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Anjali Singh
Guest faculty, Deptt. of
English, Govt. P.G. College,
Mauganj Distt. Rewa, India

A modern American poet: Walt Whitman

Anjali Singh

Abstract

The concept of 18th-century New England as optimistic rationalism emerges as the dominant view of life. According to this view, God and nature are benevolent to man and all are part of the harmonious, cosmic progress is imitable by man, and society is perfectible. These were the views of the people who led the American Revolution and created its new form of government. After the revolution, New England went through a period of intellectual decline, this happened mainly because its dominant classes were severely affected by the radicalism of the French Revolution and its associated religious infinity. In the period of the Fiedtists and the Jeffersons there was complete cultural isolation. The period ended after the war of 1812. When a young man visited Europe and brought back books and ideas. The seed of romanticism transferred from Europe and generated in soil already well fertilized by the traditional Puritan, respect for the life of the mind. it eventually grew into the so-called New England Renaissance.

Only a small number of individuals accepted the bolder implication of romanticism, although among them was the figure of the most respected descendants. New England writers fall fairly and clearly into two groups: (1) Radicals who try to break completely with the past and develop an original relationship to the universe, and (2) Conservatives who remain closer to the Brahmanical or ancient tradition. the breadwinner of the family and were mostly men of learning rather than original ideas.

Keywords: Fiedtists and the Jeffersons, revolution

Introductions

Emerson is the founder and father of American Transcendentalism. His nature is the bible of transcendentalism. He and his followers Thoreau, Hawthorn Melville Whitman got Transcendentalism partly directly from the German and partly from their English interpreters such as Coleridge and Carlyle Famous American Transcendentalists included R.W. Emerson. Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau Honson Aleott, George Ripley Margaret Fuller and Theodore Parker. The movement was a protest against America's continued cultural dependence on Europe, and ultimately a deep exploration of the spiritual foundations and moral implications of the new democracy. Emerson attracted Whitman who said I cook, Emerson brought me to the boil.

The radical aspect of the Renaissance was mainly "transcendentalism". This is the name for the intellectual attitude developed by a number of young men living in the Boston area in the 1830s. In 1838 they organized a club. The Transcendental Club for Philosophical Discussion in 1840-1844 published a magazine called Dial. In 1841 some of them were responsible for establishing the "Brook farm Colony". Former members of the group included Emerson, George Riplay Alcott, Margarte, Juller Henery, David Thoreau, and Unitarian minister Pheo Perarer. However, all of them were primarily concerned with examining the application of the American doctrine of individualism in the light of the romantic conception of human personality. Thus, they were more concerned with the emotional experience of the individual and the place in nature than with the social structure as an interpersonal relationship. Transcendentalism is nothing but an amalgamation of various philosophers, their way of thinking, both from the East and from the West, ancient and modern, systematizing the romantic disorders of the intellectual and the exaltation of intuitive philosophers such as Plato Scelling Heigal, had a firm belief that man can represent reality through spiritual insight.

Features of movement are

1. Romantic individualism.
2. Dignity of human soul-Faith in direct spiritual intuition – freedom of individual freedom of will.

Corresponding Author:
Anjali Singh
Guest faculty, Deptt. of
English, Govt. P.G. College,
Mauganj Distt. Rewa, India

3. The doctrine of correspondence – oneness of all nature, God and man.
4. Puritanism – reliance on interception.
5. Self-reliance – faith in progress.
6. Spiritual religion.
7. Conception of good life.
8. Belief in Platonism – Neo Platonism and Platonism.
9. Belief in Hindu philosophy-Synthesis of Vedant Upnishad and Gita.

Transcendentalism of Whitman

He was one of the main Transcendentalists. Belonging to the category of optimistic writers of New England, Whitman can be considered the supreme figure of the literary development of this period. Emerson and his fellow Transcendentalists took a positive view of the spiritual values of American individualism. These were negated by Emerson with Whitman. It was a return to a positive but more penetrating awareness of what is missing in the ideal of individualism and what is needed to conjugate it under the influence of romanticism. Whitman expressed a belief in the basic goodness of man, this belief was originally based on rationality and the power of enlightenment. Whitman expressed faith in man's inner energy and freedom of belief because man lives naturally and spontaneously. He would become an instrument for the divine spirit that pervaded the universe, and then he would no longer need the guidance of external authority or tradition.

Whitman was influenced by the "Quaker religious set", whose doctrine is that true worship of the divine must be experienced as in the inner light of the individual worshipper. He used Quaker terms and references in his poems, which express mystical individualism. His outlook on life was mystical. He felt that the material world and all its inhabitants were an emanation of divinity and therefore sacred. Informing this view, Whitman was stimulated specifically by the writing of Emerson. "I was cooking, Emerson brought me to the void.

Whitman found a multiplicity of oneness and like Emerson he saw all objects and persons inter – related in single oneness. He was therefore able to move comfortably in a poem from the self to an animal to God. Whitman in his poem addressed to his own self, his own body and his soul and celebrates and sings himself. Whitman believes in connection between physical and spiritual reality.

Whitman also had the transcendentalists view of man being the representative of all his fellows "For every atom belonging to me is good belongs to you". Whitman saw democracy as necessary for full development of self. He saw democracy as a form of society, which would allow the fullest and freest development of each man's self. Democracy for Whitman included individualism but also equality the leveler the unyielding principles of the average. Like Emerson and other transcendentalists Whitman too was greatly influenced by the sacred writing of the past. Whitman was interested in the concept of selfhood and he found in Hindu sculpture a well elaborated doctrine of self mysticism as it is understood by the Vedantas and as it finds expression in 'Song of Myself and it is way of embracing other the objective world, in an inclusive conception of selfhood. It is a way of finding the world in the self and in one's soul. Whitman got the idea of oneness in all objects of nature and that God is imminent in every object from Hindu sculpture.

Whitman was a Vedantist by intuition. Whitman was religious, but not in the conventional sense. Rejecting ecclesiastical authority, he boldly declared that the poet would take the place of the priest and play prophet and seer in the democracy of the future.

There will be no more priests. Their work is done..... The superior race will take their place, the mass gangs of the cosmos and the prophets will take their place. A new order will arise and they will be the priests of man and each will be his own priest. There is no evidence to show that Whitman studied Indian philosophy deeply and became convinced of the correctness of the Vedantic way of life. Aided by the Transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau, and guided by his own intuitive understanding of God and himself through his somewhat unsystematic studies, he must have realized the truth of Vedanta.

Like the Vedantists, Whitman is more cosmic and expansive in his mood. Whitman is more centrist. The soul of the poet of Leaves of Grass is constantly on a journey of spiritual discovery through the visible world and sometimes beyond. There is an insatiable spiritual desire in him to unite with the infinite annihilation of the ego and attain God-realization in this life itself.

Whitman was too enamored with life to ponder the infinite possibilities of the human spirit, which seeks perfection by losing itself in the divine. The cardinal doctrine of Vedanta is the oneness or essential unity of all things which are imbued with the same divine spirit. Whitman expressed this idea in his poems by adopting the doctrine of the self, the self of the poet acting as a unifying principle. When Whitman is not strictly personal. The poet's soul is the self or cosmic "I" found in all things sentient and non-sentient. The expansive soul destroys all dualism and refuses to recognize a pluralistic world. It unites all things with a cosmic embrace and finds one life, one world, one existence.

James E Miller stimulating introduction to the 1855 edition of "Leaves of Grass" claims that Whitman's mysticism is less Christian and more Indian because of his expressed belief in such peculiarly Indian concepts as metempsychosis and karma. The most recent Indian critic of Whitman, Dr. Chari writes mysticism not only constitutes the fundamental meaning of Whitman's poems, but it also determines their poetic form and symbolism.

It is however significant that writers on mysticism from William James to F.C. Happold have found in Whitman varying degrees of mysticism. William James attributes the spiritual quality of his poetry to an actual mystical experience he must have had sometime, in 1850. To James Whitman's mysticism is sporadic. Even under Hill one of the greatest authorities on mysticism describes in respectful terms Whitman's mystical experience though she would not call him a pure mystic. Among those who cannot justly be reckoned as pure mystics. We can detect in the work of Plato and Herace, Citus, Wordsworth Tennyson and Walt Whitman certain indication that they too were acquainted, beyond most poets, and seers, with the phenomena of the illuminated life.

"Transcendentalism is usually spoken of as a philosophy. It is more justly regarded as a gospel. As a philosophy it is so far from unanimous in its structure that it may rather be considered several systems, than one. Transcendentalism was..... an enthusiasm, a wave of sentiment a breath of mind. The fundamentals of transcendentalism are to be felt as sentiments or grasped by

the imagination as poetic wholes, rather than set down in propositions.

However, there is no dispute that transcendentalism is a way of experiencing the existence of the divine world, beyond and above the world of sense perception, through intuition. Thus, the Transcendentalist considers himself not merely a physical or psychological entity, but a spiritual being. Other worldliness is dominant under the current that runs through the innermost mind of the transcendentalist. It is the longing for release from empirical existence and for life on a higher plane of being. Such a desire is the dominant attitude of American Transcendentalists. It is the central idea of Emerson and is prevalent in Thoreau, representing the informing spirit of Walden. Unlike material self-sufficiency, it is also dominant in Whitman.

Conclusion

Transcendentalism is a revelation rather than a system of philosophy, and this is true of Emerson and Whitman. It can be seen in the revelation Above the Soul of Emerson or the true reality of Whitman which is one in all things and the object of the universe. In such treatment of ultimate reality. Being the only one without a second and holding the sense world as a tool to realize this reality is a general characteristic of the Hindu religion. Vedanta recognizes the sum and essence of the entire transcendental system of orientation of the Hindu religion.

Whitman is not a mystic philosopher, but a mystic poet. He is a mystic in art. His mysticism is based on his observations about life and death, about the spiritual and material predicaments of man on earth and life outside this physical reality. A vein of mysticism runs through his poetry. "The most interesting thing about Whitman as a mystical type is that in his book we can find the typical characteristics of absolutely all the various mystical doctrines without having read or heard of them, they arose naturally from his own temperament, and he developed characteristic mystical principles, often even more striking and paradoxical than those of his predecessors.

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