

Philosophical Doctrines of Poet Gangadhar Meher

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Poets are also philosophers. There are many examples. English poets like Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron and Keats were all poet-philosophers. Oriya poet Gangadhar Meher was no exception. His Philosophy is deep-rooted in Indian idealism and spiritualism. The important facets of his philosophy are discussed here :

(i) Faith in God : Poet Gangadhar Meher had deep faith in God. His poetic-person was also oriented towards divinity. In his poems 'Bhakti', 'Amrutamaya' and 'Madhumaya', Gangadhar has sung in grandlines of God as well as the beautiful union of the human soul with the universal. Like all other idealists, Gangadhar Meher believed in God as the ultimate reality and surrendered himself to God. His concept of self-surrender in the poem 'Bhakti' resembles with the concept of surrender advocated by Sri Aurobindo as one of the three basic aspects of his integral yoga. In his same poem 'Bhakti', Gangadhar emphasised on devotion as the only and ultimate way of realization of God.

(ii) Theory of Action : Poet Gangadhar Meher was a man of action. He had profound faith in 'Karmabad' like Mahatma Gandhi. He also believed in the concept 'Work is Worship'. In his epic "Kichak Badha", Gangadhar Meher states

that one has to reap the consequences of his action. In the fifth canto of 'Pranayaballari', the poet has putforth the same view. Again in the seventh canto of 'Tapaswini' - his magnum opus, Gangadhar has reiterated his faith in 'Karmabad'. Poet Gangadhar Meher also believed in the concept of Rebirth. Like Swami Vivekananda, Gangadhar Meher also believed that 'Karma determines rebirth'. And this view is clearly reflected in his long narrative poem 'Indumati'. Though Gangadhar Meher was a firm believer of the theory of action, he never denied the role of fate in human life.

(iii) Emphasis on Morality : Poet Gangadhar Meher respected the great Indian literary tradition by accepting morality as the didactic value of art and literature. The moral teachings contained in his literary works are really meaningful and educative. Gangadhar Meher was an epitome of integrity. He himself led a moral life based on simple living and high thinking. Gangadhar Meher was imbided with all moral virtues like honesty, truthfulness, kindness and forgiveness etc. He was not only moral but a spiritual self as well. He was so honest that he did not hesitate to give witness in a case filed against his employer, the zamindar of Barpali.

The literary creations of Gangadhar Meher directly raise the voice of morality. His poems like 'Guru-Sisya', 'Mahajana', 'Parisrama', 'Manapрати', 'Dhanapрати', 'Garba', 'Sangaphala' etc. were written to give a moral direction to human life and society. Through his literary writings Gangadhar wished to improve the work culture by making it morality-based. In his poems 'Panchayat', 'Taku Madhya Balithanti Dharma Abatara' and 'Subhaba O Swabhaba', the poet has reiterated the significance of moral values in human life. Poet Gangadhar Meher believed in the transcendental moral values, truth, goodness and beauty. These three absolute values find reflection in all his literary creations. This faith of the poet is the central feature of his literature which has immortalised Gangadhar and his creations.

(iv) Naturalism : Poet Gangadhar Meher was a staunch naturalist. Gangadhar's poetry not only makes a precise and loving observation of nature, but personifies Nature by injecting life into it. Gangadhar Meher has also emphasised on the great virtue of Nature in educating human society. He has treated Nature as a living spirit like all other human characters of his literature. In Gangadhar's subtle vision, Nature is sensitive and possesses human virtues. It is always sympathetic to human sufferings and appears like fighting against injustice. To Gangadhar, Nature is a tested friend and a solace-giver which equally shares human emotions like sorrows and happiness. According to him, Nature is a friend, philosopher and guide of man. In sharp contrast to Rousseau's naturalism, Gangadhar has socialised Nature. His Nature acts and reacts in consonance with the principles and traditions of human society. However Gangadhar Meher stressed the same thoughts as Rabindranath Tagore. Rabindranath experienced the integration of God, man and

Nature. Gangadhar's literature also reveals the same point of view.

(v) Nationalism : Poet Gangadhar Meher composed poetry to imbibe the people with nationalist spirit. He treated literature as an instrument to inculcate the sense of nationalism. He not only yearned for the freedom of his motherland from foreign bondage, but also worked to uphold the unity and integrity of his nation. Gangadhar considered both motherland and mothertongue as equal to mother, and appealed the Indian masses to come to the rescue of their nation and language. Through his writings, poet Gangadhar Meher evinced great patriotism, love for language, culture and tradition. His poetry attempted to resist attacks on Oriya language from various quarters during the later part of nineteenth century. His 'Utkal-Laxmi' justifies his resistance. It was the product of his desire to integrate the divided Oriya-speaking people then. Through his poems 'Bharati Rodana' and 'Utkala Bharatinka Nibedana', Gangadhar vehemently opposed the attempts to impose 'Hindi' on the Oriya-speaking people in Sambalpur. Gangadhar's love for motherland and mothertongue finds expression in as many as twenty poems of his works, 'Arghyathali' and 'Kabitamala'. In his poem 'Udbodhana', the poet appealed :-

*"Illumine the face of
motherland and mother-tongue
With the sacred gift of
wealth, perseverance and mind."*

Gangadhar Meher was not only a lover of Oriya language and Orissa, but also a great lover of india as a whole. In order to give vent to his nationalist spirit, Gangadhar Meher composed his lyric 'Bharati Bhabana'. Through this lyric,

Gangadhar vehemently criticised the corrupt administration and attitude of British rulers in India. The poet warned the Britishers for harassing the Indians by force as well as by adopting corrupt means, and keeping the Indians under their absolute control.

Gangadhar Meher was a liberal nationalist. Though he did not take active part in the freedom movement of India, his contribution to the freedom of the country was immense. His literary creations influenced the people to oust the Britishers from the land. Had his revolutionary and appealing creations been translated into Hindi and English, it would have created hue and cry in the British administration in India, and would have provided a new direction to the nationalist movement for freedom.

(vi) Humanism : Gangadhar Meher loved man and hence through his innumerable creations wished to educate and enlighten the common people. His aim was to bring about a social revolution using literature as the instrument. As a humanist, the poet has treated the entire universe as one society and man as a single race. His poem 'Matrubhumi' reveals his faith in the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of men. Gangadhar's world of literature focuses mainly on human life and its problems. Through his literary creations, the poet has made a whole-hearted attempt to create an ideal human society free from all vices and full of all virtues. Again Gangadhar was above narrow religious sectarianism. He believed in only one religion i.e. human religion. In this context, the poet states in his poem 'Go-bilap' :

*"Be it Hindu be Muslim or Christian
To my eyes human race is one."*

Gangadhar's philosophy of life is very glorifying and inspiring to humanity. His philosophy combines the essentials of many philosophical doctrines and theories such as idealism, naturalism, humanism and nationalism etc. Further he shares the philosophical vision of the great Indian philosophers like Gandhiji, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Truly speaking, Gangadhar Meher's philosophy is eclectic in nature.

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