



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO MYSTICS: SWAMI RAM TIRTHA & SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to portray Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ram Tirtha as great mystics and to present a comparison between the two. Both the mystics heralded the birth of national renaissance in India. They took us back to the fundamental values of our culture and gave new life to India by making Advaita Vedanta a practical way of life. They were the first poets to compose mystical poems in Indian English poetry. Their poems are soaked in mysticism and spiritualism and realizing the omnipresence of God, they desired to work for the welfare of humanity.

KEY WORDS: mystics, divinity, realization, soul, God, nature.

INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ram Tirtha are great mystics, philosophers, yogis, saints and poets and are the most illustrious builders of modern Indian thought, enunciated the message of practical Vedanta and disseminated it all over the world. The pearls of their divine messages are found in their speeches, articles, letters and poems. A comparative study of the poems of both the great mystic saints fall within the purview of this paper.

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE TWO MYSTICS

Swami Vivekananda 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 and strictly moral. Swami Ram Tirtha also shared the same set of morals with Swami Vivekananda. He believes if we can free ourselves from the obsession of material gains we can easily come out of the web of negative emotions like jealousy, fear etc. In the poem, 'To the So Called Civilized' he says:

To property no deference,

Dissolved every difference,

No jealousy, no fear,

I am the dearest of the dear.(164).

Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ram Tirtha wrote mystical poems. Their poems are the artistic expression of their unfathomable spiritual urge and are soaked in spiritualism and mysticism. The divinely inspired saints realized God within their heart and felt oneness with each object of creation. “*In Search of God*” Swami Vivekananda writes:

In rapture all my soul was hushed...

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

What do I find! 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 4).

Same spiritual urge and ecstasy may be seen in Swami Ram Tirtha’s poem ‘*So Called Civilized*’:

Wakeful mood sweeps up dreams,

Pure Love drinks up tear,

So do I wash up clear.

Pain, envy and weakness,

Death, vanity and meekness. (165).

Both the mystics have the aim to serve humanity. They desired earnestly to get rid of delusions and to realize the supreme. They aimed at the attainment of pure, passionless, detached and desireless existence. Illusion of Maya is the greatest obstacle in the realization of God. The material world offers a diversion before us but we have to realize that we are Brahma, the Bliss Absolute. Swami Vivekananda realized his true self and became free from the bondages of Maya. In ‘*A Song I Sing to Thee*’ he expresses:

Calmed are the clamours 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 that bind. (In Search 55).

Swami Ram Tirtha also echoes the same views when in the poem ‘*O Civilization*’ he alarms the people to set free the snares of maya and to discover our self :

O civilization, vagrant dream!

Respecting names and forms that seem;

Thou raisest a foolish dust of show;

Thyself in darkness does not know;

You climb a hill to comb the hair,

You murder self to cherish care

Ye please the public, win esteem,

You sacrilege the self-supreme. (159).

Swami Vivekananda firmly advocated that the union of the individual with the supreme soul is possible only either by Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga or Bhakti Yoga. 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 23).*

In the poem ‘*So Called Civilization*’ Swami Ram also gives us similar precious suggestion:

*Wake up, wake up, arise, awake!
Tear off the evil, your slumbers shake!
Cast off the shadows of desires.(163).*

Both the mystics were transcendentalists, saw God in all things .They believed that love for God can be achieved through renunciation and meditation. In the poem, “*In Search of God*”, Swami Vivekananda writes:

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

Swami Ram’s transcendentalism may be noticed in these lines from the poem “*I Cann’t Suppress a Laughter*”:

*In everything my breath I feel,
In earth and moon and sun I reel,
I blow in air and grow in grass,
I flow in rivers, throw in mass.(182).*

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 am brahma is revealed to him. In “*The Song of Sannyasin*” Swami Vivekananda 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 19).*

Swami Ram also sees divinity in nature. In the poem ‘*Good Bye*’ we find him in ecstasy in the midst of nature:

My love is flowers, music light

*My love is day, my love is night
 Dissolved in me all dark and bright
 Oh, what a peace and joy!
 Oh, leave me alone, my love and I,
 Good Bye, good bye, good bye.(140).*

Both the saint poets never treated death as something horrible .It is also the incarnation of the Eternal .They had mystic vision of the pervasiveness of God in nature. His divine presence may be felt in the moonlight, sunlight, stars, morning, evening in seas, in rivers and in everything. Swami Vivekananda 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 45).*

Swami Ram Tirtha believed that man can find ultimate joy and comfort only in the lap of nature. The beautiful poem 'Vedantic Lullaby' consoles us:

*Sleep baby sleep
 Soft roses, silvery dew-drops sweet
 Honey, fragrance,zephyrs ,geneial heat
 Melodious warbling, notes so dear,
 And all that pleases eye or ear,
 Comes from Thy heavenly blissful home:
 Pure, pure Thou art, untainedom
 Sleep, baby, sleep.(204).*

The poems of both the mystics are remarkable for their lyrical quality, intensity of feeling and spontaneity. A powerful undercurrent of mysticism and spiritualism flows through them. Their poems are replete with rich and beautiful imagery. The use of metaphor, simile, personification and mythological images enhance poetic beauty of their poems. Light and water imagery is very important in their poems, Light symbolizes knowledge, hope and freedom from darkness and water symbols show the ever changing aspect of material life. They have good command over English language and their poetic style is characterized by simplicity, spontaneity, sublimity harmony, grace and music.

CONCLUSION

Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ram Tirtha are one the greatest mystic poets in Indian English Literature .They were illuminated, inspired and divine souls. Sri Aurobindo comments on Swami Vivekananda:

Swami Vivekananda was a soul of puissance, if even thee 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).

The poetry of both the mystics is universal in appeal and is growing more and more relevant with the passage of time. Gandhiji remarked about the greatness of Swami Ram Tirtha, "Swami Ram's teaching have got to be propagated. He was one of the greatest souls of the whole world. I adore his ideals." (Swami Ram Tirtha JanamShatabdiSmarika 12).

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