

**T.V. REDDY'S QUEST FOR PEACE AND STEPHEN GILL'S
THE FLAME: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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Stephen Gill Composed *The Flame* in eight parts and *T.V. Reddy* has gone for seven sections or cantos in his longer poem *Quest for Peace*. Vices such as dishonesty, too much of greed and selfishness prevailing in the society are exposed and the poet (*T.V. Reddy*) skillfully attempts to attack particularly the present day politics, cleverness and disloyalty to the society and to the country at large. *Gill* in his master-piece creation, reveals his ambition for the quest of peace, destroyed by the maniac messiahs, with the eternal light of his divine flame he determines to dispel the darkness of the human souls. His flame has an inexhaustible, an undying and unending power, with which he is on his mission – peace. He invokes the flame thus:

*You are the spectacular sight
Of the first appearance of light
That dissolves discomforts
Of the pilgrims of peace
And the order that blooms
In the creative impulse
(The Flame 35)*

T.V. Reddy in *Quest for Peace* also tries to unveil the follies and vices in the society and criticizes to reach peace as *the ultimate goal*. In *The Flame* *Gill* opines that, "*The Flame is*

about peace and peace is the main area of Gill's poetic depiction. Those who promote peace on earth shall enjoy peace after death. It does not make any sense to expect peace after death, by destroying the peace of others" (The Flame19)

T.V. Reddy is very much concerned for restoring social and moral values in society. To be peace loving is to be social. The poet wants to reform society through the medium of poetry. The poet wants to reform society through the medium of poetry. Many poets, writers and authors have engaged themselves in making attempts to bring peace to society. *Stephen Gill* is one among them. *Gill's* magnum opus is *The Flame* where he starts his journey for peace with this holy flame. The flame is celestial and holy and it will remove the darkness of the world: *'Where the streams of youth/ do not cease flowing/ and despair does not nail tents/over the constellation of the dreams/ under land of yours/calls me to gather pearls/from the ocean of your wisdom. (The Flame).*

T.V. Reddy's faith in God is similar to the faith of another south India poet, *Niranjan Mohanty* who shows it in his poem *Prayers to lord Jagannatha*. In fact, *Mohanty's* poem *'Prayers to Lord Jagannatha'* not only establishes *Mohanty* a devotee of *lord Jagannatha*, but also a human being attempting for the welfare of humanity. His faith also never makes distinction between the rich and the poor. He prays to his lord to shower his grace over all the people of the world. His belief in *lord Jagannatha* is so strong that it looks to be a very intimate relation of the poet with the Almighty. In this closeness, he never hesitates to make queries to his lord:

*Is the breaking of temple or mosque
The insignia of our victory?
Is killing men, women, children
The almanac of our bravery?
Does the pride of our race
Lie in root, larceny, lewdness?
Does the glory of my tricolor
Rest in the sordid legacy
Of lacerating other's ecstasy
(Prayers 112)*

The background of the poem *The Flame* becomes highly significant while we interpret the poem. Actually, *The Flame* is the result of the eight year's hard work and anxious care of the robins for the poet's art. The poem was written when there was the fear of terrorism all around, in almost all parts of the world. The scenes in *The Flame* are an attack to any destruction in Canada, The United States, India or anywhere. "People are people everywhere and suffering is suffering. I believe that remorseless forces of brutalities have their own agenda. They do not follow any organized religion. (Preface, *The Flame*).

The Flame consists of eighty parts, sixty two long cantos covering 152 pages. The whole poem is in free verse composed in a varied length – monosyllabic more than ten syllables. He has used a figurative language abound in alliteration, metaphors, assonance, similes. The poem *The Flame* really deserved to be called an epic poem. T.V. Reddy's *Quest for Peace*, an epic poem in 1665 lines is written in *khand kavya* style following the tradition of Indian Hindi writers. He follows rhyme and rhyme likewise *Stephen Gill*. Both are big mystics. Their poems are characterized by mystic features. T.V. Reddy's *Quest for Peace* is too full of beautiful similes, metaphors and alliteration. He also uses wonderful poetic images. He is a great painter of words. Really the subject matter of *The Quest for Peace* is related to corruption, dishonesty and degeneration of values in the society but we should also keep the fact in our mind that the poet himself calls it a minor social epic as T.V. Reddy is very much concerned for restoring social and moral values in the society with equal force and skill in his inimitable style and in a satirical portrait there is no other poet in Indian English who can equal him:

People of all creeds who lived as loving brothers during the white Raj now see with hot in their eyes in this cruelly corrupt native Raj. (Q P 18)

Reddy is a world poet, his appeal in his poetry is universal. In the same way T.V. Reddy represents the religions of the world and their founders and followers. Mark the following excerpt from *Quest for Peace*.

"Let Rama, Buddha and Christ be our models.

To tread their path with a will without hurdles;"

(QP, 1383-84)

And

"Where bombs and bullets fail to conquer

*A little love will do with a kind generous act
Pregnant with power flinity hearts to stir
peace and smiling joy with tact.*

(QP, 1391-94)

Gill's flame is divine and it is spiritual as well. It is almighty. It has the character of lord Rama. it has the teachings of Buddha and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It has the guidance of Nanak. The beginning of *The Flame* is devotional.

*You are the spectacular sight
Of the first appearance of light
That dissolves discomforts
Of the pilgrims of peace.*

Reddy's style of writing as well as his poetic diction is different from that of Stephen Gill.

The moods and fancies of *Stephen Gill* are uncertain. Perhaps, the reminiscences and the living sights of the terror – infested beautiful world of man and nature refresh and reinvigorate his crestfallen life. So the eternal powers of the goddess of poetry come to his rescue and we experience the rhythmic charms of some excellence and rarity (*Stephen Gill's The Flame*, by R.K. Bhushan Sabharwal)

In Canto 44, *Gill* Says:

*“Birds of the non ending thirst
Fly across the widening horizon
Of the morning ocean of my fancy
To stir it pulse
To beat in a new rhythm”.*

We also hear the remote echoes of Wordsworth and Coleridge and we find the sensuousness of *Keats* in *Gill's The Flame*: Like *words worth*, he is a mystic and a pantheist, he mystifies and baffles us by glorifying his eternal flame.

He asks the flame:

*Your eyes/ a seaside retreat/ where mystic flame reigns/ and/nature courts the night's
favor/for a feast of peace as streams you an aerial grounds/nourishing the arteries of
harmony/with the flow of harmony/with the flow of wisdom/from your unseen presence.*

(*The Flame* 37)

T.V. Reddy is also a mystic. He surprises us with his mythic references and perplexing propositions. He has a musical power and intensity of thoughts.

Reddy laments the loss of social values and attacks the vices prevailing in contemporary society. Reddy has the personal urge for the reader while *Gill* is indirectly in touch with the readers. In this way his style of writing poetry is totally different from that of *Gill*.

Both *Gill* and *T.V. Reddy* are of the view that terrorism has become a global threat. According to *Gill* the terrorists terrorize making for their own purpose. They aim at killing many innocent citizens as possible because they are soft targets” (*The Flame*, 25). Their attacks make the world of men lawless and totally full of chaos:

From the bushes of disharmony leaves fly around and fall in the pond of mistrust

The locusts of threat

Shadow the crops of shelters

and the driving rain of discomfort

Lash the denuded twigs of hope

(The Flame, 48)

T.V. Reddy also censures various attacks made by the terrorists. As per the instructions of Osama Bin Laden of Al-Qaeda, a terrorist outfit attacked the twin towers in New York City on September 11, 2001. In this brutal attack (9/11) many innocent people were killed. Reddy has highlighted this attack in New York in his poem. He opines that there should not be any divergent opinion in fighting against terrorism and also those that harbour terrorists. Otherwise, a day is not far away when the terrorists would attack any nation with nuclear weapons. T.V. Reddy calls these terrorists sons of Satan who are very much against humanity and they do not hesitate to execute any heinous crime which causes destruction in this world:

When twin towers fell to terrorists without a check; imperial world trade center suddenly crashes, reduced to sky-high flames and chilling ashes to become a mourning centre of the terrorist attack and Pentagon too shivers under terrorist pact; when the land of peace, power, joy and wealth loses peace with bold terrorist attacks of stealth. How can smaller nations stay and feel secure when sons of Satan strike with hands impure?

(Q P, 904-913)

Already walls of New York face the blasting wreck when twin towers fell to terrorists without a check, imperial world Trade centre suddenly crashes induced to sky high flames and chilling ashes flames and chilling ashes to become a mourning centre of the terrorist attack to become a mourning centre of the terrorist attack and Pentagon too shivers under terrorist attack; when the land of peace, power, joy and wealth loses peace with bold terrorist attacks of stealth:

How can smaller nations stay and feel secure when sons of Satan strike with hands.

(Q P, 904-913)

In the whole Poem *The Flame Gills*' tone is devotional, he adores the flame as it is divine. But, he also changes his tone as the poem progresses. He varies his tones while talking to the flame. He has a peculiar relation with the divine flame. This relation is mysterious. He also becomes emotional and informative. Gill reveals his dream of an ideal world where love will not be suppressed. Music echoes in some lines of the poem, it will not be suffocated "Love is not suffocated and the twins are not damaged by the trotting swarm of Savages" (*The Flame*, 146). The whole Scenario presents his mission – Peace. He sings a song (*The Flame*) which will spread peace in the world. The entire poem reveals the supreme gift of the sonorous sense of sound which is the unique feature of *Gill*. He pours out melody with his musical voice in the following excerpt:

*You are the imperishable harmony
that reaps unparalleled prosperity.
From the chalice of your peace
I long painfully to sip
the invigorating wine of fruitful returns.*
(*The Flame* 32)

The picturesque details given by *T.V. Reddy* in his poem *Quest for Peace* are remarkable. His mysticism, autobiographical touches, personal experience, his humanism; his spiritualism, his imagery, devotional thinking, his realism, his religious dogma have left an indelible mark on his readers. His own voice echoes in the whole poem '*Quest for peace*', it is his sense of sound:

*Future is sorely bleak to the leaner souls,
For every scheme is sour full of black holes;
The present context doesn't need any text,
It knows how is capitalize any tiny pretext.*

(QP, 207-10)

T.V. Reddy becomes nostalgic of the posts sometimes while *Stephen Gill* is realistic of his past. *T.V. Reddy* goes deep in the sweet memories of past Indian culture, but at the same time also criticizes many big mistakes made in the history of India. These blunders hurt him a lot. Auto curacy, imperialism and the concept of Raj in India have pained him a lot.

As far as *Gill's* attitude towards Nature is concerned, it is often quoted that Wordsworth spiritualizes Nature in his poetry; Shelley intellectualizes Nature in his poetry, Keats is content to express it through senses, and one more name is added to this oft-quoted line- the name of *Stephen Gill* who has spiritualized peace to elevate it to a divine height.

*Like every day
birds Chirped
devotees came
parents brought their youngsters
to the nursery
and the sun rejuvenated
on the stage of humdrum.*

(The Flame, 12)

And the aftermaths of the process are replete with a great humanitarian message, a message of peace and love, recommended for the good of humanity. *T.V. Reddy* in *Quest for Peace* finds beauty in every object of nature. Like *Wordsworth* he is highly imaginative and creative. His impressions are indelible in Nature's regard. Nature has a soothing effect for him. *Reddy* is also a mystic. He is sage like in his approach to nature. He is highly creative. Mark the excerpts:

*Spring flowers dance in sum;
the earth smiles.
Birds flutter wings
Merry leaves rustle and greet in spring,*

*Children's chaste smiles
Leaves rustle
To nature's musical rhythm
To the wind's bustle.*

Reddy is primarily a poet belonging to a village or rural life. Plants and fruits, flowers and fragrance, animals and cow's milk, earth and its dust, children and their childhood in the rural scenario enrich his poetry:

*Autumn speaks with a fast fading grace
Spring fails to spring surprise or its trace
All seasons are richly fertile for corruption
That grows without reason or correction;
For corruption most fertile is Indian soil
The weed has full growth without any toil,
(QP, 38)*

Both poets are big mystics. They are well versed in myth making. Their mystic references make us surprised. *Stephen Gill* sometimes baffles us by introducing us to the eternal flame. He glorifies his flame in such a magnificent style that we are mystified enough to rethink beyond human understanding. *Gill* sees the flame in various forms and hence, sometimes, these forms baffle the critics who fail to understand the true nature of the flame. *T.V. Reddy* on the other hand might have gone through the Hindu Scriptures, the Quran, the Bible and Persian books. Probably the strong impact perhaps of all these books on the poet has made him morally so courageous that he very fearlessly criticizes the rituals of the society in the *Quest for Peace* and assails Indian politics and politicians. He wants to free the society from the clutches of vices, follies and frivolities. To complete this purpose he uses satire, humour; irony and symbols.

Finally, we conclude that T. V. Reddy and Gill have written their master-pieces. Both have their missions. The missions have been undertaken for the welfare of humanity. They have applied their own ways in writing poetry. Their means may have been different in their ideology. But both have made their painstaking efforts to restore peace and prosperity to this world. Both Stephen Gill and T. V. Reddy deserve unreserved admiration for their moral courage and conviction and creative competence in executing their projects and realizing their selfless objectives. Undoubtedly, they have been very successful in accomplishing their self-imposed mission.

Abbreviation:

Q P: Quest for Peace

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