



Human Values in Mahashweta’s Poetry

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Abstract

An avid reader of poetry will find Mahashweta Chaturvedi's poetry to be an eternal source of joy, bliss, hope, and aspiration. Her poems have addressed the darkness of ignorance, war, humanity, egoism, life's lies, selfishness, superficiality, ugliness, coldness, illness, and jealousy. Mahashweta Chaturvedi is a poetess of peace and harmony who aspires to establish a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without regard for race, creed, gender, caste, or colour. In an age of moral degeneration, she demonstrates how to live not only by words but also by deeds. The goal of poetry is to create an inner temple of noble thoughts in the midst of theism. Her verse has a distinct flavour, but her message is universal. Mahashweta sees life as a stage for carrying out duties and responsibilities and as a devoted follower of Love, Peace, and Wisdom. The goal of Mahashweta's poetry is as vast as the sky. She wishes to reform every nook and cranny of this earth and its people, but she also longs for the chaos of inner peace and bliss. Her poems convey a universal message or lesson to the average person. Mahashweta Chaturvedi is a poetess who writes for all of humanity, transcending class, creed, and nation. She wishes to make a man aware that a human being in the true sense of the term is one endowed with humanity. Man must create harmony in his home and in the world. He must spread the light of 'love' and 'compassion' throughout the world. The opportunity of life is not given to man for worldly pleasures such as eating, drinking, and sleeping. Only God can bestow bliss when he discovers a man living a manly life. The present paper will deal with the issues of human values in the poetry of Mahashweta Chaturvedi.

Keywords: Love Poems, Humanism, World Peace, Hope, Indian English Poetry.

The poetry of Dr Mahashweta Chaturvedi is deep-felt and heart-stirring. It is thought-provoking, delightful, full of dignity, frankness, charm and pathos. It also carries some universal and beautiful message to every one of the society. For me, it is heartening to come across a poet like her. Each her poem is a gem of purest ray serene, sprinkling light in the heart of a reader. She has attained singular success and a permanent place on the firmament of English poetry. She is applauded warmly not only in India but also beyond the frontiers of this nation. I feel proud, and I think such a great poet of par-excellence journeyed through my

thoughts and emotions. Her simple and direct poetry cast a brilliant spell and mesmerism on my being and appealed me through and through. It is undoubtedly admitted that her poetry has universal ideas and global concern. She is truly the cosmopolitan poet believing. It is also crystal clear that her poetry is universally admired and acclaimed. It reaches into the deepest of poetry lovers. Ruth Wiledes Schuler, a poet from California, in a poem 'Mahashweta Chaturvedi' pays poetic homage to her.

You rotate between
 English, Sanskrit and Hindi
 A Versatile maid
 Scrawling at ease
 A melody of peace
 And brotherhood. (Schuler)

After drinking deep at the fountainhead of poetry, she has been flowing the nectar of her verses magnificently for a long time. Her poetry, like all ideal poetry, aims at the principles of wisdom, light, peace, humanity, truth, happiness, universal brotherhood, glory, devotion, beauty, goodness and wealth of eternal joy. Her poems hint at the darkness of ignorance, war, humanity, Egoism, Life's lies, selfishness, superficiality, ugliness, coldness, illness and jealousy. Her poetry is a part of our day-to-day life. Prof. K. R. S. Iyenger sings:

Oft in the poetry there is hidden the clue
 To Life's warbled wire labyrinth
 As vision, imagination, delight,
 It soars above the humdrum
 It throws open the floodgates of knowledge
 And all obstruction ceases
 An invasion of ineffable,
 A conveyor-belt of grace
 This bittersweet Rasa of existence
 Comes as a foretaste of bliss. (Iyengar, 19-20)

Her poetry has all the merits and tendencies of Modern age. R.L. Varshney aptly peeps into the vast arena of contemporary Indo-English verse and points out - "Contemporary English verse is dominated by the themes of alienation, loneliness, frustration, cruelty, power, man's unstable and insecure problems. It is witty, intellectual and prosaic." (Varshney 14)

Mahashweta knows that our world is suffering from a surfeit of knowledge, which has no direction. It needs a soothing touch of goodness, and higher values of life as a thirsty man needs water, or a hungry man needs food. By her selfless-motive of poetry, she wants to arise a feeling of realisation that the cause of misery is ignorance of humankind. She also wants to lead towards the process of human transformation. According to her, the Vedas are the eternal source of bliss and joy that are essential for every one of all religions and community. Kurt. F. Svatek observes - “The Rigvedic Richa teaches us “Let noble thoughts come to us from every side, and Mahashweta’s thoughts are such noble thoughts. She shows us to live not by words alone but by deeds in an age of moral degeneration.” (Svatek)

Today when Jingoism and hatred breed violence, fanatics and fundamentalists play their roles discreetly to make the matter worse, jealousy and bigotry add fuel to the fire, communal riots are rampant, the innocent persons are killed, chary leaders of the Nation are managing to escape unhurt, the development of a country is impeded and economic stability is continuously deteriorating by and by. The need for value-based poetry is indispensable. Only poetry carries the neon light to torch-bear to an ignorant person on his strayed path. Premananda Panda, editor ‘Replica’ is quite correct when he writes- “The last days of 20th century has put humanity worse of timesPeace could be restored through dialogues of heart. Only a poet can compose such effective dialogues. The poet is a maker but not a destroyer.” (Panda 99)

Mahashweta Chaturvedi, in this way, is a poetess of peace and harmony who aspires to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour. She wants to encourage men to noble-ideas and noble deeds. She wishes to teach a dialogue of heart and alphabets of Love and Peace. Her poetry, by its very nature, is not only related to the world around but beyond it also. It has helped men to interpret and define the subtle-inter-relationship of the within with the without. Though she has a woman’s heart, yet she leaves a universal message to the ailing humanity. In the words of Dr Preeti Gautam, “she distils a piquant flavour in her verse, yet her message is universal. Her verse reveals a complex and personal creative approach to human problems and higher pursuits of life.” (Gautam 57)

In a real sense, Mahashweta wishes to arise and cultivate a sense of awareness and responsibility to the future generation. She wants to make a multi-dimensional image of human understanding without any hue and cry. She feels life as a ground for performing

duties and responsibilities and man as an ardent devotee of Love Peace, and Wisdom. Rightly she observes: -

Heart needs greatness
The future belongs to the young
Let us not forget
Love, wisdom and peace
Must be precious life's target." (M. Chaturvedi, Back to the Vedas
25)

Her poetry guides us on every turning point of life. There is no doubt that poetry is bringing home to mankind that the whole world is one and humanity is no longer separated by the divisions of the country, race, colour, religion or sect. Every group of humanity is now in contact with another in many respects, and none can live in isolation from another. Giving a true account of a poet, Mahashweta observes, "A true poet sings the songs of peace and harmony for all. He writes clearly and elegantly whatever he believes to be right. He is above the limitations of caste and creed." (M. Chaturvedi, The Voice of World Peace in Indian English Poetry)

The aim of Mahashweta's poetry is as limitless as the sky. She wants to reform the whole nook and corner of this earth and its people, but she also wishes fervently to seek the pandemonium of inner-peace and bliss to which sages and saints search with great zeal in their hearts. She wants to transform each and everyone's outlook of materialism, and she wants to fulfil the enormous need of contentment of spirituality in the worldly people infusing the current of love, Joy, universal brotherhood hope and divinity, uprooting the vices of false, lies, dishonesty, malice anger and jealousy. Each of her poems carries some message that has a universal appeal or lesson to a commoner to rise to the level of peculiar. Some of her poems have a historical background, which lashes at the demerits of man, his flaws and mistakes so that they may not be repeated again and again. She teaches us that man is a rational animal who knows well the distinction between right and wrong but at the same time she asserts that due to some invisible enemies of insatiable desires and wrong actions, he has created menace all around. In this way, Mahashweta gets success in depicting the gross realities of the world. Rightly Prof. S.P. Saxena 'Surya' Observes - "The poetess has revealed the basic truth, stern reality of life we live and lead." (Surya 14)

Mahashweta Chaturvedi is a poetess whose whole being is a lyre of awakening to the ignorant. She wants to let a man aware that human nature in a genuine acceptance of the term is one who is endowed with humanity. It mainly consists in directing the course of one's life towards God and marching towards one's true welfare and enlightenment. According to her if a man lacks manhood of love and pity, he is no better than a brute. A man is possessed of intelligence bestowed on him by God, and he has been allowed freedom of action. In this world, man has one momentous task of realising God in man and act for the sake of God with selfless motive. It is a sort of ignorance that we keep our lives engrossed in the fruitless and baneful enjoyments of the world, which are productive of sorrow alone. In this regard, Dr K.K. Kapoor observes the poetry of Dr M. Chaturvedi and says, "Yet she has a panacea for our ills as she advises us to rediscover our roots and to attain internal peace." (Kapoor)

Mahashweta Chaturvedi is a poetess who writes for the entire human race transcending the limits of class, creed and Nation. A poet is a well-wisher of the entire world. All the poems of Dr. Mahashweta describe the mundane world and life of man and have the appeal to wake up and know the eternal truth deep-rooted in our religion. Dr Stephen Gill from Canada Observes-"The other obvious element in Dr.Mahashweta Chaturvedi's poetry is a description of the transitory nature of the world. This description or philosophy based on the Vedas and the Gita is also the base of nearly every established reality." (Gill, A Muse of the Vedas and the Mahabharata 45)

Man is not leading a lively life for it is full of hatred, violence and greed. He has forgotten the Supreme Maker, the Almighty and Omnipresent Lord. He has lost himself in false pleasures:

Forgetting the creator

The ignorant see the creation

Being parrot, he is engaged

In the false elation

The coloured veil of 'Maya.'

Conceals 'Sachidananda.' (M. Chaturvedi, Back to the Vedas 23)

The sores of mankind can only be healed by constant prayer to the Almighty Lord is the only One Who can shower the 'Sachidananda' i.e. the eternal joy.

In the hands of Almighty

Recitation of his glories

Merely can soothe

The troubled spirits. (M. Chaturvedi, Stone God)

Mahashweta Chaturvedi very humbly implores God, the supreme creator to fly her song to those who are broken and dejected, looted and robbed. According to him, the world does lack in seers who rightly feel the pulse of sick humanity, diagnose the malady and know how to treat it. They are scattered all over the earth, but their voice is not heard by those mainly who are in power. Those persons in literature are called poets. They have no other weapon but poetry. They have no organisation of their own but thoughts. They have no different language but the language of Heart. Poetry, in this matter, is the most needed today for the benefit of ailing humanity. For it goes longer than that of prose. Mahashweta's poems are drenched in the colours of universal truths of life. Man is an eternal and pious creature born to serve and do noble acts. In her 'Thirsty Haikus' Mahashweta expounds the basic reality of youth and Age. 'Love' and 'Life.' For example:

The photograph of the one

Who is neglected in the home

Will be on the wall after Death?" (M. Chaturvedi, Mother Earth

34)

In the poems of Mahashweta, one can easily mark out the lessons of human values and moral code of conduct. She always inspires us to be the giver of 'Peace', 'Love' and 'Bliss':

Be thou giver of Peace and Bliss

To him, whose soul is purified

Who possesses noble virtues and righteousness

To all who is friendly and dignified. (M. Chaturvedi, Back to the

Vedas 25)

Mahashweta's heart is filled with the pain of the whole of humanity.

My songs

Are the voice of Agony

Of the entire humanity. (M. Chaturvedi, Voice of Agony 14)

She advocates the need for global unity and self-development.

Earth is one grand family

Under the azure sky

In such demulcent domain

Let us all awake and
Strive for self-improvement.” (M. Chaturvedi, Waves of Joy 5)

Man can live without gold and silver but cannot live without sweet words: -

Why man is in the snares of strife?

We can live,
Without gold or silver,
Lives are impossible without
Sweet words, the air, the food and the water.” (M. Chaturvedi,
Back to the Vedas 10)

‘Forgetfulness’ is a beautiful poem, which guides the man as to what, a man should know and to which path he should tread along. She sings: -

Wasting away all your powers,
Presuming God to scan,
You are boasting about your knowledge,
Neglecting the fact
That the proper study of humanity is a man.” (M. Chaturvedi,
Voice of Agony 52)

Man is born for righteous conduct to his fellow being. Merely breathing, eating, and sleeping is not life. She questions: -

Why to appear distraught and fanatic
To see the world grim
Merciful Lord is with the righteous
For the radiance, nothing is dim.” (M. Chaturvedi, Immortal
Wings 5)

According to Mahashweta, the Vedas are the eternal source of joy and morality. Tim-Wen-Chung a critic from china observes the poetry of Mahashweta Chaturvedi as; “Her very first poem ‘God Is Speaking Through Vedas’ depicts her staunch belief in the universal Vedic truth, humanity and brotherhood.” (Chung 1)

In her famous book ‘Back To The Vedas’ Mahashweta opens new vistas of light and splendour and confers us the divine key of the riddle of life and its mysteries. She expounds:

Back to the Vedas

Which direct us to the path of righteousness

Inspiring us for glory

The Vedas show excellence full of happiness

Back to the Vedas. (M. Chaturvedi, Back to the Vedas 5)

The opportunity of life is conferred to the man for the sake of seeking God in the heart.

Humanity is the true wealth of man

You are here on this earth

For Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram

Do not create malice

Between man and man.” (M. Chaturvedi, Eternal Pilgrim 3)

A wise man lives with great magnificence and morality.

The man of wisdom

Makes life splendid

Blending words and actions

Showing the milk of humanity

He is in equilibrium.” (M. Chaturvedi, Voice of Agony 62)

Mahashweta feels grim and desperate when she looks at the world oblivious of ‘Dharma’, the right conduct: -

Forgetting righteousness

Turning face away from our father

Producing flames of hate and destruction,

Engulfing the entire world,

Creating Illogical disaster

Remembering the Vedas,

And following not their teachings

We are giving ceaseless pains

To our mother earth.” (M. Chaturvedi, Mother Earth 4)

Mahashweta knows that an actual culture is a community of selfless individual. She says:

“Moral sense in modern society is neither recognised nor respected. Criminals prosper unobjected. Priests nationalise religion. Such social atmosphere compels a man to become either fools or criminals.” (M. Chaturvedi, Preface)

Mahashweta believes that entire humanity is bound in the thread of ‘Love’ and ‘Unity’.

Human race is bound in chain
 Let us see each other
 With honest eyes
 Of a true friend
 Tell me, my friend.” (M. Chaturvedi, Eternal Pilgrim 7)

Dr S.P. Saxena says:

She does-not ceases her sermonizing stream when unfolds the classic characters from the ‘Mahabharata’ and the ‘Ramayana’ to give force to her directive tone.” (Surya) She urges the countrymen to harbinger peace in the world.

Let us join
 The peace-mission together. (M. Chaturvedi, Back to the Vedas 4)

Mahashweta Chaturvedi stresses the need of right path and fast action in life. She feels disgusted at the cunning ways of moneyminded people. In her poetry, she presents the feminist point of view in a man-dominated world where women are exploited and deprived of their rights. She scolds:

O Man
 It is shameful on your part
 To engage yourself
 In the back-biting of your better-half (M. Chaturvedi, Eternal Pilgrim 7)
 Who stands by you in your troubles
 Turning against her publicly
 You are showing your misconduct.” (M. Chaturvedi, Stone God 9)

God is always merciful to the persons who are modest philanthropic, loving and prudent.

God helps the gentle and the meek,
 You are always wrong
 Devoid of acts and feelings
 Hollow is your song.” (M. Chaturvedi, Immortal Wings 10)

But Mahashweta aspires for moral courage and consciousness so that she may be able to create harmony in the world. God alone can bestow it: -

By god’s grace
 I may be a person

To create peace order

Love in the world.” (M. Chaturvedi, Throbbing Lyre 16)

She has unstoppable will power and vigour to live and fight for the world. Selfless service is the goal of her life. She declares like Frost:-

Before I sleep

I have miles to go

Deviating from my goal

I will not kill myself

These streams and waves

Cannot shake

My indomitable will power.” (M. Chaturvedi, Voice of Agony 40)

Mahashweta’s poetry has a deep concern for these major troubles of humanity. Human values like truth, peace and non-violence are chief characteristics on which Mahashweta pens poems. According to Dr I. H. Rizvi:- “Truth, beauty, love, peace and righteousness are the favourite refrains of Dr Mahashweta.” (Rizvi)

Mahashweta emphasises much on the harmony of head, heart and hands, which play a vital role in human values and education. According to Dr Mahashweta desires and thoughts – goods, as well as bad, are arising ceaselessly in our minds. It is the ‘Buddhi’ that must discriminate the good from the bad. Again the ‘head’ or ‘Buddhi’ must discriminate, imbibe the good and eliminate evil desires. Har Prasad Sharma a Critic from Gwalior, in a poetic offering to Dr Mahashweta, says:

Mahashweta Chaturvedi poetess winnows

Grains of truth from the chaff of falseness

Man throttles Humanity to death she knows

How shameful it is he clings to slyness” (Sharma)

M. Chaturvedi has recreated and conferred a new life to our ailing society. It has a mild satirical touch, which has aims at rejuvenating the weak sections of the community. Somewhere she pleads for the rights of women, and somewhere she advises for the poor, the depraved, and the ignorant people of the nation. Her heart is replete with spiritual and tender love for the oppressed and badly of people of the community. It is full of the milk of human kindness for men women and children of the Nation. In her hectic efforts of reinvigorating the emotions of the reader, she has got a glorious success. ‘The Ignorant’, ‘Smoking’ ‘On

The Threshold’, ‘You Are At The Wrong Side’ Doing Right Actions (Back to the Vedas). Sweet Words’, ‘Heart Speaks’, ‘A Vagabond’, ‘Deepmalika’, ‘Charioteer’ (Voice of Agony) ‘Indian Womanhood’, ‘Do-Not Bring Kerosene For Me’, ‘Making Marriage A Chewing Gun (Stone God), ‘Do-Not Believe’, ‘In A Temple’, ‘Barbaric Simplicity’, (Waves of Joy) ‘A Big Nation’, ‘Fasts Bind Fast Find’ (Immortal Wings) ‘Presenting You In The Shape Of Idols’, ‘You Are Busy’ and ‘Do-Not Covet are remarkable poems in which Mahashweta revitalizes the feelings of social concern.

The poetry of Dr Mahashweta speaks volumes of human values and its upliftment. She feels herself becoming a ‘throbbing lyre’ that sings the songs of Truth, Peace, Righteousness, Love, and Non-violence. Human values are engrained in the poetry of Dr. Mahashweta. She suggests us to add value not years to life. Prof. B.P. Khandelwal feels:

In a world of liberalisation and globalisation, the failure and success of one nation affect the others too. Technology, finance, and markets are all intertwined, and it is imperative for all the nations of the world to live in harmony and create synergy. Value education and value clarification can alone make this possible.....” (Khandelwal 131)

Mahashweta too considers human values as the path on which she can move forward towards ‘Param-Ananda’. According to Mahashweta, the divine principles and the code of conduct are the very core of man. A man should be aware of true-reality and break all trammels of ‘Maya’. Man is competing in a mad race for worldly possession and fulfilling the sensual desires. He has forgotten all the doctrines of ethics.

Forgetting
Human Ethics
He is behaving like beasts
Leaving all the mundane objects
He should aspire To live long.” (M. Chaturvedi, Throbbing Lyre 17)

Love, as understanding is non-violence. These thoughts words and deeds must co-ordinate all the values, whether it is the truth, right conduct, peace, love or non-violence. A man should not be violent in his deeds and words equally. People are adopting violent ways to achieve everything in life in the world. A human life it seems has no value today. The principle of non-violence can alone create harmony in the world. Mrs B. Shyamal Rao remarks –

“Nonviolence and respect for human life alone can bring peace and save the world from destruction.” (Rao 47)

Thus, we can mark out that the poetry of Mahashweta Chaturvedi is a mouthpiece of human values and she is praised all the world over for her compositions. Sheila Gujral, a renowned poetess and the wife of Sri I.K. Gujral (Ex. Prime Minister of India), is right when she says, “Mahashweta Chaturvedi deserves full praise for the skilful portrayal of the pseudo-modern man. Her ardent appeal for universal brotherhood urges us on the path of constructive humanism and global peace.” (Gujral)

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