

**ISSN : 2454-3365**

# **THE LITERARY HERALD**

**AN INTERNATIONAL REFEREED ENGLISH E-JOURNAL**

---

*A Quarterly Indexed Open-access Online JOURNAL*

---

**Vol.1, No.1 (June 2015)**

---

*Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Siddhartha Sharma*

*Managing Editor: Dr. Sadhana Sharma*

---

[www.TLHjournal.com](http://www.TLHjournal.com)

[sharmasiddhartha67@gmail.com](mailto:sharmasiddhartha67@gmail.com)

## The Concept of Humanism in Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's *Poems: For Human Dignity*

**A K Chaturvedi**

Dept. of English  
SLP Govt College Morar  
Gwalior(MP)

### **Abstract**

*An under-current of humanism consistently flows in the majority of poems included in the poetic collection under discussion. The poet is a humanist par excellence & his poems discussed in this collection constitute his valuable contribution towards humanism which assumes immense significance in the modern age of growing awareness about human rights & values, concerns & perspectives, problems & relations. All scriptures, scientists & spiritualists unanimously accept the fact that the energy which gives life force to all human beings is one and the same. The living beings are the active manifestations of this energy. So long as its sparks in the form of souls live in the bodies, our existence continues. The moment this life force is withdrawn, the body becomes defunct. This is what inevitably happens to all human beings right from their birth to their death. No body, however powerful or rich he or she may, can escape the onslaught of death. Hence the key to successful life lies in understanding the secrets of life and death. Those who try & succeed to unravel the riddle of life and death can better understand the secrets of a successful living on this earth. Such rare humans love the entire world as their family because they see the divine energy vibrating in all living beings. Although the poet has not spoken of the secret of universal love in the present collection, his reflections on the casteless & classless humanity are worth appreciation. The paper aims to highlight these reflections in the context of his poems which directly or indirectly touch upon various shades of humanism.*

**Keywords:** Humanism, Universality, Human Rights, Diversity, Harmony, Brotherhood

## The Concept of Humanism in Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's *Poems: For Human Dignity*

**A K Chaturvedi**

Dept. of English  
SLP Govt College Morar  
Gwalior(MP)

Humanism is a European phenomenon. It is a secular philosophy which aims to dignify and ennoble man. At its best, it helps man to civilize himself and makes him realize his powers and gifts. It concentrates on the betterment and perfection of the worldly life rather than on the

preparation for an eternal and spiritual life. It regards man as the crown of creation –a point of view marvelously expressed in *Hamlet*:

What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason,  
 how infinite in faculties, in form and moving,  
 how express and admirable in action,  
 how like an angel in apprehension,  
 how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals.  
 And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust? (William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

After Shakespeare, Shelley emerged as a great humanist. Though his life was short, he made a tremendous impact on the thinking of his time. He believed in the dignity of man and wanted freedom for everyone. His ‘Song to the Men of England’ reveals his inherent desire for the freedom of his countrymen. He addresses his countrymen:

Men of England, heirs of glory,  
 Heroes of unwritten story...  
 Rise like lions after slumber  
 In unconquerable number.  
 Shake your chains to earth like dew  
 Which in sleep had fallen on you.  
 Ye are many, they are few. (P B Shelley, ‘Song to the Men of England’)

People in power did not like Shelley’s humanist ideas, which they found threatening. A year after entering University of Oxford, he joined with his friend to write and circulate a pamphlet titled *The Necessity of Atheism*. It was sent to a range of people including heads of college for discussion. But the result was that copies were burnt and Shelley and his friend were expelled from the University. Shelley always argued in favour of humanism. He optimistically ended an open letter with the words:

“The time is rapidly approaching...when the Jew, the Christian, the theist and the atheist will live together in one community, equally sharing in the benefits which arise from its association and united in the bonds of brotherly love”

In respect of the treatment of humanism in his poetry Mahendra Bhatnagar resembles P B Shelley. Many of his poems included in the present collection present different shades of human existence. The very first poem ‘The Good’ presents the feeling of love for all human beings irrespective of caste, creed, colour & community as the best duty and compassion for all living creatures as the best worship. His concern for all animate objects of the universe reflects the element of universality in his poetry. This concern is discernible in these lines:

The feeling of love and affection  
 Alone  
 is the best choice  
 in the creation  
 the feeling of love and affection

of man  
in the world of men  
in the all human society!

Let the entire compassion of man  
remain  
amidst all living beings!  
It alone  
is the great best worship. ('The Good')

In his poem 'Two Poles' the poet has divided the entire humanity into two classes – the elite & the subaltern, the competent and the helpless. On the one hand, there are people, especially politicians, who are round the clock surrounded by the servants & sycophants, whereas, on the other, there are poverty-stricken people whom the poet despondently addresses as

Thirsty, starved, weak  
dispossessed .....scared,  
illiterate,  
oppressed, unorganized,  
Busy in work  
in the fields and villages  
on the roads and in cities  
Exploited/Deceived  
and Suspicious! ('Two Poles')

Having borne the stings of exploitation for long, the poor are now gradually waking up to the human rights bestowed upon them by nature. Consequently, they have risen from the bottom to a level where they are in a position to compete with the rich in the race of prosperity. Extremely happy with this situation, he sings:

The measure of equality  
We have adopted  
Has flourished  
And expanded beyond limits!  
That laid foundation  
For a new socio-economic order!

Those exploited and oppressed  
Have awakened  
and have become the architects  
of a new age. ('Change in Environment')

The feeling of selfishness is the worst enemy of humanism. Being the creation of the power which is supreme in nature, we should believe in the brotherhood of man & fatherhood of God. We are connected to each other by the thread of consciousness which keeps us all alive till the last breath. The moment this thread is broken, we are deprived of living energy & made to depart from the stage. So long as we are alive, it is our duty to share among others the bounties of God

& care for the deprived. On the contrary, if we confine ourselves to our family affairs and ignore our obligation to society we live in, we cannot justify our existence as human beings and deserve to be called selfish, self-centered and anti-humanity. The modern world no doubt abounds in such people. The poet is pained to see this phenomenon and asks,

Is there any medicine  
for this  
contagious social disease ?('Escape')

The poem 'Initiative' unfolds the poet's broad outlook and his new vision which uplifts him to the position of a poet who possesses the capacity to transcend the narrow boundaries of creed, caste, color and community. Here the poet acts a guide to the modern society which is caught and lost in the caves of irrational blind beliefs. For the atmosphere of peace and goodwill to develop in the nervous, scared & tormented localities & cities, it is, according to him, desirable to have bonds of affection & fraternity between men & men. In his inimitable way he suggests,

He has to build  
A new & loft  
Human civilization .....  
Men have to live  
with mutual understanding  
knowing and accepting  
that the entire universe  
is a single family.('Initiative')

The evil of intolerance rampant among different communities adhering to the different faiths is a matter of grave concern for the poet. As human beings we are one in respect of our internal existence but so far as our external existence is concerned, we are no doubt different from one another on account of our different physical and mental faculties, nonetheless we can bring about unity in diversity by developing a sense of tolerance and respect for all human beings irrespective of their castes & creeds, regions and religions. The present day sordid scenario triggered by the narrow mindset deserves a question mark. The poet pertinently asks,

Why a man –  
with love  
and affection  
never  
looks at a man  
belonging to other religion?('Marvelous')

Anti-humanism waves doing the rounds have regrettably converted the heavenly experiences into hellish ones. The poem 'Terror & Anxiety' presents the prevailing conditions in a realistic manner. Pessimism coupled with realism moves the poet to sing in this poem:

Angst reigns,  
Humanity haunts around

Terrorism looms large  
Everywhere. ('Terror & Anxiety')

The poet soon shakes off his pessimism, sees a ray of hope in coming days and jumps to the top of optimism and zealously sings in one of his poem,

It is certain  
That the torturous, difficult,  
Distressing and dark night  
Shall pass  
Teaming.  
This sky shall rain fury  
and the wounded life of man  
shall heal. ('Experience Proved')

The poet's heart craves for human unity and equality. To him the bondages of caste, creed, color & community are nothing but the outcomes of ego & blind orthodoxy. The element of love has to be strengthened so as to expel the evil of hatred from human heart. Any type of discrimination in the name of nations, languages & dresses should not be allowed to encroach upon the sanctity of human relations. According to him,

The human being  
should only be known by his  
body & mind,  
sagacity bred of  
experience & deep thinking. ('Dictum')

The ditch of disparity between the high & the low, the mighty & the weak leads to situations where the question of human welfare remains unresolved & the dream of human unity goes unfulfilled. The poet craves for the abolition of disparity and emergence of just & equitable social order. In the end of the poem 'Dictum' he sings,

Among the mankind  
let there be prosperity  
economic equality  
allround permeable social  
equity. ('Dictum')

Casteism, pride of being born in high family and vanity have been attacked severely by the poet in the poem 'Opposition'. According to him, casteism which is the worst enemy of social harmony & human integration has created walls of hatred among peace loving people and divided them into different sects & segments. The poet vents his anguish against the fatal repercussions of casteism in these lines,

Mean narrow heart vomits  
poison,

creating disaster!  
 Humanity blood bedaubed,  
 Devil singing  
 Senseless, malicious caste song. ('Opposition')

The poet has intensified his crusade against the atmosphere of hatred triggered by disparity associated with caste, religion, class & birth. He is excessively sad to see the devil of hatred devouring wisdom to the extent that the powerful are indulged in bestial activities and the lives of the powerless are beset with lacerating experiences of torture & oppression. Awakening the modern youths to this tragic reality born of casteism, the poet sings,

Beware  
 of the impact of  
 Faith in birth based caste  
 Destroyer of unity  
 The feeling of segregation. ('The Fall')

The poem 'Invoking Modern Man' brings to light the narrow mindset of modern man. The element of universality is conspicuous by its absence in human thinking. The poet criticizes the modern man for being limited in his outlook despite the expansion of ideas across the borders through the means of communication and exchange of cultural values through the mingling of the people representing different cultures in metropolitan cities. The poet is excessively unhappy to think that instead of adhering to the ideal of *Vasudhev Kutumbkam* taught by the great leaders of humanity, the modern man is inclined to the interests of his family, Caste, religion & language and is thus confined within circle of his narrow thinking. Swayed by our selfish ends,

We become savage  
 more fiendish.  
 than the man eater carnivores  
 we attain extremely horrifying stature  
 because we assume that  
 that is the only channel for  
 becoming great and  
 for attaining martyrdom. ('Invoking Modern Man')

The poet is skeptical about the abolition of the socio- cultural evils triggered by the narrow mindset which has become a part of our consciousness and is unlikely to disappear in times to come. Driven by his skepticism, he exhorts the modern thinkers,

Come, draw near us  
 and for the sake of humanity  
 let us create our society  
 having no religion and no caste. ('Invoking Modern Man')

The poet is pained to see the world populated by the oppressed. To unburden himself of the load of painful thoughts, he exhorts the history creators to launch a crusade to ameliorate the

deplorable condition of the exploited. Unless & until this work is accomplished, sleep should not be allowed to close their eyes. To awaken the history creators to the harsh realities confronting the modern world, the poet exhorts them,

Without changing  
the picture of that,  
Ill-starred world  
OHistory –creators!  
In pleasurable haunts  
Sleep not, sleep not a wink!(‘O History Creators’)

The poet has devoted his poems ‘Blind Age’, ‘Let Us Burn’, ‘Song of Equality’, ‘Beauty of the World’ and ‘Resolution’ to the protection of human dignity. In ‘Blind Age’, the poet has cautioned the soldiers of the country against the onslaught of demons on human freedom. These demons are hell bent on spreading the darkness everywhere so as to “swallow each ray of future.” (‘Blind Age’) To outdo the nefarious designs of these demons, the poet in his poem ‘Let Us Burn’ exhorts us to burn our carnal desires so that we may become a perfect human being, free from inferiority complex and filled with emotions of universal brotherhood. In this poem he dreams of a world where the element of hatred is conspicuous by its absence and love for all irrespective of caste, creed, colour & community reigns supreme.

Composed to celebrate the holy occasion of Holi, the poem ‘Song of Equality’ gives message of human equality. The poet is excessively happy to think that the festival of colors can fulfill his desire to come face to face with the victory of human dignity. Hilariously he sings,

Forget all differences of the world  
of colour- caste, of money – ramage,  
Only echo in all directions  
the sounds of victory of human  
glory & greatness,(‘Song of Equality’)

The concluding stanza of the poem ‘Beauty of the World’ exhorts us to subscribe to humanism and denounce the anti-humanist approach as an enemy of society. To quote:

Abandon: That throw  
The humanity of man to flames,  
Adopt: That bears  
High- minded humanism.(‘Beauty of the World’)

Thus, an under-current of humanism consistently flows in the majority of poems included in the poetic collection under discussion. From the above discussion it is evident that the poet is a humanist par excellence & his poems discussed above constitute his valuable contribution towards humanism which assumes immense significance in the modern age of growing awareness about human rights & values, concerns & perspectives, problems & relations. All scriptures, scientists & spiritualists unanimously accept the fact that the energy which gives life force to all human beings is one and the same. The living beings are the active manifestations of this energy. So long as its sparks in the form of souls live in the bodies, our existence continues. The moment this life force is withdrawn, the body becomes defunct. This is what inevitably

happens to all human beings right from their birth to their death. No body, however powerful or rich he or she may, can escape the onslaught of death. Hence the key to successful life lies in understanding the secrets of life and death. Those who try & succeed to unravel the riddle of life and death can better understand the secrets of a successful living on this earth. Such rare humans love the entire world as their family because they see the divine energy vibrating in all living beings. Although the poet has not spoken of the secret of universal love in the present collection, his reflections on the casteless & classless humanity are worth appreciation.

### References

1. Abrams, M.H. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. New York: Norton, 1971. Print.
2. Adams, James Luther. *On being Human Religiously: Selected Essays in Religion and Society*. Boston : Beacon, 1976. Print.
3. Allen, Michael J.B. *Humanism in the Columbia History of Western Philosophy*, ed. Richards H. Popkin. New York : Columbia University Press, 1999. Print.
4. Allenby, Braden Richard. "Observations on the Philosophic Implications of Earth System, Engineering and Management" Batten Institute Working Paper. Charlottesville, Va: Batten Institute at the University of Virginia Darden School of business, 2002. Print.
5. Derr, Thomas Sieger. *Environmental Ethics and Christian Humanism*. Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon, 1996. Print.
6. Kung, Hans, and, Schmidt, Helmut, (ed.). *A Global Ethic and Global Responsibilities: Two Declarations*. London: SCM, 1998.
7. Bhatnagar, Mahendra. *Poems: For Human Dignity*. New Delhi: Indian Publishers Distributors. 2013.