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“Maha Nand Sharma As A Poet: A Study Of His Themes”

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Abstract:

Maha Nand Sharma was a great poet. In his poetry we see that he has the spiritual strain like Krishna Srinivas, the great south poet. He is also a great Rishi who has spiritual themes in his poems. Spirituality is the basic theme of his all poems. The poet has composed a vast work of poems but unfortunately it has come to the knowledge of very few devoted scholars. He is a profound scholar of three literatures-Sanskrit, Hindi and English. The poet is a great literary man in English literature. He was a gifted poet with a multi-dimensional vision. His explorations into spirituality, his devotion and dedication to the Supreme Being and his adherence to the cardinal values amaze his admirers and readers. His love for learning and reading and his life long engagement with education shape and enrich his views on education and find full flow in his Poetry.

1.Introduction

Maha Nand Sharma like Krishna Srinivas is a great contemporary poet. He was born on July 11, 1924 in BulandShaher and was educated at many places like Kanpur, Meerut, Agra, Allahabad and Hyderabad. He was brought up in an humble traditional family of Brahmans. Since his student life his genius was flowed through his verses and articles on education. His critical work, "Wodehouse the Fictionist "(1980), has earned glowing tributes in the reviews in Patriot Freedom and Modern Fiction studies, and from eminent Wodehouse Scholars like David A. Jasen, Robert A. Hall Jr, and R. B. D. French. He was a University teacher and also a great scholar of English and Sanskrit literatures.

The poet is a great literary man in Indian English literature. He is a gifted poet with a multi-dimensional vision. His explorations into spirituality, his devotion and dedication to the Supreme Being and his adherence to the cardinal values amaze his admirers and readers. His love for learning and reading and his life-long engagement with education shape and enrich his views on education and find full flow in his poetry. The poet has taken birth in a traditional religious family where Sanskrit was talked to every child from his childhood. Maha Nand Sharma as a gifted and talented child picked up Devnagri quiquery which helps him in his literary life. Sanskrit poetics mirrors his life not only in its themes but in its aesthetic aspects also. The aesthetic factor, involving the reader's sensitivity to the beauty of the poet's life-the formative influences on him-forms the back ground to the aesthetic approach to his poetry from the point of view of art.

From his childhood Maha Nand was also very much impressed with the ideal thoughts of the father of the nation.. He lived in the Gandhian atmosphere all around and under the British rule with its emphasis on the rigorous enforcement of discipline among the citizens. Such was the influence of Gandhi and the freedom struggle on the poet that he ran away from his brother's house at Agra during the Quit India Movement in August 1942 and walked a distance of thirty- three miles, in two stages to Mathura and returned home only after a good deal of persuasive advice by the Principal of an Intermediate college whom he happened to meet at Mathura. Of his impression of Gandhiji, he writes: "In my boyhood I heard Gandhiji on two occasions. He looked as pure as a child not only in his voice and ways but also in the innermost depths of his heart. In the Harijan, his answers to questions had the straight forwardness of a child's utterance- the utterance which is devoid of 'ifs' and 'buts' of mean politicians."(Maha Nand Sharma, 1996)

The poet like other freedom fighters was very much influenced with the great national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jwahaar Lal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath

Tagore etc. He decided to lead the value base life like his father. This weekend easily trace out in his poetic works. He is greatly influenced with the sublime character of his father. In the preface of his collection of poem A Rudraksha Rosary he says, I bow to the souls of my father, a devout worshipper of Lord Shiva, and my mother who told me stories of Lord Shiva and Parvati, in my childhood as I lay by her side with rapt attention.

The poet has authored nine works. Of these only one is non – Poetical work which is a critical work on fiction. The title is ‘Wodehouse the Fictionist’. Among his work of poetry are three epics – ‘Flowering of a Lotus’, consisting of hundred eighty seven Spenserian stanzas and A Rudraksha Rosary and A Spiritual Warrior, each running into more than four thousand lines of blank verse. His works also include four collection of poems – ‘Divine Glimpses’, ‘Flowers and Buds’, ‘Scattered Leaves’ and ‘Gushing Streams’ ‘Divine Glimpses’ has ten poems – the first and the last remaining eight running into nearly three hundred lines of blank verse. The other three collections include poems in different metres and forms such as sonnet, lyric burlesque etc. His earliest work The Pageant of Seasons contains seventy five quatrains, each with alternate rhymes. The poems in all collections comprise several sonnets and more than forty other poems. Some other poems, including sonnets, have been published in Journals such as Metverse Muse and Brain Wave. Thus he has to his credit about thirteen thousand lines in blank verse, two hundred fifty nine Spenserian stanza, twenty four sonnets and more than forty short poems and several long poems as well.

Maha Nand Sharma has composed a vast work of poems but unfortunately it has come to the knowledge of very few devoted scholars. Like Krishna Srinivas he has devoted his full time in the literary pursuit but very few critics have come out to have the study of his works and write critical books on them. It is a wonder that Krishna Srinivas has become an international figure on account of his spiritual poetic works and Maha Nand Sharma has written near about the same works like that of Krishna Srinivas but in spite of his great works his poetry is unable to earn the recognition even in his own land. No full length study of his works has been taken up so far although they have been dealt with in chapters in books in thirty two reviews. It is the most suitable time for an intensive and extensive exploration of the artistic qualities of his works partly because Flowering of a Lotus is his last ‘long work’.

He has been given proper attention by some University professors and academicians like R. K. Singh, M. K. Nair, K. H. Ansari, A. K. Dixit, Ganga Ram Garg, V. K. Gokak, K.

R. Srinivas, and Satish Kumar etc. They have given the critical reviews on his poetic works in very high words. Dr. R. K. Singh in his introduction to creative forum observes: Maha Nand Sharma is perhaps the only recent poet, who is visionary and proffers a blend of fancy, feelings, philosophy, scriptures, myths, legends and literatures. Echoes of the literature of Sanskrit and Hind enrich his poetry.(Dr.R.K. Singh , 1991)

Sharma's use of diction, images and style is very closely related to his subject – matter and themes. His narrative art is lustily admired. Of his long poem, 'The Test Divine' Professor C. Brian Cox says, his poem is a splendidly entertaining story of Shiva.....It moves quickly to a surprising climax.....the detailed account of characters and scenery gives richness to the narrative.(Maha Nand Sharma, 1984)

Mr. Srinivasa RangaSwami Points to the simplicity of language and lucidity of style' in his narrative poems. Of the pictorial qualities of his descriptions, he says, Added to its lucidity is the author's penchant for picturisation which places it close to the cinematic. The camera eye of the author would not allow the reader to miss any detail, however small. The result is a succession of visuals in close up. This is to be found everywhere...(Srinivas Rangaswami, 1996)

Dr. A.H. Tak finds verbal ecstasy and visual beauty in his poems dwelling upon characterization and structural aspects in his poems. Dr. Tak continues:

"The structure of his poems is dramatic and in each of the poems in Divine Glimpses, he places a character at the centre and entire poem become the projection of his consciousness and his reaction to the situation or situations in which the poet places him. The Test Divine is a transcreation of a Sanskrit poem 'Mirkandu Markandya Katha' running into forty four slokes and first published in Meerut University News and Views".(Dr. A.H.Tak, 1996)

His three epics-'A Rudraksha Rosary', 'A Spiritual Warrior' and 'Flowering of A Lotus' represents his great faith in God that makes an interesting reading. The poet is a great worshipper of nature like Wordsworth and Krishna Srinivas, but his natural description is not only aesthetic it is also spiritual and his diction elevates the inner beauty of worshipper. Outer and Inner beauty are join together which creates the sublime harmony. In his epic poem, A Rudraksha Rosary he presents the sublimity of the natural beauty with the purity of soul. In the following lines its diction elevates with its appropriate expressions of the beauty of nature:

On mount kailash, as far as eye could see,
A sheet of snow, as spotless white and hard

And smooth as marble, spread o'er miles and miles

From topmost peak to foothills on the shore

Of pure and sacred Mansarover lake

As vast- and –endless looking as the sea. (Maha Nand Sharma 1987)

Thenceforward, his short poems have their direct source in his own mind. They present life more comprehensively in all its various dimensions. The maturity of old age imports into them several characteristics such as reflective and spiritual outlook, critical power, indulgence for childhood and keen observations. The sensual love of youth was transformed into spiritual love-love for god-in his old age.

2.Themes

Maha Nand Sharma is a religious poet like Krishna Srinivasa, Tulsidas and Surdas. His eight poetical works are sufficient proof that he is a great religious poet. His poetic volumes "A Rudraksha and A Spiritual Warrior" are composed in blank verse while his "Flowering of a Lotus" composed in Spenserian stanzas. All the three are great epics. The epic, 'A Rudraksha Rosary,' is the first part of the book. The second part consists of the other poems. 'The Pageant of Seasons' is a long poem of seventy five quatrains. 'Divine Glimpses' is a collection of ten poems – two consisting of seventy two Spenserian stanzas in all and each of the rest running into nearly three hundred lines of blank verse. 'Gushing Streams and Scattered Leaves' are collection of short poems including about ten sonnets and in addition to them, about forty short poems in different stanza forms. Some more poems have been published in Journals such as Metverse Muse and Brain Wave. He has thus published about thirteen thousand lines in blank verse, two hundred fifty nine Spenserian stanzas about twenty sonnets and more than forty short poems in addition to several long poems. His poetical corpus is very vast and has spiritual themes. Dr. Prema Nanda Kumar finds in Sharma's poems, the spiritual calm of the benevolent Yogeshwara Shiva. According to Dr. A. H. Tak, Dr. Maha Nand Sharma is one of those few contemporary Indo – Anglian poets who have realized the seriousness of spiritual crisis.....Srinivasa Rangaswami infers from the preface to 'Divine Glimpses' the poets meaning of spirituality as Light of pure conscience andsome other aspects of God. In the light of these comments, the theme of spirituality and its aesthetic aspects deserve comprehensive exploration.

The poet is a great worshipper of nature like Wordsworth and Krishna Srinivas, but his natural description is not only aesthetic it is also spiritual and his diction elevates the

inner beauty of the worshipper. Outer and inner beauties are join together which creates the sublime harmony. In his epic poem, A Rudraksha Rosary he presents the sublimity of the natural beauty with the purity of soul. In the following lines its diction elevates with its appropriate expressions of the beauty of nature.

The poem is a spiritual poem and therefore it portrays the war of soul's and spirit against the five senses? These five senses are often become the cause of destruction of man because they often lead him towards misdirection. In the poem Bhism is a great spiritual character who is a warrior not for senses but that physical power is not as important as spiritual power.

The above poetic lines present an echo of in the great poet Kabir,

Jal mein kumbh, kumbh mein jal hai,

Bahar-Bheetar pani

Phoot kumbh jal jalhi samana (Acharya Hazari Prasad Diwedi, 1973)

The great Hindi poet in the above couplet wants to say; there is pitcher in the water and water in the pitcher. There is water both inside and outside the pitcher (in the vast ocean). The pitcher breaks, and the water in it merges in the water outside. The same idea we find in the great romantic poet William Wordsworth who is like Kabirdas is a great sublime nature poet. Like Maha Nand Sharma he also believes in the intimation of immortality of soul. William Wordsworth in his great 'Ode on Intimation' wants to say the child is in the beginning a real copy of God but unfortunately, generally when he becomes in the contact with society in the years to follow he began to stop on the corrupt face of life.

The poet in his poetic book 'Divine Glimpses' presents spirituality as the core of all religious. In his dedication of this work to Lord Shiva, he says

All faiths are thine, O Shiva, therefore

This work which weaves a rainbow bright

Of hues which form their spiritual core

Is shine, Accept, O sources of light? (Maha Nand Sharma, 1996)

These lines are symbolical and present various aspect of spirituality. In his preface to Flowering of a Lotus, he says “; My divinity or spirituality is not the spirituality of caves and mountains. It blooms in the mires of life. In A Rudraksha Rosary, Lord Shiva descends from Heaven to Earth and plays his Lila till at last in the last book, he associates himself with Arjuna, a man who belongs to history and not to mythology. In A Spiritual Warrior, Bhism is a figure of history. In Divine Glimpses, all the spiritual

luminaries except the mother are figures who, like Lord Shiva and the great Bhisma, lived spirituality upon Earth. The mother in Mother's Crucifixion typifies common human being who, like all the mothers and fathers, are naturally spirituality in their actions but whose active spirituality like that of millions of human beings in other capacities, is not recognized. "(Mrs. Krishna Sharma, 1998)

These poems are the best specimen of the poet's love for spiritual themes. These poems are merely a drop in the ocean of his exhaustive treatment of the theme of love in his epics and some lyricist. The poet presents three facets of love-(i) sensual love (ii) spiritual love and (iii) conjugal love. Sensual love is portrayed by him on two planes: (i) the romantic plane and (ii) the naturalistic plane. He also presents the elevation of love from the sensual to the romantic and from the romantic to the spiritual level. His romantic love is related with the spiritual love. As Dr. A. H. Tak says:

"Nowhere does Dr. Sharma display his inherent power more clearly than in his treatment of love in poems like 'Mother's Crucifixion', 'The Thorny Rose' and 'Bonds of Blood' (Dr. A.H.Tak, 1996)

It is fruitful to discern in of realism this discussion of realism that the spirituality of even the common types such as the mother in Mother's Crucifixion, the trader Serivan in The Fatal Prize, and the labourer Sukkha in The Bleeding Breakfast is not ignored by the poet. What Dr. Satish Kumar says of his mysticism fully applies to his treatment of the theme of spirituality also:

Sharma's poetry is suffused with mysticism and spirituality, but his is the mysticism not of a visionary living in complete isolation from the realities of the world. His is the mysticism of a realist...."(Divine Glimpses, 1996)

It is needless to say that while the sensual love is based upon the attraction of the flesh, the spiritual love is free from such attraction. It rests solely upon the desire to do well to others. It does not feed upon flesh. Conjugal love is a blending of both the sensual and the spiritual love. Both the sensual and the spiritual attitudes play an important part in love between husband and wife.

Love on the romantic plane is mirrored in the poems To My Dejecting Mistress and The Telling Silence.(Scattered Leaves, 1991)

Though speaking not one word, the girl

With radiant smiles beamed.

Her playful eyes, her lustrous curls

With a thrilling life teemed.

(To My Dejecting Mistress)

* * * *

She with her telling silence, was
 A poem of love lines
 To me, her silence lent, alas

A poet's restlessness. (The Telling Silence)

The romantic element in the themes lends lyrical tinge to his poetry. Maha Nand Sharma's *The Thorny Rose and Flowering of a Lotus* spotlight his contention convincingly and comprehensively. The naturalistic presentation of love imports realism into poetry. It is clearly visible in Lord Shiva indulging in foreplay with Parvati - foreplay in which, according to Prema Nanda Kumar, "the Yogeshwara is to be transformed as Bhogeshwara for the good of humanity." 12. In *Flowering of a Lotus*, the poet goes beyond foreplay and portrays Bhartrahari indulging in sex with Pingla:

The foreplay over, Pingla Bhartrahari
 Are lying on a cozy, cushioned bed
 In tight embrace, The King with boundless glee,
 By soul-devouring burning passion led
 The hope of sucking all the juicy they had,
 In pressing kisses on her rosy lips-
 The lips in chandliers' light shining red,
 His rose upon her leaf-like nose he slips,

The more the hungry lust is fed, the more it grips. (Dr. Prema Nanda Kumar, 1988)

In the preface of the poem Maha Nand Sharma says in difference in the preface of his poem *Flowering of a Lotus* that a poet should imitate the life like Wordsworth. He should function, his personal experiences into his poetry. He says that poet is like a surgeon whose function is to see the organs of the body for a patient recovery. In the VIII chapter of the the' *Kumar Sambhavam*' by Kalidas has used such lines in his portrayal. He has used physical love to elevate spiritual love. In his poem he has defined spiritual love which finds expression in the worship of God in controlling the senses to save oneself from sensuality, and in doing good to others with the realization that there is the same spirit in others as there exists in one's own self at is obvious that the perfect love on this level is beyond the reach of man. The poet says:

As I have chased mirage of perfect love
 And have not found the perfect love so far,
 Yon cloud is chasing in the sky above

Its earthly shadow, fleeting far and far.(Maha Nand Sharma, 1956)

Maha Nand Sharma is in great favour of conjugal love because it is an ideal love and has its relation with the physical attraction of the wife and the husband. .It both sensual as well as spiritual love. Lord Shiva and his love for Parvati is the best model of love between husband and wife. His love for Parvati is very limited as physical love but it is unlimited as spiritual love. Once when Parvati's father not invites her and her husband in the yug at Kankhal she burnt herself in the fire of Yug.:

She jumped headlong into the flames;

The leaping, dancing flames around her licked

Her different parts-the hair, the face, the neck

The breasts, the waist, the legs, from head to foot

And tried their best to lick her down to dust

Before they could have turned her frame to ash.(A Rudraksha Rosary, 1987)

3.Conclusion

To sum up, the themes of Maha Nand Sharma's poetry include spirituality, love education, politics and poverty of the ase, spirituality is most important, in A Rudraksha Rosary, the poet brings out the endlessness of God, the need for spiritual reflections to control the senses, the penance for the spirit for union with the universal spirit with matter and the theory of Karma propounded in the Geeta. 'A Spiritual Warrior' the war of soul against the senses and the spirit trying to become one with the Universal spirit both in strength and the character. Spirituality is presented as the core of all religions in 'Divine Glimpses.' Through various long poems , the poet highlights spiritual qualities such as mercy, unflinching faith in Truth and God, introspection without judging others, correction of one's own self before correcting others courage to speak the truth fearlessly, honesty as the best virtue to be followed and practiced self-sacrifice, abstention from Lesbian love, and brotherly love as a strong cementing force. Two other facts, emphasized by 'Divine Glimpses', are the closeness of the poor to God and the honest hard work as the real worship of God. 'Flowering of a Lotus' portrays the progress of a soul towards its destination, God through the mire of life.

The diction and the setting of the poem is most appropriate. it has a spiritual theme and leaves as impression of sublimity on the mind of readers. The poet has given the theme of sublimity in its chronological order. The poet has mingled the two themes. There are three facets of love in Sharma's poetry-sensual, spiritual and conjugal. Sensual love is

delineated on two levels, romantic and naturalistic. The elevation of love from the sensual to the romantic and from the romantic to the spiritual plane is also delineated by him. Conjugal love in Sharma's poetry is a mingling of both, the sensual and the spiritual.

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