robert Greene, Nashe and Dekker took up this profession. Thomas Churchyard's letter to Lord Chancellor Christopher Hatton poignantly bring home to us the miserable plight of men who were at the mercy of patrons:

> "'I know it is miserable to crave, servitude to receive, and beggarly to want.'"[8]

Book VI of *The Faerie Queene* was published a year after *Colin Clout.* By using Colin as his pastoral persona, Spenser is most probably presenting a completely different picture of his regal queen. Investing the Queen with an unnatural eroticism and in a dream-like situation, the poet was trying to draw a parallel between Elizabeth (who can be taken as the fourth grace) and the other three graces on Mount Acidale. The motive may have been for private recreation or for glorifying the hitherto hidden eroticism of the Queen. The stanzas below read more like epiphanic moments, which the poet may have experienced in the privacy of his dreams. Otherwise the dance and rituals of the maidens in the enclosed garden of personal intimacy could not have been depicted so blatantly by any poet of the time without inviting the ruler's wrath. Spenser writes:

Such were those Goddesses, which ye did see;

But that fourth Mayd, which there amidst them traced,

Who can aread, what creature mote she bee,

Whether a creature, or a goddesse graced

With heavenly gifts from heven first enraced?

But what so sure she was, she worthy was,

To be the fourth with those three other placed:

Yet was she certes but a countrey lasse,

Yet she all other countrey lasses farre did passe....

Another Grace she well deserves to be,

In whom so many Graces gathered are,

Excelling much the meane of her degree;

Divine resemblaunce, beauty soveraine rare,

Firme Chastity, that spight ne blemish dare;

All which she with such courtesie doth grace,

That all her peres cannot with her compare,

But quite are dimmed, when she is in place.

She made me often pipe and now to pipe apace.

Sunne of the world, great glory of the sky,

That all the earth doest lighten with thy rayes,

Great Gloriana, greatest Maiesty,

Pardon thy shepheard, mongst so many layes,
As he hath sung of thee in all his dayes,
To make one minime of thy poore handmayd,
And underneath thy feele to place her prayse,
That when thy glory shall be farre displayd
To future age of her this mention may be made.[9]

Elizabeth was able to create a god-like aura for herself. Her poets and subjects were most of the time unsure as to what image she would most likely fit in. Despite being a self-declared Virgin (see chapter II, p.40), a cause of attraction in itself, the poems on her seemed to highlight a very feminine lady as well as a *femme fatale*-like nature. Its no wonder that Sixtus V, the Counter-Reformationist too had his eye on her, "'*Just see how well she governs!*" he was said to have exclaimed. "*She is only a woman, only a mistress of half an island, and yet she makes herself feared by Spain, by France, by the Empire, by all... Our children would have ruled the whole world*"'.[10] The above stanzas read more like epiphanic moments, which the poet may have experienced in the privacy of his dreams. Otherwise the dance and rituals of the maidens in the enclosed garden of personal intimacy could not have been depicted so blatantly by any poet of the time without inviting the ruler's wrath.

Queen Elizabeth injected life and enthusiasm in her people. She was the goddess of Spring (representing evergreen youthfulness) inspiring a spring of

devotion. She was a model of Platonic chastity, a force of unity and divinity whose strength and uprightness of character her poets and courtiers never tired of praising:

Praised be her nymphs, with whom she decks the woods,
Praised be her knights, in whom true honour lives,
Praised be that force, by which she moves the floods,
Let that Diana shine, which all these gives.

In heaven Queen she is among the spheres,
In ay she Mistress-like makes all things pure,
Eternity in her oft change she bears,
She beauty is, by her the fair endure.

Time wears her not, she doth his chariot guide,
Mortality below her orb is placed:
By her the virtues of the stars down slide:
In her is virtue's perfect image cast.

A knowledge pure it is her worth to know,
With Circes let them dwell, that think not so.[11]

Sir Walter Raleigh, the writer of the above poem, seemed to have fashioned his life according to the needs of his age. The chapters of his life read like a love and adventure story with all the ingredients of passion, heartache, betrayal and reconciliation. This real drama took place in two main venues-the Court and the Tower. The above poem celebrates Elizabeth as divine figure and inspiration. To a great extent, Elizabeth herself imposed the Queen's image of divinity in the minds and hearts of her people. This is another reason why Elizabethans worshipped the Queen with a deeply religious fervour. Most of the tributary pageants and poems of this time show pictures of the Queen as a divine icon. Love and loyalty for the Queen inspired the poet to compose the celebratory poem cited above. He not only lauds the virtues of the female monarch but also the circle of courtiers ('knights') who with 'true honour' were ever ready to die fighting in order to protect their Queen. The timelessness and perfection of her 'beauty' is stressed. She lived outside time. In fact, the poet accords her a place in the immutable world where time does not leave its scars on her and death ('mortality') is kept at abeyance. One is enriched in the sacred presence of such absolute perfection. Elizabeth's courtiers could never disagree openly with this conception of their queen and anybody deigning to do it would be doing so at pain of death. Raleigh, the manly poet and dashing knight, had to be extra careful in guarding his spontaneous tongue. He may have at times exerted immense self-control to curb his thirst for daredevil actions. Raleigh was a man of composite attributes. Basically, a man of action, Raleigh was also academically inclined. He

evinced interest in mathematics, cosmography and chemistry. He made his name to fame with his *History of the World.* Besides being a historian, he was also a poet and politician. All his writings in the different fields reflect the man that was Raleigh and his very personal views and opinions about his life, his Queen and his courtier-friends and foes. The psychological pressures and the depressive tendencies in the nook and corner of his life and career are visibly represented in his works, especially the poems. He candidly records the struggle and play of power that motivated life in the court of Elizabeth I:

> *Our passions are most like to floods and streams;*
> *The shallow murmur, but the deep are dumb.*
> *So when affections yield discourse, it seems*
> *They that are rich in words must needs discover*
> *That they are poor in that which makes a lover.*[12]

The unpredictability of power and the instability of human character were two main causes enabling poetry to thrive in the Elizabethan court. And power and fickleness of character combined most potently and importantly in the Queen who was subjected to many moods. Significantly, a little known aspect of the Queen was her poetic ability. She too reflected in her writings the Petrarchan attitude to courtly love. Like a veritable Petrarchan mistress, Elizabeth writes:

When I was fair and young and favour graced me,

Of many was I sought their mistress for to be.

But I did scorn them all and answered them therefore,

Go, go, go, seek some other where,

Importune me no more.

How many weeping eyes I made to pine with woe,

How many sighing hearts I have no skill to show,

Yet I the prouder grew, and answered them therefore,

Go, go, seek some other where,

Importune me no more. [13]

She again writes:

My care is like shadow in the sun,

Follows one flying flies when I pursue it,

Stands and lies by me, doth what I have done,

His too familiar care doth make me rue it.

No means I find to rid him from my breast,

Till by the end of things it be suppress.[14]

These poignant lines written by the Queen probably records the pain she experienced as a woman, and whose love and passion her courtiers like the Earl of Leicester and Essex could not understand.

Queen Elizabeth gave a new meaning to the term 'courting' which became a highly complex game during her reign. The Renaissance poets, therefore, dealt extensively with this particular aspect of sophisticated and artistic life, this prolonged social game of proposition and response, of debt and gratitude, of losing and winning which the poets played with the Queen as their chief playmate.

Raleigh and Essex had entered Elizabeth's court around the same time in the 1580s. Their initial friendship turned sour out of jealousy for the aging Queen's affections and before long Raleigh had joined hands with Essex's enemies, William Cecil and his son, Robert Cecil. The flamboyant Raleigh had in the meantime become the Queen's favourite. It was because of the strength of his personality that he survived in the glittering and dangerous world of the Elizabethan court. Like a veteran actor he successfully played out the multiple roles of statesmen, courtier, sea-adventurer, monopolist (of wool and wines), colonist and poet to near-perfection. Raleigh had a brusque character and was not an easy man to love. He was sometimes blunt to the point of rudeness but guarded his tongue ('complaints') and temper when dealing with influential figures like

the Queen and Leicester, his fellow-courtier. Sometimes, he used poetry as a definite means of advancing himself. We can see Raleigh's passion and personality vividly emerging in his poems:

Wrong not, dear empress of my heart,
The merit of true passion,
With thinking that he feels no smart,
That sues for no compassion;
Since, if my plaints serve not to prove
The conquest of your beauty,
It comes not from defect of love,
But from excess of duty.

For knowing that I sue to serve
A saint of such perfection,
As all desire, but none deserve,
A place in her affection,
I rather choose to want relief

Than venture the revealing;
Than venture the revealing;
When glory recommends the grief,
Despair distrusts the healing .

Silence in love bewrays more woe,

Than words, though ne'er so witty;

A beggar that is dumb, ye know,

Deserveth double pity.

Then misconceive not (dearest heart)

My true, though secret passion,

He smarteth most that hides his smart,

And sues for no compassion.[15]

Further, it is difficult to separate Raleigh the poet and Raleigh the courtier from his poems. The passionate lyrical poetry, which this gallant adventurer wrote, is the outcome of the power politics that was at play in Elizabeth's court. Poets and poetry were in a way means of enhancing the glamorous image of the Queen and her reign. Language and subject matter of the poems was restricted and controlled. Dispraise of the ruler and her reign was dealt with in a severe manner. Therefore, poems in praise of the Queen sometimes hid the frustration and unmanly powerlessness of poets like Raleigh. This is a case of power controlling upon the language. In the above poem, the poet says that his deep passion for the Queen has made him tongue-tied. As a poet, he may be 'rich in words' but falls short of being a good lover. His capacity for expression failed him at a time when he most needed it. He therefore pleads before the Queen ('dear empress of my heart') not to misconstrue his 'true passion'. The intermingling of compliment and

complaint is a typical characteristic of Raleigh's poetry. It is also a typical lover's attitude. Elizabeth was the mistress of her kingdom as well as the mistress of Raleigh's heart. The latter was once upon a time the Queen's prime favourite. The emotional attachment that grew between the monarch and courtier-poet must have been hard to miss. Love and duty bounded him to the Queen. Raleigh was probably the one man who did not hide his genuine sentiments under a cloak of artificiality. He was a person who called a spade a spade. Compared to other courtiers, he seems to be definitely less ingratiating. His poems reflect a man shaped by the experiences and circumstances of his life. A passionate man of action and prone to involuntary depressions, Raleigh resembles more a Shakespearean tragic hero rather than an Elizabethan courtier slavishly serving the Tudor Queen. The pose of abject servility of some of the courtiers must have irritated the expressive but melancholic Raleigh to some extent. He felt that none of these courtiers 'deserve, /A place in her affection'. Why does the poet-adventurer say this? Was Raleigh voicing out his alarm and fears at seeing the hypocrisy and ingratitude of the other courtiers towards their royal benefactress? He must have belatedly and bitterly realized the rottenness that lied beneath the beautiful and glamorous exterior of the court, that his 'saint' of 'perfection' was being served not by true worshippers but by fake devotees offering their praises and compliments as bribes to further their personal interest. Raleigh decides to detach himself from this group of self-seekers but he will continue to serve his heart's 'dear empress' in silent love and loyalty. He may not be able to express his

love for the Queen but that does not mean that he loves her less. In fact, 'silence in love bewrays (exposes, reveals or betrays) more woe, / Than words'. Love has unsettled his heart and emotions. It has thrown him into a quagmire of agony and despair. Comparing his present situation to a dumb beggar, Raleigh seems to imply that he will be satisfied with the Queen's pity if he cannot gain her love. The poet also pleads that his silence should not be misunderstood as anything else but his suppressed pain which is aggravated because he has neither voiced out his feelings nor appealed for his beloved's 'compassion'.

Therefore, the life of a courtier was decidedly theatrical and to a great extent artificial. But behind this theatricality and artificiality lurked genuine emotions and grievances wanting redress. A tremendous degree of power play was enacted in the Elizabethan court. The person who wielded power automatically achieved recognition and wealth. The struggle in the Elizabethan poet's poem reveals the struggle and survival of the Elizabethan courtier in the theatre of Elizabeth's court. Also, blood and lineage mattered a lot to the English Queen. She may not have been exactly voluble about it but we cannot miss the fact that Raleigh was never promoted to the Privy Council despite serving the Queen and country with diligence, sincerity, enthusiasm and circumspection. He was not considered suitable to hold the position of a statesman. In modern parlance, we can say that Raleigh was a self-made man. We cannot refute Sir Robert Naunton's statement that:

> ' " if ever man drew vertue out of necessity, it was he, and therewith was he the great example of industry..." '. [16]

Thus, a close reading of the accounts of Raleigh reveals a different facet of his character - of a man who dared to carve out his own destiny unmindful of life's hardships and old age, always thinking first of his country and his Queen. He was also a courtier who was not blind to his Queen's faults. Raleigh married at age forty when Elizabeth was about sixty years old. The sovereign realized that she would now no longer be the focus of his attention. The cold-shoulder meted out to Raleigh led him to the Tower for sometime. Imprisoned in his thoughts, the poet bemoaned his sad plight and in a letter addressed to Robert Cecil wrote thus:

> **' " while she (the Queen) was yet near at hand...my sorrows were the less...I that was wont to behold her riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, walking like Venus, the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks, like a nymph; sometime sitting in the shade like a goddess; sometime singing like an angel,..."'.** [17]

Loyal and devoted courtiers like Raleigh were tossed here and there like inanimate objects depending on the moods and whims of their sovereign. His relation with the Queen at court so influenced his entire personality that he truly came to believe in the self-posturing and roles he assigned himself: as lover, knight, protector, and servant of his royal mistress. In the above letter to Robert Cecil, we see Raleigh transmuting the Queen's image to a higher plane. She is

compared to Alexander, Diana, Venus, a nymph, a goddess and an angel, and all just in one sentence. Despite the tragic circumstances in which he was placed the poet-courtier left no room in his heart for harbouring ill feelings towards his Queen-regnant. His only misdemeanor, if it can be called so, was his act of candidly opening his heart out in his poems and other writings. It was a way of purging his emotions. And the one responsible for the sweltering of emotions in his heart was none other than his 'Cynthia'; Elizabeth I. Raleigh probably composed his poems for its therapeutic effect. Writing unburdened his churning emotions.

Sufficeth it to you, my joys interred,
In simple words that I my woes complain,
You that then died when first my fancy erred,
Joy under dust that never live again.

If to the living were my Muse addressed,
Or did my mind her own spirit still inhold,
Were not my living passion so repressed
As to the dead the dead did these unfold,

Some sweeter words, some more becoming verse,
Should witness my mishap in higher kind;
But my love's wounds, my fancy in the hearse,
The idea but resting of a wasted mind,

The blossoms fallen, the sap gone from the tree,
The broken monuments of my great desires;
From these so lost what may th' affections be?
What heat in cinders of extinguished fires?

Lost in the mud of those high-flowing streams,
Which through more fairer fields their courses bend,
Slain with self-thoughts, amazed in fearful dreams,
Woes without date, discomforts without end,

From fruitful trees I gather withered leaves,
And glean the broken ears with miser's hand,
Who sometime did enjoy the weighty sheaves;
I seek fair flowers amid the brinish sand.

All in the shade, even in the fair sun days,
Under those healthless trees I sit alone,
Where joyful birds sing neither lovely lays,
Nor Philomen recounts her direful moan.

No feeding flocks, no shepherds' company,
That might renew my dolorous conceit,
While happy then, while love and fantasy
Confined my thoughts on that fair flock to wait;

No pleasing streams fast to the ocean wending,

The messengers sometimes of my great woe;

But all on earth, as from the cold storms bending,

Shrink from my thoughts in high heavens and below.[18]

In the stanzas above Raleigh adopts a typical Petrarchan lover's stance. Deserted by his beloved (Elizabeth), Raleigh is proclaiming that he is now forced to live a reclusive life. He has buried ('interred') all his 'joys' in order to be able to air his 'woes'. Happiness will not cross his path again. It has been trampled for good. The Queen is no more receptive to his desires because her feelings for her once favourite are now dead. The poet therefore contemplates another thought-what if he addresses his poetry 'to the living,' to someone who understood his suffering, his human limitations. But then another doubt consumes him-whether thoughts and impressions of the Queen will ever leave him. The poet could still sense her 'spirit', her disembodied presence around him. And all his 'living passion' has resurfaced again because of the very fact that it had been deeply 'repressed' or buried like 'the dead'. What Raleigh in most likelihood seems to imply is that just as there is life after death, or as some believe, rebirth after the first death, so also was the case with regard to his suppressed feelings and passions. In the above stanzas, which are taken from his poem, *Ocean to Cynthia,* Raleigh opens out the floodgates of his emotions revealing meanwhile the truth that he has all along been keeping from himself that his beloved 'Cynthia' was

even now the sovereign of his heart that has not been his demesne for a long time. The poet is hoping that his superiors ('higher kind') will notice his run of bad luck and his misfortunes lessened. He surmises that this miracle could be possible if he somehow manages to compose 'some sweeter words, some more becoming verse'. Again, all these thoughts seem to have no solid base. It is the outcome of an overworked and 'wasted mind'. In fact, love has turned him into a mental wreck. His imagination, which is dead, is only left to be buried. Lack of peace of mind and mental turmoil and agony is the reward he received for loving his beloved 'Cynthia', i.e., the Tudor Queen. As of now there is no more vigour and strength left in the poet (symbolized by 'the tree'). His reputation and his spirit have sunk very low that they serve just as reminders, as 'broken monuments' of his 'great desires'. The poet seems to be searching for escape routes to come to terms with this dismal pit of feelings. Can the 'heat' of his love be rekindled from its dying embers is the question Raleigh seems to be asking himself.

The poem enlightens us to the fact that during his period of goodwill with the Queen, Raleigh had enjoyed his life with passion and adventurous zeal. His nostalgic feelings trail into unhappiness when dismal thoughts of the present attack him like the stabbing of a knife. Enclosed in the prison of his woeful thoughts the poet appears to be striving hard to maintain his sense of balance, of sanity. His idol (Elizabeth) had deserted him for someone else but despite this she remains his inspiration. Though the thoughts that flow from his pen now are

sorrowful and heartbreaking. The poet talks of the time when he was sidelined and his reputation was under clouds and laments thus: '...even in the fair sun days, / Under those healthless trees I sit alone...' Even while he was again in the good books of his royal icon enjoying power and prestige, he felt alone and segregated and could trust no one. It was a period when all his senses were closed feeling neither joy nor sorrow over things. The present situation in the poem speaks of those earlier days. No friend, no fellow poet could lift him from his sorrowful mood. He could see no confidant who would be able to boost his shattered confidence. During his happy times, 'love and fantasy' occupied his thoughts offering him fulfillment and hope. But as of now only unhappiness and bad news has become his lot. In a sense, he is bewildered with confusing and tumultuous thoughts of heaven and earth.

Her regal looks my rigorous sighs suppressed;
Small drops of joys sweetened great worlds of woes;
One gladsome day a thousand cares redressed.
Whom Love defends, what fortune overthrows? [19]

Poems like the above may sound overweening to some ears but the Elizabethan times were like that. Van Meteren, the Dutch historian who had resided in London remarks on his unfavourable view of the Elizabethans thus:

> "'They are full of courtly and affected manners, which they take for gentility, civility, and wisdom.'"[20]

But for personalities like Queen Elizabeth, Raleigh, Walsingham and other Elizabethans such verbosity and affected manners suited them. Normal behavioral patterns would not have matched the aura surrounding them. Raleigh's depiction of the Queen's regal bearing and its effect on the courtiers appears to be very real. Elizabeth's mere presence could remove all his sorrowful feelings and just a potent look from her royal eyes was enough to lift his sagging spirits. She had a powerful effect on her courtiers and some lucky subject occasionally and suddenly found his 'thousand cares redressed' one fine day when his beloved Queen was in a generous mood. Raleigh therefore opines that when the Queen's love is with you no ill-fortune or bad luck can prowl around loyal courtiers like him.

It is hard to imagine a monarch, till date, who has been eulogised and glorified to such an extent as Queen Elizabeth. Many transfigurations of the Queen are recorded in Elizabethan poetry. It is found that her poets left no stone unturned to magnify the virtues and assets of their suzerain delving deep into the myths and legends of yore. In *The Faerie Queene*, his classic creation, Spenser assigns her with two specific tributary titles: As Queen she was Gloriana, and in her private person (for her Virginity) Belphoebe. In the 'Letter to Raleigh' Spenser had written of Elizabeth thus:

'...she beareth two persons, the one of a most royal Queene or Empresse, the other of a most virtuous and beautiful Lady...'.[21]

She likewise appears in several prototypes: She is referred to as Eliza, Queen of Shepherds, Tanaquill for her Learning, Mercilla for her Mercy, Cynthia for her poetic powers, and Una for her Truth. Elizabeth even atttracted the epithets of the Virgin Mary: as Rosa Electa (i.e., chosen by God, especially for eternal life) and Virgo Beata (meaning, beatified or blessed virgin). Fulke Greville describes her stately aspect and universal appeal:

Under a throne I saw a Virgin sit,
The red and white rose quarter'd in her face;
Star of the North, and for true guards to it,
Princes, Church, States, all pointing out her grace.
The homage done her was not born of wit,
Wisdom admir'd, zeal took Ambition's place,
State in her eyes taught Order now to fit
And fix confusion's unobserving race.
Fortune can here claim nothing truly great,
But that this princely creature is her seat.[22]

The above passage amplifies the impression, which Elizabeth created in the imagination of her poets.

The role of Elizabeth, however, was not just that of the inspirer but also of the inspired. Personalities such as Sir Walter Raleigh and the Earl of Essex were distinguished courtiers and brave knights who, in return, apparently inspired and ennobled the Queen with astounding acts of valour - exploring the New World, defeating the Spanish Armada, to name just a few. There seems to be a ring of truth in Dryden's statement that the original of every one of Spenser's Knights was then living at the court of Queen Elizabeth-I. Perhaps, what the poets and courtiers were therefore doing "was imitating the queen who practised... artistic self-fashioning on the grandest scale."[23]

Elizabeth created a powerful impression not only in the mind of her people but also all over Europe. The charisma and charm of her youth remained intact even in old age. She retained her dignity, and her wit and intelligence, in fact, sharpened more with the passing years. Paul Hentzner, a foreign visitor, describes the Queen, as she looked a day before her sixty- fifth birthday, i.e. on 6th September 1598. Elizabeth appeared

> " ' very majestic: her face oval, fair but wrinkled, eyes small but dark and pleasant; nose a little hooked, lips thin, her teeth black... her stature neither tall nor low, her air was stately, mild and obliging. As she went along in all this state and magnificence she spoke very graciously first to one, then to another, in English, French, and Italian. Whoever speaks to her, it is kneeling; now and then she raises some with her hand. Whenever she turned her face as she was going along, everybody fell down on their knees.' "[24]

And all this display of slavish and lavish affection for the Queen became almost ritualistic and we sense this palpable feeling, this atmosphere in the poems of Spenser and Raleigh.

Queen Elizabeth loved being the cynosure of all eyes. She expected her poets and courtiers to dance to her tune at every flip of her fingers. She looked for undivided attention especially from her favourites. Family and love life of some of her courtiers were therefore badly affected:

To call me back, to leave great honour's thought,
To leave my friends, my fortune, my attempt,
To leave the purpose I so long had sought
And hold both cares and comforts in contempt.[25]

Like other favourites Raleigh too seems to have been at the beck and call of the Queen who had expected her courtiers to jump to her attention at every drop of the hat no matter what difficulties they were in. In the above lines, the poet seems to be disclosing the fact that often a courtier's genuine personal aspirations in life had to be sacrificed to attend to the Queen's summons. Elizabeth was a very demanding taskmistress. She did not show due concern to some of her subject's grievances. What mattered to her at most times was firstly the progress of her

country as a whole and secondly herself. The very human dilemmas of the common courtier were given a backseat. In the process, poets like Spenser and Raleigh were left with no option but to resign themselves to such situations. The latter, a true and loyal subject of Elizabeth was compelled 'to leave my friends, my fortune... the purpose I so long had sought...' In serving his royal mistress his 'cares and comforts' had to take a secondary place. His very human troubles like his time away from his family and the long and tedious years spent in prison were his rewards for loyally serving his monarch. But Raleigh seems not to be complaining much about this situation. Like his beloved Queen he probably believed that a poet or a courtier should not be much concerned with the 'cares and comforts' of life.

Puttenham considered Raleigh's poetry as "'most lofty, insolent and passionate'"[26] and therefore accorded him place in his " 'crew of Courtly makers, noblemen and gentlemen'"[27] of Elizabeth's court. Both Queen and court served as inspiration to poets like Raleigh and Spenser. Elizabeth may have ruled her country like a kingly queen but her vanity and inconstancy was most definitely that of a woman. She liked to see and hear her courtiers openly display their affection and devotion to her. She made it compulsory for her courtiers to wear a portrait of hers as a sign of their devotion and acceptance of her authority. The fact that she was never tired of hearing praises of her beauty and intelligence made lives in a way easier for her courtiers, and the literature of posterity, richer.

Elizabeth, like any human being, did not relish being a loser, even in small matters. Her ladies understood this. Whenever a game of cards was played, they made it a point to see that the Queen always emerged as winner. What do we say of this quality of the Queen? In some ways, she remains an enigma defying all interpretation.

Such heat in ice, such fire in frost remained,
Such trust in doubt, such comfort in despair;
Much like the gentle lamb, though lately weaned,
Plays with the dug, though finds no comfort there.

But as a body, violently slain,
Retaineth warmth although the spirit be gone,
And by a power in nature moves again,
Till it be laid below the fatal stone;

Or as the earth, even in cold winter days,
Left for a time by her life-giving sun,
Doth by the power remaining of his rays
Produce some green, though not as it hath done;

Or as a wheel, forced by the falling stream,
Although the course be turned some other way,
Doth for a time go round upon the beam,

Till, wanting strength to move, it stands at stay; [28]

During his years of imprisonment, Raleigh must have experienced love-hate feelings for his Queen. When seen in retrospective, the poet-courtier's personality seems not to be much different from the Queen's. Both were proud and stubborn individuals. Raleigh knew that Elizabeth would be greatly displeased once she discovered his inclination to marry Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of her maids-of-honour. But despite knowing this he took the plunge in the hope of enjoying marital bliss. There is no doubt that he was happy with his wife but the Queen was not at all happy to hear that some other female has replaced her in the poet's heart and life. The poet's feelings of joy and despair seemed to have depended on the whims and moods of his Queen. In the above passionate lines what Raleigh may be trying to reveal is that the 'icy' and 'frosty' treatment of the Queen towards him does not unduly affect him for he could still feel the gentleness and warmth of the Regina's love for him. Her anger was a cloak to hide her affections. All this may be wishful thinking on the part of the poet since now and then we see Raleigh emerging from this illusion only to realize that his life had become like a mutated body without the comforting physical presence of the Queen. His spirit and soul for living seems to have deserted him just like his 'stone-hearted' mistress.

Raleigh perhaps thought that his power of thinking and of expression is rapidly dwindling cooped up as he was in the prison tower. It must have been difficult for the courtier-poet to give his life meaning and direction as well as maintain a sense of balance.

Raleigh's poems are mostly paradoxical in nature. The continuous mood swings in his poetry may tend to throw the reader to confusion since renunciations and denunciations appear to be common features in his poems. In this context it would be unwise to forget the brutality and vulgarity, which was also very much a part of Elizabeth's court. Any *faux pas* on the part of the poet or the courtier brought immediate reprisals and punishments and Raleigh's life is a glaring example. The power to turn the course or the 'wheel' of the fortune of the courtier-poet's life 'some other way' rested solely in the hands of the Queen.

Hence, poets and courtiers at all times, during the reign of Elizabeth Tudor, either presented themselves as abject wooers of the Queen or as loyal servants and they were not ashamed about it. Elizabeth was elevated to the highest level of perfection. Catherine Bates has advanced a plausible suggestion that George Gascoigne, in his work 'The Tale of Hemetes the Heremyte', is clearly making a bid for royal favour. The tale revolves round a complicated story about three lovers each of whom is separated from his mistress for different reasons.

Each lover is, however, satisfied and restored with the divine and miraculous presence of the Queen. The picture of Elizabeth as a vehicle of divine inspiration and as a benevolent benefactress may be glimpsed from Gascoigne's words below:

> Fyndyng my youth myspent, my substauce ympayred, my credytt accrased, my tallent hydden, my follyes laughed att, my rewyne unpytted, and my trewth unemployed/ all w^{ch} extremyties as they have of long tyme astonyed myne understanding, So have they of late openly called me to gods gates and yo^{r} ma^{tye} being of God, godly, and (on earth) owr god (by god) appoynted, I presume lykewyse to knock att the gates of yo^{r} gracyous goodness/ hopyng that yo^{r} highness will sett me on worke though yt were noone and past before I soughte service.[29]

What the passage overtly implies is that life was not easy for the Elizabethan writer. At times, like in the above lines, it appears that men like Gascoigne had to sacrifice their integrity and manliness as a last resort. Despite not wanting to do so, they were surely forced by circumstances beyond their control to stoop to be obsequious to their female monarch. The courtiers and poets were most of the time prepared for rejection whenever they approached the Queen for some favour. Poets had a very unstable life, which led to a sense of frustration and neglect as Gascoigne evinces in the above words. Though it cannot be disagreed that some courtiers like Leicester may have tried to manipulate the female sovereign with their masculinity and were successful to some extent considering Elizabeth's partiality for good-looking and intelligent men that fortunately her reign did not

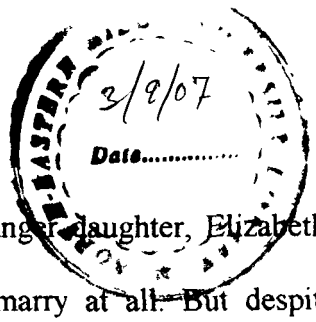
lack. Marlowe's words in his *Hero and Leander* (through the figure of Mercury, the god of rhetoric) can be applied in this connection:

> *Maids are not woon by brutish force and might,*
> *But speeches full of pleasure and delight.*[30]

It is true that Elizabeth's virginal status, her imposing personality as well as her regal splendour uplifted the thoughts, feelings and creative powers of her poets. But it is also true that the poets uttered, most of the time, only those words which the Queen wanted to hear. Therefore, sometimes the validity of their poems can be doubted.

"'Court I did, but did not love'",[31] is Giles Fletcher's admission in his sonnet sequence, *Licia* (1593). When applied in relation to the Queen one can very well ask whether Elizabeth was courted for the sake of courting or was she genuinely loved by her poets and courtiers.

Elizabeth's courtiers sponsored many entertainments that were performed for and before the Queen. Most of the entertainments highlighted the absolute domination of the female monarch over her aristocratic subjects and courtiers. The pageants also chiefly allegorized her courtiers' sexual and amorous passion for their Queen. Henry VIII's royal libido helped in formulating important policies of his kingdom like the Acts of Succession and Supremacy. We can



contrast his personal history with that of his younger daughter, Elizabeth. The former had six wives while the latter did not marry at all. But despite this difference, physical love and its associations played a major role in Elizabeth's reign too. Her state of physical virginity was publicized almost to epic proportions, across English shores as well as in the sea of Elizabethan poetry.

The inner Temple Revels of 1562 reveals the difficulty of presenting allegories of sexual love at the court of a female Monarch. In the early sixties the romance between Elizabeth and Dudley was at its peak. In this 1562 Christmas Revel, Dudley took the opportunity to articulate the nation's highly sensitive issues of Elizabeth's marriage and the royal succession. An account of the Revels is recorded in General Legh's popular heraldry manual *The Accedens of Armory (as cited in* Catherine Bates, *The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Great Britain, 1992, p.49). In the first part of the entertainment, the narrative allegory of Beauty and Desire is dramatized in a traditional tale of courtship and chivalry. A young man named Desire is inspired by " 'ye breth of fame' "[32] to seek Beauty. Accompanied by his companions, Governance and Grace, he embarks for his amorous quest in the Tower of Doctrine. While imbibing wisdom there, Desire sets eyes on Lady Beauty and is smitten with love for her. He was allowed to woo her only after he proved himself in chivalrous combat. After being promoted to a knight-at-arms, he challenges, and is successful in killing a nine-headed monster, which

represents the vices of envy, dissimulation, misreport and so forth. Hence, his courage, audacity and truth helped him in gaining the hand of Lady Beauty in marriage:

> "'Audacitee bare his helme, Curraige the brestplate,
> Speede helde his spurres.
> And Trouth gave him ye charge.'"[33]

He is promised "'ioyfull lyfe'"[34] with her not only on earth but even after his death in the heavenly chamber of Felicity.

The second part of the drama is set in the temple of Pallas, the deity of learning and warfare. Dudley in the guise of Pallaphilos appears as the chief officiator at the temple. His duty is to initiate a party of twenty-five knights into the order of Pegasus showing clearly a romantic performance of the Garter ceremony. He then proceeds to explain to the newly inducted knights about their loyalty to each other, and on their duty and obedience to Pallas, their sovereign after which the knights bowed and knelt down in prayer before their goddess, Pallas. Allegorically, the latter stands for Elizabeth's 'political body', as queen and ruler, inspiring the reverence and loyal service of Pallaphilos and his knights. Meanwhile, Lady Beauty represents Elizabeth's 'natural body', a young virgin who is to be wooed and won. The theme of the Revels, as suggested by Marie Axton (refer to Catherine Bates, *The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Great Britain,

1992, pp.50-51), therefore mirrors the old medieval distinction between the monarch's two bodies. It not only talks of Elizabeth's 'two bodies' but also hints about the 'two bodies' of Robert Dudley- firstly by playing the role of hopeful suitor to Elizabeth in the garb of Desire and secondly, in the character of Pallaphilos, as a loyal subject of the Queen.

It was not easy for Dudley to present an allegory of Desire at the court of a virgin queen. He had to emphasize more on his role as a brave and trusted knight rather than on his achievements as a courtly lover. In all the pageants throughout Elizabeth's reign, from the Inner Temple Revels onwards, we get to see only restrained and legitimized figures of desire. A character representing sexual desire is stripped of any erotic stirrings he may have had. The language of courtship could not go beyond a certain limit in Elizabeth's court.

In the Kenilworth entertainment of 1575, we see a deviation in the presentation of the Queen. In the Inner Temple Masque, defense of the feminine in the figure of the Queen was highlighted. The knights took up the mantle of safeguarding their female sovereign. At Kenilworth, on the other hand, we see Elizabeth, the queen herself being cast in the role of a militant defender of the realm. Her being conceived as Diana, the Goddess of Chastity, shows her subjects' reconciliation to Elizabeth's unmarried state. The Diana-Actaeon myth

is used to depict the several encounters that took place between the queen and a wild man figure even though the conclusion is not an exact repetition of the myth.

Elizabeth reached Kenilworth castle at eight in the evening of 9th July 1575. It was a Saturday. Just before entering the main gate, she was intercepted by a figure introducing herself as the Cumaean Sybil whose verses of welcome promised peace and prosperity to Elizabeth and her kingdom in terms that identified the Queen with Christ:

The rage of War bound fast in chains
Shall never stir nor move,
But peace shall govern all your days,
Increasing subjects' love.
You shall be called the Princes of Peace,
Peace shall be your shield
So that your eyes shall never see
The broils of bloody field.[35]

But keeping the country in continued peace was not an easy task for the Queen. In this entertainment, we therefore see Elizabeth in the appropriate role of a questing knight fighting for the peace of her people. The wild man theme is introduced consequently with the Queen meeting a porter who identified himself as Hercules, holding a club and keys, at the main entrance of the castle. Initially, the porter was

reluctant to admit Elizabeth but surrendered the keys upon recognizing her. She was then welcomed by figures from Arthurian legend, the Lady of the Lake accompanied by her two nymphs. The Lady hailed not only Elizabeth as the direct descendant of Arthur, but also Leicester and his family since they were the guardians of the lake and the castle. The close affinity between Elizabeth and Leicester is brought into focus here. Spenser too often associates Arthur, the hero of the *Faerie Queene* with Leicester.

Hunting was a pastime dearly loved by Elizabeth. George Gascoigne who had conceived, written and personally performed in this pageant knew very well how to make use of this pastime. Coming back to the castle after a successful day's hunt, Elizabeth was accosted by the poet (Gascoigne), disguised as a Salvage Man, and bearing an "'Oken plant pluct up by the roots'".[36] Not only in the Renaissance parlance but even today mention of a savage man evokes the thought of a man either demented with love or consumed with primitive desire. In medieval allegory, the 'green man' or 'wodewose' symbolized a lover driven to distraction for love of his lady. He is a wild man claiming intimate relationship with wild nature. What we have to remember here is the glorification of Elizabeth as 'Diana', the goddess of woods and springs by her poets and courtiers. Gasciogne, in his 'savage man' character addresses Elizabeth in a language replete with sexual innuendo: "'Can no cold answers quench desire?'"[37] he queries. Then continuing with his speech went on:

" 'Had I the bewties blasé? Which shines in you so
bright,...
But comely peerelesse Prince,
Since my desires be great:
Walke here sometimes in pleasant shade, to fende the
parching heate.' "[38]

Most probably, Gasciogne is pleading for Leicester's suit on the latter's behalf. Such overt allusions to sex and sexual desire can refer only to Elizabeth's 'special' relationship with Dudley. Both loved each others company to such an extent that at many a times, especially during the late fifties and sixties, Lord Burleigh was unable to seek the Queen's audience when urgent matters of state needed discussion. The Queen in all likelihood must have relished and cherished those nineteen pleasure-filled days she spent at Kenilworth. Leicester spared no expenses in organizing and sponsoring the many events during Elizabeth's visit.

On the following Sunday, a mock rustic wedding was presented before the Queen followed by some dancing. The next evening, another magical surprise was sprung on Elizabeth as she was returning from another successful hunt. She came face to face with Triton, the trumpeter of Neptune, who had come across the lake outside the castle upon a swimming mermaid whose tail was eighteen-feet long. He begged the Queen to help the Lady of the Lake, as she has been imprisoned by Sir Bruse, a pitiless knight "'in revenge of his cosen Merlyne the Prophet, whom, for his inordinate lust, she had inclosed in a rocke.'" [39] The wild man motif comes into play again in the character of the lustful Merlin though in

this case it is connected with "enemy forces rather than loyal subjects"[40] Philippa Berry's view, that it probably refers to the fight of the Protestants of Netherlands against the Spanish across the channels, may probably be true. Triton suggested that Elizabeth should help the Lady, here identified with Diana, because she herself was also a 'maid' and opposed to Juno, the marriage goddess. The latter had apparently supported Sir Bruse in his attempted rape:

> *that yrefull knight Sir Bruce had hyr in chase;*
> *And sought by force her virgin's state full fowlie to deface.*
> *Yea, yet at hand about these bankes his bands be often seen;*
> *That neither can she come nor scape, but by your helpe, O queene;*
> *For though that Neptune has so fanst with floods her fortresse long,*
> *Yet Mars her foe must needs prevaile, his batteries are so strong.*
> *How then can Diane, Juno's force and sharp assaults abyde;*
> *When all the crue of cheefest gods is bent on Bruse his side?*
> *...sure she cannot stand,*
> *Except a worthier maid than she her cause do take in hand.*[41]

Just the presence of Elizabeth in the vicinity seemed to have resulted in a miracle because news of the Lady's rescue was immediately announced.

This episode was then followed by a water pageant performed by Neptune, Triton and Proteus riding on the back of a floating dolphin, most likely celebrating the miracle that was their Queen (Elizabeth). The last week of the royal visit saw the cancellation of many events due to bad weather. One of the cancelled events was a masque about Zabeta, Diana's favourite nymph, which also involved Juno, the marriage goddess and Iris, the goddess of rainbow. On the day of Elizabeth's departure from Kenilworth, Gascoigne gave another performance, repeating the 'savage' man theme. As she was leaving the castle, the Queen was intercepted by the above mentioned poet who had disguised himself as Sylvanus, the deity of woods and satyrs, in fact, a figure more mythologised for its sexuality than anything else. The 'wild man' motif is probably used here in connection with Leicester. As the latter's emissary, Gascoigne is requesting Elizabeth to delay her departure and to free 'deepe desire'.

> "'O Queene commaunde againe / This Castle and the Knight, which keepes the same for you...'"[42]

The poet is most likely expressing Leicester's wish to continue his ardent courting of Elizabeth, at least in public if not in private. For there is a story that sounds ironical but plausible that Leicester's very private courtship of Lettice was going on while he was publicly flaunting and announcing his 'deep' love for Elizabeth. 'Sylvanus' goes on entreating the Queen that she must "'have good regard to the general desire of the Gods'"[43]. Then, leading Elizabeth to an enchanted grove, Sylvanus tells her of the lovers who have been mysteriously

transformed into trees by Zabeta, their cruel mistress who did not understand their love. Zabeta and the transformed trees may be a direct reference to Elizabeth and the many suitors that she had rejected, one of them being the Earl of Leicester. Her "'rare gifts have drawne the most noble and worthy personages'"[44] to woo and pay court to her but she had summarily rejected each one of her courtier-suitor. As Gascoigne puts it, lovers were "'rigorously repulsed.... and cruelly rejected'"[45] by their stone-hearted mistress, Zabeta, meaning Elizabeth. Sylvanus, dejected at the fate of the rejected lovers directs Elizabeth to a pair of trees, a holly bush and a laurel tree. These trees, which trembled as she came near, were once "'two sworne brethen which long time served [Zabeta], called *Deepe desire*, and *Dewe desert*'"[46]. Deep Desire was another highly eroticised symbol of male sexual longing and passion. He is

> "'such a one as neither any delay could daunt him: no disgrace could abate his passions, no tyme could tyre him, no water quench his flames'"[47]

Zabeta's rejection of Deep Desire has metamorphosed him into a holly bush. This may refer to the sacrifice of the courtly lover's phallic sexuality or the game of devotion and love, which Leicester so patiently and painstakingly played with Elizabeth during his lifetime. Many critics like Muriel Bradbrook and Marie Axton have opined that Desire's sexual longing for Zabeta is a replication of the Earl's life-long ambition to win the Queen's hand in marriage. Such explicit statements on sexuality before a Queen who had pledged virginity seem

incongruous. But this is characteristic of Elizabeth's courtly cult. Every compliment made to the queen was loaded with overt sexual innuendo. Gascoigne was doing his duty by pandering to his patron's (Leicester's) wish of furthering his marriage suit. Desire, metamorphosed into an evergreen holly bush, becomes a phallic symbol as well as a traditional symbol for constancy:

> "'*As the holy growth grene*
>
> *And never chaungyth hew,*
>
> *So I am, ever hath bene,*
>
> *Unto my lady trew*... '"[48]

In the Ditchley entertainment of 1592 hosted by Sir Henry Lee, the latter led Elizabeth to a forest that contained both constant and inconstant lovers. But a single tree stood out in this forest, and this tree symbolized the nature and paradox of courtly love:

> "'we knights are trees whome roots of faith doe bynd
> our ladies [leaves] who sometyme give us grace,
> but fall awaie with everie blast of wynd.'"[49]

Leicester's paradoxical self-presentations in the Kenilworth entertainment may leave many a reader in a perplexing situation. As Deep Desire, he is described as "'that wretch of worthies, and yet the worthiest that ever was condemned to wretched estate' "[50] Another metamorphosed lover in the enchanted forest is an

oak, also identified with Dudley. The oak, Gascoigne points out to the Queen, was once "'a faithfull follower and trustie servant of hyrs, named Constance' "[51].

We therefore see Leicester in the roles of host, courtier, lover and servant. And we become unsure of Dudley's intentions. We do not know exactly whether the Earl, through Gascoigne as his spokesman, is either condemning or complimenting Elizabeth's chastity. Then again, it may just be pure diplomacy on the part of Leicester. For obvious reasons, he was probably complimenting on the Queen's sense of justice and her ability to effortlessly extricate herself from the overt and covert sexual advances of her male suitors and courtiers.

The Elizabethan pastorals and pageants were all enacted in the frequent country progresses of the Tudor Queen. This way the court was carried to the country. The pageants were very extravagant and unreal. For example, Sir Philip Sidney had presented his pastoral play, *The Lady of May* in 1578 at Wanstead, which was Leicester's house. It was performed before Elizabeth during the courtier's absence from his house. The play depicts the common theme of love contest between two suitors vying for the Lady of May. Therion, a forester and Espilus, a shepherd, woo the latter. As the Lady is unable to come to a decision, her mother seeks the help of the Queen who gives her preference for Espilus. Sidney may have based the character of the forester, Therion, with Leicester in mind thus restating the wild man motive mentioned earlier. At the conclusion of

the play, Rombus, a schoolmaster, declares that the result of the Queen's choice was that, Therion (take Leicester) became a hermit. The play may also be hinting to the fact that Elizabeth finally did not accept the many proposals of marriage, which Leicester is said to have made her. Unlike the Wanstead entertainment, in the pageant held at Woodstock three years earlier, Sir Henry Lee had presented the hermit in a positive light. In the 1575 entertainment (at Woodstock, home of Sir Henry Lee), Elizabeth is presented as an object of sublimated desire. Being Leicester's client, the host stresses the knightly role of his patron as lover and courtier. In this play, we see Hemetes the Hermit intruding to resolve a fight going on between two knights, Contarenus and Loricus, representing Leicester and Lee. Explaining the Queen of the reason, which had caused the quarrel Hemetes, relates that Gandina, the only daughter of the duke Occanon loved and was loved by a knight of inferior rank, named Contarenus. Occanon found a way of separating the lovers. His daughter, advised by a Sybil, sought the aid of another knight Lorcius to help search her missing lover who, when found, jealously attacked the helpful knight. This understanding was the cause of the altercation but tragedy has been averted because, as the Sybil had foretold, the missing Contarenus was found in the best country of the world ruled also by the world's most just ruler. Hemetes goes on to say that the Queen's presence has not only reunited the lovers but also helped him in regaining his sight that he had earlier lost as punishment for being unfaithful in love. Hence, the poet stresses Elizabeth's Christ-like virtue and her role as divine inspiration. But the story does

not end here. In the second day of the entertainment it is revealed that both Gandina and Contarenus decides to separate ways "'for reasons of state'".[52] The former tells the latter that the light of love for him will always burn in her heart and with this the male beloved embarks on a quest with a firm faith: "'Yet this I am assur'de her Princely heart,/Where she hath lov'd will never quite forget.'"[53] The historical aspect then is highlighted here. We see the woman in Elizabeth sacrificing her love and sexuality for the Queen in her. Elizabeth's sacred vocation to be a godly Queen unencumbered with mortal desires was recognized by her subjects. Leicester meanwhile leaves for his military adventures abroad questing for the victory of war if not the victory of winning the Queen's hand.

In Sidney's May 1581 pageant called *The Four Foster Children of Desire*, Elizabeth is once again placed in the center of things. The pageant, which lasted for two days, depicts the siege of the Castle of Perfect Beauty (i.e., Elizabeth) because of her unwillingness to submit to the unholy intentions of the knights. Using as usual the natural, supernatural and divine imagery in association with the Tudor Queen, an angel pleads before the erring knights:

> "' Will you subdue the sunne, who shall rest in the shadow where the weary take breath the disquiet rest, and all comforte, wil ye bereave men of those glistering and gladsome beames, what shall then prosper in the shining...moste renowned and devine Beautie, whose beames shine like the Sun...the same I call Beautie the lighte of the worlde, the marvel of men, the mirour of nature..."'[54]

The wild-man motive assumes importance here. The knights are reproved for being selfish and are advised not to harbour such uncontrollable desires. A 'mossie-knight' comes out from his self-imposed isolation in a cave, where he had lived a hermit-like existence, to rescue Beauty and to defend her fortress. Like a typical Elizabethan courtier, the knight declares in words full of worship:

> "'most excellent and devine Beawtie, devine it must needes be that worketh so heavenly, sith he is called from his solitaire Cave to your sumptuous Court, from bondage to liberty, from a living death to a never dying life, and all for the sake and service of Beawtie: vouchsafe his shielde, which is the ensigne of your fame to be the instrument of his fortune. And for prostrating himselfe to your feete, he is here readie preste to adventure any adventures for your gracious favour.'" [55]

Philippa Berry's suggestion that the 'mossie knight' may well represent St. George seems to have some basis. For going by English folk-loric tradition, the Saint was an emblem of chivalry and associated too with the green man or the spirit of the natural man. St. George is also given pride of place as the first of Spenser's symbolic knights in *The Faerie Queene*. Humbled by the speech of the good knight, the four foster-children admitted defeat. There is a consensus in the view that this May pageant refers unobtrusively to the long drawn-out controversial marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and the Duke of Alencon, the courtship of which lasted till the latter's death in 1584. The platonic or Petrarchan conception of Elizabeth as an unattainable figure is again re-established.

The Elvetham entertainment of 1591 may seem to bear close resemblance to that of Kenilworth, especially where scenery and setting is concerned. The event takes place around a lake, shaped like a crescent moon (a frequently used image in relation to Queen Elizabeth) where there were three islands named 'Ship Ile', 'Fort Mount', and 'Snail Mount' respectively. Instead of wild men, horned satyrs and shepherds, sea-gods hold a more prestigious position. Elizabeth is here associated with the recurrent images of the sea, the moon and the sun as in "'how can Sommer stay, when Sunne departs?'"[56] as remarked on her departure from Elvetham.

While, at the fountaine of the sacred hill,
Under Apollo's lute I sweetly slept,
Mongst prophets full possest with holy fury,
And with true vertue, void of all disdaine:
The Muses sung, and waked me with these wordes:
Seest thou that English Nimph, in face and shape
Resembling some great Goddesse, and whose beames
Doe sprinkle Heaven with unacquainted light,
While she doth visit Semers fraudlesse house ?
See thou salute her with a humble voice
Behold (Augusta) thy poore suppliant
Is here, at their desire, but thy desert.

O sweet Eliza, grace me with a looke,

Or from my browes Or from my browes this laurel wreath will fall,

And I, unhappy, die amidst my song.

Under my person Semer hides himselfe... [57]

The Queen was ushered in with this speech by her host, Thomas Seymour, Earl of Hertford, another courtier angling to be restored to favour. Departing from the usual practice, he masquerades neither as a hermit as preferred by Sir Henry Lee and Robert Cecil nor as a wild man as favoured by Leicester but as the all-important figure of a poet. He extols the heavenly virtues of the Queen but discreetly points out that his muse was none other than Apollo. Also, the term 'Semer' may be a pun on his surname 'Seymour'. Elizabeth's host was none other than the nephew of the apparently disreputable Thomas Seymour with whom she was reputed to have had an affair when in her teens though the truth or falsity of this episode is still yet to be corroborated. Whatever the case, the courtier's role is gradually nudged off to be replaced by the poet's visionary gaze and we can cite Spenser's Colin Clout as a close parallel. Also, the poet in the above poem never overtly acknowledges the queen as the source of his knowledge, his inspiration. Nor does he comment on his creativity disparagingly in comparison to that of the queen's as other Elizabethan poets like Spenser were fond to do. But what one

should not forget is that both poet and courtier served one master (to be precise, mistress!) and that was the Queen.

In the Ditchley entertainment of 1592, Elizabeth is attributed with miraculous and spiritual powers in the role of a female saviour. In this masque, she rescues many knights and ladies who were imprisoned in an enchanted grove reminding us of Kenilworth. On the second and last day of the entertainment, a chaplain narrates the story of a retired knight to Elizabeth who left the court " 'willingly unwilling' " [58] to rest

> " 'his tyred lymes into a corner of quiet repose...where he lyved private in coelestiall contemplation manie winters together, and...seriouslie kept a verie courte in his owne bosome, making presence of her in his soule, who was absent from his sight' ".[59]

We thus see both God and Queen being equally important in the mind's eye of the old knight. We are then presented with a visual picture of the old knight in a near-death situation having bequeathed all his worldly goods to the Queen. We are also told that the ailing knight is subsequently restored to life because of the divine presence of 'Her Royal Highness'.

The trips to the country may have been a good way of temporarily escaping from the political intrigues of the court. But there was no respite for the Queen. As mentioned earlier, personal as well as political matters were presented

before Elizabeth with a great deal of embellishments. We have seen poets and courtiers masquerading as wild man, green knight and shepherd in dignified submission to the Queen and all in sylvan splendour. The piquant charm of Elizabeth's country progresses helped in enhancing her image as a legend. The last of the Tudors was her father's daughter. Henry VIII loved taking part in the banquets and country revels hosted in his honour, and liked appearing as the 'outlaw' character Robin Hood. In these rustic settings, the Queen is represented as the most beautiful of all shepherdesses and is significantly greeted as the May Queen. It can therefore be concluded that Elizabeth's poets and courtiers could lay down their guard more in the country festivities than in the court and thus help in articulating their serious business (personal or otherwise) in a vein of banter. Access to the Queen becomes a lot easier in such an atmosphere. Class distinctions are for the moment forgotten. The roles of knight, rustic, hermit, courtier and gentleman are all merged. The disillusioned courtiers as shown in the Kenilworth Revels frequently satirized court life. We are repeatedly informed in the poems and pageants that poets (like Spenser) and courtiers took to rural retirement whenever dissatisfaction in town life crept in – preferring the peacefulness of a hermit-like existence rather than the tensions and frustrations of life in court.

Coming to Spenser, in the April eclogue of *The Shepherd's Calendar,* we see the shepherd-courtier playing a secondary role in a purely female domain. The

image of the male courtier as wild man or Herculean hero is not active here. What is also implied is that despite giving up his sexuality, the male courtier does not gain full admission into this private circle of the courtly world. This exclusive inner circle was a mysterious space dominated by ties between women. Here, we see the queen living life not for and in relation to men but in close association with her sex. Spenser has shifted his focus of courtly service from the public places and spaces of Elizabeth's court to the Queen's private chambers wherein the poet highlights his queen's intimate bonding with others of her sex like her maids-of-honour and ladies-in-waiting. Thus we see female sexual power, attributed to a maternal rather than a paternal figure at work here. We see a vision of Elizabeth as another Wisdom figure, a female Christ unifying heaven and earth:

> *For she is Syrinx daughter without spot*
>
> *Which Pan the shepherd's god of her begot:* [60]

As cited in Patrick Cullen's *Spenser, Marvell, and Renaissance Pastoral* (Harvard University Press, 1970, p.114), E. K. exhorts Elizabeth's lofty parentage. In his view Henry VIII is Pan and Anne Boleyn is Syrinx. He explains the Pan-Syrinx myth thus:

> " 'Syrinx is the name of a Nymphe of Arcadie, whome when pan being in love pursued, she flying from him, of the Gods was turned into a rude. So that Pan catching at the Reedes in stede of the Damosell and puffing hard (for he

> was almost out of wind) with hys breath made the Reedes to pype' " [61]

Eliza, if we go by the above meaning, is the result of an immaculate conception, a virgin birth. Syrinx, a follower of Diana, the goddess of chastity becomes the phallic instrument in this unusual mode of conception. Pan turned her into reeds for spurning his sexual advances. He then tied some of these reeds together and placed them within the opening of his mouth, thus creating the beautiful song, which Spenser equates with Eliza. Spenser then assumes the role of the sexually thwarted Pan by donning the garb of the shepherd poet, Colin Clout. He had relinquished his sexuality for the pipes of Pan. The hollow musical maternal phallus, i.e., the reed pipe of Pan, has now replaced the male phallus. It is only now that as a poet he can let his eyes roam freely on the unauthorized object of the female body. By freeing his mind and imagination he is now able to enter the secretly enclosed feminine sphere where he sees Eliza in her regally naked splendour dressed in her own skin. The green pastoral background and the red and white of her own skin make her a combination of love, faith and hope. But Colin himself is not physically present in the eclogue. It is Hobbinoll, the shepherd, who sings Colin's song about Eliza in his absence. Does Hobbinoll represent 'Robin' (Robert Dudley)? This is a teasing question. For we all know, and so probably had Spenser, that Dudley was a frequent visitor to the Queen's privy chambers. Consequent upon their love affair he may have caught the Queen in various states of undress along with her female attendants.

In the April eclogue, we therefore see Eliza surrounded only by her feminine companions: the nine virgin daughters of Apollo and Memorie, and other nubile nymphs. The fairy tale atmosphere is enhanced by the song and dance of the three graces and as embodied in Eliza's own person, as another Venus:

Lo! How finely the Graces can it foot
To the Instrument:
They dancen deftly and singen sweet
In their merriment.[62]

Despite the notable absence of male presence, this scene is far from devoid of sexuality. The tripartite perfection of the three Graces symbolizes the unity and oneness of contemplative, active and sensual love. Eliza is represented as Venus and Diana, love and chastity. She is '*clad in scarlet like a maiden queen...*'[63] and '*upon her head a crimson coronet, / With damask roses...*'[64]. Spenser, by poetically emphasizing upon the colour 'red' in relation to Eliza, has managed to refocus our attention to the theme of feminine sexuality.

And wither run this bevy of ladies bright,
Ranged in a row?
They ben all ladies of the lake behight,
That unto her go.[65]

In this golden world, Spenser shows us a picture of a paradise solely inhabited by women, all beautiful and fairy-like in their appearance and all dancing attendance upon Eliza. There is no room for any man here. This is in contrast to the other Elizabethan pastimes, which basically recorded the ambitions and pride of some male courtiers.

Ye shepherd's daughters, that dwell on the green,
Hye you there apace:
Let none come there but that Virgins ben,
To adorn her Grace: [66]

In this pastoral paradise, our gaze fastens on the nymphs, 'shepherd's daughters' and 'all ladies of the Lake' running to and fro in order to dress and beautify their already beautiful goddess, and those serving her were themselves virgins.

Bring hither the pinks and purple columbine,
With gillyflowers:
Bring coronations, and sops-in-wine,
Worn of paramours:
Strow me the ground with daffadillies, And cowslips, and kingcups and loved lilies:
The pretty pawnce,
And the chevisaunce

Shall match with the fair flower Delice.[67]

The flowers with which Eliza is adorned reinforce the ethereal and otherworldly atmosphere of the eclogue. Eliza is compared to the spring goddess. The maternal bonding between the fairy queen and the other female figures around her is very much conspicuous. The ladies and nymphs surrounding Eliza is seen involved in intense creative activity: the Muses creating their music while the Graces dance to the music. The other young ladies appear busy in bedecking their maiden goddess in a floral extravaganza strewing the ground around her with 'dafadillies, and cowslips, and kingcups and loved lillies'. Spenser is probably enlightening us to the fact that a poet has more access to feminine secrets than a courtier in spite of being physically excluded from the scene presented to us through the agency of his art. With a camera-like fidelity of description the poet has been able to give us a near perfect picture of the ideal that was Elizabeth by employing certain characteristics of the Queen to define, amplify and give depth to the characterisation and meaning of Elisa.

Edmund Spenser appears not to have been a consummate courtier well versed in the art of 'courtiership' as Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Walter Raleigh was. The game of court politics- its corruption, the greed for wealth and power- all these factors may have pained his poetical sensibilities. Luckily or not, Spenser's stay at court was but for a short period of time. His life was mostly spent in Ireland. Spenser was a serious poet and seems to have possessed a sensitive heart.

The right and wrong of things mattered greatly to him. Encouraged by Raleigh, Spenser published three books of *The Faerie Queene* in1590 for which he received a pension and was gladly accepted, coming as he was from a humble background. He added three more books to his heroic romance. *The Faerie Queene,* his *magnum opus,* is the main literary monument celebrating Queen Elizabeth I as a cult figure:

> *... O Goddesse heavenly bright,*
> *Mirrour of grace and Majestie divine,*
>
> *Great Lady of the greatest Isle, whose light*
> *Like Phoebus lampe throughout the world doth shine,*
> *Shed thy faire beames into my feeble eyne,*
> *And raise my thoughts too humble and too vile,*
> *To thinke of that true glorious type of thine...*[68]

Elizabeth was her subjects' 'dearest dred', [69] their sole focus of reverence and awe. In her form and presence was intertwined both majesty and divinity. Like any superior being the Queen instilled fear and love in the heart of the writer. She was a pattern of virtue whose greatness and goodness not only brightened the world but also opened the poet's mind's eye to the earthly reflection of heavenly grace in the picture of the Queen's perfection. The glorious image of the virgin ruler served as Spenser's main inspiration in creating other beautiful idealistic

figures. In essence, the poet invokes Elizabeth, the source of his inspiration, to lift his thoughts and strengthen his intellectual powers so as to enable him to write 'of Faerie knights and fairest Tanaquill' [70]. In the Proem to the first book, the poet mentions words like 'holy Virgin chiefe of nine' [71] and 'fairest Tanaquill' [72]. In the first instance, Spenser may possibly be referring to Clio, the Muse of History who is said to be the "Chiefe" or eldest of the nine muses. The "holy Virgin" may also refer to Calliope, the Muse of heroic poetry. Whatever the reference, the words gain significance because it is applied in relation to the Virgin Queen. And in the second instance too, we realize that Elizabeth is "fairest Tanaquill" (whom legend called the wife of the Roman King Tarquin) since she too, according to Spenser, bore the same traits of the mythological Roman queen. Like the latter, the Virgin Queen was also a symbol of nobility, chastity and perseverance.

Both Gloriana and Belphoebe are representations of Elizabeth: - one as her public person, i.e., as a queen (Gloriana) and the other as her private person (Belphoebe). Besides emphasizing on her image of royal and earthly glory, Spenser does not forget to write about her virginal and heavenly glory. And one cannot achieve glory without possessing any innate virtue or quality even if one is a King. As St. Paul states, God will bestow

> "'to them, who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life... glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good' (Romans 2:7,10) ".[73]

The remarkable glory that surrounded Elizabeth-I during her reign can be said to be unsurpassed even today. She had become a living myth, an awe-inspiring personality. And all this was very likely an outcome of her good deeds and almost virtuous character.

The 'famous Britomart'[74] mentioned in BK. III Canto i.8 may be another portraiture of the Virgin Queen. The name (Britomart) suggests that she is a female knight, i.e. Brito-Mart or the martial Briton. She is also addressed as 'Briton Mayd'[75] (Bk. III Canto ii.4) and "Martial Mayd" [76] (Bk. III Canto ii.9). The poet regards Elizabeth-I as a Diana-Venus figure. Britomart, as the name signifies, is woman and warrior. In her is combined the attractiveness of Venus and the cool virtue of Diana, the goddess of chastity.

Poets could not overtly portray the queen in an erotic manner. They had to conform to the rules of tradition and maintain strict decorum and etiquette in the presence of their sovereign whether in court or even while writing on her. A poet could extol her public and private virtues but any hint of slander or derogatory word written about the Queen brought with it drastic consequences to the sinner. This was the case not only with poets but also with other subjects. In the closing years of her reign, the ageing Elizabeth had to contend with many of her wily courtiers who were making veiled preparations to nominate a successor. Being a remarkable energetic woman even in old age, the Queen did not brook any open

interference where the succession issue was concerned. She turned a blind eye and a deaf ear as long as her courtiers kept their thoughts and preparations under wraps and did not allow their actions to compromise on their loyalty to her while she was alive. Anyone who did not adhere to this unwritten code was severely punished, as was the case with Bishop Rudd and the Puritan Peter Wentworth. The former was briefly confined for his impertinence when in March 1596 he delivered a sermon at court urging the Queen to settle the succession issue. Meanwhile, the outspoken Wentworth had to bear the brunt of his actions for plotting against his sovereign and championing James VI as the heir presumptive. For this crime, he was imprisoned in the Tower in 1593 till his death in 1597. Adding a twist to this situation is the subsequent dismissal and imprisonment in the latter part of 1595 of Sir Michael Blount, Wentworth's gaoler, for accumulating arms in anticipation of the Queen's death and for supporting the claim of the Seymour family to the throne of England.

To come back to Spenser's poetic presentation of the Queen, erotic or otherwise, we realise that Elizabeth was a very potent inspiration for the poet. In the opening lines of BK. III, Spenser decides not to personify the virtue of chastity in Elizabeth herself for the Queen's virtue and beauty goes beyond perfection. Neither a 'Poet's Wit' nor a painter's brush will be able to do justice to her perfection. And in his case he did not want '*for fear through want of words her excellence to marre.*'[77]

There are those who hold the view that 'chastity' can be of two types: one is pure virginity and the other faithful matrimony. Therefore, besides Britomart, we can view Amoret and Belphoebe too as fictional projections of the Queen:

To your faire selves a faire ensample frame,
Of this faire virgin, this Belphoebe faire,
To whom in perfect love, and spotless fame
Of chastity, none living may compaire:
Ne poysnous Envy instly can compaire
The prayse of her fresh flowring Maidenhead;
For thy she standeth on the highest staire
Of th'honorable stage of womenhead,
That ladies all may follow her ensample dead.[78]

Many Elizabethans projected the Virgin Queen as Diana or Cynthia. She was the goddess of the woods and forests who thrilled in living the free-spirited life of a hunter unshackled by the state of matrimony. We therefore see Belphoebe being made the foster-child of Diana by the poet. Then again in A Midsummer Night's Dream, Shakespeare portrays Elizabeth as 'a vestal virgin' and according to mythology, Vesta, the Roman Goddess of the hearth (identified with the Greek Hestia) preserved the sanctity of her home, and in whose altar a sacred fire was always kept burning under the care of maidens who had taken vows of perpetual virginity. Venus, going by mythology, happens to be the foster-mother of

Belphoebe's twin sister Amoret and 'Amoret' comes from the Latin word amor meaning 'love'. Spenser gives free rein to his imagination with a graphic and sensuous description of Belphoebe in BK. II, Canto iii of *The Faerie Queene* despite her recognition as a dedicated and unyielding virgin:

> *Below her ham her weed did somewhat traine,*
> *And her streight legs most bravely were embayld*
> *In gilden buskins of costly Cordwaine,*
> *All bard with golden bendes, which were entayld*
> *With curious antickes, and full faire aumayld:*
> *Before they fastned were vnder her knee*
> *In a rich Iewell, and therein entrayld*
> *The ends of all their knots, that none might see,*
> *How they within their fouldings close enwrapped bee.*[79]

In the above stanza, we see the royal body being subjected to an intense visual assault. We cannot miss the sensuousness of some of the words, like 'her streight legs', 'vnder her knee', 'that none might see' and 'close enwrapped bee'. In the superficial sense, Spenser at this juncture recounts the episode of the cowardly knight Braggadocchio and his cunning attendant Trompart when they chance upon Belphoebe hunting in the woods initially unaware of their presence. Consumed with lust Braggadocchio attempts to assault Belphoebe but threatening him with her boarspear (her weapon for slaying the boar of lust) she disappears

from the scene of action and from the book. Poets like Spenser could go only this far. Any further invasion of the Virgin Queen's privacy would have been foolish. In the *Letter to Raleigh*, Spenser remarks of Queen Elizabeth:

> **" she beareth two persons, the one of a most royall Queene or Empresse, the other of a most virtuous and beautiful lady, this latter part in some places I doe expresse in Belphoebe, fashioning her name accordingly to your own excellent concept of Cynthia, (Phoebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana)"[80]**

As a poet, creating the character of Belphoebe was more politic as it could be manipulated to suit his own end of portraying the queen indirectly according to Petrarchan or erotic conventions. It would have been a grave error if Spenser had blatantly expressed his romantic fantasies (if he had any!) of his empress disregarding her absolute position and stature. But by taking recourse to the Petrarchan convention, the poet was able to picture both aspects of the Queen- as a figure of chastity and as a sensuous and romantic figure. Belphoebe represented ' the highest staire' of virginity, the purest and unadulterated form of chastity and womanhood. And Queen Elizabeth is the prime example of this virgin statehood. But this does not mean that Spenser is making a case for the whole feminine race to remain pure virgins.

Belphoebe and Elizabeth share some aspects of each other as the poet himself claims. Subjects are usually infected with the bug of curiosity to know more about their regent's private life and affairs. They tend to entertain thoughts

of catching them offguard in compromising situations. Spenser, meanwhile, had to guard himself from any excessiveness otherwise a public outcry would have been effected against him for slandering the regnant's public image. Also, extravagant physical description of the Virgin Queen would have resulted in demystifying as well as demythologising her image not only as a public figure but also as a legendary or mythological figure. Therefore it will not be unwise to conclude that most of the courtiers and poets must have felt sexual as well as platonic love simultaneously where the Queen was concerned. Gender played a very big role in stimulating the attitude of the Elizabethans towards their sovereign. As a virgin, Elizabeth was consecrated to the service of God. But we can say that she experienced every aspect of a woman's life: as a *femme fatale* she was desired by many of her courtiers like Essex and Leicester but remained like the proverbial 'forbidden fruit' which in this case could not be eaten. Elizabeth looked after her household (her nation and her people) like a prudent housewife, and, like a devoted and loving mother took care of her children (her subjects) selflessly. Such images of the Queen repeatedly occur in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and other works.

The man who introduced Spenser to the Queen's court was none other than Sir Walter Raleigh, an inspiring force in the former's life. Raleigh visited Spenser at Kincolman and was able to coax and convince him to visit London and get the first three Books of his epic published. Giving in, Spenser made the trip

with Raleigh and along with *The Faerie Queene* (Books I to III) he also managed to publish a volume of *Complaints* and a short pastoral elegy *Daphnaida.* For the flowery tribute paid to Elizabeth-I in the epic, Spenser was the only such poet who was rewarded with a pension. Though the Queen encouraged the writing of poetry, it was left to the poets to go looking for patronage elsewhere since she neither took on the role of a patron directly nor took anyone under her tutelage to fulfil any literary ambitions. As such, for Spenser, Raleigh was his patron and friend who offered him timely help and encouragement thus giving a fillip to his calling as a poet.

But though ever ready to praise the glories and virtues of his Queen, Spenser does not forget to remonstrate her for her errors of judgement. The poet makes a case for Raleigh, who appears as Timias in *The Faerie Queene*, when Elizabeth banished him to the Tower for marrying one of her maids-of-honour (Elizabeth Throckmorton). Spenser considered it a very stringent punishment to be inflicted on someone who had served the Queen with great loyalty and humility. The long years which Raleigh spent in prison were heart-rending not only for the prisoner but also the writer:

There he continued in this carefull plight,
Wretchedly wearing out his youthly yeares,
Through wilfull penury consumed quight,
That like a pined ghost he soon appears.

For other food then that wilde forrest beares,

Ne other drinke there did he ever tast

Then running water, tempred with his teares,

The more his weakened body so to wast:

That out of all mens knowledge he was worne at last.[81]

Spenser's empathy and sympathy for his fellow-poet is palpable. He must have understood the sorrow and wretchedness of the courtiers and poets who were most of the time sidelined and discarded by the royal virgin when there was no more need of them. Also, prominent courtiers like Raleigh and Leicester were dealt with firmly without any misgivings once the Queen realised that their love-affiliations had shifted to someone other than herself. Poets were castigated and ostracised without any qualms. In some ways, we can say that Elizabeth concerned herself most of the time with what her feminine and sometimes fickle heart wanted and in the process rode roughshod over the feelings of others. In Raleigh, Spenser discovered a patron and a well-wisher who was also a sympathetic and discriminating critic of the poet's works. Spenser, in most likelihood, understood the workings of Raleigh's heart and must have rightly thought what the latter felt for their Queen was not platonic love. Another significance can be ascertained when we view the love of Belphoebe (Elizabeth) and Timias (Raleigh) from a deeper perspective. The sexual overtones cannot be

missed. One who has seen a friend experiencing passionate love and longing for his beautiful mistress could only have inspired passages like the one below:

And eke by that he saw on every tree,
How he the name of one engraven had,
Which likely was his liefest love to be,
For whom he now so sorely was bestad;
Which was by him BELPHEBE rightly rad.
Yet who was that Belphebe, he ne wist;
Yet saw he often how he wexed glad,
When he it heard, and how the ground he kist,
Wherein it written was, and how himselfe he blist: [82]

The Queen's name was one way or the other engraved in Raleigh's heart and it would not be so far-fetched if we conclude that his 'liefest love', his dearest 'Belphebe's' name must have been written and rewritten by him inside his prison cell which was his 'home' for many years and besides 'he kist' the ground 'wherein it written was'. Raleigh could not dismiss his feelings for Elizabeth easily. His serious and stern demeanour was just a façade to hide his emotions and Spenser 'the poet's poet' was able to pierce through his armour and get a glimpse of the man who unbelievably seemed to have possessed a passionate and romantic soul as articulated vehemently in his very private poems like the *Ocean to Cynthia* which was never meant to be published.

It fell to this unhappy boy,

Whose tender heart the faire Belphebe had

With one sterne looke so daunted, that no ioy

In all his life, which afterwards he lad,

He ever tasted, but with penaunce sad

And pensive sorrow pind and wore away,

Ne ever laught, ne once shew'd countenance glad;

But alwaies wept and wailed night and day,

As blasted bloosme through heat doth languish and decay; [83]

Elizabeth may have brought peace and joy to many of her general public by delivering them from the atrocities of constant war and religious fanaticism. But the elite circle that surrounded her throne was subjected to immense political and emotional pressures triggered mostly by the Queen's character and charisma. Like a typical Petrarchan mistress Elizabeth first of all charmed her courtiers, suitors and poets with great sincerity of love and affection till they were putty in her hands. Her fickle heart turned capricious more often than not. Timias (Raleigh), 'this vnhappy boy, / Whose tender heart the faire *Belphebe* had' was one such besotted man whose happiness in life vanishes as he loses the Queen's favour He is excommunicated and ostracised from her circle of favourites In a way the Queen has taken the joy and laughter away from his life 'with one sterne looke'.

Raleigh must have 'always wept and wailed night and day' and shed many a silent tears in the Tower. His cup of life seemed to have been filled not with happiness and contentment but with tears and heartache.

A queen she was to me, no more Belphebe,
A lion then, no more a milk-white dove;
A prisoner in her breast I could not be;
She did untie the gentle chains of love.

Love was no more the love of hiding... [84]

In the lines above taken from his *Ocean to Cynthia* Raleigh writes about his unique love for the Queen. Earlier his love may have bordered on the passionate and the sexual, and had to be kept hidden from the public eye. Acknowledgement of it directly was most likely considered improper to the royal sensibilities of his mistress. The poet has now realised that Elizabeth, as his own 'Belphebe' was an unachievable prize of love. As a humble courtier, he can only woo her as a subject to a queen and not as a lover to a beloved. She may have untied 'the gentle chains of love' like a fountain of spring but he did not relish the thought of wallowing in self-pity because of unreciprocated love. Otherwise loving the Queen selflessly would leave him feeling like 'a prisoner in her breast', which the poet is determined, he 'could not be'. His impression of the Queen has also changed. He now no longer seems to regard the Queen as a symbol of gentle love as signified by the phrase 'a milk-white dove' The strength and character of his mistress

bears more resemblance to 'a lion's' than anything else. The poet-lover therefore appears to be easily subjugated when faced with the greater persona of the queen.

Ne any but your selfe, O dearest dred,
Hath done this wrong, to wreake on worthlesse wight
Your high displesure, through misdeeming bred:
That when your pleasure is to deeme aright,
Ye may redresse, and me restore to light.
Which sory words her mightie hart did mate
With mild regard, to see his ruefull plight,
That her inburning wrath she gan abate,
And him receiv'd againe to former favours state.[85]

Timias who bears a striking resemblance to the swashbuckling Raleigh is repentant and seeks forgiveness from his awe-inspiring queen for committing the unconscious blunder of falling in love with her. When viewed sympathetically, we are with the lovelorn poet for the latter had most probably been smitten not with Elizabeth the Queen but with Elizabeth the woman. Only after losing the virgin-monarch's favour and getting the cold- shoulder from her did the poet-lover-knight realise the enormity of the situation. He comes to believe that his suffering and heartache will be slightly mitigated only if he could continue to offer his loyal services to his Queen and in the meantime, worship and love her

from a distance. Elizabeth's 'mightie hart' melted at seeing the 'ruefull plight' of her courtier-poet and Raleigh was 'received againe to former favours state'. The poet has to be satisfied with a platonic kind of love since this is the only feeling or affection which Elizabeth, the virgin queen can allow. Love does not always have to be consummated. The love of Belphoebe and Timias is a striking parallel to the love of Elizabeth and Raleigh. Their relationship celebrates the marriage or coming together of virginity and heroic honour. In such ways, the Tudor Queen served as an afflatus to the courtier-poets of her reign. We can say that she monopolised the creative thoughts and sentiments of most of her subjects who all seemed to be poets in their hearts.

In Book V, Canto ix, of *The Faerie Queene,* Spenser without mincing his words quite blatantly and blisteringly heaves his condemnation on Mary Queen of Scots who appears as 'Duessa' in the epic. The poet narrates the events leading to her execution:

Then was there brought, as prisoner to the barre,
A Ladie of great countenance and place,
But that she it with foule abuse did marre;
Yet did appeare rare beautie in her face,
But blotted with condition vile and base,
That all her other honour did obscure,
And titles of nobilitie deface:

Yet in that wretched semblant, she did sure
The peoples great compassion vnto her allure

.. how this that seem'd so faire
And royally arayd, Duessa hight
That false Duessa, which had wrought great care,
And mickle mischiefe vnto many a knight,
By her beguyled, and confounded quight:
But not for those she now in question came,
Though also those mote question'd be aright,
But for vyld treasons, and outrageous shame,
Which she against the dred Mercilla oft did frame

. to depryve
mercilla of her crowne, by her aspired,
That she might it vnto her selfe deryve,
And tryumph in their blood, whom she to death did dryve.

But through high heavens grace, which favour not
The wicked driftes of trayterous desynes,
Gainst loiall Princes, all this cursed plot,
Ere proofe it tooke, discovered was betymes,

And th' actours won the meede meet for their crymes.

Such be the meede of all, that by such mene

Vnto the type of kingdomes title clymes.

But false Duessa now vntitled Queene,

Was brought to her sad doome, as here was to be seene.

Strongly did Zele her haynous fact enforce,

And many other crimes of foule defame

Against her brought, to banish all remorse,

And aggravate the horror of her blame.

And with him to make part against her, came

Many grave persons, that against her pled;

First was a sage old Syre, that had to name

The Kingdomes care, with a white silver hed,

That many high regards and reasons gainst her red.

Then gan Authority her to appose

With peremptorie powre, that made all mute;

And then the law of Nations gainst her rose,

And reasons brought, that no man could refute;

Next gan Religion gainst her to impute

High Gods beheast, and powre of holy lawes;

Then gan the Peoples cry and Commons sute,

Importune care of their owne publicke cause;

And lastly Iustice charged her with breach of lawes..

But she,whose Princely breast was touched nere

With piteous ruth of her so wretched plight,

Though plaine she saw by all, that she did heare,

That she of death was guiltie found by right,

Yet would not let iust vengeance on her light;

But rather let in stead thereof to fall

Few perling drops from her faire lampes of light;

The which she covering with her purple pall

Would have the passion hid, and vp arose withall.[86]

Mary Stuart was a person who loved creating an impact and thus attracted attention. Even as a captive princess, she maintained her proud mien. When she entered the great hall at Fotheringay (where she was subsequently beheaded on 8th Feb.1587) many present probably saw the 'rare beautie in her face' that shone despite the circumstances. She appeared before the audience calm and composed ready to seal her fate. But the poet's mind's eye could fathom an ugly and mean soul behind the false honour and piety, which even her beautiful face could not hide. As Spenser writes 'Yet in that wretched semblant, she did sure/ The peoples

great compassion vnto her allure'. Being a devout Catholic she made sure to let the audience and her sympathisers know that she had died not only in her faith but also for the cause of her faith. Thus playing on the feelings of the people- for she knew how one is vulnerable about one's religion- the Queen of Scots prepared herself for the last act to reach martyrdom remarking dramatically that in her end is her beginning. In a mysterious and spellbinding voice Mary Stuart prayed for the people of England, for the soul of Elizabeth; her royal cousin, and forgave all her enemies. Dressed shockingly from head to toe in blood red, the colour of martyrdom, the Queen at last met her doom.

Spenser further heaves his condemnation on Mary, Queen of Scots, the beautiful but 'false Duessa' (in his Book V, Canto ix. of *The Faerie Queene*) who brought torment and misfortune to 'many a knight' who were 'by her beguiled'. David Rizzio, the young and foolish Lord Darnley, the Earl of Bothwell, and the Duke of Norfolk were just a few of Mary Stuart's quarries who could not extricate themselves from her tempestuous beauty and charm, and in the process, fell into the bottomless pit of danger and death. But she was not brought to the gallows because of the above reasons though it could purportedly be added to the list of sins committed by her. Mary was only charged 'for vyld treasons, and outrageous shame, / Which she against the dred *Mercilla* oft did frame.' It was an open secret that there was no love lost between the Queen of Scots and the Tudor Queen. The former was for nearly three decades a thorn in the flesh of the Virgin Queen.

Mary tried every trick in her book to destroy and vanquish her cousin Elizabeth and these included making use of her lovers as well as her husbands (some names of which are given above) by pulling their emotional strings. She was led as a prisoner on the scaffold after being found guilty of

> "'stubborn...disobedience...incitement...to insurrection...against the life and person of her sacred majesty...high treason...'"[87]

And in this charge is included her conspiracy to subvert even the religion of England. She constantly conspired to oust 'the dred *Mercilla*' i.e., Queen Elizabeth, from the English throne for Mary, Queen of Scots, jealously 'aspired' the crown for herself.

Spenser goes on to say that God the Almighty always favours the good and 'loiall Princes' saving them from 'the wicked driftes of trayterous desynes'. The 'cursed plot' of overthrowing and destroying Queen Elizabeth was discovered before any harm could be done, and 'false *Duessa* now vntitled Queene' was thus brought to sad doom and defeat. The errant lady's crime was far from few. To remove any guilt or 'remorse' relating to her execution, 'many grave persons' and of high rank came forward to justify against her of which one 'was a sage old Syre' alluding most probably to the Lord Treasurer, the aged Burghley who along with Leicester, Hatton and Walsingham was Mary's bitterest enemies.

Mary, Queen of Scots' existence threatened not only the life of the Virgin Queen but also of every Londoner. It also put to risk the sanctity and safety of the state religion, i.e., Protestantism. According to A.C. Hamilton's interpretation of stanza 44 of Book V, Canto ix of *The Faerie Queene*, the Act of 1584 provided penalties against any attempt upon the person of the Queen. The Act gave the 'Authority' by which the rebel Queen of the Scots could be put on trial. Mary had also violated 'the law of Nations' by joining a conspiracy against Elizabeth [the Babington (Anthony) plot is a case in point] who was the head of a foreign state. And to protect the Protestant faith, 'Religion' demanded the death of Mary (who was a devout Catholic). Elizabeth's councillors had been begging and beseeching her collectively and individually by using all the arts and arguments at their command to get the Queen's stamp and signature on Mary Stuart's death warrant. She finally signed on the paper which her newly appointed Secretary, Mr William Davison, had been keeping by him just in case the Queen changed her mind or her Council succeeded in wearing down her resistance. The Queen must have deeply regretted this one act of weakness but we cannot overlook the fact that it was a matter of life or death for her. Further most of her subjects were pleased that their Queen was now no more in constant peril of her life.

According to Spenser, when news of Mary's execution reached Elizabeth, she appeared to be genuinely sorry for her cousin's 'wretched plight' for it seems the Queen had obliquely warned Davison not to go in for a public execution. The

latter was sent to The Tower for confinement, fined (ten thousand marks), and Elizabeth promised greater and more severe punishment. All this seem to have been merely a convincing act, an eyewash to stem the immediate criticism and condemnation which came flowing from across the English shores especially from Catholic nations like Spain and France. Because Davison, though stripped of his post, was set free after eighteen months when the tempest had subsided. He was remitted of the entire heavy fine levied against him and he also went on drawing his salary as Secretary.

There is another account, which says that the Virgin Queen did not show any emotion when news of Mary's execution reached her. Spenser remarks that she may have hidden her private tears, the 'few perling drops from her faire lampes of light' behind 'her purple pall,' i.e., behind the public figure. Since there is no doubt that Elizabeth Tudor must have gone through countless hesitations, introspections and self-consultations before signing the warrant. And after the execution she may have realised that she had led her head rule more than her heart in this matter. Since her sister Mary Tudor's reign, Elizabeth had learned to guard her emotions. The depth of her feelings can therefore just be conjectured.

Reading Book V of *The Faerie Queene*, James VI of Scotland was neither amused nor impressed. He considered it blasphemous and an insult to his mother who was executed in 1587, and had demanded unsuccessfully that the poet be

punished. Spenser was protected by the greater power of the English Court and the Queen's power then operating over the poetry of the times. One cannot also dismiss Spenser's claim that Elizabeth was the epic's chief subject and inspiration. Elizabeth as the guiding spirit of the age is discussed in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER IV

ELIZABETH: The Spirit of the Epoch

ELIZABETH: The Spirit of the Epoch

"Her name recorded I will leave forever"
***(Colin Clout's Come Home Againe,* Edmund Spenser)**

The age was named after Elizabeth: there can be no greater achievement than this for the Queen and her poets as their name is recorded for posterity. It was her talent and subtle mind that gave her name to a brilliant and dazzling age. The Elizabethan Age is famous not only for its fecundity in the field of literature but also for its daring adventures. Besides the great Shakespeare is the other equally unforgettables: Spenser and Raleigh.

The inspiration behind the great achievements of this age is largely due to the imaginative temper, which the reign of Elizabeth provided. She was the presiding spirit nourishing and protecting it. Even the privateering and daredevil maritime enterprises were carried out with her tacit approval. In fact, the Queen became a living icon, a deity who ruled England for almost forty-five long years. She understood that she had to win the love of her people because she had nothing to depend on having inherited a throne, a kingdom beset with many worries: its coffers empty, lurking foreign dangers, a greedy and ambitious nobility, to name only a few. England, at this time, was surrounded by a ring of watchful enemies with not a single friend or ally. She had to depend only on her woman's wit to tackle all these problems one by one. She had succeeded in creating an environment where her subjects sang her praises with great fervour and

enthusiasm and Elizabeth consciously encouraged this. It may indicate vanity, selfishness and calculation but it was the only way she could tame her tumultuous people. She understood that being a woman she could not rule them by force but by the intricate arts of love and by bestowing them with sincere affection. Elizabeth's courtiers and subjects were not less intelligent than their queen. Their bravado, pluck and gutsy determination to achieve great miracles mirrored that of their monarch. As Garrett Mattingly write:

> '"Elizabeth was not the mistress but the mother of the temper we call Elizabethan, and she was as little able as most mothers to estimate her offspring. To the daring they had from her they added a determination of their own, a flaming imagination, which was none of hers, and a thrust of ambition, it would tax her to control. It delighted Elizabeth to see her subjects sailing impudently in Oceans claimed for Spain.... It amused Elizabeth to keep the ground on which her cousin Philip stood in the Low Countries so shifting and precarious that it would never do for a springboard to her Island, but she could sympathize as little with the temper which yearned to crusade against the Catholics because they were Catholics as she could with Cousin Philip's determination to burn Protestants because they were Protestants"'.[1]

Elizabeth's court provided an intellectual and stylish environment that helped greatly in stimulating the minds of her poets and courtiers. The Court in those days was what a University is in contemporary times. The Elizabethan court provided the poet a language and a fixed code of behaviour together with a cultivated and sophisticated audience. Like the court of Henry VIII (the Queen's father), it was sometimes dangerous, brutal and unpredictable but posterity

records greater fertility, sophistication and sanity of the court under Elizabeth. The improved economic conditions during the Tudor Queen's reign brought forth many related advancements in the life of her people. The number of bureaucracy multiplied, there was extravagance and wastefulness, and the positive aspect of it is that it increased the diligent and serious-minded writing. The vital connection between economic prosperity, the Court, and literature cannot be missed. England though late on the scene, could amass her fortunes from Africa, Asia and the Americas through her efficient commercial navy. Burghley's monumental structure, Wootton Lodge, which reeked of lavish extravagance, is just one of the many ostentatious buildings founded on merciless exploitations of slave labour, raw materials, and piracy. But there was great music and poetry in these big houses, which almost became like mini-courts where they could entertain the Queen as well as themselves.

Elizabeth's courtiers achieved milestones in the years between 1587 and 1588. They could carve out a name for themselves and their Queen in history with their stupendous victory over Philip's Armada. But Elizabeth also had the thankless task of controlling the enthusiasm and reckless dispositions of some of her knights. The firebrand Sir Francis Drake and the zealot builder, John Hawkins had their way most of the time. Sir Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth's Principal Secretary of State and Drake's patron kept the latter informed of developments at home. The Queen, we can be fairly sure, did not like the idea of war, especially

with Spain. She longed for peace during the Armada years. Unlike most princes of her age, she was sensitive to the economic woes of her subjects and also not ignorant of the connection between general prosperity and the royal revenues. Elizabeth had to behave like a close-fisted wife only to save her country from utter doom. The wars with Ireland, Spain and the Low Countries had left the royal coffers almost empty. The Queen would probably have shunned war had it been solely in her hands. Not because she was afraid but because this 'protestant heroine' prayed only for peace and to be mistress of her own and her country's fate. Elizabeth had more 'stomach' than her father. That she took deliberate and a calculated risk of her person (her open public processions prove this) says enough. She detested the unpredictability of war. 'Good Queen Bess' knew that war leads only to destruction and darkness, whether one is in the victory camp or not. She had not given the go-ahead to attack the Armada may be because of other preoccupations like the fate of Mary, Queen of Scots, who had been executed just a few months earlier (Feb 8th 1587). Whether she finally gave the order to attack the Armada is still shrouded in mystery that was highly characteristic of Elizabeth as an administrator. We may call it just ruse or plain diplomacy since:

> '"To suppress an unpleasant argument and arrange to have it refuted, to hold out one hand in friendship and keep a sword in the other, to follow at the same time two apparently irreconcilable lines of policy and play two contradictory roles with such histrionic gusto that even old friends never quite knew earnest from acting, this was how, by choice or by what she thought necessity, Elizabeth-I regularly played the game of high politics. Even in the thirtieth year of her reign, when the Queen's ambiguities

> cannot have been altogether unexpected, they continued to confuse not only her enemies but also her servants and advisers. People were puzzled at the time, and many have been puzzled ever since..."[2]

Sore at the loss of Calais and with her powerful enemy, Spain, facing her across the sea, Elizabeth was extra careful in keeping her shores well guarded. By 1588, she became the mistress of the most powerful navy Europe had ever seen. Her experienced and gallant 'sea-dogs' made sure that the English shores were manned with powerful fighting ships or 'galleons'. Elizabeth gave a good example of unselfish leadership. Her needs were almost first and foremost those of the nation and her motive was not private profit. Below is Thomas Deloney's impression of the Queen's visit to the camp at Tilbury on the eve of the sailing of the Spanish Armada:

Her faithful souldiers, great and small,
As each one stood within his place,
Upon their knees began to fall,
Beseeching God to save her Grace.
For joy whereof her eyes was filled,
That the water down distilled.
Lord bless you all, my friends, she said,
But do not kneel so much to me:

Then sent she warning to the rest

They should not let such reverence be.

Then casting up her princely eyes

Unto the hill with perfect sight,

The ground all covered she espies,

With feet of armed soldiers bright.

Whereat her royal heart so leapt,

On her feet upright she step.

Tossing up her plume of feathers,

To them all as they did stand:

Cheerfully her body bending,

Waving of her royal hand

Then came the Queen on prancing steed,

Attired like an angel bright:

And eight brave footmen at her feet,

Whose jerkins were most rich in sight.

Her ladies, likewise of great honour,

Most sumptuously did wait upon her,

With pearls and diamonds brave adorned,

And in costly cales of gold:

Her Guard in scarlet then ride after,

With bows and arrows stout and bold . [3]

Lending momentum to the spirit of participation, the Queen and her whole escort advanced into the ranks of the militia, who were very delighted and encouraged to see her. She spent two days at Tilbury, i.e., on 8th and 9th August 1588 and was accompanied by the Earl of Ormonde and Sir John Norris, and flanked on her sides by her two most dashing and handsome knights: her Captain-General Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester and her Master of the Horse, the twenty- three year old Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex. To suit the martial occasion and like the cavaliers on either side of her, the above-fifty Queen rode bare- headed with just her red wig ('her plume of feathers') slightly askew, a sheen of pearls and the glitter of diamonds in her hair. Her subjects were touched by this act of their Queen. They did not see a scraggy spinster with black teeth dangling a toy sword but an illumination. They saw instead Judith and Esther, Gloriana and Belphoebe, Minerva the wise protectress, Diana the virgin huntress and in their most favourite picture, their very own beloved Queen and Mistress who had arrived at this hour of tension and danger in all simplicity and trust. The above poem speaks of the feverish enthusiasm and wild protest of devotion of her subjects at so touching a gesture on the Queen's part. It was on her second day's visit that she delivered the famous Tilbury speech to her subjects.

I am come amongst you,

As you see at this time,

Not for my recreation and disport,

But being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle,

To live or die amongst you all;

To lay down for my God,

And for my Kingdom,

And for my people,

My honour and my blood

Even in the dust.

I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman,

But I have the heart and stomach of a king,

And of a king of England too !

And think foul scorn that Parma or Spain,

Or any prince of Europe,

Should dare to invade the borders of my realm! [4]

Elizabeth was able to provide stability to her nation, thereby making it greater and stronger than it had been. In her repertory of achievements can be included good governance, substitution of tolerance for cruelty and law for violence, and above all is her success in 'managing men' It was because of her marvelous political acumen and talent as an administrator that her reign saw an advance in civilization There were fewer state executions as compared to the

earlier regimes (even when compared to those of her father). Elizabeth's few high-ranking victims of the scaffold (like Mary, Queen of Scots, and the Earl of Essex) were all fairly convicted of substantial plotting and rebellion to mortally harm the Queen and therefore to overthrow the state by dislodging her power.

In his *Hymns of Astraea*, Sir John Davies elevates Elizabeth and compares her to Astraea, the goddess of justice and daughter of Zeus and Themis. Just like the goddess, the poet considers Elizabeth to be the last of the immortals to leave mankind at the end of the golden age. In the meantime,

Exil'd Astraea is come again,
Lo, here she doth all things maintain
In number, weight and measure:
She rules us with delightful pain,
And we obey with pleasure.

By Love she rules more than by Law,
Even her great mercy breedeth awe:
This is her sword and sceptre:
Herewith she hearts did ever draw,
And this guard ever kept her.

Reward doth sit in her right hand,

Each Virtue thence takes her garland,

Gather'd in honour's garden:

In her left hand, wherein should be

Nought but the sword, sits Clemency,

And conquers Vice with pardon. [5]

Thus, the Elizabethan age was an age of enterprise and new ideas. England laid its first big step into becoming a world power during the reign of the Tudor Queen. There was an impetus, a powerful national drive to achieve greater glories not only in the European arena but the whole world. It would be wrong if we say that Elizabeth initiated these developments but she definitely approved. Her main concern at this stage was to secure the conditions for advancements than with promoting it. She left it to her courtiers, knights and her '*sea-dogs*' to realize their collective ambitions. It cannot however be forgotten that Elizabeth, like a good king, made it her own task to ensure that they survived to achieve their ambitions, especially considering the grave dangers her naval officers faced in the perlious waters of the high seas. Davies again writes:

Cynthia, Queen of seas and lands,

That fortune everywhere commands,

Sent forth Fortune to the sea,

To try her fortune everyway.

There did I Fortune meet which makes me now to sing,

There is no fishing to the sea, nor service to the king.

All the nymphs of Thetis' train

Did Cynthia's fortune entertain.

Many a jewel, many a gem,

Was to her fortune brought by them.

Her fortune sped so well, as makes me now to sing,

There is no fishing to the sea, nor service to the king.

Fortune, that it might be seen,

That she did serve a royal queen,

A frank and royal hand did bear,

And cast her favours everywhere.

Some toys fell to my share, which makes me now to sing,

There is no fishing to the sea, nor service to the king.[6]

Her poets never tired of eulogizing her beauty of character and statesmanship The success of her reign is repeatedly and humbly attributed to her. She ruled them with love and mercy and gave them justice and peace as rewards for goodness. Though Elizabeth's England remained impregnable, the world was no longer so "'There is no land unhabitable nor sea innavigable'" [7] were what Robert Thorne had written when the century was young It was however the Elizabethans who were the first to print his words and seek to make them good

Theirs was a slow start but gained momentum with time and progress. The first ten years of Elizabeth's reign was dedicated to just preparation while real achievement came ten years later. The Queen was given a share of any booty her seamen captured. This is the *'fortune'*, which Sir John Davies is most probably talking of.

Elizabeth was considered as a topos of modesty. In the Proem to Book III of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser writes that he had no need to look for '*forreine ensamples*' to write of chastity since it is indelibly imprinted in his '*soueraines brest*'. Elizabeth's haloed figure is reflected in more than one mirror. In *The Faerie Queene*, she is, as mentioned elsewhere, described variously as Una, Belphoebe, Britomart, Mercilla, and Gloriana. Since Elizabeth remains unwedded, the union of Arthur and Gloriana does not take place. Spenser possibly meant Elizabeth and Gloriana to be allegorical alter egos. The splendid words with which Davies, like Spenser, sings of her glories and achievements are remarkable:

What Musick shall we make to you?
To whom the strings of all men's hearts
Make music of ten thousand parts:
In tune and measure true,
With strains and changes new.

How shall we frame a harmony

Worthy your ears, whose princely hands

Keep harmony in sundry lands:

Whose people diverse be,

In station and degree?

Heaven's tunes may only please,

And not such airs as these.

For you which down from heaven are sent

Such peace upon the earth to bring,

Have heard the quire of angels sing:

And all the spheres consent,

Like a sweet instrument.[8]

Most of the poems, written on the Queen, bordered on the purely erotic. Poets like Raleigh and Spenser were also courtiers paying court to their sovereign. There were moments when relations were strained between monarch and subject, moments when two similar personalities clash on issues and viewpoints. Raleigh, without doubt, was an extraordinary man of many gifts. Though he wrote intermittently, there are touches of genius in his small body of poems. Poetry played a small but significant part in his life. The fragmentary eleventh book of *Ocean's Love to Cynthia* was written when in prison to win back the Queen's favour. Poets chiefly wrote poems either for its therapeutic effect or to regain the

Queen's goodwill and affection Raleigh's poem expounds this weird convention of Elizabeth's court He pretends to be hopelessly in love with the Queen burning with passion and contrition Though in fact the poem becomes a gradual exploration of the courtly ceremony, the high ambition and scheming to which he has entangled himself It becomes an emotional, spiritual as well as a personal trial:

> *When she did well, what did there else amiss?*
> *When she did ill, what empires could have pleased?*
> *No other power affecting woe, or bliss,*
> *She gave, she took, she wounded, she appeased.*[9]

Spenser's greatest achievement lies in that his epic, *The Faerie Queene* is the greatest poem of the age Fusing medieval romance with Italian epic, the poem is also indebted to Chaucer and Malory What is most important is that the age itself regarded Spenser as its representative poet and recognised his greatness. Unlike Raleigh, Spenser's life basically revolved around poetry, which was a vocation for which he prepared himself consciously and reverentially He was a less adventurous person than Raleigh but did not play spoilsport. Spenser understood that the Elizabethans demanded action and excitement and he did not dishearten them *The Faerie Queene* provided all these and more It was a celebration of the achievements and rewards which the age received The whole six books was dedicated to the 'Empress' in 1596 and Spenser for this gift was

awarded an annual pension of fifty pounds (Burghley is said to have halved the pension of hundred pounds that the Queen had allowed) though he did not live long to enjoy it having died at the young age of forty-six. He did not forget to mention the contributions of his well-wishers who had wished him well during his lifetime in his Dedicatory Sonnets (Refer to A.C Hamilton's *The Faerie Queene,* pp741-43). Lord Grey, the Artegall of the *The Faerie Queene* and Spenser's patron is eulogised as " *the pillor of my life, And Patrone of my Muses pupillage*". Spenser considered Elizabeth's master-spy Sir Francis Walsingham as " *the great Mecenas of this age*". And Raleigh, the person who introduced him to the Queen, was hailed as "*the Sommers Nightingale, Thy soveraine Goddesses most deare delight.*" Last but not the least, living upto his gallant self, Spenser did not forget to include in his paean of praises "*all the gratious and beautifull Ladies in the Court*" especially the 'Countesse of Penbroke' (who was also the poet Philip Sidney's sister) "*who first my Muse did lift out of the flore*". Even George Peele is not behind in his praise of his fellow countrymen who had served their Queen and country and had contributed to the developments and achievements of the age. For instance, in the poem *A Farewell to Sir John Norris and Sir Francis Drake* written in around 1589, he writes:

> *You follow noble Norris, whose renown,*
> *Won in the fertile fields of Belgia,*
> *Spreads by the gates of Europe to the courts*
> *Of Christian kings and heathen potentates.*

You fight for Christ, and England's peerless queen,

Elizabeth, the wonder of the world,

Over whose throne the enemies of God

Have thunder'd erst their vain successless braves.

O, ten times treble happy men, that fight

Under the cross of Christ and England's queen,

And follow such as Drake and Norris are! [10]

The poets of Elizabeth's England, unlike those of more modern times, were mainly men of high fortune and rank. Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Walter Raleigh are the examples of such aristocratic poets. The former was the son of a Lord Deputy of Ireland, and the nephew of the Earls of Warwick and of Leicester. The latter, meanwhile, was one of the Queen's favourites for a long time. Raleigh held the position of Captain of the Guard, Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall, Lord Warden of the Stannaries, and Governor of Jersey. People with fortune and those belonging to the governing class provided the literary climate as well as produced the bulk of literature of the day The highest officials occupying responsible positions were the ones who made time to write and contribute to the literary coffers of the time. However, there were some poets who were less fortunate and had to look for patronage to salvage their poetic careers Spenser can be cited as an example It is common knowledge that *'the poet's poet'* wrote with the intention of fulfilling his desire of gaining access to the Queen and thus furthering

his career prospects. Elizabeth too did not dishearten her poets who all along played constant courtiership with her. She welcomed the propaganda, the mystery surrounding her. This Tudor Queen wanted to be talked about and discussed in all circles. Elizabeth's several processions may have been a deliberate campaigning on her part to keep alive the aura of a supernatural being which her people considered her to be. And her poets like Raleigh and Spenser helped her in this. It is important to mention in this connection about the obvious patronage given by royalty even in the later successive reigns of other monarchs to enhance their popularity and stature. Dryden wrote *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) to gain the favour of James II while as Poet Laureate *The Medal* or *A Satire Against Sedition* is said to be written on the behest of Charles II. In some ways, poems in this context become complimentary verses or courtly panegyrics.

The Virgin Queen had made two significantly determined decisions after ascending the throne: firstly, never to marry and share her power with a husband and secondly, never to appoint or even name a successor as long as she lived. When the issue of her marriage and her naming a successor was raised in the '*Commons House*' in 1566, Her Majesty had replied,

> **"'There were occasion in me that time I stood in danger of my life, my sister was so incensed against me: I did differ from her in religion, and I was sought for divers ways. So shall never my successor be."'**[11]

To reiterate what has been said earlier, the Queen was well versed in the Greek and Latin classics and she was fluent in her French and Italian. Elizabeth did not believe in wasting time. Following the footsteps of the few previous translators before such as King Alfred, Chaucer and Caxton, the Queen translated works like Boethius *De Consolatione Philosophiae (1593)* into English, said to have been completed in seventeen days. Even in old age she had an astonishingly huge retentive memory. The nobility and strength of character with which she ruled her kingdom can be seen in the following poem composed by the Queen herself:

The doubt of future foes exiles my present joy,
And with me warns to shun such snares as threaten mine annoy.
For falsehood now doth flow and subject faith doth ebb,
Which would not be, if reason ruled or wisdom weaved the web...

No foreign banished wight shall anchor in this port;
Our realm it brooks no stranger's force, let them elsewhere resort.
Our rusty sword with rest shall first his edge employ
To poll their tops that seeks such change and gape for joy. [12]

Most of her councilors agreed with Robert Beale, the experienced clerk of the Privy Council that she was a "'princess of great wisdom, learning and experience," and Sir John Harington "never did find greater show of understanding and learning than she was blessed with."'[13] The Queen was in her

fifty-sixth year when she composed the above poem. She must have been besetted with many worries relating to her realm and rule. The younger generation around her like Essex must have considered her to be already in her dotage and it must also have irked them to see only elderly men like Sir William Cecil (Lord Burghley since 1571) and Sir Francis Knollys virtually monopolising the key positions around the Queen. The uncertainty over the royal succession was also over since Elizabeth had passed the child-bearing stage. All these issues must have preyed on her mind since she poignantly writes, "*The doubt of future foes exiles my present joy*". At this point we cannot forget that Leicester, the most important man in Elizabeth's life had breathed his last (1588). It was only to him that she had given her lifelong fidelity, and to be skeptical, Elizabeth may have promised Leicester that she would never marry anyone if circumstances did not allow him to be her husband. The key to their mutual attraction was most likely due to the fact that they were born on the same day of the same year with destiny and the stars playing matchmakers.

A few lines later in the poem we see a resurgence in the Queen's confidence. She will not let any foreign intruder into her "*port*", her "*realm*". She will save and protect her country and her people till the end. In her heart and outwardly too, it can be sure, she gave due thanks to her advisers. Elizabeth had an uncanny ability to choose only men of the greatest merit as her chief servants. We may also call her extremely lucky to have such talented men living in those

times to choose from. Though Elizabeth Tudor spent lesser on patronage than either her father Henry VIII or her successor James I, she seems to have achieved instant acclamation and far more glory during and after her lifetime than the former two. She became, as we have seen, the subject matter and inspiration for many poets and writers. The Queen in fact expected her nobles and courtiers to do the needful, i.e., to promote the various poets and writers. And her feelings were respected. The propagandist stance of poets like Spenser can hardly be missed. The patronage system propelled the cultural power, which existed in a big way, in the Elizabethan court. There was a great struggle for political as well as cultural power in the court of Elizabeth since both these powers, political as well as cultural, were interlinked. Just like the Queen's poem that was earlier discussed, it was not always music and celebration for other poets and writers too. There were moments when the courtly glitter and compliments could not hide the struggle and subjugation-mental and intellectual, which the writers had experienced in their desire for achievement and advancement. In *The Historie of the World* (1614), Walter Raleigh has to say this:

> **"so many worthy and wise men depend on so many unworthy and emptie-headed fooles; that riches and honour are given to externall men, and without kernell: and so many learned, vertuous, and valiant men weare out their lives in poore and dejected estates..... For whosoever shall tell any great man or Magistrate, that he is not just, the Generall of an Armie, that he is not valiant, and great ladies that they are not faire, shall never be made a Counseller, a Captaine, or a Courtier.... It is also a token of a worldly wise man, not to warre or contend in vaine against the nature of times**

wherein ne liveth: for such a one is often the authour of his owne miserie..."[14]

In Spenser, the dissatisfaction and disaffection with courtly life can be best glimpsed from his work published after 1590 (and we can exclude here the first three books of *The Faeire Queene,* published in 1590). *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* was dedicated to Raleigh in 1591 and was first published in 1595. Spenser uses the analogy of Colin's return to rustic life from his sojourn to the Queen's court. We see his illusions of perfect courtly life being shattered. In the poem, compliment and dispraise is juggled with great finesse. On one hand, he celebrates the singular sophistication and splendor of the Queen and her court and on the other hand he is critical of the corruption and artificial veneer of this society. According to the poet, the thirst for power, position and wealth has turned the courtiers to cheats and malcontents and hence "*it is no sort of life, / For shepheard fit to lead*". [15] Spenser is called 'sage and serious' and this may be true. The circumstances of life seem to have made him so. His poetic achievement aside, an admirable quality detected in Spenser is his courage in articulating and putting forward his personal views on certain issues. In '*Prosopopoia: Or Mother Hubberds Tale*', he not only criticizes courtly life but also denounces Elizabeth's impending marriage to the French Duke, Alencon who was twenty years her junior. The poet goes a step forward and without any qualms depicts one of the Queen's favourite counsellor, Lord Burghley, in the picture of a scheming and

wily fox. Burghley was supporting the match while Spenser's patron Leicester was against it. Certainly he may have been reprimanded or censured for this.

The extract below from Spenser's '*Mother Hubberds Tale: OR Prosopopoia*', which was written under the category of 'Complaints', reads more like a Raleigh poem in its intensity and heartache:

Full little knowest thou that hast not tride,
What hell it is in suing long to bide:
To loose good dayes, that might be better spent;
To wast long nights in pensive discontent;
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow,
To feed on hope, to pine with feare and sorrow
To fret thy soule with crosses and with cares;
To eate thy heart through comfortlesse dispaires;
To fawne, to crowche, to waite, to ride, to ronne,
To spend, to give, to want, to be undonne.
Unhappie wight, borne to desastrous end,
That doth his life in so long tendance spend! [16]

We therefore find Spenser decrying the functioning of the court and its system quite occasionally Speaking from his own experience and seeing others too (like Raleigh) going through the same ordeal, the poet knew about the tension created

by the excruciatingly long wait for preferment, for recognition and advancement in the Queen's court He admits that there are some virtuous characters (meaning Raleigh, Leicester, etc) in the court of 'Gloriana' but the good qualities of these few people were not sufficient to compensate for the vices prevalent in the sixteenth-century court All this notwithstanding, Spenser is all praise for Elizabeth, his Queen He is determined to record her name for posterity

For when I think of her, as oft I ought,
Then want I words to speak it fitly forth:
And when I speak of her what I have thought,
I cannot think according to her worth:
Yet will I think of her, yet will I speak,
So long as life my limbs do hold together:
And when as death these vital bands shall break,
Her name recorded I will leave forever.
Her name in every tree I will enclose,
That as the trees do grow, her name may grow:
And in the ground each where it will engross,
And fill with stones, that all men it may know.
The speaking woods and murmuring waters' fall
Her name I'll teach in knowen terms to frame
And eke my lands, when for their dams they call,

I'll teach to call for Cynthia by name.

And long while after I am dead and rotten,

Amongst the shepherd's daughters dancing round,

My layes made of her shall not be forgotten,

But sung by them with flowery garlands crown'd. [17]

The Tudor Queen's intelligent decision of gifting Spenser the annual pension of fifty pounds had gifted her much more in return-in terms of laurels. Elizabeth was able to achieve undying glory not only for her successful reign of forty –five long years but also because of the contribution put forward by her poets like Spenser, in whose poems the Queen emerges as a living, breathing and vibrant figure. The '*poet's poet*' decides to leave Cynthia's (Elizabeth's) imprints in the minds of future generations even after he is *"dead and rotten."* Because of political loyalty and usefulness of patronage, Spenser eulogizes the Queen to the extreme but criticizes the moral corruption of Elizabeth's royal bastion (her court).

The fact that Spenser was able to sustain such a lengthy work like *The Faerie Queene* (which contain Book-I to Book VI and Two Cantos of Mutability considered as Book VII) was an achievement without which the flowering of the nineties would not have been possible. This can be said to be Spenser's greatest contribution to the development of English poetry. His poetry was concerned with

education of the self, and of educating others. It was aesthetic as well as moralistic. The poetic achievements of other poets of the eighties and nineties were of a similar kind. Raleigh, Spenser, Lyly and Sidney wrote about the arts of courtship, which was for most of them synonymous with the art of living. All the poets mentioned seems to have admired and respected each other.

Spenser was not a courtier in the real sense but he was a poet who thought and wrote like a courtier. Raleigh on the other hand, was first and foremost a courtier who played the game of courtship and courtiership to the hilt. He was a multi-faceted personality; an adventurer, explorer, colonist, poet, historian, diplomatist, warrior, navigator and courtier. He can be said to be one of the Queen's most learned courtier. He was an avid reader and writer all throughout his life. Raleigh wrote his famous prose-work, *The History of the World*, during his long period of imprisonment. The bulk of his poetry of which only a few survive was written when his courtly '*career*' was at its peak and fortune and relationship with the Queen favourable.

> **' "He had in the outward man a good presence, in a handsome and well compacted person, a strong naturall wit, and a better Judgement, with a bold and plausible tongue, whereby he could set out his parts to the best advantage, and these he had by the adjuncts of some generall learning, which by diligence, he enforced to a great augmentation, and perfection, for he was an indefattigable reader..."** [18]

The swashbuckling Raleigh entered the court of the Virgin Queen as a protégé of Leicester in 1581 and gradually became a great favourite of Elizabeth who knighted him in appreciation in 1584 in which year he also discovered and claimed Virginia (earlier called Roanoke) during an expedition to America. His commercial enterprises enriched not only himself but also his country. He was a seaman swayed by imperialist ideas who soon after his release from the Tower (imprisoned by the Queen from 1592 to 1595 because of his relationship with her maid-of-honour Elizabeth Throckmorton) set sail in 1595 to South America in search of Eldorado, the fabled city of gold. To reiterate, his life reads like an adventure story but with an unhappy ending. Raleigh's life and poetry are one. The road to achievement was not easy. He definitely used poetry as a means to clamber for position in the Queen's court. His poems echo the sentiments of every Elizabethan courtier. Raleigh experienced first-hand the uncertainty and the precariously dangerous nature of court life. But despite all the hardships, he achieved a lot by dint of his varied talents. Though he enjoyed the favour of the Queen for almost a whole decade, i.e., from 1582 to 1592, and

> **' "though he gained much at the court, he tooke it not out of the Exchequor, or meerely out of the Queenes purse but by his wit, and by the helpe of the prerogative, for the Queene was never profuse in delivering out of her treasure, but payd most and many of her Servants, part in money, and the rest with grace...." ' [19]**

We can agree with the above statement of Sir Robert Naunton. Raleigh may have gained power and prestige from his alliance with the Queen and her court but he also gave back much in return. Elizabeth was made richer by the share of booty given to her that Raleigh accumulated from his buccaneering expeditions especially from Spanish ships. But destiny repeatedly ill-treated this melancholic man who was not once but thrice imprisoned for misguided reasons, first by his beloved Queen and then later, on the latter's death, by James I. The courtier-poet did not particularly admire Elizabeth's successor (James I) but he unreservedly loved the Virgin Queen and this can be gleaned from the voluble and articulate expressiveness of his poems, especially in his fragmentary epic *Ocean to Cynthia*:

> *... the eyes of my mind held her beams.*
> *In every part transferred by love's swift thought;*
> *Far off or near, in waking or in dreams,*
> *Imagination strong their lustre brought...*
>
> *My weary limbs her memory embalmed;*
> *My darkest ways her eyes made clear as day.*
> *What storms so great but Cynthia's beams appeased?*
> *What rage so fierce, that love could not allay?* [20]

In almost all his poems Raleigh adopted the typical pose of a Petrarchan lover His works also tells us that the road to achievement was not easy for him

We can glimpse the inner struggle of the proud and haughty man being subjected to authority and the demands and dominance of the court. His poems were mainly efforts to gain back the Queen's favour and thus regain the power and influence that he earlier had enjoyed. In his *Ocean to Cynthia*, Raleigh not wrongly writes of his long and devoted service to his Queen. The poem is also a telling account of Elizabeth's treatment of her courtiers. The poet is frank about his feelings. The joy and sadness of court life is described passionately. Raleigh writes:

Twelve years entire I wasted in this war,
Twelve years of my most happy younger days;
But I in them, and they now wasted are,
'Of all which past the sorrow only stays.'

So wrote I once, and my mishap foretold,
My mind still feeling sorrowful success,
Even as before a storm the marble cold
Doth by moist tears tempestuous times express.[21]

The poet's melancholy is not without reason. He had served the Queen for twelve long years (1580-1592) but the rewards he received were disgrace and imprisonment. Raleigh understood that power corrupts but he also realizes his inability to sacrifice the glories of office He laments the fact that Elizabeth has wiped away from her memory the faithful office he had rendered her for more

than a decade But the poet makes excuses for his Queen and like a selfless devotee chants·

'I have loved her all my youth,
But now old as you see,
Love likes not the falling fruit
From the withered tree

'But love is a durable fire
In the mind ever burning;
Never sick, never old, never dead,
From itself never turning.'[22]

Fascinated by the Queen, Raleigh had played the courtly game of a Petrarchan lover wooing his iron-hearted mistress for a long time. But suddenly, love was no longer a game for him. For cupid had struck him for good this time in the shape of Elizabeth Throckmorton. Frustrated and anguished, his patience snapped and Raleigh finally secretly married his beloved to the utter chagrin and great displeasure of Elizabeth Tudor and this act resulted in his consequent fall from grace At this point, he must have been thoroughly disillusioned by the power politics prevalent in court The above lines from his poem *Walsinghame* (or '*As you came from the Holy Land*') speaks volumes about his sentiments but Raleigh the poet still seemed optimistic about the durability of the power of love

The political and melancholic tone of the lines can also not be missed. He is now assured that escaping from the painful realities of life into romantic illusions is futile and meaningless. One has not only to grin and bear it but also face it bravely and tirelessly.

Though Raleigh was not a prolific writer of poems, his importance and achievement in the field of poetry is no less meagre. The two-dozen surviving poems bear his individual stamp. His short lyrics, as we have seen, vibrate with a passionate intensity thus reflecting with fearful clarity the tempestuous nature of the man and the raw deal which life meted out to him. The psychological and the mental pressure exerted by the Elizabethan court, and the struggle of the individual caught in the courtly system is expressed in this beautiful poem of 'Farewell to the Court' (1593):

Like truthless dreams, so are my joys expired,
And past return are all my dandled days;
My love misled, and fancy quite retired,
Of all which past, the sorrow only stays.

My lost delights, now clean from sight of land,
Have left it all alone in unknown ways;
My mind to woe, my life in fortune's hand,

Of all which past, the sorrow only stays.

As in a country strange without companion,

I only wail the wrong of death's delays,

Whose sweet spring spent, whose summer well nigh done,

Of all which past, the sorrow only stays;

Whom care forewarns, ere age and winter cold,

To haste me hence, to find my fortune's fold.[23]

Raleigh's poem seems to be basically concerned with self-consolation, healing and restoration, mainly for its therapeutic effect. Reading his poems, one can almost sense the release of tension, the smoothening of his puckered brow, and freedom from some of the grueling and pessimistic thoughts which men of his temperament and that too in a jailed and failed condition usually suffer. The above lines are a telling comment on the disfigurement and dislocation of life which advancing age heralds. With the loss of youth and beauty, the reputation and favour at court too became doubtful and insecure, and the fate of one's life depended on the whims of an aging Queen who preferred the company of courtiers with youth and beauty like Robert Devereux (the Earl of Essex).

Sir Walter Raleigh was a complete Elizabethan with a huge intellectual appetite The misfortunes in his life shaped him as a man He bitterly realized,

though a little late, the ingratitude, the hypocrisy and treacherousness of human character. For the Queen, Raleigh was once upon a time her prime favourite. She had bestowed on him estates and patents (for wines) and a license to export woollen clothes, which made him a very rich man. He spent his revenues funding and taking active part in the expeditions to the North and South Americas, which he continued till Elizabeth's death. James I, the latter's successor hated him and Raleigh's life became a living hell. Charged with treason, he was callously tried, convicted and imprisoned for thirteen years, then given a reprieve when he was about seventy, again imprisoned and finally executed in the October of 1618. All this may have been like slow death for him having also lost his son in the expedition to Guiana while hunting for the famous land of gold, '*Eldorado*'. The poet may have most definitely railed at his misfortunes but then he also realises:

Complaints cure not, and tears do but allay

Griefs for a time, which after more abound.[24]

The '*tragic*' poet spent fifteen years of his life in the Tower in silent and pensive meditation. The thoughts and feelings, which had most definitely churned in his mind and heart, are mirrored in his poetry. Spenser therefore remarks in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* of the '*great unkindness*' of '*Cynthia*' the '*Lady of the Sea*' towards her '*Water*', i.e., Raleigh, the Ocean Shepherd. The wronged courtier-poet may have written some lines in the *Ocean to Cynthia* when he was

most probably in a suicidal state of mind, the Queen's favour lost and all past service forgotten

Thus home I draw, as death's long night draws on;
Yet, every foot, old thoughts turn back mine eyes.
Constraint me guides, as old age draws a stone
Against the hill, which over-weighty lies
For feeble arms or wasted strength to move;
My steps are backward, gazing on my loss,
My mind's affection and my soul's sole love,
Not mixed with fancy's chaff or fortune's dross

To God I leave it, who first gave it me,
And I her gave, and she returned again,
As it was hers; so let his mercies be
Of my last comforts the essential mean.
But be it so or not, th'effects are past;
Her love hath end; my woe must ever last [25]

We see at this stage the forthright Raleigh resigning himself to his fate His poetry, like the man, had a touch of cynicism and this was natural considering the twists and turns of his life In the poems, he seems to speak directly from the heart, an embittered heart Raleigh's masculinity and his pride were tremendously

hurt by the Queen's attitude to him once he was out of her favour. He is now prepared for the last journey of his life and the far from positive words like '*death's long night*,' '*old thoughts*,' '*old age*', '*feeble arms*', '*wasted strength*', '*my steps are backward*', '*my loss*', '*my last comforts*', and *'Her love hath end; my woe must ever last'* resonate with its sobriety and intensity. He realizes that all this soul-searching has to be stopped to achieve a semblance of peace. Finally, coming out of his dark thoughts, the poet concludes that he has done his duty to God and Queen and the rest is up to God. True to his nature, the poet again adds (as an afterthought) since the Queen's love and affection for him has ended, his pain and suffering will have to continue.

William Cecil, after experiencing three generations of court life, had wisely advised his son Robert Cecil thus- '"*Seek not to be Essex; shun to be Raleigh.*"'[26]Another person, a Sir Anthony Bagot had said that Raleigh was '"*the best-hated man in the world: in court, city and country*"'[27]. This was said most probably due to his insolence and haughty behaviour in being the Queen's favourite. Because he did rule the Queen's heart and because of this closeness men thought it wise to seek his friendship. As Sir Robert Naunton wrote, in the earlier days Elizabeth had taken Raleigh '"*for a kind of Oracle*"'[28]. She had called him fondly '*Water*' and had gifted him many estates in England and Ireland. On Raleigh's request, she also agreed to help out his penurious friend, Edmund Spenser, with a pension. The Queen had also granted him patents and monopolies

at seeing his enterprising nature and Raleigh became extremely rich. Though she pampered him, Elizabeth was not unaware of his faults; his tactlessness and brash outspokenness. For this, she did not promote him to the Privy Council. Her reaction went to extremes when she learnt that the subject of her fascination have dumped her in order to marry a younger woman. Like any other spurned female, Elizabeth too did not forgive and forget Raleigh easily. She sent both husband and wife to the Tower and it was many years later that Raleigh was again received back at court and reinstated as Captain of her Bodyguard though his former glory at court as a favourite courtier was no more.

But Raleigh's '*complaints*' regarding Elizabeth's later treatment of him should not be misconstrued as his lack of love or respect for the Queen. Its love and reverence for his '*mighty empress*', which made him write so intensely and passionately. And rightly so, for the Virgin Queen was able to provide internal peace and security in the forty-five long years of her reign:

By Love she rules more than by Law,
Even her great mercy breedeth awe:
This is her sword and sceptre:
Herewith she hearts did ever draw,
And this guard ever kept her.[29]

The glory of the defeat of the Spanish Armada during the reign of Queen Elizabeth still evokes wonder and amazement. It was a turning point in English history, made possible because of the spirit of participation, which the Queen enthused in her soldiers.

Then came the Queen on prancing steed,
Attired like an angel bright:
And eight brave footmen at her feet [30]

It was also during her reign that England laid its first giant step into becoming a colonial power with the establishment of the East India Company in 1600. She was therefore seen as a vessel of God's grace and mysterious agent of God's will. Like God, she aroused universal admiration. Samuel Daniel gave beautiful expression to this achievement of Queen Elizabeth I:

All around about her blood and misery,
Powers betrayed, princes slain, kings massacred,
States all confused, brought to calamity,
And all the face of kingdoms altered:
Yet she the same inviolable stands,
Dear to her own, wonder to other lands.[31]

Shakespeare's magnificient vision of Elizabeth in the close of Henry VIII sums up the welter of attributes conferred on her:

She shall be lov'd and fear'd.

Her own shall bless her,

Her foes shake like a field of beaten corn,

And hang their heads with sorrow.

Good grows with her.

In her days, every man shall eat in safety

Under his own vine what he plants: and sing

The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours.

God shall be truly known and those about her

From her shall read the perfect ways of honour,

And by those claim their greatness, not by blood...[32]

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

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'Best jewel that the earth doth wear'
***(Hymns to Astraea in Acrostic Verse,* Sir John Davies)**

Elizabeth-I has emerged, in the process of this research, as a fascinating figure whose life-study can keep our attention riveted. The information and perspectives relative to the Tudor Queen and her poets advanced in the earlier chapters are now summed up. It is in this chapter that the unraveling of the enigma that was Elizabeth is clearly stated and an attempt made to arrive at a comprehensive description of her and her times. The research undertaken has finally led to certain conclusions about the times- the circumstances that shaped the character of Elizabeth, her overwhelming influence that subsequently resulted in the rich harvest of poetry, and the Virgin Queen's role as the presiding spirit guiding her nation towards new discoveries and achievements.

The poets, especially Spenser and Raleigh, engaged themselves in studying and offering fulsome praises to their iconic Queen. But, as Achala Moulik writes, "Elizabeth of England never trusted the courtiers when they praised her beauty, though she accepted the fulsome tributes as she accepted their gifts and hospitality."[1]But whatever be the case, poets, like ideal lovers, seek happiness in the perfection of a mood, a state of suspension, just like the lovers on Keats' Urn. The longings, the heartache, the deprivations and other emotional seesaws that Raleigh and Spenser experienced in relation to the Tudor Queen

seemed more real than feigned. Elizabeth's personal magnetism and formidable intelligence inspired her poets to write innumerable pages glorifying her and the achievements of her reign. And in this, the sex of the Tudor monarch made most of the difference. At this point, one cannot forget that "'the tradition of combining encomium and tutelage in courtly address is as old as monarchy itself"'[2]

Chapter I attempted to elaborate through a general overview, the environment- historical, social, political and personal- that shaped the nature of the times and the monarch. At the historical level, the chapter showed that the Renaissance and its corollaries, Reformation and Humanism, had also left a deep and wide-ranging impact in England since the reign of King Henry VIII. It is also shown that the Reformation in England happened chiefly due to Henry VIII's selfish desire to take a second wife. Ironically, this profane motive yielded sacred results as this resulted in the birth of Protestantism in England.

At the social level, when Elizabeth ascended the throne, England was swaying towards religious persecution and bigotry. But the young queen was neither daunted nor discouraged. The current chapter showed that with her inspiring leadership, Queen Elizabeth was able to give her name to a dazzling age. In fact, Elizabeth's England experienced a true cultural reawakening or rebirth- in thought, art and vision-begun a century earlier in Italy. All this optimism and vigour had also permeated into the literature of the period.

Hence, Spenser and Raleigh, both accomplished poets, derived their inspiration from a common source, i.e., Queen Elizabeth I. If the former was 'serious' and conservative in his poetry and in his attitude towards life, the latter was passionate and highly ambitious. Their assessment of the Queen may vary in its accuracy but comes very near to the truth. Both poets seemed to agree that in the long forty-five years of her reign Elizabeth was held captive by the love of her people and vice versa. She was also responsible in altering the course of humanity since it was during her reign that the East India Company was born. It is a different thing that the Company charter was issued on 31st December 1600, almost at the fag-end of her life. The Queen did not live long to enjoy the fruits of success of the East Indian Traders. The legend of the Virgin Queen made popular by her greatest subjects, Spenser and Raleigh, greatly helped the Protestant Queen in dispensing her monarchical duties. Elizabeth was able to give stability and peace to her kingdom because of her longevity and conservative attitude to life – whether it is the political or religious sphere. In her paper titled, "'Wise Handling and Faire Governance': Spenser's Female Educators," Sarah Plant writes:

> 'The use of "governance" as representative of a guiding hand that not only seeks to direct others towards moderation and self-regulation, but engages in active pursuit of its own self-regulation, is indicative of the role Elizabeth chose for herself. In taking on the title of Supreme Governor, rather than Head of the English Church, she sought to navigate a middle course between the conservatives, moderates and radicals who were all active in the task of creating a structure and form for the church. Spenser's insistence on the governing and guiding role of

> his women educators both reflects Elizabeth's chosen role as Supreme Governor of the English Church, and provides a platform from which the poet is able to support and praise that choice. This portrait of a moral leader commends Elizabeth, while implicitly instructing her in the correct behaviour required of a godly prince and the governor of the Church of England.'[3]

Chapter II has endeavoured to highlight the larger than life image projected by Elizabeth herself as well as her courtier poets. Firstly, it has focussed on the view that the Queen's character and policies was shaped by her traumatic experiences in early childhood. The chapter has emphasised the fact that the young Elizabeth Tudor was frequently segregated and ostracised from court life by her father, Henry VIII and older half-sister, Mary. It has further attempted to demonstrate how her tyrannical love, dissembling nature, fickle-mindedness and insecurity can be better inferred when related to these childhood experiences.

The chapter further analyses the point that though the Virgin ruler was successful in ruling her country for close to forty-five years, the years before her coronation were trying times for her. She not only had a difficult time in warding off the sexual advances of her step-father, Thomas Seymour but was enmeshed in one dangerous political plot or the other, one of which was as a co-conspirator scheming against Queen Mary's wishes to marry Prince Philip, son of Emperor Charles. She was later absolved from this conspiracy and proved innocent and this chapter shows us how these experiences shaped her ruling. Another aspect

discussed is the joyous welcome which the Queen received from the very first day of her reign. She was seen as an angel descending from heaven to offer relief to a country which was undergoing religious turbulence in those times. It was shown that Elizabeth who did not have any rigid views on religion was successful in giving comparative peace and harmony to her people and because of which her poets and courtiers therefore heaped many praises to celebrate her queenly, maidenly and womanly qualities.

The chapter further drew attention to Elizabeth's administrative capabilities and her art in tackling the male chauvinism and aggression of her many courtiers. She was depicted as the common centre organising and balancing the grand ballet of life with her charming wit, intelligence and political acumen. This part also delved into the mysterious and enigmatic character of the Tudor monarch and in addition tried to vindicate the respect, reverence and popularity which Elizabeth's countrymen felt for her. The excessive eulogising of the Queen was not plain exaggeration. It told us that when she ascended the throne, England was not in the best of state- it was passing through a financial crisis, religious chaos and even her military power was far from strong. Hence, for Elizabeth, the unity and security of her realm was the main criteria and this she was able to provide with the guidance and assistance of her courtiers such as Burleigh and Walsingham.

Meanwhile, Spenser's grand plan was to write twenty-four books of *The Faerie Queene* but he could finish only one quarter of it during his lifetime (the first 3 Books in1590 and the last 3 Books in 1596). The six Books tell us about the six private moral virtues of Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice and Courtesy. This complex and lengthy poem contains about 33,000 lines and in this can be included the two Cantos on Time and Mutability from the Seventh Book which was published after the poet's death in 1599. Famous poets like Milton, Wordsworth and Keats were greatly impressed and influenced by Spenser and his dream of chivalric romance and medievalism. And Spenser's dream was made possible because of Elizabeth and her personal cult. But as all good things come to an end, the Tudor Queen too found her hold on time and her people slipping out of her hands. The satirist Ben Jonson's plea also went unheeded:

> *Fly from her, Age: sleep, Time, before her throne:*
> *Our strongest wall falls down when she is gone.* [4]

But chapter II showed that the Virgin Queen's physical beauty had only a peripheral impact on her poets and subjects. They were drawn more to her legendary image of an ageless queen.

Elizabeth was like the 'Rock of Gibraltar' to her poets and subjects. Very few women rulers have ever been adored and glorified with so much intensity and

passion. None of the other sixteenth-century Queens like Mary Tudor; Mary, Queen of Scots; Catherine de Medici of France, or Mary of Hungary possessed the personal charm and charisma of Elizabeth Tudor. An anonymous poet reinstates the eternal image of her youth in 1602, just about a year before the Queen's death:

Time's young hours attend her still,
And her eyes and cheeks do fill
With fresh youth and beauty:
All her lovers old do grow,
But their hearts, they do not so
In their love and duty.[5]

This chapter evaluated the Tudor Queen as a woman who made profitable use of her status as a virgin. It was used as a trump card to enhance her image as an earthly divinity and further boost her identity as a Protestant queen. Her poets therefore loved comparing her to the biblical Deborah and the Virgin Mary. On the other hand, it has speculated on the Queen's very human and Cleopatra-like character who enjoyed male company and the courting process of wooing and being wooed.

The Queen's single state was also shown as a cause of worry for her many advisers since the serious and grave matter of succession sat heavily in the minds of the national conscience. Attempt was made to find out the reason why Elizabeth shied away from marriage and subsequent motherhood. The chapter suggested the view that the Queen's experiences in early childhood like the executions of her mother, Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard, her step-mother, by her lascivious father, King Henry VIII must have turned her against the institution of marriage. Further, she saw firsthand the trauma which her older half-sister Mary had to undergo for being unable to produce an heir to succeed her to the throne of England.

But the chapter also showed that it did not deter Elizabeth from enjoying the male company around her. In fact, it was seen that courtiers such as Raleigh, Leicester and Essex must have felt like being wedded to her since they were at the constant beck and call of their Queen sacrificing most of the time their personal lives. The unusual intimacy of Elizabeth and Robert Dudley was also examined here.

Chapter II showed that courting was tantamount with the desire for power and authority. The political relation between the Queen and her poets and courtiers was depicted as being highly sexualised. Many a times the courtier-lover was compelled to readjust and reinterpret his relation to the Queen. The chapter

further showed that Elizabeth's courtship diplomacy would not have worked had she been a man The fact that she was a woman, '"**the wisest woman that ever was**"'[6] according to Lord Burghley, helped her to a great extent in inspiring the people of her nation Her poets including Spenser and Raleigh have recorded the great and glorious achievements of her reign for the coming generations But it would not be proper to give the credit for the achievements of the Elizabethan era solely to the Tudor Virgin According to Jasper Ridley, " The brilliant successes were often achieved, not by good policy and planning at the centre, but by luck, by the courage, skill, initiative and improvisation of the many ardent patriots and Protestants who served their God and their Queen so devotedly "[7]

That great Cleopolis, where I have beene,
In which that fairest Faerie Queene doth dwell,
The fairest Citie was, that might be seene;
And that bright towre all built of christall cleene,
Panthea, seemd the brightest thing, that was: [8]

The cult of Elizabeth continued throughout her reign Poets like Spenser, Peele and Lyly found it very hard to dissociate the Queen from their poetry since consciously or unconsciously she permeated every aspect of their lives And Elizabeth audaciously accepted such courtier service as her rightful due In the

above lines Spenser acknowledges the beauteous reign of his Queen. The poet goes on to say that '*Cleopolis*' or historically interpreted, Elizabeth's London is

> *The fairest peece, that eye beholden can:*
> *And well beseemes all knights of noble name,*
> *That covet in th' immortall booke of fame*
> *To be eternized, that same to haunt,*
> *And doen their service to that soveraigne Dame,*
> *That glorie does to them for guerdon graunt:*
> *For she is heavenly borne, and heaven may justly vaunt.*[9]

Spenser conceived this centre (London) of the Queen's power to be the most beautiful masterpiece created on earth, and her courtiers automatically achieved fame and recognition in serving her and by rotating round her orbit. Elizabeth, like Una, '*is heavenly borne*' and hence can take pride in her descendency. With *The Faerie Queene* Spenser's name is written in indelible ink 'in thy immortall booke of fame'. The poet achieved this 'fame' and glory mostly due to luck and foresight in remembering and worshipping a Queen whose far greater glory and charismatic reign served as his vital inspiration.

> *In her the richesse of all heavenly grace*
> *In chiefe degree are heaped up on hye:*
> *And all that else this world enclosure bace*

Hath great or glorious in mortall eye,

Adornes the person of her Maiestie;

That men beholding so great excellence,

And rare perfection in mortalitie,

Do her adore with sacred reverence,

As th'Idole of her makers great magnificence.[10]

Elizabeth maintained peace, mercy and joy during her reign. Her knights like Sir Walter Raleigh, Essex, Leicester, to name just a few, reported the results of their adventure (or misadventure) directly to the Queen especially when a mission was successful; like the defeat of the Spanish Armada. As the above lines imply, Elizabeth was endowed with 'the richesse of all heavenly grace' and observing such 'great excellence' and 'rare perfection in mortalitie' from close quarters left her people, especially the poet, feeling a deep sense of reverence for her. The Queen was magnificence personified. In the letter to Raleigh, this virtue is ascribed to Arthur but it may well apply to Gloriana, i.e. Elizabeth. For all these reasons, the young Queen became the symbol of awakening hope and great enthusiasm instilling meanwhile a powerful patriotic consciousness in her knights and subjects. The love and respect for the Queen by her people grew stronger with each consecutive day of her reign and this helped in cementing her position as monarch

Chapter III endeavored to project Elizabeth as the Muse of Poetry. She was shown as instrumental in providing the vital impetus and inspiration to her poets in composing the varied poems on her and her times. It also enlightened us to the fact that for her poets, the magnificent Queen and her circle of able and capable courtiers and knights formed the source and material for their poems.

This chapter explained at length the major role of the court as the cultural and literary hub of the times. It showed that the courtier could seek audience with the Queen only through the medium of poetry. The Elizabethan poet therefore became the obvious spokesman for the Court rejoicing in its values, ideals and varied activities. Spenser, in *The Faerie Queene*, compares Elizabeth's kingdom to 'faeryland' and London, the seat of her power (i.e., her court) is named 'Cleopolis'.

The system of patronage was explained and further elaborated in this segment. It was shown that when reading the works of poets like Spenser and Raleigh, we come to recognize the enormous power, which the court and the patronage system exercised over the language and matter. The unpredictability of power and the fickleness of human character were the main causes allowing poetry to flourish in the Elizabethan court. And the chapter has shown that power and fickleness of character combined most potently and exceptionally in the Queen who was subjected to many moods.

Chapter III also briefly touched upon the Queen's talent for writing poetry. The significance of Edmund Spenser and Sir Walter Raleigh's poems not only in relation to the Queen but also in the larger context of poetry is further discussed in detail. Their poems illustrate the point that Elizabeth was successful to a great extent in securing her position as monarch by building a glorious public image that overwhelmed religious differences and appealed unswervingly to English patriotism. She understood that in order to win her subjects over, she was required to be seen and this led her to embark on her regular country processions which in turn resulted in the many pageants and entertainments making the harvest of literature richer.

Poets, and writers of the masques and pageants, all came together to intensify the image of Elizabeth as "Gloriana," the Virgin Queen or the "Faerie Queene" of Edmund Spenser's fantasy. But Elizabeth can be said to be the creator of all these portraits for it was she who acted out all these roles in real life to absolute perfection.

Chapter III, attempted to discuss Raleigh's tumultuous relationship with Elizabeth more specifically through his long but fragmented epic poem, *Ocean's Love to Cynthia.* Raleigh's poem brings to light a passionate and restless man shaped by the experiences and circumstances of his life. The traumatic language of the poem reveals the struggle and survival of the Elizabethan courtier in the theatre of Elizabeth's court. Though loyal and devoted to his queen, Raleigh was

not blind to the callous and fickle nature of Elizabeth-I. This chapter has explained the position that though the Virgin Queen was responsible for the pain and 'heartache' in the poet's life, she would still remain his 'Cynthia'. Raleigh, who was Elizabeth's favourite for a decade, i.e., from 1582-1592, was dispatched to the Tower for his involvement with Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of the Queen's maids-of-honour. The poem informs us that during his period of goodwill with the Queen, Raleigh had lived his life with passion and adventurous zeal. But though his idol (Elizabeth) had deserted him for someone else she still remains his inspiration.

Chapter III also attempted to focus on the many transfigurations of the Queen recorded in the poetry of the times. She has been referred to by Raleigh as 'Cynthia', may be for her poetic powers, and Spenser further recognizes her as 'Tanaquill' for her learning. The chapter has depicted Elizabeth's role as not only that of the inspirer but also of the inspired. She was in turn inspired by the courageous deeds of his brave knights like Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh and the Earl of Essex, to name just a few.

Elizabeth took deliberate advantage of the fact that her enemies expected a woman to be indecisive. But she took care to mask the clever mind, sharp political instinct, and intense desire to survive that lay at the root of her fluctuating decisions. What was shown to the outside world was a vacillitating monarch who offered hope and then retreated, gave half a promise and then denied it.

Hence, it was shown that poets and courtiers at all times, during the reign of Elizabeth Tudor, either presented themselves as wretched wooers of the Queen or as devoted servants and they were not ashamed about it. Elizabeth was raised to the highest pedestal. Writers such as George Gascoigne seem to have enjoyed portraying Elizabeth as a vehicle of divine inspiration as well as a benevolent benefactress.

The Elizabethan pastorals and spectacle like Sidney's May 1581 pageant called *The Four Foster Children of Desire* were very extravagant and illusory. In addition, Chapter III highlights the opinion that natural, supernatural and divine imagery are repeatedly used in connection with the Tudor Queen. These pageants re-establish the platonic or Petrarchan conception of Elizabeth as an appealing but unattainable figure.

In this chapter was also discussed the April eclogue of *The Shepherd's Calendar,* wherein Spenser shifts his focus of courtly service from Elizabeth's court to the Queen's private chambers in which the poet highlights his queen's intimate bonding with others of her sex like her maids-of-honour and ladies-in-waiting. It is showed that as a poet he could let his eyes wander freely on the unauthorized object of the female body. By freeing his mind and imagination he is now able to enter the secretly enclosed feminine sphere where he sees Eliza, the queen-protagonist, in her regally unclothed splendour dressed in her own skin.

The green pastoral background and the red and white of her skin make her a combination of love, faith and hope. But it is shown that Colin himself is not physically present in the eclogue. It is Hobbinoll, the shepherd, who sings Colin's song about Eliza in his absence.

Chapter III further tried to illustrate the view that unlike Raleigh, Spenser was not a seasoned courtier. The intricate game of court politics with its corruption and greed for wealth and power may have pained his poetical sensibilities. Luckily or not, Spenser left for Ireland after a brief stay at court. He seems to have been a serious poet. *The Faerie Queene,* his *magnum opus,* celebrates Queen Elizabeth-I as a cult figure through the varied representations such as Belphoebe and Britomart. Spenser further defends his friend and patron, Raleigh in the character of Timias in *The Faerie Queene* while Mary, Queen of Scots, is condemned as Duessa for endangering the life of his Queen, Elizabeth-I.

According to Spenser, Elizabeth was truly her father's daughter and the worthy heir to the English throne. Her reign was successful because she resembled Henry VIII, her father, in many respects. Both were strong personalities well skilled in the art of administration with an inborn quality of wooing subjects to their side. The poet has to say this of his royal Queen and her equally famous and powerful father, King Henry VIII:

Great was his power and glorie over all,

Which him before, that sacred seate did fill,

That yet remaines his wide memorial:

He dying left the fairest Tanaquill,

Him to succeede therein, by his last will:

Fairer and nobler liveth none this howre,

Ne like in grace, ne like in learned skill;

Therefore they Glorian call that glorious flowre,

Long mayst thou Glorian live, in glory and great powre. [11]

The King was like an unseen talisman exerting his powerful influence on his daughter's actions. On his departure from earth, Henry VIII has bequeathed to the people of England 'the fairest Tanaquill', i.e. Elizabeth, who may have equalled if not outshone his glory with her reign. The words 'by his last will' may refer to Henry's final will where he stated that

> "'the said imperyall crowne... shall wholely remaine and come to our said daughter Elizabeth' cited Kitchin (1872)"'.[12]

The Virgin Queen's comparatively peaceful reign proves that the glory, which she achieved, was well earned. Spenser therefore states clearly in his *Letter to Raleigh* that Queen Elizabeth is the human embodiment of this abstract quality of glory.

Chapter IV endeavored to focus on Queen Elizabeth-I as the presiding spirit of The Golden Age nourishing and protecting it. Elizabeth was an enormously popular Queen, and her popularity has far from waned even with the passing of four centuries. She became a legend in her own lifetime, famed for her extraordinary abilities (even as translator and poet) and achievements. Yet, about Elizabeth the woman, we know very little. She is still an enigma defying all interpretation. Her reign witnessed the spread of capitalism, the growth of trade and industry, and the beginnings of colonization in the Western Hemisphere. The fine arts flourished as never before--it was the age of William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, and Nicholas Hilliard, the famous painter. This chapter has attempted to show that the reign of Elizabeth has brought about a revolution of new ideas and developments.

Elizabeth's enthusiastic and reckless courtiers achieved stupendous victory by striking a tremendous blow to the mighty fleet and pride of Spain's Armada which had astounded the whole of Europe. The English felt the mixture of both jubilation and relief. The genius of her seamen, assisted by extraordinary good luck, had saved the first Elizabeth's England.

This chapter has attempted to study the vital connection between economic prosperity, the Court, and literature. The enhanced economic condition during the Tudor Queen's reign is shown to have brought forth many related

developments in the life of her people. The number of bureaucracy is also found to have multiplied, there was extravagance and wastefulness, and the promising and optimistic aspect of it is that it has increased the diligent and serious-minded writing.

Queen Elizabeth went through the whole process of being courted and wooed by foreign and local suitors because she wanted her country to remain inviolable and its unity preserved for good. Crossing many hurdles, she managed to achieve this. There were moments when she had to swallow the bitter pill of failures too. She could not recover Calais from the French. The last decade of her reign was not a happy one. Economic and social changes were taking place at a rapid pace, and the aging Elizabeth was finding it difficult to adjust to these changing realities. The increasing corruption and factionalism at court was also not making things easier for her, and even for Raleigh:

Say to the court it glows
And shines like rotten wood;
Say to the church it shows
What's good, and doth no good:
If church and court reply,
*Then give them both the lie**.[13]

*'Give the lie' was considered to be an insult and an outrage according to the courtly code of conduct. If a courtier would 'give the lie' he would have to settle matters through duelling, etc

The above stanza is taken from *The Lie*, an exquisite lyric, which Raleigh is said to have written around 1592-93 when he was out of favour with the Queen, and imprisoned in The Tower. There are others who view that it was written just before his execution in 1618. The poet vehemently denounces both the court and the church for their sham, hypocrisy and corruption. The poet also appears to be piqued with his monarch's (either Elizabeth I or James I of England) cruel treatment of him even after rendering his loyal services.

The old world was getting replaced with a new one. Poets, courtiers as well as Elizabeth's other subjects must have yearned in their heart of hearts for a befitting male replacement to come and relieve their nearly seventy-year-old Queen from the burdens of state and polity. The Queen, with all her old 'cronies' dead, must have felt lonely in the midst of the younger generation who were actively involved in the administration of her kingdom. The personality cult which she fostered and with which she kept her people emotionally bound to her (through their fervent patriotism and devotion) seemed to have lost its edge with the onset of the new century. Elizabeth was also finding it difficult to shake herself out from the long established rules with which she was governing her kingdom. The earlier exuberance for life could not be seen anymore. She most probably willed herself to settle into a deep and permanent sleep in the early hours of March 1603. The following lines attributed to the Virgin Queen seem to reflect what she had felt:

Now leave and let me rest. Dame Pleasure, be content-

Go choose among the best; my doting days be spent.

By sundry signs I see thy proffers are but vain,

And wisdom warneth me that pleasure asketh pain;

And Nature that doth know how time her steps doth try,

Gives place to painful woe, and bids me learn to die.[14]

When Elizabeth breathed her last in 1603, England was an expanding power with a rich and growing trade in the Netherlands, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and even Russia. In addition, the foundation had been laid for the first English settlement in the New World, established by Raleigh in Virginia in 1607. Though just the beginning, the kingdom Elizabeth preserved against great odds and obstacles was on its way to its later status as a major world power, while the fortune of Spain was slowly dwindling.

Elizabeth I left behind a valuable legacy for her successor James I: the unity of her nation. And her poets, chief among who were Spenser and Raleigh, have given Elizabeth a pride of place in the history of literature as well as in the annals of mankind. The contribution of these two poets to the rich mine of English literature and history is therefore worthy of praise and commemoration. Time has also not been able to erase Elizabeth's image of a perfect Virgin Queen which Spenser and Raleigh had build up through their treasure-trove of poems

and writings. As Alison Weir also remarks, Elizabeth would have been greatly delighted and pleased by the Latin epitaph in her magnificent tomb, which describes her as

> "'The mother of this her country, the nurse of religion and learning; for perfect skill of very many languages, for glorious endowments, as well of mind as of body, a prince incomparable.'"[15]

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