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A Study on the Humanistic Values in the Select Works of R.W. Emerson and C. Subramanya Bharathi

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This paper attempts to explicate humanistic values as found in the select works of R.W.Emerson and C.Subramaniya Bharathi. To do so, it argues to connect culturally different contexts and value systems of two different poets and their contributions to the society. By comparing them the paper tries to unify and synthesize the common standards shared between their works. Though their language is different, their thoughts are identical. Their message is for the human beings. Besides their lives have revolutionized and rekindled the human spirit for the betterment of the society. Hence the purpose of this paper is to highlight those rare emotions expressed through the lives of the 'Two revered and master poets of the West and the East.'

"If one cannot recognize the divinity in the prophets of other nations, then one cannot wholly realize the divinity of one's own prophet," is an adage.

The function of a Comparative Literature is to analyse and appreciate the artistic values, and the lasting impressions of different literary works in a broader spectrum. The benefits to be gained from cross-cultural or cross-national works include a deeper understanding of other cultures and enriching the process of research. In this analysis, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), an American essayist, orator, and poet, the exponent of Transcendentalist movement - represents the west. And Chinnaaswami Subramanya Bharathi (1882-1921), an Indian Tamil Poet laureate, writer and journalist, a social reformer and activist of Indian Independence - represents the east.

There were fewer personalities in the history who doubted and questioned about the fundamentals of civilization, rebelled against their own society and nature, set a new paradigms of hope and possibility. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Subramanya Bharathi are two such personalities of different ages, parts of world, languages and cultural backgrounds; form a perfect ground for Non-Indigenous literary analysis, giving greater emphasis on cross- cultural nationalism.

Both of them share some common elements in their life-time such as social unrest, civil

war, and slavery. Of which, Subramanya Bharathi fiercely resisted the British colonial subjugation by his powerful writings. While Emerson, declared "the American Newness," and spent the rest of his career proclaiming a new American philosophy. In his early life Emerson turned out to be a rebel against the Christian Church over his dauntless criticism on the Church doctrines. On both the cases, the consequences are one and the same; Subramanya Bharathi had to go on a self-exile to French territory to continue his passionate writing for independence, while Emerson made a self-exile from the religious communion service and begun to develop the new intellectual school of Transcendentalism, which was later considered as the beginning of "Intellectual Independence of America."

The great writers are unique as naturalists, freedom lovers, champions of social inspiration and campaigners of individualism. They disseminated their thoughts through innumerable of poems, essays, journals, and lectures. The sense of aesthetic beauty, conscience of universal oneness along with individual existence, insight of self-esteem, and concern for individual, society and values are the cornerstones of their literary works.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the first man of an American intellectual movement of the first half of the 19th-century known as transcendentalism for the society is the author of a large number of noteworthy essays with a strong accent on morality and ethical behaviour which were aimed at reforming of the society so as to enhance of humanism but can also be inspirational for us in the present day.

Subramaina Bharathiyar was not only a poet but also a great humanistic poet. His poems exposed his tone against social injustice in the society. While dealing with social injustices, his poems spat fire! His deep nationalistic songs posed a great challenge to the British. In his poems, we are confronted with deep Nationalism, Revolutionary social ideas, based

on humanistic ideals.

Taking 'Vande Mataram' as his magnificent mantra and having consuming thirst for freedom he sings:

"When will this thirst for freedom slake?

When will our love of slavery die?

When will our mother's fetters break?

When will our tribulations cease?"

His poems expose not only the anguish of the oppressed people and awakened them to fight against the British yoke but also proclaimed in prayerful tones his pantheistic philosophy with crystal clarity. In all his poems, the core ideas were Equality, Fraternity and Liberty - all three ideas are revealed in his "Vandemataram", Bharatha Desam", and other poems. He dreamt of an independent India where people will progress in all fields and even reach the Moon! There should be no distinction based on caste or creed amongst Indians, and no dichotomy between the rich and poor, male or female, or higher and lower caste.

Now, the above comparison assumes structurally produce sense, that the similarities cannot be suspended at any rate due to their cultural differences. They need to be analysed and criticized in all their manifestations, in an analytical view-point by the method of construction in a normative standard attached to their personalities, periods, and locales. However, side by side comparison of their tenets brings no strong argument and does little to the complete understanding of the personalities. The analysis requires a sound frame of reference, because this may draw an immediate argument that Emerson and Bharathi are the innocent victims of overwhelming societies and circumstances. But by virtue, both of them are self-ascertained, stand apart from the customary status of culture, and ultimately sought to transcend the discursive traditions that they often feel and speak.

It is not necessary that an analysis need to be

carried out always by examining the similarities, it may also equally done with dissimilarities. From the stereotype of similarities, the criticism envisages the differences of interest, purpose, social, religious, and inspirational backgrounds, in the given context. Since the thirsts for free thinking, imagination, nonconformity (freedom of sidelining traditions) of expression are of the high points to these writers, the dissimilarities will set a striking balance to the argument.

In such case Subramanya Bharathi thrived in a land as a colonial subject. India apparently is a country of multi-culturalism with myriad languages, with social inequalities perpetuated by the caste system and religious practices. Bharathi emphasized the need for breaking such barriers of caste, creed, gender and communal obstructions. He sang in glory of deliverance, "Let us all become learned and wise... / No more penury! No more slavery! None is low-born in India... / Men and women shall equal be in this land of ours" (Bharathi Patalkal, 377). He expressed his views as a "rebel-socialist" against all such social oddities with a grit of fearlessness and openness.

While on the other hand, Emerson employed a defensive mechanism, what he called "The American Newness," by which he tried to bring about a national identity to the land of culturally dispersed cross-national migrants. Emerson sported "an orthodox role" of Transcendentalist, an implicit idea to abandon the religious imperialism originating from the west. In the Divinity School Address of 1838, Emerson emphasized for the revival of religion, "Historical Christianity has fallen into the error that corrupts to communicate religion. As it appears to us... it is not the doctrine of the soul, but an exaggeration of the personal, the positive, the ritual" (Emerson, 81). In other words, he indirectly challenged the deliberation of puritan practice and asserted a careful isolation of America from the influence of western nations and

religion. This dissimilarity in approach to social life enables to understand their ingenuity and application of mind in the given social context. The discussion of similarities and dissimilarities still lacks to bring a comprehensive outlook in the probe. It appears to be two monologues put together as a dialogue and is called a discourse. The reason for such effect is that, human minds are not unique and no two socio-cultural systems are same due to difference in approach and emphasis. In practical sense, the Comparatist should also see the psychological aspects to arrive a fair opinion about the roles of these personalities and their work of art.

Joel Porte writes, "Emerson sits at the crossroads in a critical moment of American history and like his own Sphinx asks the unanswered questions of our collective life - questions about the relative claims of conservatism and radicalism, the establishment and the movement, private property and communism; questions about slavery and freedom, the rights of women, the viability of institutions, the possibility of reform, the efficacy of protest, the exercise of power; indeed he asks perpetually about the meaning of America itself and its prospects among nations"(2). Envisioning the future nationalism of "New America" and "Independent India," understanding the dominant predicaments (disorder) in which both of them are caught, Emerson and Bharathi stand out to be the "cultural agents" of their society, transgressing not only their boundaries of tradition, but also the contradicting parts of spiritual and material worlds. As a result, throughout their career both of them stand as controversial figures.

This deductive method of deconstruction, vividly exhibits the outcome of their resentment and anguish in the form of nonconformity (violating tradition) against the dehumanizing behavior of the society that always strives to travel in search of food and comfort. Hence, their exasperation and anger are not against any other external agents, but they are against

their own inadequate and incompetent nature of society; The society that falls as a prey to the subhuman systems of slavery, superstition, disharmony, gender bias, inequality, and many other weaknesses. N.Subrahmanian observes Subramanya Bharathi as a social reformer in this spirit, "But patriotic fervor has nothing but contempt for facts... The trouble with revivalist patriots in India has been they were all caught between a desire to revive the 'glorious' past and an ardent wish to be in the 'progressive' bandwagon..." (130).

The life mission of Bharathi and Emerson are many, but considering the importance of the then national movements and social scenario, the study pictures the literary personalities alternatively as pious nationalists, and committed seekers of truth, attached to the essence of " Humanistic Values." As national and spiritual visionaries they foretold and campaigned for the dawn of a global humanistic and spiritual consciousness beyond sectarian traditions. Hence, both of them travels the narrow limits of national and cultural borders and are celebrated internationally for their human values. At this juncture, the two human forms by name Bharathi and Emerson turn into a single universal voice proclaiming the need for sustained human values beyond the limitations of culture, time, space, and action.

So far the above comparative analysis has travelled different phases of investigation. First the analysis has begun using the method of construction, juxtaposing similarities of Bharathi and Emerson in a normative perspective. The probe has then travelled to comparing the dissimilarities, considering the cultural differences in which both belong as subjects. As a result, the scrutiny has given way to the deductive method of deconstruction, in which the underlying characteristics of personalities are revealed.

Given developments in the studies of globalization and inter-culturalism, today's Compara-

tive Literature represents a wider scope than single-literary study. It facilitates to gain deeper understanding of other cultures, encompassing meaningful research process. As Subramanya Bharathi says, "To enrich, refine and modernize our tongue, new writers must arise/ Translations too we must produce from foreign classics for our use what boots it if we idly prate of our glorious past in our present state? The world will recognize our worth if genius midst us gain takes birth"(Bharathi Patalkal, 307).

Comparative Literature stands as a monument among all other analytical literary methods in unraveling the humanistic values in the entire span of World Literature. Hence, this genre deserves to be called an art by itself in connection with the Humanistic values in Literature.

They were Nationalists, religionists, social Revolutionary, and a great Humanists! Call it Nationalistic Humanism or Spiritualistic Humanism, the concern for the suffering humanity ran through their verses. No wonder, they are cherished for their humanistic values, their idyllic verses and their brave. They are the great Nationalistic Poets and revolutionary HUMANISTS!

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