

Poetic Mysticism

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Abstract

Poetic Mysticism is one of the latest varieties of mystic consciousness. The term “mysticism” has its religious, philosophical and psychological connotation. Mystic consciousness is realized by the trinity of God, man and nature. As man visualized the union of mystic trinity in terms of a slow spiritual process, the very notion of mystic voyage emerged. The five fold structure was developed as “Awakening, Purgation, Illumination, the Dark Night of the soul and Union. Poetry and mysticism are inseparable because of their origin in “dim consciousness of the beyond.” Mystic poetry embodies three pathways- i.e, Truth, Beauty and Goodness. The mystic poets create a concrete, integrated and upto date vision which properly developed mystical doctrines, a well defined path and multi-dimensional articulated images of great power, Mystic poetry paves the path to divinity and the union with Almighty.

Key words: - mystic, occultism, transcendentalism, visionary, mortification etc.

Introduction

Poetic Mysticism is one of the latest varieties of mystic consciousness. At the very outset, it is very necessary to understand what the term "mysticism" and "mystic" actually mean. In religious context, it means the experience of faith states, in philosophical context, it refers to the knowledge of unity. In psychology, it denotes different states of consciousness. In Science, it means something "vague" and "misty", whereas in occultism, it means an instrument of power.

As a term, mysticism has a religious orientation, since it has its origin in the Greek Mystery religions and Christianity. It comes from the terms mysterion (mystery), a derivation from muo, meaning to "shut or close the lips or eyes" and muein, meaning "to remain silent. Both mysterion and muein were concerned with the cultic initiation rites, which were observed in silence and which were kept strictly secret. The term mysticism is also linked with the Christian term mustikos which “referred to the spiritual meaning that Christian in the light of revelation, detected under the original literal meaning of the scriptures.”

However, in the medieval theology, mysticism was associated with the knowledge and experience of reality. For the purpose, the medieval theologians used two terms, theologia mystica for “a specific kind of insight and Knowledge about God” and contemplatio (contemplation) for advanced form of spiritual experience.

However, during the period of secularization, an attempt was made to remove the religious apparels of mysticism. Consequently, a tendency developed not only to search out secular analogues to the religious states but to drop the use of old terms altogether. This tendency became very popular among Americans who were interested to replace the term mysticism. Harold Bloom has named such term as “the new transcendentalism” and “the Orphic strain”. J. Hillis Miller prefers to describe it “a visionary or apocalyptic union of subject and object.” But inspite of these innovative references, the term mysticism retains its importance.

However, the term "mysticism" has been welcomed by many other subjects, specially by those who wished to explore reality, religion, art, philosophy and science. F.C. Happold states: "Mysticism is a particular

and distinct sort of 'spirituality' and defines it "as a type of experience, as a way of knowledge and as a state of consciousness." Happold's definition is inclusive as it takes its religious, philosophical, scientific and psychological approach. Poetry also treats mystical phenomenon in an inclusive sense.

Mystic consciousness is realized by the trinity of God, man and nature. As man visualized the union of mystic trinity in terms of a slow spiritual process, the very notion of mystic voyage emerged. The five fold structure was developed as 'Awakening, Purgation, Illumination, the Dark Night of the soul and Union. The experience of Awakening is as old as the primitive religions. The Purgation is closely connected with purification of emotions, holiness purification of body as well as of mind. It involves mortification and detachment. The third stage is Illumination. It brings radiant Consciousness. To produce illuminative experience is Contemplation. The Dark Night of the soul is another ladder which seems as an interlude of dark ecstasy between the raptures of Illumination and the joy of Union with Almighty. The last stage is Union. Union forms the crowning glory of the mystic life. In religious context, Union is the spiritual marriage of soul with God.

As far as the role of poetry as an instrument is related, it is believed that poetry in its philosophical and religious state is highly mystical. Poetry and Mysticism are inseparable because of their common origin in "dim consciousness of the beyond". Mystic poetry embodies three pathways-i.e; Truth, Beauty and Goodness which can pave the path to Absolute.

Since Poetic mysticism is a form of mystical experience with a difference, it has its own definition. Caroline F.E. Spurgeon, one of the most important pioneers in the field of literary mysticism defines mysticism as "a temper rather than doctrine, an atmosphere rather a system of philosophy." Evelyn Underhill described poetic mysticism as on the one hand, "a temperamental reaction to the vision of reality" and on the other hand, "as a form of prophecy."

Mysticism in poetry explores the themes beyond the ordinary. Poets believe in the existence of a faculty of vision, which is yet to be stated. Spurgeon states: We have as yet no recognized name for this faculty and it has been variously called "transcendental feeling", "imagination", "mystic reason", "Cosmic consciousness", "divine sagacity", "ecstasy", or "vision", all these meaning the same thing. But although it lacks a common name, we have ample testimony to its existence, the testimony of the greatest teachers, philosophers and poets of the world who describe to us in strangely similar language."

Spurgeon describes mysticism as a temper. It can be the attitude of mind founded upon an intuitive conviction of unity, of oneness in all objects. Supporting her argument, she quotes the verse from the last chapter of the Bhagavad Gita:

There is truth Knowledge. Learn thou it is this:

To see one changeless life in all the lives,

And in the Separate, One Inseparable.

The faith in unity implies another faith that this entire phenomenon is the reflection of one divine being. Another important feature of poetic mysticism is experience, the experience that the poet has lived. This experience is beyond knowledge. It is a kind of feeling. A mystic poet is "a man who, in a world of blind men, has suddenly been granted sight, and who, gazing at the sunrise, and overwhelmed by the glory of it, tries however falteringly, to convey to his fellows what he sees. They, naturally, would be skeptical about it, and would be inclined to say that he is talking foolishly and incoherently."

Moreover, Harmony and Joy are the remarkable features of Mystic poetry. These are linked with spiritualism. Another distinguishing characteristic is use of symbols in mystic poetry. Mystic poets are

concerned with practical objects. They used nature symbols to achieve their destination. William Wordsworth and William Blake described the importance of contemplation and imagination. Both of them stressed the importance of purification. With the advent of Christianity, the elements of revelation and spiritual cannnotation of the scriptures were also added to it.

Poetic mysticism revolves round the matter of the subject object convergence. In mystic poetry, aesthetic sense rises from “a pleasant feeling to a passion” in which the sense of strangeness, terror and joy are mingled in which the entire universe seems “charged with a new vitality” and splendour”, with each blade of grass becoming “a well of wondrous light”, and in which the seeker knows “the eternal calculus”. The mystic poets create a concrete, integrated and uptodate vision with properly developed mystical doctrines, a well defined path and multi-dimensional experiences articulated images of great power.

In its power to create mystic states, poetry is capable to touch the great height. It strengthens not only the physical vision but also the spiritual vision; the physical vision for looking splendid glory of God in the external universe and the spiritual vision for witnessing the operations of the indwelling almighty. Thus, only the poet is gifted with the resplendent vision for he has the imaginative eye to see both the worlds external and internal, natural and spiritual. Thus, its not a matter of astonishment that poetry has replaced asceticism as the pathway to the utmost reality. It provides mystic experience which is aesthetic, secular, social, and democratic, a mystic experience which paves the path to divinity and the union with Almighty.

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