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MYTH AND MYSTICISM IN INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH

Dr. SAHOO RAGHUNATH

Assistant Professor
Department of English,
Naami College, Naami, Bhadrak, Odisha



Dr. SAHOO
RAGHUNATH

ABSTRACT

This article is a modest attempt to trace the trends of myth and mysticism in Contemporary Indian Poetry in English. Myth and mysticism occupies an important place, position and appears to be the kernel in India Poetry in English and Contemporary Indian poetry in English is richly suffused with myth and mystic elements. Myth is a well-known story which was used in the past to explain natural events or to justify religious beliefs or social customs. But mysticism is a religious practice in which people through meditation and prayer search for truth, knowledge and closeness to God. It is a sort of religious enquiry, monotony, inner agitation and ambivalent attitude. It is psychological, philosophical and self explorative in nature and content. It has been defined as the direct experience or the efforts for experiencing ecstasy, intuition and the vision of the self, soul, Nature and God.

Key Words: Modest, Myth, Mysticism, Kernel, Ecstasy.

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INTRODUCTION

Mysticism includes the sense of union of the self or soul with God and Nature. It is usually accompanied by melancholy, solitude, renunciation, meditation, contemplation and prayer. Emotional purification, penance, confession surrender, soul, trance and peace are its conventional features. But in modern times, due to invention of science, mysticism has become diverted and got a new form. As a result the modern poets imbibe the truths of scientific mysticism which contains all opposites and transcends at the same time.

Modern philosophers and psychologists have done a lot to study mysticism Mr. Bergson has considered intuition to be the highest way of human knowing and mysticism is the perfection of intuition. William James has suggested that mysticism may be an extension of the ordinary field of human consciousness. It also concerns with the experience of vacuum and of systematic analogy between the human mind and outer world and natural and the spiritual world. It relates with the faith in a divine principle or soul in which both the humanity and the cosmos participate. It is a manifestation of both human consciousness and inspired insights.

DISCUSSIONS

Contemporary Indian poets in English always deal with myth and mysticism. It is their special flavor and concern. But the study of myth and mysticism in Indian Poetry in English is a complex activity for demarcation. Both myth and mysticism are intimately connected and any reference for it would be an assimilation of both. But partially it should be diametered. The poets like Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan and Toru Dutta partly focus on myth but other poets like Sri Aurobinda, Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Das, Pradeep Sen, Som Praks Ranchan, P. Lal, P.K. Saha, N.K. Sethy and P.N. Mukharjee are the pioneers of writings on mysticism.

Nissim Ezekiel is a poet of Indian myth, custom and tradition. The real source of Ezekiel's writing is his insistent awareness of the ties stemming from the surrounding milieu. His poem 'Night of the Scorpion' is a clear testimony of Indian culture, flavour myth and tradition. It is based upon the symbol of darkness and myth of evil. In 'Night of the Scorpion' evil is symbolized by scorpion. The reader made to participate in the ritual as well as suffering through a vivid evocation of the poison moving in the mother's blood. Evil has always been associated with darkness, seamy side of our life in human psyche. It has always been the integral part of theology that every one's suffering helps to remove the darker patch in human mind:

May be the sum of evil
Balanced in this unreal world
Against the sum of good
Become diminished by your pain,(28)

A.K.Ramanujan is also another prolific poet of myth in Indian Poetry in English. His poem 'A River' is based upon Tamil culture. It is a poem of river which flows through Madurai. The poem is an evocation of a river. Here the poet refers to the river as a helping as well as a destructive force. It is a realistic presentation of both past and present, myth and culture. In the Sangam period the city had many great Pundits who sang the glory of their town, language and river. In the past the poets were the appreciators of the cities, temples, rivers, streams and are indifferent to the miseries of human beings and animals. Flood is the symbol of destruction to person and property:

In verse of the pregnant woman
Drowned, with perhaps twins in her
Kicking at the blank walls even before birth. (28).

Toru Dutta's poem is essentially a poem of her race and she was fully soaked in Hindu myths and legends. She aptly interpreted the culture of her country to foreign lands. Her poem 'Lakshman' is based on the mythology of 'The Ramayan'. It is a conversation between Sita and Lakshman during their life in seclusion of the forest. Sita on seeing a beautiful stag desires to have it. Sri Ram being a dutiful husband runs to catch the stag in order to fulfill his wife's desire. It is during Sri Ram's absence, this conversation takes place between Sita and Lakshman.

Sri Aurobindo is a poet of mystical experience and metaphysics. His poems are philosophical and the union between soul and body. His poem 'The Rose of God' is equated with the rising sun and the descending supper mind i.e. mind and passion. The vermilion sun on the blue sky appears like a kunkum mark on the forehead of a beautiful woman. The redness is the passion and sapphire of blue heaven stands for the limitless infinity. His another poem 'Revelation' is a mark of Aurobindo's realization of the spiritual world. Revelation is a mystic experience of the poet. He feels as if the presence and vision of God leaps behind the rocks and passes him like a blow of wind. By the time, when he tries to guess what it would be, it vanishes. He feels it like a bright which is visible to his mortal eye. It is like a frightened rose glows with a sudden beauty. He feels it just a veil of Maya of illusion, similarly his other poem 'Transformation' is a mystical poem where Aurobindo speaks as an illumined soul. The speaker is no longer a man of flesh and bone. He is transformed to Gods happy tool. His cells are lighted with the rapture and joy of the Unknown and the Supreme. The poem captures the process of transformation from the human to the Divine.

Sarojini Naidu's immortality lies in her mysticism reflected in almost all her poems. Her best poem 'The Soul's Prayer' reveals the mysterious secret law of life and death. She wishes to taste each joy and pain

which the eternal hand can measure out and give her the share. She wants to enjoy every joy and endure every suffering which is the gift of God and Supreme.

Nissim Ezekiel's poem 'Enterprise' is an example of mind and mysticism. He takes enterprise as a pilgrimage where the poet starts a holy journey of mind up to soul. The final destination of the poet's pilgrimage is mystically the same home of mind where from the journey was started. It is the place of purposelessness and nothingness where grace of the soul should be gathered by prayer and meditation:

When finally, we reached the place
We hardly knew why we were there
Home is where we have to gather grace. (267)

Kamala Das belonging to the same generation of Contemporary Indian Poets in English gives a mystic experience through her peculiar poem "The Dance of the Eunuchs". She describes a peculiar dance by sexually deserted human creatures who danced till they bled in prayer. Though they were singing melancholy in harsh voice, yet they were trying their best to transcend in vacant ecstasy. Besides also, Kamala Das's mystic experience lies in the submission and surrenders herself with God Krishna in Hindu Religion earlier and with Islam's Allah later on. Her spiritual submission has also been expressed in her Allah Poems. She believes that Allah is true to her. He is the creature and rescuer of her life. He is the seed in the soul of the poet. He lies within her heart and grows when she dreams. He can save her from Death. Death can't touch her. Allah is more powerful than Death:

Ergo, I remain beyond the
Clutches of death
It can't touch me
Designated to live
In another planet. (Seed-22)

At last we analyse "The Eternal Child" a poem is written by P.N. Mukharjee. We find that the poet is enjoying a mystical experience of union of opposites. The poet feels ecstasy and he has the vision of the miraculous eternal child embracing the earth and his smile contains the cosmos:

He casts his arms around the earth
And kissed her in an ecstasy
A mighty sweetness broke its spell (292)

CONCLUSION

On the whole, one can't fail to discern the note of myth and mysticism in Indian Poetry in English. In fact, the note of myth and mysticism is the fort and fulcrum of Indian Poetry in English. It is central to it. It is to ask, probe, posit and explore the truth and again the ultimate knowledge about culture and tradition. These queries and qualms are existential and unto-logical in nature. The note of myth and mysticism is not an imitative one but it is deeply rooted in our great Indian tradition of myth and cultures, epics and scriptures. It is mysticism which tries its best to dive deep into the various unshaded and unfathomed mystical approaches enshrined in the bosom of the "Vedas and Upanishads". It takes diverse shapes and forms, different phases and levels, ultimately, envisioning a state of harmony between the inscape one's inner life and the landscape of outer life.

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