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Spiritual Discourse: A Study of Some Selected Anglo-Indian Poems and the *Bhagavad Gita*

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to find out the value of the spiritual discourse represented by various Indian poets and writers in their works through a study of the *Bhagavad Gita*. It shows that the discourse of the *Bhagavad Gita* finds its valuable expression throughout the ages. This article analyses the importance of spiritualism in this modern era. It brings into light spiritualism not as a matter of religion but as a mode of living. Religion is a part of spiritualism and spiritualism is beyond the prescribed rules of religion. Spiritualism gives birth to religion so that each and anyone can follow the path of spiritualism knowingly or unknowingly. As a mode of living, spiritualism finds its expression in each and every part of the world and this article tries to explain how the value of spiritualism has been adapted in this modern era and also explains its relative importance. Literature as a mode of discourse is always influenced by spiritual discourse and how that discourse gets its existence in the writings of the poets is a matter of study in this article.

Keywords: Hinduism, spiritualism, salvation, karma-yoga, Bhagavad Gita.

Spirituality as a concept demands logic which seeks to find out the answer about the reality of the existence of the human beings. It wants a knowledge which shows or gives meaning about the spatio-temporal matrix of the universe. The unresolved question of death may be a determining factor in the region of spiritualism. Kirpal Singh says

that “It is a Path of Love, discipline and self-control. After the initial Spiritual Experience given at the time of initiation, the rest depends on the relentless regular practice, as enjoined by the master” (Singh 1956, 8). Different religions define spiritualism in different ways. According to Hinduism, spiritualism designates the existence of an immortal soul and that perspective defines the aspect of afterlife too. Spiritualism as a concept is based on dual metaphysical belief which states that the world is made up of two substances – one is matter and the other is spirit. Matter is transitory in nature and spirit is immortal. That’s why spiritualism teaches us to free oneself from the clutch of materialism and shows the vastness of the soul which is eternal. Spiritualism also states that human beings crave for salvation. And the path to get salvation has become the mode of spiritualism. From ancient times, spiritualism has provided human beings with the answers of all the happenings around there. But with the passage of time spiritualism has gone through a change. The reason may be distortion or the distorted representation of the religion which is the symbol of spiritualism. Now-a-days human beings are turning towards spiritualism with expectation. That expectation demands relief from sorrow. But the concept of sorrow is very problematic. The same can be understood from the point of view of Ferdinand de Saussure where the willful ignorance of the binary opposition of happiness/sorrow may be the main reason behind the disinterestedness about spiritualism. The poetries of Aurobindo Ghosh represent a spiritual phenomenon and the first glimpse of spiritualism is represented in the following manner in his poetry “Revelation” as he writes, “Someone of the heavenly rout/ From behind the veil ran out” (11-12).

The above mentioned quotation represents the image of a divine idea. The word divine idea denotes the image of a disillusioned mind. That disillusioned mind may be the mode of actual knowledge. Now the question automatically arises what is illusion then? Illusion means the tendency to seek happiness in the objective phenomenon. But in doing so, we forget the basic truth as it is mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita* that changing is the basic rule of the universe. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Supreme Lord advises Arjuna to get rid of illusion in the following manner:

O Arjuna, why has such illusion overcome you at this critical moment? This is unbefitting a nobleman (Aryan). It is an obstacle to the attainment of heaven, and a destroyer of Good name and fame. (Gambhirananda 12)

The same kind of knowledge can again be found in Aurobindo Ghosh's poetry "Transformation" where the poet declares the existence of his disillusioned mind, "I am no more a vassal of the flesh,/ A slave to Nature and her leaden rule;/ I am caught no more in the senses' narrow mesh" (9–11). The knowledge of illusion gives birth to the existence of true knowledge. And that's why, the poet is thinking himself as a soul not as a matter of flesh and blood. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Supreme Lord mentions about the transformation of the human body from childhood to youth and then to old age. On the other hand, a transformation of the mind or in other words a transformation of the knowledge can be found in Aurobindo Ghosh's poetry. That transformation can be noticed as a change from worldly knowledge to heavenly knowledge. Now from this point, it can be stated that the sense of sorrow is nothing but the outcome of worldly knowledge. The materialistic knowledge gives the idea that the happiness lies in this universe only. Thus the materialistic creation of human beings like money, job, relatives etc. puts them into a Pygmalion situation, Pygmalion, in the sense that they are attached to their own creation and thus find themselves in a labyrinth of attachment. That sense of belonging to the worldly things put themselves into the region of joy and sorrow. In "Transformation" Aurobindo Ghosh describes the attainment of infinite knowledge in ecstasy, "My breath runs in a subtle rhythmic stream;/ It fills my members with a might divine:/ I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine" (1-3).

The knowledge of illusion gives human beings a sense of relief from the worldly duties. Does it mean a sense of disinterestedness in the worldly duties? No, it means that one should do his/her worldly duties without attaching himself/herself in the work itself. This idea has been described in the Bhagavad Gita in the following manner:

A person does not attain freedom from action by abstaining from action; nor does he attain fulfillment merely through renunciation.

(Gambhirananda 137)

From the above mentioned quotation, we can see that a sense of disillusioned duty comes in front of our eyes. It means that worldly duties are needed but to be performed without any kind of attachment to the result of the work itself. That's why Aurobindo Ghosh comments, "Time is my drama or my pageant dream" (4) in his poem "Transformation". Now the question automatically arises what is needed to get that knowledge? The answer is very easy but practically it is very difficult to carry out. The most important thing that is needed is unconditional surrender to the Almighty. That Supreme power cannot be measured by our five senses. So faith is needed to attain that knowledge. As Nizamat Jung sings his faith in "Soul-Weariness", "Give sight to faith, and faith unto my sight/ Through calm, through storm, through changing night/ and morn" (9-11), the poet desires for a mode of faith which is devoid of expectation. He wants a faith which is not going to alter with the passage of time. The same thing was described by the Supreme Lord in the *Bhagavad Gita* to show the path of knowledge to Arjuna in the following manner:

Those who meditate on Me by fixing their minds on Me with steadfast devotion (and) being endowed with supreme faith- they are considered to be the most perfect yogis according to Me.

(Gambhirananda 475)

The above mentioned statement demands for an unconditional surrender to God's will. In other words it can be stated that in doing good works all the confusions or all kinds of doubts should be put down willingly to God's will. As the Supreme Lord suggests, while doing works one should forsake the attachment to result. This type of attachment is the main cause of sorrow. This attachment in other words can be termed as illusions. Aurobindo Ghosh in his poem "Rose of God" says, "Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical rhyme;/"

Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the children of Time” (15- 16).

This illusion of joy and sorrow can be termed as the main obstacle in the path of salvation. So to obtain the path of salvation one should forsake the shackle of illusion. Thus one’s mortal body can be transformed into a tool which can bridge ‘earthhood’ and ‘heavenhood’ as it is mentioned clearly in the poem of Aurobindo Ghosh. In Rabindranath Tagore’s poem “Heaven of Freedom”, he prayed to the Almighty for a heaven of freedom in the following manner:

Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever–
widening thought and action --

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let
My country awake. (9-12)

So to get that heaven of freedom, one should keep faith in the transcendental image of the Supreme Being. Keeping faith does not include an expectation. The definition of true faith gives the image of selfless action where the desire for the result is zero. That type of devotion gives birth to universal love. Now-a-days getting some bookish knowledge, a tendency has appeared in comparing the belief in God as a blind faith. These persons want logic but in doing so they forget that their belief in bookish knowledge is hypothetical. Disbelief comes when someone approaches with expectation and this expectation gives birth to superstition. Then some person equalizes superstition with religion and the problem starts with realizing the ultimate knowledge. Scientifically it is possible to explain the reason of the existence of the human beings. But that answer still can be put into question. But does it mean that science is neglecting the existence of spirituality? No, actually some persons are trying to feel or realize Him objectively and some persons realize Him subjectively. But the problem is that in some objective actions there is a mode of expectation and subjective action sometimes devoid of expectation. The Supreme Lord in the *Bhagwad Gita* comments:

O, Arjuna, one who engages in Karma-yoga with the organs of action, controlling the organs with the mind and becoming unattached – that one excels. (Gambhirananda 141)

Again, in the poem “Transformation”, Aurobindo Ghosh has given the image of that type of knowledge as he says, “My soul unhorizened widens to measureless sight,/ My body is God’s happy living tool,/ My spirit a vast sun of deathless light” (12-14).

From the above mentioned lines, a sense of ultimate knowledge comes in front of us. The poet realizes the truth about soul as it has been mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita*. It has been stated in the *Bhagavad Gita* that the soul is indivisible and cannot be burnt. The soul is everlasting, constant and ever existent. Now from the above perspective, the following lines of Kirpal Singh can be stated:

. . . ‘Spirituality’ contents itself only with “Self-Realization” and “God-Realization”. (Singh 2005, x)

Without self-realization, the realization of God is not possible. Self-realization makes us conscious from inside and thus subjective attitude can be pushed towards outside. This way, a glimpse of Super power can be noticed logically. Objective phenomenon can appear as a beautiful one but after that the object of beauty can be transformed into a matter of irritation. Actually everything depends on mind and mind is the bearer of subjective phenomena. If it is trained properly it will act as an apparatus in realizing the actual subject which lies behind the name given by the society. That subject or in other words ‘soul’ doesn’t need any name to distinguish itself from others. From that point it is easy to say that all human beings are made up of one common element. And the human beings are there to get the path of salvation through their works. Works performed by human beings create their fate in this world. And the fate can be identified as collective fate and as an individual fate. The same can be understood from the point of view of the *Mahabharata* where the action performed by Arjuna determines his individual fate. And the collective action performed by all the warriors in the

Mahabharata determined the fate of the state. Here the struggle was for good and the action of Arjuna brought into light the necessity of being good. In this long struggle the name of God was the only apparatus in the hands of Arjuna. So the image of God has been appearing as a charioteer who shows the path towards the good. The main thing is that human beings are the possessors of intellectual quality, so it depends on them which path they should choose. God has presented the way of goodness through scriptures and while presenting this, an image of bad quality has also come in front of everyone. The ultimate choice depends on human beings. Aurobindo Ghosh has chosen the path of salvation which comes in front of the reader through his poetry. Thus the ever desiring object ‘peace’ can be achieved. Swami Vivekananda defines peace in the following manner in the very poem entitled “Peace” itself:

It is not joy nor sorrow,
But that which is between,
It is not night nor morrow.
But that which joins them in. (9-12)

That type of feeling can be achieved by a person who is spiritually active and that type of active spirituality comes in front of our eyes through the *Bhagavad Gita*. Aurobindo Ghosh also in his poem “Transformation” brings into light the same kind of feeling and writes, “Now are my illumined cells joy’s flaming scheme/ And changed my thrilled and branching nerves to fine/ Channels of rapture opal and hyaline” (5-7).

All the spiritual scriptures and the spiritually motivated poems describe that the actual way to knowledge lies inside. So to get that ultimate knowledge, one should look inward. In this regard, the following lines of Sri Ananda Acharya from his poem, “True Immensity” may be quoted:

True immensity
Is in the glass – star blossom of my soul,
Not in this vastness
Of land and air and sea, (1-4)

The objective phenomenon is changeable. And a mind full of illusion also changes according to the passage of time. But the mind which is spiritually guarded cannot be changed. It remains unchanged as it knows that the outward phenomenon is nothing but ‘Maya’. Lord Sri Krishna lived a worldly life and showed how to perform worldly duties and not to be involved in the work itself. So, many incidents in Sri Krishna’s life need to be discussed logically. Krishna’s dance with many Gopis or Krishna’s relations with Radha has been sometimes criticized illogically. But from the point of view of metaphysics, it can be stated that an image of transcendental love comes in front of everyone. Nanikram Vasanthmal Thadani in “The Gopi’s Song” depicts transcendental love in anticipation, “This heart is thine, my love, and thine is mine;/ Love made thee man, and made my Soul divine;/ ‘And so I wait- my love will come to me’” (22-24).

The love of the Gopis and Radha is devoid of expectation. And the love free of any kind of expectation made them greater than saints. That divine love gave them the strength to remove the shackle of earthly bondage and thus they show the real image of love towards God. That divine love is desirable to all and it has been expressed by Sarojini Naidu also in the following manner in her poem “Summer Woods”, “Companions of the lustrous dawn, gay comrades of the night,/ Like Krishna and like Radhika, encompassed with delight” (15-16).

Thus it can be noticed that the impact of Holy Scriptures is always there in the mind of the people and it comes in front of everyone through literary discourse. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, death has been described as a momentary illusion in the following manner:

As are boyhood, youth and decrepitude to an embodied being in this present body, similar is the acquisition of another body. This being so, an intelligent person does not get deluded.

(Gambhirananda 49)

The same concept has been declared by Aurobindo Ghosh in a memorable way in his poem “Life and Death” as he declares, “Life only

is, or death is life disguised, -/ Life a short death until by life we are surprised” (5-6). The above extract states that life is only a short period of activity which shifts from one dimension to another through the process of death.

This article brings into light the spiritual aspects of different poems through the study of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the poems by different Indo-Anglian poets. The aim is to bring into light one aspect of ultimate knowledge, the knowledge that gives men the right way to peace. Lord Krishna or other divine beings through their activities or preachings showed us the difference between right and wrong. Science can observe the objective phenomenon but the subjective phenomenon like NDE (Near Death Experience) or OBE (Out of Body Experience) is still a mystery to science. According to some scientists, this phenomenon is nothing more than a matter of hallucination. But the question automatically arises why these phenomena happen at the time of death and this is the question where science can be seen as dumbfounded. The most important thing preached by all divine beings is to do the best for the welfare of mankind and to love each other. Spiritualism teaches to free oneself from the day-to-day materialistic anxiety and to lead a happy life. In this era, a spiritual life or spiritual awakening can help to create a corruption free society. But the matter of sorrow is that spiritualism has been degraded by some corrupted people in the society and general human beings have been duped by these people without knowing the meaning of true spiritualism. Religion has been made a matter of business and God fearing people are responsible factor for this hideous act. People should have to free themselves from the clutch of selfish activity and then one will be able to understand the true meaning of spiritualism. A spiritually enlightened person sees no difference between joy and sorrow or good or bad. Thus spiritualism is able to show a ray of hope in this postmodern era.

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