

Mysticism in the Poetical Works of Swami Vivekananda: A Study

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Abstract - The objective of this study is to portray Swami Vivekananda as a great mystic poet who heralded the birth of national renaissance in India. He took us back to the fundamental values of our culture and appealed to find the truth in Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. He was the first great poet to compose mystical poems in Indian English poetry. His poetry is replete with mysticism and spiritualism and his ambition was to work for the welfare of humanity.

Index Terms - Mystic, spiritual, God, Maya, realization.

INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda, a great mystic, yogi and a saint, heralded the birth of national renaissance in India. He took us back to the fundamental values of our culture and appealed to find the truth in Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

The movement associated with the great names of Ramkrishna and Vivekananda has been a very wide synthesis of past religious motives and spiritual experience topped by a reaffirmation of the old asceticism and monasticism, but with new living strands in it and combined with a strong humanitarianism and zeal of missionary expansion. (The Renaissance in India 31-32).

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AS A GREAT MYSTIC

Swami Viveknanda gave new life to Hinduism and India by making Advaita Vedanta a practical and dynamic religion capable of conquering the world. He aimed at the betterment of the world and spiritual liberation. He said : “Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within the controlling nature, external and internal.” (The Complete Works, 124). He taught the people to be strong, fearless, kind, strictly moral, to conquer egoism and to know god.

In Indian English Poetry Swami Vivekananda, was the first poet to compose mystical poems. His songs, poems and hymns are the artistic expression of his unfathomable spiritual urge. He has composed poems on various subjects such as the mystery of creation, peace, meditation, Yoga, Brahman, Goddess Kali, Lord Shiva and his longing for liberation etc. All these poems are soaked in spiritualism and mysticism. The divinely inspired saint realized God within his heart and felt oneness with all animate and inanimate objects. ‘*In Search of God*’ he says :

In rapture all my soul was hushed....

The heart of my heart opened wide, O Joy, O bliss,

What do I find ! My love, my love, you are here,

*And you are here my love my all ! And I was searching
Thee ! From all eternity you were there Enthroned in
majesty. (In Search of God 04).*

Swami Viveknanda firmly believed in the oneness and omnipresence of God. He believed that the entire creation is pervaded by the same divinity. In the poem, ‘To a Friend’, he reveal his divine experience : “From highest Brahman to the younderworm, And all the minutest atom, Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love, Friend, offer mind, soul, body, at their feet.” (In Search 05).

Swami Viveknanda had the opinion that the welfare of humanity should be the top priority of a devotee. The only way to worship God is to serve his creation and to make and end of all dividing tendencies. His poem, “*The Living God*” reflects this belief:

“Ye fools ! who neglect the living God

*And His infinite reflections with which the world is
full,*

While ye run after imaginary shadows,

*His worship, the only visible! Break all other idols !”
(In Search 20).*

REALIZATION OF THE SUPREME

The poet desired earnestly to get rid of delusions and to realize the supreme. He aimed at the attainment of pure, passionless, detached and desire less existence. He said to Sister Nivedita,”

“The Mother herself is Brahman. Her cure is blessing. The Hearth must become a cremation ground- pride, selfishness, desire all burnt to ashes. Then and then alone, will the Mother come.” (The Life of Vivekananda 141).

Illusion of Maya is the greatest obstacle in the realization of God. If we are able to remove veil of Maya, we can realize that God and Man are one. The material world offers a diversion before us in the shape of body, sex, caste and creed etc. But we have to make our mind realize that we are Brahma, the Bliss Absolute. Swami Vivekananda realized his true self and became free from the bondages of Maya. His songs are replete with joy, bliss and spirituality, In ‘A Song I Sing to Thee’, he expresses:

Calmed are the clamors of the urgent flesh, The tumult of the boastful mind is hushed, Chords of the heart are loosened and set free, Unfastened are the bondages the bind. (In Search 55).

Self- realization is God- realization. The mist of Maya dissolves through concentration and meditation. God is truth, He is eternal and is behind the ever-changing phenomenon of the world. He is the immutable centre of endless mobility. Swami Vivekananda realized that the Supreme reality is God and this world is unreal.”

This world’s a dream though true it seem.

And only truth is he the living !

The real me is none but He and never mother changing” (In Search of 8-9).

SWAMI VIVEKNANDA AS A TRANSCENDENTALIST

Swami Vivekananda was a transcendentalist. He saw himself in all things and all things in himself. Love for God can be achieved through renunciation, Repeated practice of meditation awakens our coiled up power of Kundalini. It is the state of ecstasy and divine wisdom may be attained through it. ‘In search of God’ Swamiji says :

*A gentle soft and soothing voice that said ‘My son’
That seemed to thrill in unison with
All the chords of my soul.(In Search 3-4).*

The soul is invisible, immortal and impenetrable. A person who loves his own self, sees the same self in all

beings and attains his supreme goal. Swamiji reveals the true nature of self in the poem. ‘To My Own Soul’

In thee is friendship, faith,

For thou didst’t warn when evil

Thoughts were brewing

And though, alas, thy warming thrown away,

Went on the same as ever-good and true (In Search 30).

Due to our ignorance we can’t perceive and realize the divine essence in nature. When one is free from the delusions and experiences, freedom from birth and death, the supreme truth that ‘I and Brahman’ is revealed to him. In “The Song of the Sannyasin” Swamiji writes:

No more is birth,

Nor I, Nor thou, nor God, nor man,

The ‘I’ Has all become, the All is ‘I’

And Bliss know thou are That, Sannyasin bold !

Say

‘Om Tat Sat, Om’ (In Search 1-9).

Swami Vivekananda, the great mystic poet had an ardent optimistic attitude. He believed if a person is true, pure, pious, compassionate and virtuous, he will surely gain victory. The pleasures and pains are not a permanent feature in life. They come and go. We should not be affected by them. In his poem, “*Thou Blessed Dream.*” He expresses:

If things go ill or well,

If joy rebounding spreads the face,

Or sea of sorrow swells,

It is a dream, a play.(In Search 3-2).

Swamiji firmly advocated that the Union of the individual with the supreme soul is possible only either by work. (Karma Yoga) or philosophy, (Jnana Yoga) or worship (Bhakti Yoga). Karma Yoga is the yoga of action, Swami Viveknanda was immensely influenced by the teachings of the Gita. He believed that the action should be done with the spirit of detachment, dedication, non-violence, brotherhood and sacrifice. In the poem ‘To the Awakened India’ he writes:

Awake, arise and dream no more !

This is the land of dreams where Karma Weaves

Unthreaded garlands, with our thought.(In Search 2-3).

The Jnana Yoga leads to liberation. A person who attains divine wisdom rise above his self and selfishness. We work with devotion without expecting anything as a return. Bhakti Yoga is the path of

devotion of God. It leads man to truth, freedom and union with God.

Swamiji never treated death as something horrible. It is also the incarnation of the Eternal. God is responsible for creation as well as destruction. He had mystic vision of the pervasiveness of God in nature. He fills the divine presence in the moonlight, sunlight, stars, morning, evening, night, in sea, rivers, in the melodious songs of birds, in the innocent faces of children and in mother's affection. In the following lines he beautifully expresses the immanence of God in nature:

The moon's soft light, the stars so bright
The glorious orb of day,
He shines in them....
In nature's beauty, songs of birds,
I see through them- it is he. (In Search 4-5).

CONCLUSION

Swami Vivekananda's poems are remarkable for their lyrical quality, intensity of feeling and spontaneity. A powerful undercurrent of mysticism and spiritualism flows through them. The lyrics like 'The Dance of Shiva' and 'Shiva in Ecstasy' exhibit superb lyricism. Swamiji's poems are also remarkable for the use of rich and beautiful imagery. The use of metaphor, simile, personification and mythological images enhance poetic beauty of his mystical poems. Nature imagery is abundant in his poems. Light and water imagery is very prominent in his poems. Light symbolizes knowledge, hope and freedom from darkness. In the poem. 'Kali the Mother', the extinguishing light symbolizes destruction of the world. Water symbols like streams, rivers, ocean, waves, rain and flood etc, show the ever-changing aspect of material life.

*Ever rising, ever falling with the waves of time,
Still rolling on I go,
From fleeting scene to scene
Ephemeral with life's currents ebb and flow (In Search 09).*

The poems like "The song of the Sannyasin," "To the Fourth of July", "To a Friend", "The Cup", "The song of the Free", "Shiva in Ecstasy" etc. are replete with beautiful imagery. Swamiji has a command over English language. His poetic style is characterized by simplicity, spontaneity, sublimity, harmony, grace, melody and music. Undoubtedly, Swami Vivekananda

was one of the greatest mystic poets in Indian English Literature. He was an illuminated, inspired and divine soul. Sri Aurobindo rightly said:

Swami Vivekananda was a soul of puissance, if every there was one, a very lion among men. We perceive his influence still working gigantically... something leonine, grand, intuitive, upheaving, has entered the soul of India, and we say, Behold ! He still lives in the soul of his Mother and in the soul of her children (Bhavan's Journal 20).

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