

A SELF IN RELATION TO GOD IN DICKINSON'S POEMS

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Abstract:

The unquenchable thirst for knowing the true idea of god has been a great talk of all ages. It is also a predominant issue of nineteenth century New England. Many Puritan movements play its part to quench the thirst of knowing God. But fails to express a proper and real idea of God. So, the seeking for the knowledge of God increased. The non-participants of the flourished societies yearn for the self in relation to God without any mediators which are viewed as an irreverent by the movements then. Dickinson's spiritual poems, the poems of that age clearly convey the urge of seekers and also show the possibility of self in having intimate relationship with God.

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The urge for religious truth has been a great thirst for men all over the ages. Many religious movements have blossomed in various periods to quench the religious thirst with their own orthodox doctrines and left their trace in social, political and literary history. The Nineteenth century of New England history is marked with such great experience and evidences the changes in religious, social as well as in literary life. Three Christian orthodox religious waves Transcendentalism, Unitarianism and Calvinism filled the land of Massachusetts in this century by developing chaos and crisis of faith in the minds of believers.

Transcendentalism believed in the unity of the world and God. Unitarianism is on reason and experience. Calvinism is on original sin and repentance. These principles led the seekers of religious truth to discomfort on their own belief independent thinking about the sense of self in relation to God. The seekers pine for the spiritual meaning of existence, real idea of God and wanted the God who could speak to their own soul. Emily Dickinson's spiritual poems, the poems of the age, voice these urges and confirm the scope of faith with the real idea of God God as Father and friend in poems. This paper proceeds to take up a study on these elements and shows how the idea of God is expressed in Dickinson's spiritual poetry.

Dickinson's spiritual poems form a new dimension of unique spirituality which is ideal from all the movements of the age. The real idea of God in poems unveils the truth that the divine companionship of God is always present with everyone near, not in skies or in rites and rituals. It conceives God as a father and a real friend on earth. It also reveals the veracity in having good rapport with God naturally through faith without any mediator.

Faith - is the Pierless Bridge
Supporting what We see
Unto the Scene that We do not -
Too slender for the eye
It bears the Soul as bold
As it were rocked in Steel
With Arms of Steel at either side -

It joins - behind the Veil

(Complete poems 431)

Faith is a supporting element in human life to reach God. It makes the soul¹ to experience God as father God. As a father and child, a soul can converse with God freely through prayers and this is the way which is hidden by the orthodox movements of the period. But Dickinson's poems bring out this possibility of faith in self in relation to God. It conveys the real religious fact that the seekers urged- prayer needs no mediator. The poem "A Prayer" (*PbEDSS* 34) clearly depicts the effect of prayer on a soul. It says prayer is an action which God Himself kindles man to speak with Him. It is done not only by man but by God. The poem further says that the heart poured prayer is the time where a soul has an individual intimacy with the creator. It is the time God comes near to His creation by shining His glory on the creation and read his/her thoughts. This relation is seen as an odd nature by the flourished movements. They blocked the believers to enter into this relation by keeping some principles as barriers.

Dickinson's spiritual poems explore the fact that prayer is a major gift for human by God. It makes God take hold of one's life "To have a God so strong as that/ To hold my life for me" (*Complete Poems* 577) and brings all saints to see the blessings of God on the soul:

A heaven not so large as yours,
But large enough for me.
A smile suffused Jehovah's face;
The cherubim withdrew;
Grave saints stole out to look at me,
And showed their dimples, too.

(*PbEDSS* 34)

This father - child relationship makes the soul be fearless of death and life. This experience makes the soul see death as the porter of father's palace and the challenges in life as nothing hard. The reason is God as father gives boldness to His child to face the world, "AFRAID? Of whom am I afraid?/ Not death, for who is he?/ The porter of my father's lodge/...../ Of life? 'Twere odd I fear a thing" (*PbEDFS* 135). The actual kind of companionship that seekers urged is clearly explained above. This is unexperienced by the believers of movements then. Dickinson's poems of this concept go further and explain the effect of father, child relationship. The poems say when encountering this bond, the father becomes a permanent dweller in one's life, begins to dine with the soul and allows no ribaldry inside. In the time of exploring the specialty of divine bond the poems also show the childish behaviour of the soul with the father. When God becomes a father the soul often knocks the father's door in need of anything. The following lines beautifully picturizes this in a comic mode:

Twice have I stood a beggar
Before the door of God!
Angels, twice descending
Reimbursed my store.
Burglar, banker, father,
I am poor once more!

(*PbEDFS* 152)

Amidst depicting the funny action of the soul, it bares the rights of a child in calling father as burglar and banker. These words show the intimate bond of child where no one can claim to this level.

God is not only a father, Dickinson's poems say, he is friendly, so friendly that He and the soul could address and speak as one of the most intimate friends. Assigning God with the quality of friend and father is seemed irreverent to the flourished movements then. They view God in high place and believe that God will not reach and speak with everyone. But the non-participants affirm this possibility of relationship with God. Dickinson's poems carry out this belief in a unique way. As a friend God becomes more near to the

soul. To prove this to the followers of the movements, a poem indicates a biblical incident where a thief requests God to remember Him. The answer of the God that he will be with Him changes the thief as an intimate friend. Through this incident the poem conveys that the polite behaviour will change a thief as good soul.

That courtesy will fair remain,
When the delight is dust,
With which we cite his mightiest case
Of compensated Trust.
.....
Are unexpected friends.

(*The Single Hound* 103)

Being a friend, God guides the soul in right path of life and never leaves the soul in any situation. Forever He becomes the best companion for the soul. The quality of friend moves one step deep with the quality of father. But the father and friend are same for the soul. So, the spiritual poems of Dickinson's state that the relationship of God as father and friend create trust, intimacy and freedom which is the base of life. It also proves the sense of comradeship with the creator is ever present and the creator can have individual intimacy with the soul as friend and father. Thus, Dickinson's poetry sounds a prophetic note that God works beyond the human created creeds and emphasizes the idea of God as a Father and friend who creates and conserves the values in human life and leads men through love to greater achievements.

End Note:

1. The word soul is meant to a person.

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