

☆ Paper.

William Blake, A Mystic Poet. ①

Mysticism stands for seeking God, and through that realisation of truth beyond man's understanding. A mystic poet is one who reveals in his poetry soul's relationship with God and analyses the states of soul and man's predicaments on this earth and beyond. He also ponders over the purpose of life and tries to answer why and where from regarding the origin of man's soul. If we study Blake's poetry deeply, we find that even from the time of his early poems, he began to ponder over these questions regarding man's predicaments on this earth. He analyses the present state of soul and stresses its need of salvation.

Blake was Swedenborgian. To Blake as to the Swedish visionary, material body of man's is not his real body. To clarify this point he uses the language of myth and symbolism. His poems and engravings all reveal an imaginative world peopled by beings that seem to have an existence in their own right, as have the Homeric gods or Christian Holy family. As a mystic his conviction is

"To see the world in a grain of sand
And a Heaven in a wild flower
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour."

To substantiate his theory of mysticism Blake had to take recourse to the imagination. He could confidently say one power alone makes a poet. It is imagination, the divine vision because for him the imagination creates reality, divine reality of the self in its unimpeded energy.

Blake saw in the simple joys and raptures of ordinary life a Paradise regained in the Divine Image. The Divine Image, of course is man. Blake speaks quite literally and means to be taken at his word when he says:

For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love

Is God, our father dear ⁽²⁾

For mercy, Pity, Peace and Love

Is man, His child and care.

Therefore

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All must love the human form

In heathen, Turk or Jew

where Mercy, Love and Pity dwell

'There God is dwelling too.'

In the songs of Innocence he entered an heaven to which man had long been alien. No poet, not even words, worth could ever step in heaven through his inspiration. Both the naturalism and mysticism of the Romantic Revival found simple expression in Blake. On the naturalistic side he deals with the simplest phases of life: with the love of flowers; hills and streams, the blue sky the brooding clouds, and yet the mystical vision of the poet is always transforming these familiar things, touching obscure aspects into something strange and wonderful. To Blake, every spot is a holy ground angels shelter the birds from harm the good shepherd looks after his sheep the divine spark burns even in the breast of savage animals. Cruelty to animal excused Blake. He would give them the same freedom, he wishes for the Mankind.

" A Red Robin breath in a cage

Put all heaven in a rage

A skylark wounded in the wing

cherubin does cease to sing."

Blake, therefore, says.

" Kill not the moth nor the butterfly
for the last judgement draweth."

Mysticism in Poetry is blended usually with a wistful melancholy. The desire of the moth for the star and the night for the noxious animates the poet's soul and in his hankering after eternity, he feels more

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and more dissatisfied with the show of life. But

Blake is an exception. He is a joyful mystic. For him the morning stars sing together and the splendour of life outweighs its shadows. There are no mouthful regrets in his voice, no sighing for a day that is dead. Evil sources him anger not his tears sorrow he accepts cheerfully as a necessary twin to joy.

"Joy and sorrow are woven fine
clothing for the soul divine."

Unlike some mystics he did not seek after the spirit world. because he despised the world of senses, but because he loved it so well he felt there was more in it than man could fathom here. His mysticism was not an aspiration for the future. it was realised on of the present. He wanted to explore the Kingdom of Heaven which in the *ewitt* within of everyone.

There is also a side of mysticism that is deep revolted in the practical side of his nature and touches the problems of his life. For Blake, it is experience that destroys innocence in man. It also destroys love and affection. His view of love touches Shelley's, but because love bids us act so. The intellectual analysis of spiritual truths revolted him. Logic and argument offend him. For traditional theology he had no love. and priestcraft he abominated. It was the theologian and the priest who had added to the misery of the world by their distorted pictures of God.

Love, thought Blake was so often confused with self-love.

"Love seeketh only self to please
To bind another to its delight
Joys in another's loss of ease
And builds a hell in Heaven despite."

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Another bond with Shelley is his passion for liberty. He thunders for kings and priest and oppressive rulers in his prophetic writings, nor will he spare his country.

