



## Prose and Literary Criticism by Devulapalli Krishnasastry

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### Abstract

Devulapalli Krishnasastry (1897-1980) is famously referred to as Andhra Shelley. He was a vital cog in the Telugu Romantic Era. He got inspiration from Brahma samaj movement and to propagate the movement he compiled a volume consisting of Brahma marshi principles called 'Mahati'. In his own words Mahati is a divine feeling in the brightness of countless suns and endless tranquility. He desires to reach bright and tranquil world and attain the ultimate happiness, 'the Brahma nanda' experience by practicing the principles. He craves to provide the exact happiness to the society through his lyrics in 'Mahati'. Spirituality and melody is the essence of this volume. He invited the destitute and poor to the inner brightness of the Lord Shiva. To attain the proximity of the Almighty, he provoked the nobles and royals to come up to him by leaving egoistic feelings, shining attires, titles and honours behind them. "On each tree branches shoot and in each flower sweet honey appeared". He urges the devotees to wake up from the worthless sleep and experience the world. He compares sleep with ignorance and caution as knowledge. In turn knowledge will cradle the person, in the sweet and cold waves, whoever propagates the happy message.

**Key Words: Spirituality, Principles, God, Experiences, Poet, Culture, Prose, Criticism, Telugu, Literature and Society.**

### Brahmo Samaj- Mahati

#### Introduction

One of the principles of the brahma samaj is collective spiritual experience. Siblings, wives and children came forward hand in hand for this cause. All of them separated the doors of the fort for God. Here the poet compares the fort to the hearts of the followers and he proposes them if the chambers of the heart are opened then the God, who stays there, will appear to them. Here the poet refers to the few lines of 'purusha suktam'. "Sahasra-sirssa Purussa Sahasra- akssah Sahasra- Path!" The purusha (universal being) has thousand heads, thousand eyes and thousand feet. Thousand signifies innumerable which points to the omnipresence of the universal being. The Idol is shining with thousand open hands and calling each one of us by names. The poet explains the sweetness in the name of the Almighty by saying, that the God will be a friend, lamp light and peace of mind to those who hear his name. So the poet reiterates the importance of the search of God that the followers will not lose hope, will walk together, and will not return till they reach the feet of the universal spirit. Devulapalli explains one more principle towards 'Samoohika Upasana'- Collective Prayers in Brahma Samaj, that there is only one song in the voice and one divine lamp in the eyes. Oh my Lord, the arch of the spiritual doors is far away but my mind and heart does not think otherwise. But at times the poet feels in depression, what will happen if gets exhausted in the way, and gets submerged in the dust? How much time it would take in this unknown journey and this burning eagerness? At the same time he prays to the God to raise the hopes of himself and that of the fellow followers saying that inner peace is possible only because of his presence and his illumination is spread all over.

#### Discussion:

The person who has become a Yogi will have no doubt whether he would reach the steps of the supernatural being. The poet explains the whimpers of a poor man who's dragging his life in the spiritual darkness and adores the Almighty but does not have a lamp to look at him in the night,



no words to praise the God, no divine song to pay tributes to the God. Devulapalli asks the poor not to worry and suffer because the God will engulf even the wicked and sinners. Here the poet gives confidence to the destitute reminding them of the God's kind, compassionate and benevolent heart which cares for every being alike. The rejuvenated poor, heart filled with passion, state that they will not return to their homes until they reach the destination of Moksha. With strong determination and courage they move forward till the song plays in their mind and till there is time in the world. "Papoham karmaanaam papaatma papa sambhava traahimaam kripayaadeva ". Here the poet explains that this mantra applies to everybody and should be recited after every pooja. Human beings unknowingly do sin through our words, actions in our daily life. So a person who regrets his sins with tears and who does cleansing of soul with this mantra becomes a virtuous one and dear to God. The garlands of tears are the ornaments on the chest of the Lord. That's why we call him 'Patitapaavana', for he sanctifies and cleanses the sinful and immoral.

The tear extracts that are secreted by glands become as pure as the Ganga when they reach the feet of God. Hence the heart which develops lot of hope on the god transforms his perception from a flood threat to a kind and generous friend. Then the whole world seems to be 'Akshayapatra' to the followers and the Lord himself the 'Annapoorna'. The poet mentions that the God is not there in the dilapidated temples, but he's everywhere in the universe. Devulapalli questions the society, then why some people are labeled as outsiders, when God himself is the 'paramjyoti' shining all around the corners of the earth? The poet is inspired by the Brahmosamaj Principles, even before 'harijannodhaar' by Mahatma Gandhi, in the footsteps of Gurajada Apparao; he wrote how significant is a caste without any attributes? He is unable to decipher which kautilya sastra teaches this caste system, where after so many generations it has become almost impossible to break the hatred shackles. 'When your words are expressed from my mouth, when you stay in my heart and play the veena', the poet sings a song for the Almighty. He expresses that 'Amritaveena' will be heard if we fill our hearts with him. His soul experienced the inexplicable feeling of oneness with God in the form of sounds of Amritaveena. So the poet desires to distribute the experiences collectively among all those seeking God. In this way, 'Mahati' fills the sweetness of devotional nectar to all the devotees in the Vasudaika Kutumbam fulfilling the blend of Satyamsivamsundaram. Thus Mahati hymns fortify collective prayers, undifferentiated by caste and creed, Equality. So from the extracts of ancient Upanishads to modern Russo Humanism principles we can find the ideology of Brahmoism. Sri Etukoori Balamoorty (Visalandhra, 9 mar 1980) found both the legs of philosophy balanced in the writings of Devulapalli.

#### **Rigvedhi- The principles of Brahmoism:**

The literal meaning of Rigvedhi is the street of verses. All the incidents of life are controlled by the one and only Lord Esvara. He is the one who consumed poison and spread peace in the universe. One fine day the bad will convert into good and the mist into nectar by the order of Shiva. He does not show inequality between you and me in the path of salvation. When there is no hope in the dense forest, prayers only can pave way to save us. The unsolved puzzles in life are given solutions by the hymns to God. It is the key to the lightning of God. He is the nurse in childhood, beloved friend in adult age, shade in the time of need, medicine to disease. Thus the poet explains the importance of prayers. If the universal lord is our mother then earth is our mother, fellow human beings are our brothers. If we don't stand by our brothers, the father will lose the support. God who is in both the heaven and hell is the truth. It is the responsibility of the teachers to show the way to brotherhood, wisdom and science. He is the everlasting sweetness



and he is the beautiful song that rings in the soul of each living thing. Ethics maintain the sanctity of a religion, without ethics religion is of no use. At the same time Love and Gratitude play equal role in the prosperity of a religion. Man is a traveller who continues his journey from the dark world of ignorance towards light filled temple of the Almighty. He who measures happiness and sadness on same terms is the real God with the whole world as his home. The main weakness of a man is fear of sin. Repentance is the solution. Today's worst sinner can be tomorrow's saint. Devulapalli wishes that to happen and entrusts the followers that God will forgive their sins because there is no punishment in the universe of God. According to Devulapalli, heaven and hell are not two different entities, but they both are internal situations and principles. If we consider hell is a hospital then the doctor is Love. Inner condolence is the medicine that only can drive away any punishment. The temple of God itself is a heaven and home too, for the devotees. Thus the poet signifies the trust on God. He who practises selfless service is in way to moksha. He is accompanied by the God himself, wherever he goes and wherever he stays. The parameshwara experience is the mukti itself. The emotion of 'paramatma' visiting one soul is itself a pilgrimage. Selfishness, the root cause of all ill qualities must be destroyed. Then only Dharma can be maintained in the society. Service, universal brotherhood, patriotism are the values preached in Brahmoism. Devulapalli suggested saptapadi, to stay away from ego to the devotees of Eeswara. To visit the God in inner soul, with prayers, is a true devotee and is a follower of a religion, a real theist. To desire God in every breath of life and all jobs be converted into his worship is taught by Rugvedhi poetic volume.

### **Literary Criticism**

His basic instinct is towards poetry. Coping up with the stress of modern requirements, he wrote prose. He wrote mostly literary criticism in that prose. Criticism generally provokes the thinking of a reader. But his criticism, instead of thought provoking, made the reader feel ecstatic.

### **My great composition:**

It is the most difficult task for a poet if he is asked which his great, favourite or ethical composition is. Poet sings his poems affectionately from his own experiences of sorrow and happiness. Poet compares it to churning of milk to yield butter. The poetic material is churned out from the momentum of imagination. So the poet considers it a punishment for him to select one from them. Depending upon the situation, nostalgia, emotion and mood poets love their compositions differently at different times. Sometimes they are repeated in the poet's brain or through some others voice. So Devulapalli stands still like a person unable to clear his debts when he is asked to pick up the best among his compositions. The poet's pride and humbleness obstructs him occasionally to answer the question. Any author would possess either of these qualities. Philosophers believe that great poets have both these qualities in sync. Humility confirms that nothing is superior. Pride gives us strength. When both are in sync, then the poet embarks on a new journey of hard work and imagination. After much labour the poet thought a way out of the cave. He wants to move out of himself, the writer. He accepts the chair of audience. He comes out of all memories and situations that ignited him to compose his works. All the works are laid down in front of him. He would try to rate them as he prepares to plainly go through each one of them as a new reader. After the first step, he faces another issue that the nearer hills may seem better than the far-away mountains. The latest writings he made might seem dearer to his heart him than the older compositions. Here Devulapalli remembers and shows his gratitude towards his father and uncle who had motivated him in his formative years. He compared them to statues of knowledge and described their influence as shadows of statues where he takes shelter in times of need. His achievements are limited when compared to their



legacy. The list of people who inspired him starts from Valmiki to Rabindranath Tagore. He states that he climbed a small hill in the beginning of his career in the form of 'Krishnapaksham'. Before that he had experiences and writings of lukewarm results. Gradually his heart stirred him with discontent and he could not stay stable. He began searching like a gopika does for gopi. His wings started to flap and he started flying high in the sky till stars. When wings hurt, he fell from a height in Krishnapaksham where he found that his mate is only grief. It is not weakness but strength and hope. When he dug deep into Krishnapaksham, he found out hope is truth, hopelessness is false, crime and sin. Poets must be great believers. He got reminded of a Great Russian philosopher words that one has to travel through fire and water to reach invaluable treasure. He is of the opinion that healthy body needs happiness, healthy mind needs sadness. So he did not stop the search. He explored inside his soul when he could not find anything in the outer world. He got tired in the process but felt the taste finally. There was eagerness even though he was in solitude and he found the 'Pravasam' volume right out of his heart as an exile from the heart.

After a gap of time, poet normalizes his eyes that were used to darkness, and realises that he is standing on Udayagiri hill when he started the journey in Nallamalla forests. After all the sadness in 'Krishnapaksham' and 'Pravasam', now he is facing the sky level beauty in the form of 'Urvasi'. He got the feeling as if he is filled with the sea of milk. There is no emotion greater than love. Due to her arrival, his life attained stability. How great love is. The one who can love selflessly can have affection for anybody, anywhere. There is no controversy in Urvasi as it was there in Krishnapaksham, Pravasam. He has tears when he sees her, but these are different from those in Krishnapaksham. When we have happiness and affection inside the heart, it softens and becomes a canal of milky ice. He is always on his knees to welcome her. She is more than an angel to him. The eagerness, the tiredness and anxiety all are dusted off at her feet. Her presence is gift, dream like truth and truth like dream to the poet. He along with Urvasi walked on the way full of flowers and jasmynes all over their bodies. Then heart of Devulapalli travels into Urvasi and heart of Urvasi travels into Devulapalli. So Devulapalli considers Urvasi as his greatest writings. Pravasam is greater than Krishnapaksham in terms of structure and magnanimity. Urvasi is all about imagination. He finally comes out of his imagination that all his writings are great. In the initial stages he felt that the composition which he has not done till now would be greatest of all. The poet at this point seems diplomatic and inspiration seeking. He is bound to think in that manner that he is going to produce the best writing in future to keep himself going.

### **Why epic poems are not written now-a-days**

There are many reasons for epic poems not written by the poets of this age but some strong causes have been discussed by Devulapalli Krishnasastry. One of the qualities of the present generation is to hurry up. Unknown feeling of breathlessness, speed, many problems that need attention, agitations, many efforts, fun etc. all are done in a mood of urgency. There is no proper planning. Time is not enough in a day to do the tasks. We often get to listen to some phrases like finish off fast, have to move urgently, bus will leave, might not catch the train. Then how long and great poems will come and who will write? If at all they are written, then who will read? How will they read when they do not have enough time? That is why, small poem, drama and plays are widely spread. Till the time of Devulapalli, poets wrote on themes like Sitaramagaadha, Story of Nala-damayanti, history of Nigama Sharma, Dhruvopakhyanam and in between they inserted their personal experiences. Where Damayanti is born? , what type of people are they? ,



how they met swan? , severe situations etc are explained by the poet when he is at his peak of experiences.

But today poet puts all the situations of his life into the script from beginning and then he speaks a little of the remaining which may lead to severe happenings. Another important reason is the lack of concentration, practice and meditation. There is a temple inside in everybody and one can get peace in there. Devulapalli explains the way of life of a poet. He must maintain house and porch alike, look after backyard and garden alike. His daily life must be systematic. The poet who is in contact with present education, movements and progress of the society is at advantage when compared to others. From there he can fly into the imaginary Kailash, the abode of lord Shiva. Then such poet's emotions are not normal but they resemble the emotions of Garukmanta. His heart is like a sea of milk filled up to his throat. Any poet without such practice and penance will be in dark, deep valley. He will be able to produce remarkable compositions only a few times. Devulapalli memorises his idol Tagore, who continued poetic imagination until he gave up earthly existence. He was a sagacious in all ways like Vyasa, Valmiki, Kalidasa, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth. If the qualities are not enough, then poets cannot sing their poems to spread in all directions with their heads held high and inflated chests. They can only sing in intervals. The noble rage is considered to be stirring the poets whose goal is the polar star. Without the above qualities that noble rage is cooled down in such poets. Many poets stop writing at early stages. Every great poet has a reservoir internally as a big dynamo. Average poets might have it in size of a serving spoon or big utensil. When it gets emptied he must attempt to refill it and get charged.

The vast human nature that is moved by the flourishing consciousness is the infinite amounts of reservoir and dynamo. He must jump into it; otherwise he might cool down, dry down and push himself into nothingness. The poet when falls into the flow of modern life will have an experience of life nuances. Then he will write about them with rage. The turning point in any poet life comes at this stage; he must continue to compose with the same zeal and aggressiveness. But if he sits inside the four walls hugging the experience owing to affection towards the experience or self bound ego, then it will be crushed down to death out of breathlessness. In the view of Devulapalli, the poet must fill his reservoir persistently with new tastes, experiences, warm feelings. For that to happen he must be in a special relation with nature. Nature has the ability to give life and only the affectionate, un-resting, appropriate walls can become boundaries. If the poet is connected to the world filled pleasure, sorrow and relationships it will create compassion but not pity in him. Pity is weakness, compassion is strength. Everlasting relations create poetic material like personal experiences, energy for imagination, consciousness. Devulapalli cites fake philosophy filled in the blood veins of poets as reason for poets not having healthy relation with the society. It is not the philosophy that moved the saints and priests. It will drive the poets into hopelessness, weak state, sleep and rigidity. There will be no poetic celebration but he will be left yawning and thinking.

Self sustainability and freedom were not therein the time of Devulapalli. So the brain, limbs and heart were tied down with different kinds of shackles making them partially working and eventually immovable. Tiredness and weakness spread all over the society. Discipline is required without fear and tyranny. He, whose soul is free from salvation, can only follow the suite. According to the poet if the whole race climbs at least a plateau, then it would be simpler to fly away into soaring heights of space. He strengthens the point by saying Kanchenjunga is nearer to Kashmir. When someone asks him to pick up one, between traditional and modern poetry, he is unable to separate them. Poetry belonging to any



period, race, and kind is dearer to the poet. He opines that the combination of culturalism, romanticism and realism must be in appropriate proportions for making of a complete poem. If anyone of them is out of balance then the poem loses its charm. For example if culturalism is more, then poem becomes lifeless, if imagination is more then it leads to madness and if realism is more, then the poem loses its color and taste. Poet in the analysis of Devulapalli is like a temple dome with feet underground and head held high in the galaxy. Poet is a tree, selfless and full of full of life. Every era gives importance to different qualities. According to that we classify them as epic poem writing era, era of articles, self experiences expressing sections, dramas and novels writing era. Poet thinks that present world situations are not suitable for poetic creations. Good creations are outcome of love, gathering and harmony. It is dusk now, old world is gone but new world is not formed comprehensively. Everything is fast and temporary like unreliable constructions, relationships and disintegrated society. There must be harmony between mind and heart, between nature and people, among old, present and future ages, between myself and world, between east and west cultures, between imagination and realism.

These features are required for any creation including poetry. Devulapalli is lost in a thought if there would be any poet in future who can create epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata and odyssey. He is hopeful that such poet would take birth in near future. If not as great as Tagore, at least he will become the nearest peak which acts as a step to the Everest. There are three popular eras in the Indian literary history. We have three universal poets in all of the three eras. First one is the period of moral times, when Valmiki's 'Ramayana' emerge. Second era was very meticulous and intelligence at its best and Vyasa's all-human problem solving 'Mahabharata' materialized. Then arrived earthly pleasures and beauty exaggerated era when Kalidasa and tunes adoring beauty came into the world. The energy that can bind all three of them in union is only the spiritual energy. This energy is greatest of all creations by Sankara acharya and Ramanuja acharya. Tagore is a great poet without any doubt but he has not written any great poems like that mentioned above. According to Devulapalli the collection of all his compositions are equivalent to Ramayana and Mahabharata epic poems.

### Conclusion

Beginning from his personal experiences, his surroundings, country and human world related problems all are there in his poetic world. He filled in himself Vedas, Upanishads, Indian cultures, traditions and absorbed scientific vision, western tradition. He made Santiniketan his permanent residence and made frequent visits to western continents. He examined people's worries, revolts and social situations face to face while visiting all around the world. Devulapalli has got a gutsy feeling that Tagore was Kalidasa and his visits in Ujjain decorated the city. He was also there in Mahabharata epic war in all happenings and he was the one who sang Adikavya after listening to the cry of Skylark. Here the poet adores Tagore when he states that all three era great poets co-existed in Tagore. So he described that Tagore was the universal poet who glued all the three energies. Devulapalli lamented that today's poets have got the talent but the moment has not yet come.

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