



Devotion and cosmological speculations in the hymn

'Srishtiyum neeye srishtavum neeye' by Mata Amritanandamayi Devi

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Abstract

"Srishtiyum neeye srishtavum neeye" a famous hymn written by the hugging saint Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, popularly known as "AMMA" in Her mother tongue Malayalam. This bhajan was written by Her in the early 1970s when She was in a state of 'Self Realization' seeing all of the nature as being the Divine mother (or Self). According to Her, the creator and the creation are not two. They are one. Just as the ocean and its waves are essentially water, gold and golden ornaments are nothing but gold and clay and earthen pot has clay as its substratum, this world is a manifestation of the undivided consciousness. Without consciousness there is no 'doing' or the world of duality. The unchangeable serves as the substratum and essence of the changing world. So, basically everything is one. Oneness is the fundamental principle of the universe. Though many masters and plenty of hymns are available in literature, this particular bhajan was selected because of Amma's practical application of Her philosophy through universal motherhood. Her life demonstrates Her principle that the entire universe emerges from the ultimate self (affectionately called mother), and that the individual self is a child, a product of the supreme self but not completely the supreme.

Key words Amma, Bhakti, creator, creation, universe

Introduction:

‘Bhakti’ or ‘emotional devotionism’, and ‘Jnanam’ or ‘Knowledge about the self and universe’ are the two pillars of Indian Philosophy. The concept of evolution is deeply intertwined between these two vast entities in most of the classical Indian texts. There are plenty of bhajans or hymns written by many Satgurus or spiritual masters in which their views are explained in a simple language for common man to understand. One such is “Srishtiyum neeye srishtavum neeye” a famous hymn written by the hugging saint Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, popularly known as “AMMA” in Her mother tongue Malayalam. She is famous for Her contributions as a spiritual master and also for Her charitable activities worldwide in the interest of mankind. She spreads Her message of love through Darsan (1), spiritual discourses (satsang) and Bhajans (devotional songs). Her humanitarian activities and their sociological aspects, yoga and meditation (1) and contributions to management field have been studied in universities but Her contributions to Indian philosophy has not yet been studied thoroughly and published.

Amma has not written any classical text book as such on Her views on cosmology but has written a few bhajans in which She explains Her philosophical outlook. So in this article we would like to make an attempt to understand the Emotion of Bhakti and concept of evolution in Her bhajan ‘*srishtiyum neeye srishtavum neeye*’.

This bhajan was written by Her in the early 1970s when She was in a state of ‘Self Realization’ seeing all of the nature as being the Divine mother (or Self). This state of realization is considered in Indian Philosophy as the highest level of evolution of mankind where he identifies himself as one with the entire universe(2).

Meaning of the lyrics of the hymn:

The creation and creator are though

Thou art energy and truth O Goddess O Goddess O Goddess

Creator and cosmos are thou and thou art the beginning and end

The essence of the individual soul art and though art the five elements as well 2

Analysis of the lyrics:

Srishtiyummneeye srishtavum neeye- Creation and creator art thou – You are the creator and you are the creation too

Shakthiyum neeye sathyavum neeye: thou are energy and truth’ – you are the source of energy and you are truth itself

Antakadahavidhathavum neeye aadiyum anthavum neeye: , 'the creator of the cosmos art thou and thou art the beginning and end'-you are the creator of the universe you are the beginning and the end “

She also says paramanu Chaitanya porulum neeye panchabhoothangalum neeye’ –the essence of the individual soul (atoms, jiva) art thou, thou art the five elements as well- You are the essence of the individual soul; you are the five elements as well.

These lines depict the essence of all Indian Philosophies, specially The ‘Darsanas’. All great philosophies of both ancient as well as contemporary India have been born in the critical analysis of two major concepts – ‘creation and creator ‘and ‘self and the universe’. And the hymn is a typical example of the same.

Amma very clearly explains Her concept of the creator and creation in the first line of the song itself, -You are the creator and you are the creation – O Goddess!

You- By using the term You She refers to the creator as someone different from Her. Here, Her philosophy is purely of dualism- God and the creations are two which matches very much with that of Madhava’s Dualism(3).

But when we analyze the complete line as such it says You are the creation and creator i.e., being a part of the creation She knows She is the creator too. Here, as we analyze the entire line we can see that the concept emerges from Dvaita or dualism to Vishistadvaita (theism) of Ramanuja (4) in which the supreme Brahman is the world – soul or the supreme consciousness. But as we say the creator and creation are same, it matches even with the Advaita Vedanta, ie, there is only the self- or Brahman. The universe is but an apparent reflection of the same, due to ‘maya’ – which is only a virtual reality like that of reflection in a mirror.

Amma says, “The creator and the creation are not two. They are one. Just as the ocean and its waves are essentially water, gold and golden ornaments are nothing but gold and clay and earthen pot has clay as its substratum, this world is a manifestation of the undivided consciousness. Without consciousness there is no ‘doing’ or the world of duality. The unchangeable serves as the substratum and essence of the changing world. So, basically everything is one. Oneness is the fundamental principle of the universe”.

She says in the second line, ‘Satyavum neeye shaktiyum neeye’ which means you are the energy and you are the truth too, the Divine mother (Goddess). i.e., the power behind this cosmic game or that causes the one (Brahman) to become the many (the universe) is what is known as the Shakti and the underlying truth is considered as the absolute- as Shiva (5).

The entire universe is therefore a play of truth and power- of being and becoming, Shiva - Shakti (6).

She continues in the third line ‘andakadahavidhatavum neeye aadiyum anthavum neeye’ where She explains the Goddess as the creator and the entire creation too. Amma refers to the ‘anda kataha’- remarkably this is the technical term for the ‘shell of the cosmic egg’. In Hindu puranic lore, the entire creation sprang from what is symbolized as the ‘cosmic egg’. (7, 8) This matches with the basic concept of Indian Philosophy that the Unconscious matter and Conscious soul in all states constitute the body of the Brahman who is the cause and the world is the effect. The effect is only an attribute of the cause and not one with God. It also matches with the theory of causation of Sankhya (9) which supports the plurality of selves. In Sankhya, the evolution of the world is clearly explained with the starting point of creation as purusa (self) and the universe as the prakriti (primal matter).

In the fourth line of the hymn, ‘Paramanu chaitanya porulum neeye panchabhootangalum neeye’, from the concept of universe, Amma relates to the concept that the gross elements evolve (as budhi ahankara and eleven sense, motor organs and five physical subtle essences – tanmatras and the five gross elements) from the prakriti.

Amma also mentions of the term paramanu the atom, drawing attention to Vaisesika (10) according to which atom is partless and can be neither produced nor destroyed. It says that the atoms are different in kind in earth, water, light and air. These five elements are known as the ‘tanmatras’. The Lalitha sahasranama refers to these in the line ‘pancha tanmatra sayaka’. – as subtle ‘elements’ out of which the gross world is made(11). This verse is immense in its philosophical depth declaring that the self is situated in all beings as an atom, as a spark of consciousness smaller than the smallest (12).

O Goddess! – Here the concept suddenly shifts from all the concepts in the darsanas. The creator is pictured as a female or She attributes this to Goddess- an implication that She worships the creator in female form. In the contemporary world Sri Ramakrishna too considered creator in feminine form.

Devi Bhagawata (13) says, Adi maya (Goddess) the great Shakti Bhavani the giver of everything who is not different from Brahma (universal consciousness), who is the Purusa and the Prakriti, the preservatrix and the destructrix of all -is the mother of all Gods, beings and world. She is without beginning and end - omnipresent. In Devi Bhagawata, She is called maha maya, undecaying and eternal, is the cause of all, is the will force of the supreme self. She is the creator of this universe. It is also mentioned in the same text that

this whole universe and all elements of universe owe to Her as their sole cause, she is the Goddess of all. Amma draws our attention from the philosophical thoughts of Darsanas to the concept of Goddess and devotion. According to Her, God is not an individual sitting somewhere up above the sky in a golden throne, judging people, punishing the evil doers and blessing the good people. God is the all-pervading, ever present pure awareness. God is neither She or He. (*If at all God has a gender, She says, God is more 'She' than 'He', because 'He' is in 'She.'*)

It shows the significance of the devotion or the strong emotion of immense love, along with the philosophical facts.

The concise philosophy of the entire hymn, reminds us of Advaita Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda of the contemporary world. The Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda says that the absolute is by itself and uncaused. Through time, space and causation the universe is formed from the absolute. The creator is the paramatma and creation is the individual soul. Sri Aurobindo too had defined creation as a double-process, a process of descent and ascent or involution and evolution: ie, descent of the spirit into the worldly forms and an ascent of the worldly forms to its original higher status of supreme consciousness. In this bhajan, as explained in the evolutionary concepts of Sri Aurobindo the author witnesses the emerging of the self in to the universe (14).

Inclusion of the supremacy of the Divine power in Amma's hymn reminds us of Dr S Radhakrishnan's concept of Divine Intelligence- the creative power- which is intermediary between the Absolute Being and the cosmic process. According to him, God is the Absolute in action, the creator (15).

Though the hymn has only four lines it takes us through the knowledge and truth embedded in the scriptures of all times.

Discussion

India is a land blessed with sages and masters from time immemorial. Their contributions as verses or hymns or slokas in the field of knowledge is remarkable. Though many masters and plenty of hymns are available in literature, this particular bhajan was selected because of Amma's practical application of Her philosophy through universal motherhood. After realization, She started spreading love and compassion in the name of motherhood. Her life demonstrates Her principle that the entire universe emerges from the ultimate self (affectionately called mother), and that the individual self is a child, a product of the

supreme self but not completely the supreme. The same concept is put in words in the bhajan 'Srishtiyum neeye srishtavum neeye'.

Mata Amritanandamayi Devi's, philosophy is special in this regard that She admits the sovereignty of the Divine power. Thus we see a grand picture of the Divine that emerges here in this song that Amma has written from her own experience- ie, the Divine is the truth the absolute substratum of this universe, the divine is the force which causes the absolute to manifest as this universe, the divine is also the process through which this manifestation is made, the divine is the power that upholds and sustains and destroys the creation, the divine is the Self in the individual being, self aware, which studies creation and is the life in the beings it creates, and finally the divine is the very matter that makes up this universe.

Amma's description of the creator and creation explains that cosmic salvation is possible when we identify our self with the Absolute losing our identity. Though many consider Her as a social reformer, the greatness of Amma lies in the fact that She presented Her philosophical conviction in simple words with absolute precision in most of Her hymns, 'Srishtiyum neeye' being one among them.

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