

Tribhuvan University

Spirituality and Freedom in Swami Vivekananda's *In Search of God and Other Poems*

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Approval Letter

This research work entitled "Spirituality and Freedom" in Swami Vivekananda's *In Search of God and Other Poems* submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Yagya Raj Bhatta has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled "Spirituality and Freedom" in Swami Viv ekananda's *In Search of God and Other Poems* submitted to the faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu is an original work written under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, Central Department of English, Kirtipur. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English. No part of the study has been published in any form before, and has not been presented anywhere else for the award of any degree or any other reason. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

.....

Yagya Raj Bhatta

September 2, 2024

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Abstract

This research explores the issues of spirituality and freedom in twelve selected poems from Swami Vivekananda's anthology, *In Search of God and Other Poems*. It aims to interpret the role of Vivekananda's spiritual thoughts to liberate people from colonial restrictions. The interpretation of the primary texts is based on the principles of intersubjectivity, historicity, infinity of understanding, productivity, interrelatedness, hidden reality and linguistics found in Hans Georg Gadamer's two books: *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (1977) and *Truth and Method* (1960). Following qualitative research design, this study attempts to fill the gap between spiritual thinking and materialistic hunger through Swami Vivekananda's poems, which favour spirituality, freedom and tranquillity. Poems such as "In Search of God," "The Song of the Free," "Kali, the Mother," "Peace," "On the Sea's Bosom," "Misunderstood," and "A Benediction," emphasize spirituality, whereas "My Play is Done," "The Cup," "The Song of the Sannyasin," "To the Awakened India," and "To the Fourth of July" advocate for freedom. The use of imagery of nature, metaphors, similes and symbols enhance spiritual thoughts in his poems. During Vivekananda's life, the Indians were suffering from British colonialism. So, he expressed his longing for freedom through his poems and advised them to follow the concepts of service to man as service to God. These ideas are quite relevant to replacing the hunger for material prosperity and selfishness. He appeals to Goddess 'Kali', regarded as 'Bharat Mata' or the incarnation of 'Shakti', to destroy the evils and save innocent people. He recognized Indian's spiritual thoughts by addressing World's Religious Conference in Chicago in 1893. Hence, I have found him to be a source of spiritual thoughts, freedom fighter, positive ideals, humanity, patriotism and optimism to lead life in a more progressive and scientific way.

Keywords: Hermeneutics, spirituality, liberty, linguistics, interrelatedness and historicity.

Table of Contents

Declaration	ii
Approval Letter	iii
Plagiarism Test Report	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	vi-vii
Contents	viii
Chapter I: Introduction of Spirituality and Freedom	1-19
Chapter II: Critical Insights of Philosophical Hermeneutics: An Effective Way for Interpretation	20-29
Chapter III: Interrelationship between spirituality and freedom in Swami Vivekananda's <i>In Search of God and Other Poems</i>	30-50
Chapter IV: Findings and Conclusion	51-56
Works Cited	57-59

Chapter-I

Introduction of Spirituality and Freedom

This research examines and analyses the concept of spirituality and freedom in Swami Vivekananda's poems in *In Search of God and Other Poems* anthology. Spirituality means understanding the value of a meaningful life free from self-centred materialistic hunger. One never gets spirituality only visiting the idols or statues of gods and goddesses. To understand spiritual life, one must have a clean soul and honestly perform his/her duty. It is more than sensory perception. It has universal themes of existence, such as love, compassion, altruism, life after death, wisdom, and truth, which control human behaviours. Vivekananda's poems also depict similar assumptions. For instance, in the poem; "In Search of God," the speaker wanders here and there in search of God, but finally, he finds God within himself.

Another concept which I explore in his poems is freedom. Freedom is a state of self-satisfaction because it promotes our creativity to bring changes to the existing environment. Speaking or performing the task based on one's interests or wants is a relief or strength. One cannot be happy without freedom. In the poems; "To the Awakened India" and "To the Fourth of July," Vivekananda focuses on freedom of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, being happy to celebrate America's Liberation Day. His poems focus on spirituality and freedom, making an individual realize his/her responsibility towards family, society and nation. He composed these poems being inspired and impressed by Raja Rammohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore and Ramakrishna. They appreciated his spiritual ideals and encouraged him to do deep meditation. Gradually, he was empowered with spiritual strength and the existence of God within himself. At that time, India was under the control of British colonialism, and Indians were forced to obey British rule blindly. They were deprived of their fundamental rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. On 11 September; 1893, he delivered a speech at the "World Parliament

of Religions," full of spiritual thoughts. Then, he expresses his longings for freedom and spirituality in his poems. His artistic creation motivated them to fight for the nation's freedom. Hence, he became one of the inspiring intellectuals who favoured India's freedom. Aurobindo Ghose, Hemmah and ra Ghosh, Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose were also inspired by his creative and encouraging artistic activities to liberate the nation from restrictions. He advised them to have faith in God and move ahead to achieve their goals.

Vivekananda, one of the great Indian spiritual philosophers, possesses a multi-dimensional personality with prominent ideals for interpreting life in this modern wasteland. His poems highlight the concepts of spirituality, freedom, and nationality as values of human existence. He is also a freedom fighter, not with guns but with ideals/logic. His motto is to make people realize the role of spirituality in life. He is bold enough even to sacrifice his life for the welfare of people and asks them to awake and see the new dawn with a fresh sun for a new life. He tries to spread the miracle of meditation, spiritual faith and self-respect over material prosperity. He has great faith and respect for God's mercy on human beings. He advocates for peace and freedom by following the assumptions of meditation, spiritual life, self-respect and hard labour. Human life is full of ups and downs. Those who have patience, dedication to their duty and faith in God to get success, but those who run after material prosperity, suffer a lot. So, one must have spirituality to get peace and material success. Such a concept exists in his poems.

Vivekananda's poems reflect the influence of Vedic philosophy. His poem, "The Song of The Sannyasin," imparts Vedantic philosophy to maintain peace in life. A Sannyasin, i.e. an ascetic is called upon to continue his march on the road leading from 'I' to 'All', cancelling all distinctions and divisions. The poet writes, "Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped, not free; /For fetters though of gold, are not less strong to bind; /Then, off with them, Sannyasin bold! Say- /'Om Tat Sat, Om!'" (16) He encourages the saint to be more

courageous to end the divisions. Besides this, his poetry spellbound the reader with rhythmic movements, proper selection of words, and a keen vision of truth. Although his writing style is similar to Rabindra Nath Tagore and Aurobindo, his poetry is distinguished for consistency and maturity as it reflects a smooth musical flow with simplicity and coherence of ideas. We find the blend of immense poetic sensibility and spiritual profundity, intellectual brilliance and indefatigable energy, universal love and authentic voice of a prophet in his poems. International Journal of Education and Multidisciplinary Studies (IRA 2016) has focused on Vivekananda's sense of renunciation, devotion, quest, innate mystic effulgence, self-realisation and the consequent philosophic offspring - all are converged in his poetry inseparably fused. (11-12)

Vivekananda composes poems in various moods and dispositions that advocate God's omnipresence, omnipotence, and benevolence, as well as the realization of God in oneself, establishing newness in life. For example, "I feel Him standing by/ O'er hill and dale, high mount and vale,/Far far away and high"(Vivekananda 4). So, his poems are complete with spiritual ecstasy, philosophical musings, motivational suggestions, personal anguish and lively interaction with acquaintances. We know him as an artist, and his poems, songs, and hymns express unfathomable spiritual urges. His poems are about multiple issues such as the mystery of creation, goddess Kali, Lord Shiva, peace, meditation, yoga, Brahman and longing for liberation. He said, "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within the controlling nature, extreme and internal"(The Completed Works 124). God exists everywhere. Vivekananda's poetry encompasses man's inner exquisiteness. His poems display the interrelated connection between man and God. He worships divine power because he longs for God and truth. He believes that we all are God's creation. That is why it is our duty/responsibility to have faith and respect for God. Ignoring the spiritual part of life

cannot bring us happiness. The man runs after material life in this industrialised society and is bound by routinized life. Consequently, his soul is like a vacuum without air.

As a freedom fighter, Vivekananda heightens freedom, which becomes a significant part of the soul of his poetry. The freedom of the mind is a delusion. How can the mind be free? He urges for the ecstasy of self, which creates a living atmosphere of inwardness. For this, the concept of Shiva, the embodiment of all Serene, brings forth marvellous imagery. The symbol of the trident vomiting fire and the moon on the forehead of Shiva with its fierce flame are clear indication of the ecstasy of self that shows the way to emancipation. Swami Vivekananda advocates purity, patience, perseverance, spirituality, and freedom to overcome obstacles. He says that faith in ourselves and God becomes the secret of greatness. He has strong faith in God and his creation. He opines that spirituality renews our lives like the spring season renews nature. Most of his poems, such as "In Search of God", "The Song of the Sannyasin," "Kali the Mother," "The Living God," etc. , praise spiritual life and appreciate God's glory. In the poem; "In Search of God," the poet wanders in different places such as mountain ranges, temples, churches, mosques, the Bible, and Ganga's shore, and finally, he finds God within himself. Reflections of God are in every nook and corner of the world. He glorifies the power of Goddess Kali to eliminate the evil forces in the poem "Kali the Mother".

Vivekananda has taught Indians a new notion of freedom through his poems. He requests everyone to be laborious, dutiful, dedicated to God and believe in their 'Karma'. One gets the outcomes based on his/her 'Karma'. He clarifies the condition that one has to go through ups and downs in life without being hopeless. Enough boldness and faith in God help eliminate our life's evils. He silently encourages people to go against the British Empire over India. He wants to maintain equality and fraternity among all. In the poem "My Play is Done", the poet is tired of his works, the unending ebb and flow of life. So, he requests God

to rescue him from the boat of false aspirations, delusion and cycles to life and death. He does not like to remain sick in this selfish, materialistic world. So, he begs for freedom. In the poem "To Awakened India," he inspires people to awaken in search of truth for prosperity and peace. He awakens the world through the Vedic message of "oneness of existence and eternal freedom of the soul" to glorify human life. For example,

And tell the world:

Awake, arise, and dream no more!

This is the land of dreams, where Karma

Weaves unthreaded garlands with our thoughts,

... Which are Eternal Love and Service Free. (6-10)

In the poem; "To the Fourth of July", the poet advocates for the passionate utterance of his powerful longing for liberty as "The light of Freedom on mankind" (24).

Vivekananda's poems include figures of speech representing multiple aspects of human life. The imagery of nature dominates his poems to a large extent since he has a close connection with the beauty of nature. 'Nectar in mother's kiss" (17) is a strong imagery. The use of metaphor represents different ideals to elaborate life in his poems. The tone of his poems is praising, motivating and critical. His language is rhythmic, simple and religious. He has taken the words from different areas such as the Vedas, the Bible, etc.

Swami Vivekananda conceptualizes spirituality as a weapon to release suffering and appeals to everyone to have faith in divine mercy for a peaceful life in his poetic art, *In Search of God and Other Poems*. His concept of spirituality is uniquely expressed in poetic art as it focuses on self-realisation and actualisation. The poetic spirit of spirituality is realized through yoga, introspection, meditation, and Vedanta's philosophy in his poetry. Similarly, he treats spirituality in his poetry by implying figures of speech such as 'The nectar in mother's kiss', which refers to the celestial touch of God. In his twelve selected poems, we perceive the

reflection of spiritual ecstasy, the appeal for freedom, the ecstasy of nature, philosophical musings, motivational suggestions, and lively interaction with an acquaintance. These concepts are helpful for research as they inspire us to speak for equality and a peaceful environment. Our life becomes like a wasteland without incorporating spiritual faith. We cannot promote liberty for a prosperous life without breaking down the imperial chains in society. Ignorance of spiritual thought and responsibility becomes the obstacle to a peaceful life. So, the need for spirituality becomes an essential part of life to be free from the materialistic world. God is the truth and the ultimate source of healing our troubles, but only visiting temples or worshipping idols has nothing to do with it because God's glory exists in honesty and devotion to work. One has to follow the concept of 'to serve man is to serve God'. We do not have to wander here and there to search for God because God is within us, but we must do our duty, i.e., 'Karma'. One cannot escape from society because spirituality is related to individuals, society, and power politics, whether democratic or civil society. The intimacy of spirituality and freedom is essential to alter self-centred, materialistic attitudes and promote a peaceful life. Therefore, this research aims to study how Vivekananda treats spirituality and freedom in his selected poems, which become more comprehensible to maintain tranquility and happiness in our life as we have souls spiritually empty/hollow but filled with selfishness and materialistic feelings restlessly. This research work seeks to answer: What is the literary and poetic understanding of spirituality in Swami Vivekananda's *In Search of God and Other Poems*? How does Vivekananda use prosody to capture spirituality in his poetry? Why does Vivekananda prioritize spiritual thoughts to liberate people from colonial restrictions?

This research analyzes Swami Vivekananda's poems from hermeneutical perspectives to address the following objectives: to examine the poetic understanding of spirituality in *In Search of God and Other Poems*, to identify the role of Vivekananda's spiritual thoughts in

motivating people for freedom through poetry, and to analyze the use of prosody to capture spirituality in his selected poems. This research analyzes issues of spirituality and freedom in twelve selected poems from Swami Vivekananda's *In Search of God and Other Poems* using Hans Georg Gadamer's Hermeneutics Theory. The poems include: "In Search of God," "The Song of the Free," "My Play is Done," "The Cup," "The Song of the Sannyasin," "The Living God," "Peace," "To Awakened India," "To the Fourth of July," "Kali the Mother," "On the Sea's Bosom," and "A Benediction." This theory claims that "the subjective intention of the author is an inadequate standard of interpretation because it is non-dialectical while understanding itself is essentially dialectical - a new concretisation of meaning that is born of the interplay that goes on continually between the past and the present" (GadamerXXVI).

Life is full of ebb and flow, but there is no need to be pessimistic because God is there to shelter us if we are dutiful. I have learnt from Vivekananda's poems that spirituality does not mean having faith in God but also performing our duty honestly and serving others selflessly. The mix of spirituality with materiality brings better results in our lives. To maintain peace and prosperity, one must have patience, dedication, enthusiasm and faith in God. So, this research study clarifies the role of spiritual assumptions and freedom in enhancing human life in this selfish, dried-up, and technocratic world. It also helps us to understand who God is and how to change this world. The poems like "In Search of God", "The Living God", "Kali the Mother", etc., inspire us to understand the inner beauty of God and the poems like "The Song of the Free", "The Fourth of July", "To the Awakened India", etc. highlight the issue of freedom for all to be happy in life.

This research is based on Hans Georg Gadamer's theory of Hermeneutics, which is the art of interpretation. He furthered Heidegger's theory of interpretation in his book *Truth and Method*. Since this research aims to examine how Vivekananda's selected poems

promote the concept of spirituality and freedom for peace and prosperity, I have found hermeneutics to be the best tool to analyze them. I have books: *Philosophical Hermeneutics* and *Truth and Method* by Hans Georg Gadamer. Hermeneutics claims that understanding is the interpretative act of integrating particular things, such as words, signs, or events, into a meaningful whole. First, it was used in biblical texts. The term 'hermeneutics' has gradually developed into the Hermeneutics Theory to interpret literary texts. Philosophical hermeneutics emerged as a discipline in the twentieth century after the publication of the German philosopher Hans-George Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960). He developed his hermeneutic philosophy by "interacting with a number of significant figures in the history of hermeneutics. The major theorists of Hermeneutics are Zimmermann, Schleiermacher, Gadamer, Dilthey, Thiselton, Ricoeur, Heidegger, Derrida, etc. Their major insights are:

First, hermeneutics is an art of interpretation of texts. Schleiermacher defines: "It is the art of understanding particularly the written discourse of another person correctly"(3). It helps to interpret the text linguistically. Second, hermeneutics avoids misunderstanding. "It is the art of clarifying and mediating by our effort of interpretation what is said by persons we encounter in tradition"(Gadamer 98)). It clarifies the content, links it with existing cultural practices, and identifies errors or false beliefs. Third, the interpreting task is relational. "Every interpretation includes the possibility of a relationship with others"(Gadamer 399). While interpreting the text, the reader also compares and contrasts it with others. Fourth, Understanding is individualised, as in *Truth and Method*. The reader decodes the text based on his/her experience, knowledge and techniques.

Fifth, the reality of the work of art and its expressive power depends on the experience of the reader as in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Gadamer says, "The work of art is the expression of a truth that cannot be reduced to what its creator actually thought in it"(95). The reader identifies the reality of the expression beyond the creator's expectation. Sixth, the

plurality of language has a link with semantics and hermeneutics. "Both semantics and hermeneutics mature at some time along the ways of the totality of our relationship to the world that finds its expression in language, and both do this by directing their investigations behind the plurality of natural language"(83). The use of different languages maintains the concept of unity in diversity. Seventh, poetic expressions denote the truth through language. "Poetic utterances proved to be the special case of a meaning that has dissolved into and been embodied in the utterance. The coming into language that occurs in a poem is like entering into relationships of order that support and guarantee the "truth" of what is said"(Gadamer 483). Poetic expressions are inner thoughts that guarantee the truth relating to existing phenomena. Eighth, the interrelationship between life experience and creation is understood through images, concepts or words. "A word is not just a sign. It has a mysterious connection with what it images; it belongs to its being"(Gadamer 416). Each word plays a significant role in determining the meaning of the text. The use of prosody clarifies the link between experience and creative tasks. "Verbal form and traditional content cannot be separated in the hermeneutical experience" (Gadamer 438), as the verbal form is a means of transmitting the content. These concepts become the parameters of my research work while interpreting Vivekananda's poems.

"Hermeneutics explores how we read, understand and handle texts, especially those written in another time or a context of life different from our own"(Thiselton 1). It deals with the literary questions on different types of texts, the process of reading, theories of communication, and linguistics as it elaborates on the whole communication process that affects readers or a community. Plato used 'hermeneutics' to indicate poets as 'hermeneutics of the divine'. Similarly, Aristotle wrote on hermeneutics to elaborate on how spoken and written words become expressions of inner thoughts. According to Zimmerman, "We understand an object, word or fact when it makes sense within our context and thus speaks to

us meaningfully"(7). It means understanding the object depends on one's consciousness and context.

This research works as qualitative research, focuses on library study and uses data from both primary and secondary sources. The selected primary text, *In Search of God and Other Poems*, is primary data under scrutiny. Selected poems of this anthology are analysed by applying the theoretical lens of the established principles of hermeneutics. Extensive library research and guidance from the supervisor are obtained to enhance critical insight. These insights are the theoretical parameters used to examine, analyse, and interpret the primary text. Secondary data from other related books, academic journals, and internet sources are used here. Critical debates related to the issue and the primary texts benefit the study.

Swami Vivekananda is a great spiritual leader who works as a bridge between East and West. He brings changes in Westerners' way of looking at the East. While participating in the World Religious Conference in Chicago in 1893, he established his new identity with the help of his powerful oratory and writings dealing with the essence of spiritual faith in God and freedom for the welfare of everyone throughout the world. He advocates for spiritual strength in life to change society. I have listed some of the critics' views on Vivekananda's spiritual philosophy below:

Adiswarananda includes Vivekananda's advocacy for spiritual humanism, which is doing good for others and loving the Divine, realising its presence in all beings regardless of race, culture, country or social affiliation. Vivekananda says, "The God in you is the God in all". He believes, "The fall of a country or culture is caused by its spiritual bankruptcy. In the same way, its rise depends upon spiritual awakening. Spiritual fall brings in its wake moral fall, moral fall brings intellectual blindness, and intellectual blindness brings material downfall" (xii).

Jagdish Batra's article "Spiritual and Secular Strains in the Poetry of Swami Vivekananda" focuses on Vivekananda's spontaneous modern spiritual ideas and comments on his vision like "Vivekananda's poetry is a vehicle of his thoughts and experiences. He wanted "abstract Vedanta must become living-poetic-in everyday life"(Nehru 337).

Vivekananda's spiritual ideas or philosophy impressed Sister Christine a lot. So, she remarks on his ideas, "Then he would rush up to one of us with blazing eyes and finger pointing and would exclaim, 'Remember, God is the only reality' " (168).

Priyanka Gupta regards Vivekananda as a great Indian spiritual philosopher. She writes, "Like Christ chose Peter to lay the foundation of the church, Krishna transmitted the message of Srimad Bhagavad Gita through Arjuna, and Buddha selected Ananda to spread the message of compassion" (6).

The critic Iyengar comments on Vivekananda's idea in "Kali the Mother" as an "almost apocalyptic vision of the breaking of the world and Dancing of Doom"(52). Vivekananda believes that one can reach "eternal peace" by wading through the sea of life struggles, which requires dedication and patience. Such notions remind the readers about Swamiji's explication of Lord Krishna's message to Arjuna that he will not attain Moksha by shunning the world. His poems use the image of a whirl to describe the maddening course of worldly life. He spread Vedantic philosophy to bring changes in the existing culture through his poems.

Jyoti rmayananda explains Sri Ramakrishna's appreciation of Vivekananda in the book *Swami Vivekananda—A Comprehensive Study* like, "Naren is not a pond but a reservoir. He is not a pitcher or a jug; he is a veritable barrel. He is not a minnow or sardine; he is a huge red-eyed carp. He is not an ordinary sixteen-petalled lotus; he is a glorious lotus with a thousand petals"(182).

Jyoti rmayananda observes that Swami Vive kananda's vision led to significant achievements such as the reconstruction of Hinduism, altering its image in the West, and initiating a movement of social and cultural regeneration: Swami Vive kananda's greatest achievements include the reconstruction of Hinduism, the change of its image in the West, and the starting of a movement of social and cultural regeneration, all of which were directly linked to the birth of Indian Nationalism, which was taking place at that time. The key to all these contributions was Swami's modernization of Hinduism. (Ghosh 57-58)

Arabati Pradeep Kumar focuses on Vive kananda's language, rhyme, rhythm, versification, symbolism, and imagery, which are linked to our hearts and minds He states, "The poems of Vivekananda are rich in lyrical quality, as the ancient epics of Hinduism were perfect in the subtleties of style and diction and carry out the qualities of spontaneity, lucidity, symbols, images, metaphors, and similes which enhance the poetic beauty of his poems"(101).

S. Lalita summarizes Vive kananda's inspiring and profoundly significant lectures as follows:

To rouse the religious consciousness of the people and create in them pride in their cultural heritage, to bring about unification of Hinduism by pointing out the common bases of its sects, to focus the attention of educated people on the plight of the downtrodden masses, and to expound his plan for their uplift by the application of the principles of Practical Vedanta. (95)

Naresh Chandra elaborates on artistic imagery, "an image is a replica of any object or phenomenon formed by reflection or by some other physical process. Thus, a reflection in water or glass, or a mirage formed a rock or building, is described as the image of the original object or phenomenon"(111). Such an idea also exists in Vive kananda's poems.

Radhika Nagrath appreciates Vivekananda's poetic use of imagery to understand the existing phenomena by heart and writes:

With the images of the physical Nature, the poet shakes the inner being to realise real, true nature. His imagination, continually in search of concrete pictures, often turns to the world of Nature for evocative, atmospheric images. He uses the visual and the kinetic images from Nature which link the inner feelings with an external situation ... The visual and the kinetic atmosphere of fear darkness which are always aiming 'to crush' one out. (84)

Vivekananda's effort to avoid Westerners' misconceptions on Vedanta philosophy through his speech is highlighted by S. Nikhilananda in the following lines: "In America, Vivekananda's mission was the interpretation of India's spiritual culture, especially in its vedantic setting. He also tried to enrich the religious consciousness of the Americans through the rational and humanistic teachings of the Vedanta philosophy"(2).

V. K. Pandey regards Vivekananda's poetry as a work of finest poetic craftsmanship handling figures of speech. He compares Tagore and Vivekananda's ideas like,

For Tagore, God is the greatest singer, and as a singer, he presents himself before Him; Swami Vivekananda portrays God as a poet and painter. He claims that God is the most ancient Great poet whose poetry is the whole universe, written in perceptual bliss. Like the Divine poet, the Divine painter has painted the world with his 'golden brush' on the canvas of the earth with various colours 'over the bosom of nature' (2).

S. Radha Krishna prioritises Vivekananda's love for nature, concern for the downtrodden, and faith in man's dignity. He says: "Swami Vivekananda affirmed the universe"(50).

Tapan Rai Chaudhary looks Vivekananda as a modern spiritual philosopher to awaken the people from darkness. He says, "Swami Vivekananda had a two-fold agenda

which he had time to pursue for less than a decade: Firstly, to preach a university spiritual faith based on the life of his master which he saw as the ultimate realisation of the Vedantic truth; and secondly, to create a mass consciousness through service and education"(Jyoti rmayananda 18).

Similarly, Sri Ramakrishna found Narendra as the one who would carry his message to the world, his message of Jeeva Shiva, i.e., every life in the universe has the divine potentiality within itself; his message of treating poor and pauper alike; his message is not to search God in stones, in temples, in objects, but to serve Him in every being of the world. His message is evident in the following lines: "Leaving the different forms of life that exist before you, where art thee seeking God; he who loves all beings, is the one who serves God" (Ghosh 18).

Rolland describes Vivekananda as: "Nothing escaped the magic of his glance, capable equally of embracing in its irresistible charm, or of sparkling with wit, irony or kindness, of losing itself in ecstasy, or of plunging imperiously to the very depth of consciousness and of withering with its fury"(2).

Jai Shankar Tiwari analyses different critics' remarks about Vivekananda's perception of victims and literary activities. He says,

Vivekananda has learnt spirituality from his Guru Ramakrishna, who said that serving down-trodden people is serving God with the understanding of God in humans, i.e., Jeeva-Shiva. He devotes himself to eliminate/alleviate the suffering of common people. He contributes to develop spiritual thoughts to improve /alter discriminated life of people. He wants to wake them up from their age longslumber of caste, creed, and religion. (115)

Although the West had succeeded in scientific progress and India had advanced in spiritualism, there remains the vacuity of spiritual thoughts in the West and material

prosperity in India. So, he journeys to the West, spreading the spiritual messages to fulfill this vacuity and enhance unity in diversity. Vivekananda states:

The root cause of all the difficulties between the Indians and the English was not knowing each other' ... We can learn many things from the West, but the world is waiting for the treasure of our spirituality ..., therefore we must go out, exchange the gem of spirituality for anything they have to give us ... If you want to become equal with the Englishman or the American, you will have to teach as well as to learn. (45)

Vivekananda's selected poems appeal to us to be awakened from materialistic hunger/culture and search for peace. Neither political changes nor economic regeneration nor an increase in the amenities of life can enhance peace in the world. The Upanishads also tell us we cannot get peace until we recognise our true self. The transformation of the world takes place only after the transformation of consciousness. Fear, hatred, bigotry and war are the obstructions to spiritual unity. So, one must be in one's actual being and have faith in God to get peace and fight against discrimination to achieve freedom. No progress takes place under restriction. In the poem "My Play is Done," the poet is tired of his works, the unending ebb and flow of life. So, he requests God to rescue him from false aspirations, delusion, and cycles to life and death. He does not like to remain sick in this false/materialistic/selfish world. So, he begs for freedom. In the poem "To the Awakened India," he inspires people to awaken in search of truth for prosperity and peace. His poem, "The Song of The Sannyasin" imparts Vedantic philosophy to maintain peace. Most of his poems, such as "In Search of God", "The Song of the Sannyasin", "Kali the Mother", "The Living God", etc., praise spiritual life and appreciate God's glory and the poems like "The Song of the Free", "The Fourth of July", "To the Awakened India", etc. highlight the issue of freedom for all to be happy in life. The above critics regard Swami Vivekananda as a great spiritual leader and humanitarian who fought for spiritual freedom and self-realisation.

Gadamer's hermeneutics theory interprets a text in a dialogue form that can be taken as a mutual interpretation of texts. It states that understanding is a relational task, and the truth is found by encountering different factors within the text in a dialogue form. Hence, language plays a significant role in determining the meaning of a text. According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, hermeneutics is "the study of the methodological principles of interpretation and explanation" (4). It clarifies the content logically.

Suominen and Tuomi describe Gadamerian hermeneutical reading as "the search for agreement between tradition and the text we are reading. Common traditions are the conditions of "commonness", so this would include other readers of the text as well"(619).

Loren G. Agrey assumes that "Philosophical hermeneutics is not concerned with methods of interpretation and understanding but rather with the question of what enables understanding to occur...hermeneutics is not about the recovery of existing meanings, but instead, the creation of meaning itself and understanding is composed of both previous and new meanings"(190–191).

Alan Chan states: "What Gadamer is trying to do in his *Truth and Method* may be described initially as an attempt to go beyond the modern methodological self-consciousness prevalent in the human sciences"(422).

Johnsen and Olsen comment on the controversial points of Gadamer's concept of prejudice. They state that Gadamer sees prejudices as the condition for experience and understanding; they are "biases to our openness to the world. They are simple conditions whereby we experience something - whereby what we encounter says something to us" (9).

Kristin Gjesdal says, "Gadamer's analysis of the early nineteenth-century theory of interpretation consists of two closely related moves: a critique of romantic philosophy and its model of objective reconstruction of meaning and an effort to demonstrate how Hegel points beyond this paradigm"(104).

It is a medium of hermeneutic experience and is a vehicle of our understanding of the world. So, what I have learned from Gadamer's book is that hermeneutics is a genuine conversation or dialogue between an interpreter and an object. This concept helps to examine Vivekananda's message of spirituality and freedom for all in his selected poems. Similarly, Zimmermann's theory applied to analyzing poems from linguistic perspectives, i.e., by examining elaborate words, signs, and figures of speech. Schleiermacher's concept of hermeneutics helps analyse the text as it is the art of understanding the written discourse of another person on the basis of linguistic interpretation. He states, "Every utterance has a dual relationship to the totality of language and the whole thought of its originator"(9).

From my study of the available literature, I have understood that Vivekananda assumes that world peace depends upon social peace, social peace upon individual peace, and individual peace upon the spiritual awakening of the individual. However, I haven't found a critical analysis of his poems in any academic research paper. So, this research will analyse how Vivekananda's selected poems develop spiritual consciousness in people and fill a gap between his spiritual vision and existing culture.

This research work includes four chapters. The first chapter introduces the concepts of spirituality and freedom, a brief critical summary of the primary texts, a statement of the problem, specific objectives, delimitation, the significance of the study, methodology, literature review, and theoretical frame work. The second chapter comprises Gadamer's *Philosophical Hermeneutics* and *Truth and Method'* major assumptions applicable to interpreting poetry and clarifying the issues. The third chapter deals with textual analysis of selected poems. While analyzing the primary texts (poems), I have attempted to address the research questions and objectives following the parameters of Hermeneutical theory. I have focused on Vivekananda's spirit and the issues of spirituality and freedom necessary to

promote our lives in this materialistic world. The fourth chapter incorporates findings, a conclusion, and suggestions for further research, followed by the list of works cited.

Chapter- II

Critical Insights of Philosophical Hermeneutics: An Effective Way for Interpretation

Hans Georg Gadamer grew up during the Enlightenment Phase, which rejected external authority. He was trained in neo-Kantian scholarship and classical philology. His mature philosophy was a dialogical approach based on Platonic, Aristotelian, and Heideggerian thinking that rejected subjectivism and relativism. He was impressed mainly by the Heideggerian philosophy of art. Heidegger connected art with truth, arguing that the essence of artistic work is to disclose the world rather than representational character. He introduced the term 'philosophical hermeneutics' in his book *Being and Time* in 1927 but did not analyse it. Then, Gadamer came up with the idea of *Truth and Method* in the 1960s to elaborate the concept of philosophical hermeneutics. It is the theory and methodology of interpretation, especially the interpretation of biblical texts, wisdom literature, philosophical texts, literary texts and symbolic expression. It demands an interpretive approach. It examines the relation between the text and the person who wants to understand it by historicizing the content. In the book *Truth and Method*, Gadamer describes the role of language, the nature of the question, the significance of prejudices, historicity and tradition linked with human understanding.

Similarly, his *philosophical hermeneutics* is one of the hermeneutical theories that emerged in the twentieth century. Heidegger introduced its foundations, and Gadamer elaborated on them in detail. It refers to the systematic examination of human understanding. He argues that our perception of the world is theoretical and practical. We understand the objects by linking them with the preexisting totality of meaningful relations. His theory precisely relies on the historicity of human experience and life. He demonstrates how historicity constitutes the mode of being through hermeneutic theory, also known as the theory of arbitrary and extreme, because it assumes the text is self-sufficient. Hence, inter-

subjectivity becomes an inevitable part of understanding and interpretation. It emphasizes the process of understanding and interpreting literary texts. Understanding is existential, historical, dialectical, productive, linguistic and infinite.

This theory has a fore-structure including fore-having, fore-conception, and fore-sight. Heidegger states, "Whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight and fore conception" (191). The hermeneutical process contains three components: understanding, interpretation and application for literary text analysis. In the book *Truth and Method*, Gadamer states, "We consider an application to be just as an integral part of the hermeneutical process as understanding and interpretation"(307). It helps to determine the meaning of the text in different ways based on the reader's competency.

Gadamer's Philosophical Theory claims that understanding is always interpretation, and interpretation is the explicit form of understanding the text. He states, "Interpretation is not an occasional, post facto supplement to understanding; rather, understanding is always an interpretation, and hence interpretation is the explicit form of understanding" (306). We cannot be satisfied unless we understand each expression of the text. That is why we need to interpret the subject matter.

Gadamer's Philosophical Theory rejects the theory of traditional hermeneutics, namely: 1. the methodology of the interpretation of the text; 2. the meaning of the text is nothing but the meaning intended by the author; 3. interpretation is the reproduction of a meaning previously produced by the author; 4. the possibility of an objective interpretation of the text; 6. the interpretation is restricted to what the text says. (Abdal-Fadil3)

Gadamer claims, "The reading and interpreting of what is so distanced and detached from its author - from his mood, intentions, and unexpressed tendencies - that the grasping of the meaning of the text takes on something of the character of an independent, productive

act"(23-24). The written expressions become meaningful only after the interpreter goes through it and determines the meaning. Gadamer says, "texts are enduringly fixed expressions of life that are to be understood; and that means that one partner in the hermeneutical conversation, the text, speaks only through the other partner, the interpreter. Only through him are the written marks changed back into meaning"(389). Written or spoken words/expressions become meaningful only after the readers or the audiences decode them.

It regards reconstructing the original meaning as bringing a dead meaning to the present. Gadamer states, "A hermeneutics that regarded understanding as reconstructing the original would be no more than handling on a dead meaning"(160). Meaning is determined by merging the interpreter's and the text's horizons. He says, "The interpreter and the text each possesses his or her and its horizon, and each moment of understanding represents a fusion of these horizons"(Palmer 62). So, understanding is interrelated with the interpreter's competency and the context of the text. We understand that the interpretation of the text is done by fusing the horizon of the present with that of the past. Its purpose is not to grasp the author's intention but rather to grasp the meaning through the interpreter's encountering the text and merging it with his horizon. Gadamer's theory claims that the text must be analysed in a new perspective at every moment and situation. He states, "This implies that the text, whether law or gospel, if it is to be understood properly - i.e. according to the claim it makes - must be understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way" (307-308). We must be able to capture the gist of the text.

Conceptual Framework

1. Understanding the text is inter-subjectivity: Understanding becomes inter-subjective rather than objective because prejudices and presuppositions determine meaning. Gadamer states, "Thus there is undoubtedly no understanding that is free of all prejudices. However, much the will of our knowledge must be directed toward escaping their

thrall"(484).Pre-occupied ideas help to determine the meaning. Interpretation depends on the existing environment because "Our prejudices do not cut us off from the past, but initially open it up to us. They are the positive enabling conditions of historical understanding commensurate with human finitude"(xiv-xv). They interrelate the ideas to identify the actual condition. In the book *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Gadamer writes:

Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something - whereby what we encounter says something to us. ...the concept of prejudice is closely connected to the concept of authority, and the above image makes it clear that it is in need of hermeneutical rehabilitation. (9)

Prejudice helps the interpreter distinguish between right and wrong. It is an experience-based expression.

2. Understanding the text is historical: The meaning of the text is elaborated on the basis of historical events/factors. The changes take place along with the changes in the recipients' moods and experiences. Gadamer states, "Understanding is essentially a historically affected event" (299). Past matures an individual to face the present. He also says, "But that we should learn to understand ourselves better and recognize that in all understanding, whether we are expressly aware of it or not, the efficacy of history is at work"(300). History never let us be altered completely. For Gadamer, "the past has a truly pervasive power in the phenomenon of understanding, and this power was entirely missed by philosophers who dominated the sense before Heidegger"(xv). The role of the past cannot be restricted merely to supplying the texts or events that make up the objects of interpretation. Like prejudice and tradition, the past also defines the ground the interpreter occupies when he understands. Understanding is not reconstruction but mediation. We are conveyors of the past into the present. Even in the most careful attempts to grasp the past, understanding remains essentially a mediation or translation of past meaning into the present situation. Thus,

Gadamer's specific emphasis is "not on the application of a method by a subject, but on the fundamental continuity of history as a medium encompassing every such subjectivity act and the objects it apprehends"(xvii).

3. Infinity of understanding the text: This theory is somewhat similar to Derrida's Deconstruction. There is no final and fixed understanding of the text because understanding is renewable, challengeable, contextual and personal, following the dynamism process. Gadamer states, "Certainly every understanding is only underway; it never comes entirely to an end"(211). It believes that discovering the truth and final meaning of the text is everlasting due to the emergence of new sources of understanding it. Gadamer points out, "But the discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is, in fact, an infinite process. Not only are fresh sources of error constantly excluded, so that all kinds of things are filtered out that obscure the true meaning, but new sources of understanding are continually emerging that reveal unsuspected elements of meaning" (298). The process of determining the meaning of a text never ends. Instead, it produces a new horizon contextually.

4. Understanding the text is a productive activity: Understanding the text is not merely a reproduction but also productive as the interpreter goes through it and produces new meaning beyond the author's intention. This is because determining a given text's meaning relates to the interpreter's intellectual horizons and existing situation. Gadamer mentions, "Understanding is not a mere reproduction of knowledge, that is, it is not a mere act of repeating the same thing. Rather, understanding is aware that it is indeed an act of repeating"(45). Not just occasionally but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. Understanding becomes meaningful and productive through hermeneutical interpretation. Gadamer states, "Hermeneutics achieves its actual productivity only when it musters sufficient self-reflection to reflect simultaneously about its critical endeavours, that is, about

its limitations and the relativity of its own position"(93). The interpreter needs to mix his/her experience to analyse the text.

5. Understanding the text is a dialectical process; the text is rhetorical: This theory focuses on the reciprocal dialectic of rhetorics between the interpreter and the text. The interpreter addresses questions in the text, and the text answers them. Likewise, the text addresses questions to the interpreter, and the interpreter answers them. Gadamer mentions, "We understand the sense of the text only by acquiring the horizon of the question, a horizon that, as such, necessarily includes other possible answers"(363). Meaning is determined through discussion and inquiry into the text. He also states, "Thus we return to the conclusion that the hermeneutic phenomenon too implies the primacy of dialogue and the structure of question and answer"(363). Hermeneutical analysis of the text is also based on the rhetorical method of decoding the meaning.

He believes that the dialectic of question and answer helps to interpret written texts during conversation. He writes, "When it is interpreted, written tradition is brought back out of the alienation in which it finds itself and (sic) into the living present of conversation which is always fundamentally realised in question answer"(362). Such a process clarifies the misunderstanding on the subject matter. We find similar concepts in the following lines:

The author's subjective intention is an inadequate interpretation standard because it is non-dialectical, while understanding itself, as Gadamer shows, is essentially dialectical- a new concretisation of meaning that is born of the interplay that goes on continually between the past and the present. Every interpretation attempts to be transparent to the text, so that the meaning of the text can speak to ever new situations. (xxvi)

Gadamer uses rhetorical methods very effectively to analyse the text. He talks about the relationship between rhetorics and hermeneutics:

The rhetorical and hermeneutical aspects of human linguisticity completely interpenetrate each other. There would be no speaker and no art of speaking if understanding and consent were not in question, were not underlying elements; there would be no hermeneutical task if there were no mutual understanding that has been disturbed and that those involved in a conversation must search for and find again together.(25)

6. Interrelationship between text and application: The interpreter tries to capture the meaning of the text in the light of his current horizon. It takes place by fusing the interpreter's horizon with the text's horizon. Gadamer says, "We emphasized that the experience of meaning that takes place in understanding always includes application"(385). Determining the meaning depends on how effectively the interpreter employs his/her skills based on the content. Understanding the text depends on the interpreter's present situation, too. Gadamer also says, "He [i.e. the interpreter] must not try to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to this situation if he wants to understand at all" (321). People can only identify the actuality by relating the text to their horizons. In addition, he says, Every interpretation has to adapt itself to the hermeneutical situation to which it belongs (398). The production of meaning is the artistic description.

7. Understanding the text discovers the hidden reality: Understanding the text depends on an individual's intellect. It goes beyond what it says. Hermeneutical reading discovers the hidden reality of the text. Gadamer argues, "Thus, a person who wants to understand must question what lies behind what is said. He must understand it as an answer to a question. If we go back behind what is said, then we inevitably ask questions beyond what is said"(363). The more inquiry we make, the more we generate the meaning. Palmer states:

From the beginning, then, Heidegger defined his philosophical task in essentially hermeneutical terms. Hermeneutics, in this context, does not mean simply interpretation in

terms of correctness and agreement; hermeneutics carries its deeper traditional overtones of bringing out a hidden meaning, of bringing what is unknown to light, revelation and disclosure. (147)

Hermeneutical reading uncovers hidden reality by analyzing each word and expression contextually and helping the reader understand.

Gadamer writes, "The work of art is the expression of a truth cannot be reduced to what its creator actually thought in it... However, the hermeneutical perspective is so comprehensive that it must even include the experience of beauty in nature and art"(95-96). Although the hermeneutical process is compressive, it brings out the core of the text so that meaning is detected.

8. Understanding is essentially linguistic: Language is the vehicle or mediator to transmit the meaning. It is the medium in which past and present interpenetrate.

"Understanding as a fusion of horizons is an essentially linguistic process; indeed, these two - language and the understanding of transmitted meaning - are not two processes, but are affirmed as one and the same" (Gadamer xxvii). Gadamer agrees with Heidegger's assertion that language and understanding are inseparable structural aspects of human being-in-the-world, not simply optional functions that man engages in or does not engage in at will.

Language makes possible agreements that broaden and transform the horizons of those who use it. Gadamer writes, "Misunderstanding and strangeness are not the first factors so that avoiding misunderstanding can be regarded as the specific task of hermeneutics... Understanding is language-bound" (15). Unless the ideas are communicated with others through language, they are useless. It gives a concrete form to our thoughts and conveys the message persuasively. "Language occurs once again, in vocabulary and grammar as always, and never without the inner infinity of the dialogue that is in progress between every speaker and his partner. That is the fundamental dimension of hermeneutics" (17).

Hermeneutical theory becomes an interdisciplinary theory in that it analyses every aspect of linguistic structure to identify the meaning of the text. Hence, language becomes the real medium of communication/interaction. Hence, language is the real medium of human beings, "if we only see it in the realm that it alone fills out, the realm of human being-together, the realm of common understanding of ever-replenished common agreement - a realm as indispensable human life as the air we breathe. As Aristotle said, man is truly the being who has language" (68). Language makes the expression meaningful.

Whether it is prose or poetry, the ideas are expressed through linguistic signs and symbols to represent life's existing circumstances and reality. "The poem's structure, which thus becomes language, guarantees the process of soul and world addressing each other as something finite" (79). Impossibility can be changed into possibility with the help of language, and "Hermeneutics focuses upon the internal side of our use of this world of signs or, better said, on the internal process of speaking, which, if viewed from the outside, appears as our use of the world of signs" (82-83). Linguistic signs and symbols are analysed through hermeneutical reading, and the validity of the text's expression is evaluated. Gadamer offered a modality of interpretation of the text on the basis of inter-subjectivity, Being, authenticity, fore-structure, presupposition, prejudice, temporality and history.

Chapter-III

The Interrelationship between Spirituality and Freedom in

Vive kananda's *In Search of God and Other Poems*

This chapter analyses the representation of spirituality and freedom through twelve selected poems of Swami Vivekananda's *In Search of God and Other Poems*. His soul is filled with God's glory and comes forth for liberty. His poems convey the message of Oneness and Unity with spirituality, ignoring fanaticism and bigotry. They inspire people to understand the glory of God and struggle for freedom. He believes in oneness. The best way to worship God is to serve His creation. Such concepts are embedded in our lives knowingly or unknowingly. The philosophy of Gita has also influenced him as he believes that one has to perform the task with the spirit of detachment, dedication, non-violence, brotherhood and sacrifice. Similarly, the Jnana Yoga emphasizes liberation. He believes that a person who attains divine wisdom rising from his/her self, he/she achieves godhood. So, the fusion of spiritualism, liberation, dedication, renunciation, service to humanity and worship of motherland popularized his poetry. In this materialistic world, his spiritual thoughts motivate the people to believe in God. As a great Indian spiritual poet and philosopher, he teaches us about cultural values and appeals to identify truth, spiritualism, and freedom following the guidelines of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita.

Focusing on spirituality, the analysis begins with Vivekananda's poem, "In Search of God." This poem's theme of spirituality emphasizes self-realisation and truth after assimilating God's existence within oneself. It gives a vivid picture of the poet's search for God, who comes in the form of love, soul and nature to him. The speaker wanders "Over hill and dale and mountain range/ In temple, church and mosque"(3) but does not see God. He assumes himself like a child and continues to search for God but finds himself in the dark

forest. He cries a lot to see God in the deep forest and asks where He has gone. Deep devotion is expressed in the following lines:

Like a child in the wildest forest lost

I have cried and cried alone,

'Where art Thou gone, my God, my love?'

The echo answered, 'gone'. (5-8)

This poem is mystical because the more the speaker searches for Divinity, the more it haunts our mind, thoughts, ideas and reflections. He frequently asks the questions: Where is He? What is the ultimate truth? His strong wish to see God leads him to different places, such as mountain ranges, temples, churches, mosques, and forests, but he does not find God. Even the Vedas, the Bible and the Quran fail to reveal the truth of God. He spends days and nights with a burning fire in his brain and a zeal in his heart without caring about the heat and dust by the Ganga's shore. "A fire in the brain" is a metaphorical expression to reflect the ongoing challenges in this spiritually deserted world. However, after passing year after year, being tired and worried, he hears "a gentle soft and soothing voice/That said 'my son', 'my son' "(3), which takes away all his cries and complaints. His understanding is subjective as he had faith in God earlier and will remain so. One's true faith in God never fades away and is expressed through poetry. If we sincerely search for God, He is available and with us.

Gadamer's *Philosophical Hermeneutics* deals with such subjective notions related to prejudices, which are the basis for interpreting the text. As he says, "There is undoubtedly no understanding that is free of all prejudices" (484). The interpreter's surrounding environment influences the text's meaning because one analyses it based on his/her competency, ethnic background, history and existing environment.

He has a sacred vision of God that is ever-present. He finds Divinity in the moonlight, sunlight, stars, morning, evening, night, sea, rivers, melodious songs of birds, innocent children and mother's affection. He beautifies God in nature as in the following lines:

The moon's soft light, the stars so bright,
The glorious orb of day,
He shines in them; His beauty-might-
Reflected lights are they.
The majestic morn, the melting eve,
The boundless billowy sea,
In nature's beauty, songs of birds,
I see through them-it is He.(23-30)

These lines promote the presence of God's glory in nature, which has made our lives meaningful. If there is no God, there is neither life nor beauty.

The use of metaphor, simile, personification and mythological images enhance the poetic beauty of his spirituality. For example, "A fire was in the brain" is a metaphorical expression focusing on the rising tension in our mind. Similarly, "Like a child in the wildest forest lost" is a simile that deals with the disguised form of an adult into a child who runs here and there to search for God. We find the image of nature throughout his poems. The imagery of 'light' (4) symbolizes knowledge, hope and freedom from darkness. Likewise, 'water'(3) symbolizes the changing aspect of material life. Such images of nature motivate people to have faith and respect the glory of God. Hence, poetic expression reveals one's longings and the reality in the surroundings. Similarly, "The nectar in mother's kiss"(5) is another metaphor which refers to the mother's love for her child. Some expressions such as "Meseems I hear The whispering sweet/'My love', 'I am near', 'I am near'"(5) make him understand the existence of God to help him.

He advocates that Indian spiritual culture should create its own identity. The closing four lines of this poem represent the core spirits of Indian philosophy and spirituality, the wisdom of the Vedas and the Upanishads, the Purans and the Gita, praising God's power and love and his devotion to God. He reflects God's omnipresence and omnipotence in the following lines:

'Thou art', 'Thou art' the soul of souls

In the rushing stream of life.

'Om Tat Sat Om.' Thou art my God.

My love, I am Thine, I am Thine. (23-26)

Only God is the truth, and He is the soul of souls for everyone's existence. Though we do not see God with our naked eyes, God exists everywhere, which is realized through spiritual thoughts. Hermeneutical reading discovers such hidden reality of the text as it claims, "The work of art is the expression of a truth" (Gadamer 95). So, poetry becomes a vehicle to display the unknown message, ground reality perceived after its analysis. Hermeneutical reading analyses every aspect of the text thoroughly.

Likewise, Vivekananda's "The Song of the Free" deals with the reality of life and the importance of spirituality to resolve our difficulties. We need to normalize the ups and downs of life with the help of profound faith in God. Such perception is analysed through hermeneutical analysis. Gadamer says: "Faith's self-understanding is determined by the fact that faith is not man's possibility, but a gracious act of God that happens to the one who has faith" (54). So, if we do not harm others, God protects us in difficulties, but we must have faith in God's glory. When we face the challenge, we become bold and able to achieve our goals. Hence, it is necessary to understand our true nature to avoid difficulties, hatred, jealousy and cowardice which destroy human civilisation. Spirituality insists that life is beyond body, mind and intellect; the spirit is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. The

spirit is immortal and eternal, not limited by the law of causality. The poet encourages us to stick to the right path to achieve our goals even in challenging, sorrowful conditions, which familiarise us with strange thoughts/conditions.

The poet uses metaphors of 'a wounded snake unfurling its hood', 'rising flame', 'the echoing sound of the thrilling roar of a lion in the desert air' and 'lighting in the heart of clouds' to depict the awakening of the dormant spiritual power of human beings who can bring out the hidden power of the soul. When the world, nature, and fate become unfavourable, we experience failure in friendship and betrayal in love. Although nature tries to crush and destroy us, we cannot be diminished due to our divine soul/nature. So, we must march ahead to reach our destination without getting distracted. External appearances are among the outer and inner crust of the human body, space, time, and the law of cause and effect. Reality or truth is the spirit that is beyond all senses and thoughts. All souls are integrated into one soul and cannot be divided or separated. In this way, he focuses on Divinity and says that human life is full of suffering and difficulties. One gets the best power in life through its ups and downs. We should never be disheartened as God's blessings fully protect us. The aim of human life is godhood.

The poet talks about our true nature. We are not angels, men, animals, bodies and minds because we are beyond the concept of gender, such as male and female. His poem, "The Living God," encourages everyone to worship God and break all other idols that represent false beliefs. There is only one superpower, and that is God. It inspires us to connect with Divinity, which is within us directly. The glory of God is present everywhere. So, we must learn to respect God. He writes:

Ye fools! who neglect the living God,
And His infinite reflections with which the world is
While ye run after imaginary shadows,

That lead alone to fights and quarrels,

Him worship, the only visible

Break all other idols!(16-21)

Vivekananda composed the poem "Kali the Mother" while visiting the Kashmir Bhawani Temple after his speech at the Parliament of World's Religions in Chicago in 1893. His thought of 'Kali' signifies 'Bharat Mata', undercurrent of British Colonialism. It praises Goddess Kali with beautiful images of nature, such as stars, trees, wind, and Death, to promote spiritual faith among the followers. Kali is the incarnation of 'Shakti', which is needed for the destruction of the wickedness of the world that creates chaos in society. Only after the wicked ones are destroyed, will the innocent beings be saved. Kali disguises in different forms to save the humans from the pond of evils, plagues and sorrows. She is as fearful as her name for those who harm others, but she is as good as Saraswati /Durga for those who are innocent and have respect for Her. Such belief is also found in Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics. As he states, "Faith's self-understanding is determined by the fact that faith is not man's possibility, but a gracious act of God that happens to the one who has faith"(54). We are God's gift.

The whole world trembles and shakes as she moves ahead with weapons to annihilate sinful activities. It is full of imagery. The night indicates the horridness of Death. Kali in the form of Kaal Rupa (Death embodied) is not only dreadful but also blissful as she is both creator and destroyer. This poem has linguistic significance in highlighting the power of the Goddess, Kali, based on the principle of infinity in understanding the text. The discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process"(Gadamer 298). Goddess Kali has two forms: one four-armed form and another ten-armed Mahakali form, and the poet glorifies Her importance in destroying in, evil and chaos.

He takes the whole world as a stage for Her frenzied and ecstatic dance. However, he appeals to the Goddess to come upon the earth and save us from danger.

For Terror is Thy name,
Death is in Thy breath,
And every shaking step
Destroys a world forever
Thou 'Time', the All-destroyer!
Come, O Mother, come! (19-24)

Being a Hindu, he believes that Goddess Kali is generous to us whenever we fall into difficulties. His mind is full of Kali's frightening image, which is needed to destroy sinful activities. Similarly, Zinia Mitra also connects the imagery of Kali to the vision of Blake with an apocalyptic vision and says:

Vivekananda invokes mother to come "scattering plagues and sorrows/ dancing mad with joy". The imagery conjured is not that of the protective mother but is associated with Death. In the next stanza, the association is strengthened and it is made explicit that she is not merely individual Death, but time, the All destroyer' whose very name is Terror and whose breath is Death. (96)

Mother Kali blesses those bold enough to tolerate/face love and misery without bothering consequences. However, one should not forget the path of Sat Karma and Dharma to achieve goals in one's life. Such ideas are expressed in the following lines:

Who dares misery love,
And hug the form of Death,
Dance in destruction's dance,
To him the mother comes. (25-28)

The poem "Peace" advocates for spiritual strength that brings happiness. Peace is happiness, and all of us expect a peaceful environment for progress. Life without peace is similar to hell. Whenever we get in trouble, we appeal to God to free us and help maintain peace. The poet says peace comes in might. The shade takes place in "dazzling light"(29). He philosophises the concept of peace and writes:

It is joy that never spoke
And grief unfelt, profound,
Immortal life unlived,
Eternal Death unmourned. (5-8)

It is neither joy nor sorrow. Peace is something that appears in between joy and sorrow. One feels peace in "sweet rest in music and sacred art"(29). The speaker claims that peace is unseen beauty and love. While elaborating on peace, the poet uses paradoxical expressions such as "It is death between two lives/And lull between two storms"(29). Science claims we have only one life, but religious texts/books claim that there is still life after Death. Some people experience peace in this physical life, while others expect to experience it after Death.

Vivekananda composed the poem "On the Sea's Bosom" during his return from his second trip to the West. While crossing the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, he observed the natural beauty that inspired him to write it. This poem deals with nature and its interrelationship between physical and spiritual realms. Nobody runs away from natural beauty. It also reflects the late nineteenth century's attraction to pristine nature, a part of spiritualism. Nature is the source of spirituality and forces us to concentrate. It depicts a vibrant sky floating with a "multitude of clouds, white, black, of many shades and thicknesses, an orange sun" (37). These colours present different phases of our life. 'White' is related to the peaceful condition of human life. 'Black' refers to the challenging and

obstructing condition. 'An orange sun' refers to the uplifting condition/the brightening life. By mixing different colours, he conveys that our life is not as simple as we assume. If we insert spiritual feelings in our mind and heart, we may bring happiness in life because spirituality enables us to avoid materialistic hunger and motivates us towards welfare of others.

Surfacely, if we look upon the sea, we find it calm, beautiful, rich and floating smoothly but as we observe it closely, it is filled with diverse obstacles just like our life. So, one must have patience and critical thinking skill to analyze the circumstances, objects and life. To handle such things, we must have poetic heart rather than materialistic. Hermeneutics guides us to interpret every aspect surrounding us in different life phases. Gadamer says that when the poets "describe the poetic conception as the harmony of the world and soul in the linguistic concretization that becomes poetry" (79). Poetry is not only about feelings but also about facts. There must be a channel to transmit the message, and poetic language must convey it to the readers. Our affection for nature is generally expressed through poetry. Whenever we think of nature, we become liberal towards others and accept it easily as part of spirituality or God's creation. He writes:

The wind blows as it lists, a hurricane
Now craving shapes, now breaking them apart:
Fancies, colours, forms, inert creations-
A myriad scenes, though real, yet fantastic.(5-8)

The word 'hurricane' refers to a violent wind that moves in a circular motion. This hurricane is the hurricane of our lives, and it moves through ups and downs. Just like the wind does not have any shape or size but is very powerful, God's power is also unseen. If there is no God, there is no existence of life.

Vivekananda presents his spiritual belief, emphasizing the supremacy of God and the illusory nature of the materialistic world in his poem, "Misunderstood". The poet questions a

priest sitting by the shore of Ganga and teaching about how Sita and Ram came. He has misunderstood the deities. The reality is that only God is truth, and all other materialistic ideas are self-centred and mislead us. This world is only a dream of fantasy, which is challenging to achieve unless we access God's blessing. As he says,

That God is true, all else is nothing!//

This world's a dream

Though true it seem

And only Truth is He the living~

The real me is none but He

And never never matter changing!(24-29)

This world is a materialistic dream, and everyone is selfish except God. They cannot understand the power of God. They are as dried as desert. Faith in God's mercy has been diminished. So, we must understand that God is real and never changing. This world is only a dream of fantasy. Whatever beautiful dream we see, it cannot be fulfilled unless we get God's blessing. So, we should respect God and follow His guidelines. The poet praises Indian's faith in God's mercy to uplift people from miseries.

Dealing with the colours of nature that offer hope and encouragement, the poet focuses on the challenges and uncertainties of the early twentieth century. Whatever disaster takes place on this earth, God's brightness never diminishes. It always spreads sweet perfumes for those who are honest, dedicated and faithful to God's creation.

The poem "A Benediction" appeals to the virtues of courage, composition, devotion and spirituality. It begins with "The mother's heart, the hero's will" (33) and focuses on love and freedom. A mother loves her children, and a hero fights for freedom. The poet links these things with nature, like "The sweetness of the Southern breeze" (33), which develops spiritual feelings. When we meditate/concentrate in the lap of nature in tranquillity, we better

understand the spiritual power/diving power. It includes imagery such as a mother's heart, a hero's will and Aryan altars, which encourage us to have faith in God for our progress and to fight for freedom that uplifts our lives. No one wants to be repressed or victimised.

The poem is optimistic, hoping for India's freedom from Colonialism and prosperity. "Be thou to India's future son"(33) refers to God, who can free India from British restriction and make it a Hindu country. He calls for unity in the face of existing adversity among the people as a whole. He inspires Indians to advance with spirituality to establish peace and prosperity for everyone. The words 'Southern breeze' and 'free' refer to spiritual feelings and liberation, respectively. The title, "A benediction," is an blessing.

Vivekananda's poem "My Play is Done" advocates for freedom from restrictions, especially India's liberation from British Colonialism. In the context of the British Raj in India, Indians were searching for liberation, and Vivekananda expressed his strong longing for freedom, equality and fraternity through his poems. By observing and experiencing the spiritually dead lives of people, he marches ahead by giving a speech in favour of the need for spirituality to develop the feeling of brotherhood/oneness and humanity. In this poem, he presents a sense of weariness with the cyclical nature of life and feels trapped in an endless cycle of birth, Death and rebirth. However, he continues to evoke others for freedom, accepting life as "ebb and flow". We experience joy and sorrow as time passes. He writes:

Ever rising, ever falling with the waves of time, still

rolling on I go

From fleeting scene to scene ephemeral, with life's

currents' ebb and flow

Om! I am sick of this unending force; these shows

they please no more,

This ever running, never reaching, nor even a distant

glimpse of shore!(1-4)

He confesses that he is tired of his work and life's unending ebb and flow. So, he requests God to take him from this sinful world and give him shelter where he gets peace and rest. He is optimistic about God's favour. His bold and devotional longing for liberation is expressed through powerful imagery such as "this floating bubble, the earth" and "too late, the knowledge age doth gain"(11). He compares life to 'the floating bubble' and 'old wheel of grief and bliss' while the Divine gate is 'the gate of light'. The Indians are struggling for freedom from the existing ruling system that has transfigured their lives into the lives of animals. Here, the 'gate' refers to the gate of heaven where the soul gets rebirth and pleasure. Such interpretation of poetry has become a part of hermeneutics because it focuses on linguistic aspects of communication. "Language occurs ..in vocabulary and grammar as always, and never without the inner infinity of the dialogue that is in progress between every speaker and his partner. That is the fundamental dimension of hermeneutics"(Gadamer 17). Each word, phrase and sentence has its meaning based on the context.

Through this poem, he expresses his desire to be free from the bonds of illusion (maya-moha), sukha-dukha, and life-death as he has completed his tasks. He struggles with rising and falling waves of time along with life's currents' ebb and flow and becomes sick of being tired of unending force. He observes the Bhavachakra, which is constantly rising and falling. The poet stands at the gate to enter heaven, crossing the shore with solid longings for a peaceful life.

The poet has a strong faith in God and wants His blessings. He requests to let him enter. He writes: " Opens the gates of light, O Mother, to me Thy tired son/I long, oh, long to return home! Mother, my play is done"(10). He has a strong faith in God that He helps us whenever we are in trouble. He presents the misery of life and appeals to God to save us "Tossed to and fro, from wave to wave in this seething, surging sea/ Of passions strong and

sorrows deep, grief is, and joy to be"(10). He expects God's love and care in difficult times, just like a mother takes care of her children and rears them up.

The poet uses conceptual metaphors to emphasise the painful life and requests God to liberate it. We find three metaphors: Vive kananda's life is a homeward bound voyage, Earthly temptations are like a drink before a thirsty person, and the earth is a bubble.

"The Cup" is a symbolic poem that deals with the philosophy of our life and living. The cup refers to the cup of one's own life. It is a metaphor of life. Life is like a circle and a water bubble on the harsh ground of realities. Goethe's statement, "Everything is a symbol," is the most comprehensive formulation of the hermeneutical idea (Gadamer103). He deals with three things:- life and Karma, the path of life, and the tasks we prefer; God is within us and asks us to keep Him in our hearts. God determines ourdestiny and Karma,we perform our Karma in the very space of life, which is never-ending. Therefore, we cannot escape from our Karma. God asks us not to worry about understanding life's path and task but to just close our eyes to see His face. When we concentrate on God, 'Our wishes get fulfilled. He writes:

But you, My child, must travel here.

This is your task. It has no joy nor grace,

But it is not meant for any other hand,

And in My universe hath measured place,

Take it, I do not bid you understand.

I bid you close your eyes to see My face. (9-14)

This poem is full of imagery to represent the complications of human life. 'Dark drink' refers to poison or evildeeds. 'Road' refers to the path through which we passour life. 'Task' refers to the responsibility which we bear in life. What is in one's Karma and dharma is beyond our capacity. However, it is true that as people sow, so they reap.The cup contains the brew of fault and passion, and we drink it unknowingly. As a result, we do not understand our

destiny and path, which is never smooth and easy. It is a long and tiresome journey, like a pilgrimage filled with stones. However, it is His will to travel through it. The poet compares 'the human body' with the 'cup'. For Romanticists like Shelly, this cup is full of negativity, failure, disappointment and frustration caused by society and the environment. The poet puts the responsibility of using life like the cup on its users. Neither social nor environmental force is responsible for the sour or sweet substance of the cup. God has only made the cup, not its substance.

In the poem "The Song of the Sannyasin," Swami Vivekananda appeals to everyone to wake up when the opportunity of a consciously lived life comes/takes place. The song of the spirit is for everyone's liberation. When we look inward, we become aware of the light of consciousness. In order to be liberated, one must be bold. The poet suggests we identify the fetters and release the constraints of false personality, whether it is good or bad, positive or negative, love or hate. As he writes, "Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped, not free;/ For fetters though of gold, are not less strong to bind;/ Then, off with them, Sannyasin bold!" (16). First, we need to understand the nature of our life as a slave.

Vivekananda's poetry also shows the influence of Vedanta Philosophy, which works as the essence of Vedas. The spiritual reality has a connection with the Vedic mantra, i.e. poetic expressions. Combining the three highest strengths of poetic speech, such as the power of rhythmic movement, the intensity of verbal form and style, and the soul's vision of truth, has won the reader's heart. This is possible through language because it is an effective means of communication and motivation to the readers or audiences. Whenever teachers misunderstand the poet's creation, critical content analysis is needed. It can be done by following the assumptions of hermeneutics. Gadamer states, "Hermeneutics is the art of clarifying and mediating by our effort of interpreting what is said by persons we encounter in tradition" (98). Whatever brilliant ideas we have in our minds do not carry any value unless

they are expressed among the readers. Hence, all these activities are "linguistic manifestations" (98), and the poet expects his readers to understand his feelings and move ahead to establish a sense of humanity in this barren land. The passion of humanity is a dim foreshadowing of the divine urge that promotes all the creations for godhood. Such things are expressed in the following lines:

Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The 'I'

Has All become, the All is 'I' and Bliss.

Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say-

'Om Tat Sat, Om.(86-89)

Our dream of life is empty because everything is unreal. Nobody exactly knows about others. Father, mother, children, wife and friend become strange. Only the Self exists as "the self is all in all". The realisation of self and truth is liberation; we must be bold in our aim and responsibility. There is only one, the Self, and all the things that obstruct its vision are illusions or dreams taken as life. The true self is that which can self remember, observe and witness. The Self sees the inner feelings. It sees the nature of our reality. He writes:

There is but One- The Free- The Knower- Self!

Without a name, without a form or stain.

The Witness, He appears as nature, soul.

Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold!(11-14)

The Buddha stated, "Man must himself rise and make way to the portals that give upon liberty!" The Sannyasin runs here and there in search of freedom. No books or temples answer his questions. Only God has the power to set him free. So, have faith in God and be bold. He writes, "Where sleekest thou? That freedom,..../ The rope that drags thee on"(17). We roll within our destiny determined by God. The freedom we need is achieved through our spiritual activities following the path of reality. Truth comes in peace and sacrifice. Lust,

greed, and selfishness obstruct reality and create chaos in society. Unless we give up such chaotic deeds, we never see the dream of heaven. Godhood and freedom take place beyond material prosperity. So, he writes:

Truth never comes where lust and, fame and greed
Of gain reside. No man who thinks of woman
As his wife can ever perfect be;
Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he
Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro' Maya's gates.
So, give these up, Sannyasin bold!(8-13)

The poet rejects the sinful deeds of the modern world and wishes to "release the soul forever"(19). He is no longer interested in getting another birth. Only God can do this. So, we must respect God. He says that to expect praise or appreciation of our efforts from others is in vain. Satisfaction should come within ourselves. Fear of pain and search for joy is related to our mechanical nature, which does not carry any value for us. We must continue our efforts for freedom until the great day of brightness comes. So, he advises us not to be pessimistic.

In 1898, Vivekananda composed the poem "To the Awakened India", supporting India's peaceful movement for freedom and sent it to Prabuddha Bharata for publishing. Sister Nivedita comments on this poem, "The Swami had always had a special love for this paper, as the beautiful name he had given it indicated. ... Day after day, he would talk of the forthcoming first number under the new editorship of Swarupananda. One afternoon, as we sat together, he brought to us a piece of paper on which he said he had "tried to write a letter, but it would come this way"(Vivekananda 87). He expresses his longing for liberation in it. British colonial rule prevailed for a long time in India, and Indians were frustrated and fed up. He encourages everyone to fight for freedom and truth. He advises all freedom fighters to have patience and not to be violent. He writes:

With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest, even of the road-side dust//
That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold and free. Awakener, ever
Forward! Speak thy stirring words. (7-11)

He believes in God's gentleness and benevolence upon us. So, he appealed to God to liberate innocent people from the bonds of sorrow. He seems confident that God loves us like a mother loves her children. We are the flowers of God's garden. Unity in diversity works for freedom and happiness. We get empowered by God. He suggests to have patience and conduct peaceful movement. He writes:

The mother that resides in all as Power
And life, who works all works, and
Makes of One that world, whose mercy
Opes the gate Truth, and shows
The One in All, give thee untiring
Strength, which is Infinite Love.(17-22)

He regards God as a mother who lets her children enter the gate of heaven for a peaceful life. He advocates for victory over misdeeds and requests everyone to come up from the existing place and perform his/her duties honestly. Freedom is sure to take place, but be bold. India's freedom is not only for Indians, but it is the freedom of all who are repressed, dominated and victimised. Freedom is essential for growth and development. It is a basic human right. To control others, freedom is a crime. One cannot see the dream of brightness in chains. One has to seek inner freedom of life by oneself, which is possible through dedication, penance, and faith in God. He writes:

Awake, arise, and dream no more!

This is the land of dreams, where Karma
Waves unthreaded garlands with our thoughts,
Of flowers sweet or noxious, and none...
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.(7-11)

He speaks in favour of freedom of all kinds for everyone. He reflects a clear idea of a resurgent India that promotes spirituality worldwide. The expression 'Awake, arise and dream no more/This is the land of dreams, where karma /weaves unthreaded garlands with our thoughts' clarifies India's strong belief in "sat karma" to reach the destination. India has the immense inherent strength to revitalize herself and guide humanity towards enlightenment. He encourages Indians to fight against British rule and maintain tranquility and freedom to live happily.

Vivekananda's "To the Fourth of July" glorifies liberty, especially America's Independence Day. By praising America's Independent Day, he strongly spoke in favour of freedom from all kinds of bondages. It presents his love for freedom and passionate longing for a land where the 'shackles are broken" (24). He links the imagery of nature with his desire for freedom. Nature's relation with freedom is similar to the assumption of Gadamer's aesthetics and hermeneutics because "the aesthetic consciousness can appeal to the fact that the work of art communicates itself"(96). The beautiful scene of nature always attracts anyone's mind and motivates him/her towards meditation on the existing problems and find a solution. Vivekananda uses nature as the most potent weapon to express his desire for freedom and spirituality among the readers. We can analyse his inner thoughts of the spiritual world through hermeneutical interpretation. "The hermeneutical perspective is so comprehensive, however, that it must even include the beauty experience in nature and art" (Gadamer 98). We were born in nature, grow up in nature and die in the lap of nature. So, we cannot detach ourselves from nature. This idea is expressed in the following lines:

The lakes are opening wide in love
Their hundred thousand lotus-eyes
To welcome thee, with all their depth.
All hail to thee, thou Lord of Light!
A welcome new to thee, today,
O Sun! Today thou sheddest liberty! (1-6)

He compares our life with lotus blossoming in the garden and indicates the need for God's light to protect it. He believes God's glory shines upon those who perform their duties selflessly. So, he requests God to make them free. God's glory spreads throughout the world. He dreams of seeing the broken shackles and renewed lives of victimized people. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; this is the time of all good fortune. Some people set out in search of God, giving up their homes and friends to get freedom. They wander through forests to oceans, facing the challenge of Death and misery. So, he pledges God to grant freedom, bringing happiness to people's wounds. He advises them to continue their journey until they get liberty. He writes:

Move on, O Lord, in thy resistless path!
Till thy high noon overspreads the world
Till every land reflects thy light,
Till men and women, with uplifted head,
Behold their shackles broken, and
Know, in springing joy, their life renewed! (18-23)

The poet describes the beautiful pictures of nature, "The Silvermoon" (45) spreads a sweet smile to all and 'The soft Malaya breeze' refers to the horror of nature. Nature gives energy to create a new environment instead of the old one. He elaborates on every part of life, connecting it with nature. He expresses the sorrows and challenges with the imageries of

nature. In this context, his poetic qualities become part of hermeneutics. As Gadamer says, "Aesthetics is an important element of general hermeneutics" (102). It brings out one's inner emotions and appeals to others to think over his/ her life spiritually.

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Chapter-IV

Findings

Swami Vivekananda's spiritual ideals are significant and praiseworthy in understanding our life. His poetry emphasizes the need for spiritual thinking to unite people and fill up the gap created by materialistic hunger. He vividly elaborates on spirituality and freedom in his 12 selected poems using images, symbols, metaphors, similes and personification of nature. His spiritual philosophy was followed by Indian nationalists such as Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose and Rabindra Nath Tagore to promote non-violent movement for their fundamental rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. I have found him to be a source of spiritual thoughts, positive ideals, humanity, patriotism and optimism to lead life in a more progressive and scientific way. I agree with Vivekananda's opinion that we cannot find God visiting temples or mosques. Instead, we find Him within ourselves if we have true faith in God and respect Him selflessly.

Conclusion

Swami Vivekananda's poetry offers a rich tapestry of spiritual and philosophical insights that transcend the boundaries of materialism and seek to elevate the human soul towards divine consciousness. His collection *In Search of God and Other Poems* encapsulates his quest for understanding and embodying spirituality and freedom, themes that resonate deeply through the twelve selected poems analyzed in this chapter.

Vivekananda's poetry is imbued with a profound sense of God's glory and the relentless pursuit of liberty. His verse serves as a clarion call for unity and oneness, promoting spirituality while eschewing fanaticism and bigotry. The central tenet of his message is that true worship of God is achieved through service to His creation, an idea that permeates our lives consciously or unconsciously. This philosophy, influenced significantly by the Bhagavad Gita, emphasizes performing one's duties with detachment, dedication, non-violence, brotherhood, and sacrifice. Similarly, the principles of Jnana Yoga underscore the importance of divine wisdom and the attainment of godhood, forming the bedrock of Vivekananda's spiritual discourse.

The fusion of spiritualism, liberation, dedication, renunciation, service to humanity, and patriotism underpins the poetic expression of Vivekananda, offering a counter-narrative to the pervasive materialism of the modern world. His spiritual thoughts inspire faith in God and adherence to cultural values rooted in the teachings of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita.

"In Search of God", one of Vivekananda's seminal poems, serves as an archetype of his spiritual journey. The poem delves into themes of self-realization and truth, portraying the poet's fervent quest for God amidst various religious and natural settings. The imagery of the speaker wandering through temples, churches, mosques, and forests symbolizes the universal and often elusive nature of the divine. This mystical search, characterized by a childlike

innocence and profound devotion, culminates in a moment of divine revelation, where the poet hears a soothing voice affirming God's presence. This poem illustrates Gadamer's hermeneutical principles, emphasizing that understanding is inherently subjective and influenced by one's historical and cultural context.

Vivekananda's sacred vision of God extends to nature, where he finds divinity in the moonlight, sunlight, stars, and the natural beauty surrounding him. His use of metaphors, similes, personification, and mythological images enriches the poetic beauty of his spirituality. For instance, "A fire in the brain" metaphorically captures the intense spiritual quest, while "Like a child in the wildest forest lost" simulates the speaker's earnest pursuit of God. Such imagery underscores the interconnectedness of nature and spirituality, reinforcing the idea that God's presence imbues all aspects of life.

"The Song of the Free" reflects Vivekananda's belief in the transformative power of spirituality to overcome life's adversities. He advocates for profound faith in God, which enables individuals to face challenges with courage and resilience. Through metaphors such as "a wounded snake unfurling its hood" and "the echoing sound of the thrilling roar of a lion," the poet depicts the awakening of dormant spiritual power within humans. This poem reiterates the necessity of understanding our true nature and maintaining unwavering faith in God's protection and guidance.

In "The Living God," Vivekananda admonishes the worship of false idols and emphasizes the supremacy of the living God. He criticizes those who neglect the omnipresent divinity in favor of imaginary shadows that lead to discord. The poem calls for direct connection with the divine, highlighting God's infinite reflection in the world. This spiritual insight aligns with Gadamer's hermeneutics, which points that faith and understanding are influenced by one's experiential reality.

"Kali the Mother" is a powerful invocation of the Goddess Kali, embodying both destruction and creation. Vivekananda's portrayal of Kali as a fierce yet benevolent force reflects his deep spiritual connection with the divine feminine. This poem, written during his visit to the Kashmir Bhawani Temple, underscores the need for spiritual strength to combat the evils of society. The imagery of Kali's frenzied dance symbolizes the cyclical nature of destruction and renewal, reinforcing the concept of divine justice and protection.

"Peace" offers a contemplative exploration of spiritual tranquility. Vivekananda presents peace as a profound, almost paradoxical state that transcends joy and sorrow. The poem uses paradoxical expressions to convey the elusive nature of peace, suggesting that true spiritual contentment lies beyond the dichotomies of life. This philosophical perspective highlights the poet's belief in the eternal and immutable nature of divine peace.

In "On the Sea's Bosom," Vivekananda reflects on the interrelationship between the physical and spiritual realms through the lens of nature. The poem captures the beauty and turbulence of the sea, mirroring the complexities of human life. The vivid imagery of a vibrant sky and tumultuous waves serves as a metaphor for the spiritual journey, emphasizing the need for patience and critical thinking in navigating life's challenges. This poem exemplifies the hermeneutical approach to understanding the divine through natural phenomena.

"Misunderstood" critiques the materialistic misinterpretation of spiritual truths. Vivekananda juxtaposes the eternal truth of God with the ephemeral nature of worldly pursuits. He warns against the illusion of materialism and advocates for a deeper understanding of divine reality. This poem reinforces the importance of spiritual wisdom in discerning the true nature of existence, aligning with hermeneutical principles that seek to uncover hidden meanings within texts.

"A Benediction" combines themes of courage, devotion, and spirituality, linking them to the natural world. The poem invokes the virtues of a mother's love and a hero's will, drawing parallels to the Southern breeze's sweetness and the fight for freedom. Vivekananda's call for unity and spiritual advancement in the face of adversity reflects his optimistic vision for India's future. The poem's title signifies a divine blessing, reinforcing the poet's belief in the transformative power of spirituality.

"My Play is Done" articulates Vivekananda's weariness with the cyclical nature of life and his longing for liberation. The poet expresses a desire to transcend the endless cycle of birth and rebirth, seeking peace and rest in the divine. This poem resonates with the collective struggle for freedom during British Colonialism, highlighting the poet's yearning for spiritual and national liberation. Vivekananda's use of powerful imagery, such as "this floating bubble, the earth," underscores the ephemeral nature of material existence and the eternal quest for divine truth.

"The Cup" explores the philosophy of life through the metaphor of a cup, symbolizing the cyclical nature of existence. Vivekananda reflects on life's challenges and the importance of spiritual detachment in achieving liberation. The poem's emphasis on the illusory nature of the material world aligns with the poet's broader philosophical outlook, advocating for a life guided by spiritual principles.

"To the Awakened India" shows Vivekananda's appeal to the Indians to rise up from their place to fight with British for freedom. He believes in Karma rather than dharma. He regards God as a mother who lets her children enter the gate of heaven for a peaceful life. He advocates for victory over misdeeds. India has the immense inherent strength to revitalize herself and guide humanity towards enlightenment.

"To the Fourth of July" glorifies America's Declaration of Independence Day and appeals for India's freedom from British Colonialism. He strongly spoke in favour of freedom

from all kinds of bondages. The poet advocates for the rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness as well as passionate longing for a land where the 'shackles are broken'.

At last in brief, what I can say is that Swami Vivekananda's poetry serves as a profound expression of his spiritual philosophy, emphasizing the unity of all beings and the importance of divine wisdom. His verses are a testament to his unwavering faith in God and his belief in the transformative power of spirituality. Through vivid imagery, metaphorical expression, and philosophical insights, Vivekananda's poems inspire readers to seek a deeper understanding of the divine and to cultivate virtues of dedication, service, and resilience. His poetic legacy continues to resonate, offering timeless wisdom for navigating the complexities of human existence and striving towards spiritual liberation.

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