

Humamity to Divinity: Charu Sheel Singh's Gandhi A Script and Scroll.

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Charu Sheel Singh, professor of English in Mahatama Gandhi Kashi Vidhyapith, Varanasi is not just a poet, critic, theorist and a profound scholar but also a living mystic popularly known for his unusual blend of profundity and pragmatism. His poem Gandhi A Script and Scroll published in his poetic volume Scripture on Stone is a jewel studded to the diadem of Gandhian glory.

C.S. Singh has almost Squeezed every drop of Gandhian elixir in two hundred fifty seven lines. The poem is divided into five sections sketching the graph of this towering personality from seed to syllable to script and scroll. The poem begins with the stormy images of nature to depict the turbulence of the colonial period in contrast to the tranquility amid which Gandhi was born. This reminds me of the birth of the tenth incarnation of Hindu God, Lord Krishna. I do not intend to place Gandhi ji and Lord Krishna at one plane but every age is identified with a yugpurush – the man of the age. What Lord Krishna was to the Dwapar era Gandhi ji is to the colonial India because Gandhi ji is not just a man or a hero but a myth and reality combined into an integrated whole.

Mr. Singh elaborates the birth of Gandhi ji at a moment of history when India was witnessing great upheavals due to colonial activities. A man synonymn to peace and non violence was born when –

“Rain didn't pour its
Muzzles out nor the sea
Attained in depth when
Gandhi was born across the
Sea waves of life.....”(line no.1-5)

A time when India was bleeding under the barbaric, autocratic, violent and torturous cruelties of Britishers, Gandhi was born. India at that time was a county waiting to be a nation.

It is indeed an irony that the emblem of peace and the father of nation was Shot dead of a bullet. The poem offers an understanding of Gandhi is the light of his full name : Mohan das Karamchand Gandhi. A superman who had

“the beauty of Mohandas and the
Devotional commitment of a
Karamchand.”(line no.19-21)

The preacher of Ahinsa had a ‘tornado character’ and his ideas were like ‘blistering sword’ inspite of the fact that they were clothed in the garment of peace. A paradoxian life style where a man of action with peacefull means preaches nonviolence. This was also explicit in his physical appeacarnce as he wore :

“garments of peace and lathi

Ornaments of desire.”(line no.33,34)

India’s endless tradition was carried by Gandhi in his lion cloth. Dr.Singh describes Gandhiji’s physical attributes which were contradictory making him :

“a true white

Man’s burden of mystical

Calamity.”(line no.38-40)

The process of learning began early with Gandhi in such a manner that he made ‘his body the canvas of idea’. He harmoniously blended Allah and Ishwar to provide him strength. Charu Sheel Singh is right when he describes that people read to find out truth but Gandhiji experimented it :

“throughout the chaurange lanes

And the sound table ways of his life”.(line no.52,53)

The poem is the poet’s tool to underline the pastness of the past and its present viewing the eternal nature of social maladies and their universal remedies. The journey of Gandhi is a journey of common to the uncommon, from ordinary to extraordinary. He weaved the country into nation by showing his commitment through his devotional theory of Action.

The second section of the poem serves to complicate the mythical framework of the poem to universalize the centred significance by projecting the journey of Mahatama from Porbandor to South Africa. This stage transformed Gandhian ‘seed’ to ‘syllable’. The experiences of South Africa especially the one related to the ticket collector left an everlasting impression on his life. These experiences made his tongue ‘as straight as lathi’. The ample use of illustrations and images makes the poem a little obscure but the poet manages to win the readers by his exactness. Section three of the poem has Symbolic overtones. The poet employs images to relate the journey of Gandhi for freedom. This piece of literature is an attempt to bring out those attributes which remained concealed till now by the writers on Gandhi. The incident of Gandhi’s expulsion from the train to his becoming a hero are covered by Dr.Singh in this section. Amid all these activities Gandhi’s wish to make an ashram was

“the politics of desire with

That of renunciation”.(line no.120,121)

It is through the polarities that the world exists, but the one like Gandhi who wishes to transcend beyond polarities has to use unreal to pass over real, to go beyond pleasure and pain. The Sabarmati Ashram in the beginning may have been a politics of desire but it was through this desirous mire, the lotus height of Gandhi could blossom.

Gandhi made his body tough by passing through various tests of the society. He kept the “sense of perpetual death alive in his polity” and made his body “Vajra Kaya”. Dr. Singh employs a very apt image of ‘brick – klin’ to communicate the tests Gandhi withstood. His uncompromising ideas of freedom passed through the furnace of British pressures. Incidents like the Simon Commission, salt tax etc were the lessons he learnt making his ashram

“a pilgrimage for those

Who made India a temple of

Freedom and love and work.”(line no.145-147)

The mytho-mystical attributes of Gandhi are framed by Dr CharuSheel Singh with a rhythmic flow of language, maintaining the frugal and elusive flow of sensibility which is native to Hinduism. Gandhi with this zeal of heroic, spiritual, ethnic and mythological attributes became a shrine visited by the colonizing minds.

“Thus came Meera
And the likes of her to romance
With Gandhi the man whom
They discovered Gandhi the nation”.(line no.152-155)

It is not to philosophy the poem that Dr Singh makes the reference to the Last Supper of Jesus but the factuality compels to state the journey of this mortal planet is the journey of mortality to immortality, from humane to divine and in a way from earth to sky. To enter the blessed Kingdom known as Heaven every one has to go through though test of within and without. Wether it is Socrates, Jesus, Mansor or Gandhi all had to pay for being different in their attitude from multitude.

The fourth section of the poem rewinds to initial image ‘script’. Dr Singh links this image of the first section to the fourth section connecting it with grammatical component ‘Noun’ and ‘verb’. Noun are abstract but verb is always related to action. He proved that
“India is not a body but the ideation
Of an idea; it is not to be
Read or understood; it is
To be lived.”(line no.194-197)

Here I would like to quote Tushar A Gandhi,

“Bapu is a way of life, a philosophy which needs to be understood and imbibed according to one’s ability. When this happens, Bapu will automatically become relevant and appealing. Bapu can’t be taught, the must be learned. Bapu is not who can undergo an image make over and become appealing again.”

The concluding section of the poem begins with the image of ‘conch shell body’. The unshakeable ideas, the strong unbeatable faith in non violence were the attributes of Gandhi The Section concludes with the modern scenario where we have ‘junked into slavery again.’ His concept of Harijan is nowadays like a ‘rudderless ship; trying to fly when it could hardly swim’. He founded vidyapiths to spread secular education but either Gandhi erred or we as

“We could not follow virtues of
Truth and renunciation.”(line no.228,229)

Thus Gandhi is not just a name but a phrase, for the freedom fighters, a phrase synonyms to truth and non violence and above all with his heroic height still matchless for our century. He is the only character, in his own way, in a lion cloth with staff in a hand exercising the power of soul on both – ruler and the ruled. His empire will never behold the setting sun. He awakened a slumbered country to transform it into a nation.

His sole Endeavour was to awaken us to what we could be, not to comfort us as we are today. The poem is thus a long discourse of contentment with self rejecting modern secular world, that is dominated by the two ideologies both based on wealth and economics, broadly classified as capitalism and socialism. We praise Gandhi but fact to understand that his journey was from humanity to divinity.

Dr singh, CharuSheel. Scripture on Stone, Adhyayan Publishers, New Delhi 2007
Tushar A Gandhi, Times Life, 2 Oct, 2011, p.1.