

R. K. Bhushan's Muse: An Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

Bhushan is so much influenced by Wordsworth that his love for nature also seems to be Wordsworthian. Ponds and Rivers are the examples that teach the philosophy of life. Ponds are always associated with a confined life that breeds selfishness, egoism and narrow-minded. Rivers are associated with the flow of life that does not take but believes in giving life to others. Rivers teach how to be broad-minded and live for others. Rivers flow in search of identity and ultimately are lost in the sea. But, to mingle in the sea—the eternal sea is the desired goal of life. R. K. Bhushan's Muse experiences mixed feelings, sometimes she is bruised at the contemporary landscape dotted with materialism which negates spiritualism and values in life, sometimes, she seems to be nature conscious, sometimes, she becomes philosophical to the extent that she inspires to inculcate patience and peace and sometimes, she surrenders everything at the altar of Sai Baba. The poet in Bhushan makes an inward journey right from the outward world.

Keywords: Nature, Melodies, Wordsworth, philosophical, Sai Baba.

Under

The patronage and protection

Of impotent will and toothless law. (Melodies 16)

Nature is the theme that has always attracted the poets who have associated themselves with nature so much that they feel her presence in them. Wordsworth has become almost a legend in his treatment of nature and in this regard, he has influenced a host of poets. Bhushan is so much influenced by Wordsworth that his love for nature also seems to be Wordsworthian. Like Wordsworth, he believes that “Nature yields and adores / To comfort man / For relief and reward” (Melodies 11). Whenever he moved towards nature, she welcomed him with her ‘treasures of beauty and wealth’ and gave him “her lore and light” (Melodies 22). For him, leaves are not simply left but are the singers that while “Rustling, falling and flying, / In breezes, winds or storms furious, / Sing the thoughts / Of places and persons far-off: / For fields fertile and barren lands, / And for men in cities grand” (Leaves 40). He is worried because of the way of life led by the modern man who has become materialistic so much that he does not hesitate in polluting the environment for his gain. His inner self weeps when he sees modern man's indifference to nature. Mark the excerpt for the portrayal of the sad scenes of nature:

Springs have gone dry

Leaving only the traces
Of their eternal flow.
Roots have withered
Or are dead.
Trees are denuded
Or dying (Melodies 15)

No matter what the modern man thinks or does, he will continue to love nature. He is so much in love with nature that he wishes to be “a tree / That never withholds / Its shade and fruit / From those / Who hurt and hit it” (Melodies 18). He wishes to learn how to stand in peace and poise and smile like “the Lord of Happiness / At the hurting kids / And slapping storms, / Ruffling rains / And sustaining sun!” (Melodies 18). Does it not sound great to be at peace and smile even in spite of being hurt and slapped? The poet in Bhushan is Wordsworthian in his relationship with nature that “never did betray / The heart that loved her” (Wordsworth 251).

Philosophical and devotional overtones add beauty to Bhushan’s verse that searches for “success” in “failure” and the poet’s failures are “painted with success” (Soul 15). Mark the excerpt that reminds of Emily Dickenson searching for positivity out of negativity:

Your successes are shrouded in failure;
My failures are painted with success.
Doesn’t matter
Where is what
And
What is who?
Life takes its own course;
Time leads on its own course;
The world guides on its own course. (Soul 15)

Ponds and Rivers are the examples that teach the philosophy of life. Ponds are always associated with a confined life that breeds selfishness, egoism and narrow-minded. Rivers are associated with the flow of life that does not take but believes in giving life to others. Rivers teach how to be broad-minded and live for others. Rivers flow in search of identity and ultimately are lost in the sea. But, to mingle in the sea—the eternal sea is the desired goal of life. Outwardly, rivers lose their identity but inwardly they gain—the pleasure of association

with the sea. Same is true with man whose ultimate aim is the association with the Supreme Soul. Mark the excerpt for the philosophical touches which teach man the essence of life:

Ponds pollute and rivers rule
And redeem their rich routes.
The rivers weave tales that sing
Of passion and purity,
Progress, peace and prosperity.
Their pilgrimage is a search
For identity, new and eternal,
That fulfils the Infinite.
Yes. Losing to gain
Is the essence of life! (Leaves 44)

The philosopher in Shakespeare speaks through Hamlet when he says: “There is nothing either good or bad but thinking maketh it so” (Hamlet 1141). Here, in this world, man feels highly elated when he sees or gets the things of his liking but feels sad or dejected when he meets its opposite. Ultimately, he has to see whether it is of his liking or not. Things are not good or bad but it is the attitude that makes them things of likes and dislikes. Light makes man show the things of likes and dislikes. But, if a man wishes to avoid the things of his dislikes, he cannot do so. Mark the excerpt for the high voltage current of philosophy that breathes truth in plain words:

Lamp that lights the world,
lamp that we light—
Both light us not
But only show
What interests us not
And what interests us most! (Melodies 13)

The irony is that death is the truth which no man wishes to remember. The thought of death does not enter the mind and this very feeling makes the will weak. Life is to be loved but it is not so with the modern man who has turned himself into machine under the impact of the materialistic culture. Mark the excerpt for the philosophical touches mixed with ironic flavour:

The most astounding irony,

The irony of ironies
Of which we are aware
And also unaware
Is—
Our thought of death
is dead;
Our will to live
Is feeble.
We are living in death,
We are dying to live (Melodies 31)

The philosopher Bhushan is a true devotee of Sai Baba whom he considers “see-of-all, the knower-of-all, the doer-of-all” (Melodies 2). It is Sai who purifies the total existence of man. He is the Lord of the universe and nothing is hidden from Him whether it is yesterday, today or tomorrow. The poet makes a complaint against the people who have lost their values as they have followed the path of materialism that destroys conscience. Mark the excerpt for the complaint to Sai Baba against the people who have raised the walls of violence and isms:

Your integrated vision
Is disintegrated
Into isms and creeds,
And sects select
With faiths multifacet
This assures and gives
Loaves and fishes
Of luxuries and riches;
Sentiments are fired
Goons are hired.
Toons work and loons shirk. (Melodies 2)

It is the ego that stops man from being happy. Sai asks to “demolish the confine of self”. Mark the excerpt for Sai’s teachings that teach a man how to live a respectable life:

Dare to fight injustice,
Tyranny and suppression,
Love others’ happiness

As your own—

This is the ethics,

This is the religion and the righteous,

All else is unethical and irreligious! (Melodies 47)

Such are Sai Baba's precious pearls which make man a man in real sense if he wears them inwardly. The poet in R. K. Bhushan is on the path of developing the poetic idiom for his articulations that first strike his heart but take nourishment from his head that attempts to make some mental gymnastics in order to surprise the reader who sometimes reacts as desired and sometimes, quite contrary to the expectation, is not much impressed because of the artificiality of expression. Sometimes, he uses simple sentences to make his strength in expression. Sentences like "The roots of sin have gone deep" (Soul 22), "Undressed were the fancies of the flights" (Soul 36) and "Sleep has become a stranger" (Melodies 3) go directly to the reader's heart that praises the poet's simplicity. The poet also surprises the reader who is lost in the jugglery of words that attract him to decode their meanings. "This is the world of man / In which lives the man of the world" (Soul 22), "The aids do not aid / And cause AIDS" (Leaves 10), "Of matter in spirit / And spirit in matter" (Leaves 20), "It was identity for wisdom / And wisdom for identity" (Leaves 69) and "Shadows show / The shadowy show" (Melodies 9) are the instances that prove the poet's nature of playing with the words that twist their real meanings which come only when the reader re-reads and re-thinks in order to decipher the poet's idea. "Morality, thy name is Mammon!" and "the word is too much with us" (Soul 23) remind the reader of Shakespeare's "Frailty! thy name is woman" and Wordsworth's "The World is too much with us". A man who is the favourite of mammon i.e. has a lot of wealth becomes the incarnation of morality. No one is moral like him. For Bhushan, the world is replaced by the word. Now, it is not the world but the word that is too much with us. Man is so busy that he does not wish to talk. He has almost forgotten how to make dialogue. That's why he is so lonely and isolated in spite of having the world, i.e. materialistic pursuits. No doubt, the poet has imitated the lines but not the ideas which make man ponder over the ideas mentioned therein. Sample other such excerpts which remind the reader of Keats: "Bliss is beauty and beauty is bliss / With truth that is lost in synthesis" (Melodies 1) and "The work continues / Amidst fret, fever and fun" (Melodies 11). The other striking feature of Bhushan's verse is its phraseology. Instances like "This economics of my sociology?" (Leaves 11), "A moving encyclopedia of ignorance" (Leaves 37), "And the aura of achievements" (Leaves 63), "Contours of our celebrated geography" (Melodies 6) strike the reader with connotations and

expressions. The poet has the potential to take the maximum output out of minimum words. Here lies the genius of the poet in packing lines with a meaningful matter. Mark the excerpt for the packed sense which makes the reader take a tour of American literature:

This is America
Which writes her history
In the scarlet letter
On the leaves of grass
Around the Walden with Waldo
To lend its transcendence
For the portrait of a lady
And for Frost to sing,
In pastoral tranquility
Where he has miles to go (Soul 45)

Rhyming which sometimes becomes the great tool to enhance the beauty of his verse also becomes infantile when he labours hard or almost forces his mind to release the words of rhymes. But, when he is natural, he is able to create miraculous effects. Mark the excerpt for the use of rhyming particularly internal rhyming:

“Virgin delights of the virgin flights
Where the celestial glides” (Soul 36)
and...
“The brides of culture , the privileged vulture” (Soul 7)
and...
“I live amidst
Haunting homes, mounting domes;
Honking horns, conking morns;
Vaulting bones, taunting tones;
Clanking china, whanging Diana” (Soul 25)

and...

“Life of spirituality yields the hope;
Life of materiality fails to cope” (Leaves 14)

The beauty of Bhushan’s verse lies not in rhyming alone but in rhyming with more musical effect. In order to add more music to his verse, he employs more vowels that give the incantatory touch. For instance: “Of the care of cocoons—/ Loons, spoons; Spoons, loons- / All goons and cocoons” (Leaves 39). The poet is well-aware to keep pace with time that is changing fast because of the progress in science and technology. The world of pen and paper has given place to the world of computer and keyboard. Mark the excerpt for the poets use of modern scientific terms:

Beloved vandilists,
Junk mail loaded software,
Working on computer with no hard disk,
And multimedia keyboard
With letter half-missing
On wobbly knobs! (Leaves 39)

Generally, it is seen that the poets are in love with figures of speech particularly simile and metaphor. The poet in Bhushan is not an exception but he employs alliteration and oxymoron more effectively than any other figure of speech. “Coated with caution and cologne” (Soul 36), “All look forward to nation’s / Pride, prosperity and power / Which wade through / Jingle, jangle, jungle and gymnastics” (Leaves 24) , “Lore that has lost luster” (Leaves 55) , “Their stones / Are grinding, grueling and grilling” (Melodies 11) and “The supreme / reigning, raining, reining / Passion!” (Melodies 35) are the instances of alliteration. His use of alliteration differs from other poets as he uses alliteration with musical effect. The other figure of speech that is used by Bhushan is Oxymoron. Instances like “We find harmony in disharmony” (Soul 10), “Irrational is rational / To clear the fogs of confusion” (Rustling 69), “I love peace and order / But I found myself / Amidst conflict and disorder” (Melodies 32) clearly exhibit the poet’s knack in employing oxymoron. All such technical features add charm to Bhushan’s verse. Due to them, his verse has come to the form of “mantra—where what is unheard is sweeter than what is heard” (Niranjan Mohanty, blurb on verso, Melodies)

R. K. Bhushan’s Muse experiences mixed feelings, sometimes she is bruised at the contemporary landscape dotted with materialism which negates spiritualism and values in life, sometimes, she seems to be nature conscious, sometimes, she becomes philosophical to the extent that she inspires to inculcate patience and peace and sometimes, she surrenders everything at the altar of Sai Baba. The poet in Bhushan makes an inward journey right from the outward world. He believes that “Poetry is an internal quest for the eternal” (Soul viii). Hence, he wishes to be happy in all circumstances with his devotion to God. His firm faith in

life makes him declare: “Whatever we are, / Wherever we are / Let’s be happy” (Melodies 31). As he is optimist every inch, he gets over the adverse circumstances. For him, such despairing circumstances are transitory and momentary. He believes in “confronting the darkness imminent in the world with the light of hope and truth” (Foreword, Soul v). He is Brownian in spirit and, so, declares the philosophy of life in three words: “Life goes on” (Leaves, Preface vii). For him, poetry is not less than life for him. When he states: “Life goes on”, he actually thinks of poetry: “Poetry goes on”. Assessing Bhushan’s genius as a poet, Niranjana Mohanty states: “Raghu’s enthusiastic and animating engagement with nature in celebrating its bounties and beauty, his impassioned leap into the sea of the life with an immaculate innocence, his dynamic vision of championing the spirit of democracy, his love for rhyme, rhythm and a hunting lyricism make his poetry throb with an immensity that is rare, a vitality that is irreducible. Raghu’s poetry makes an humble, honest and sincere attempt to celebrate mortality and through such celebrations, he tries to connect the mortality with immortality, the visible with the invisible, the tangible with the intangible” (Blurb on verso, Melodies).

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