



EXISTENTIAL CRISIS AND RECOVERY OF "SELF" THROUGH NARRATIVE DISCOURSES; A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE POETRIES BY G.M. HOPKINS

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Abstract

It is difficult to explore if "self" is 'one's own person' or 'an identical person' in spite of / because of "crowd"? A person is "identical" because of the separate attributes in his social, political, economic, intellectual, as well as creative presence or, absence, according to the 'free- will' of him.

This is one of the main reasons for which Victorian poet G.M. Hopkins certainly gets popularity with the publication of his first poetic collection in 1918 by his friend Robert Bridge as in the barren land of morality and true "dharma", his poems present a spiritual path, lost in the first world to obtain the real relief. The metaphysical note of modern poetry with the eager wish to go beyond physicality to attain possible peace as the limitation of physical identity is already proved.

The crisis of the "Made Self" happens when one individual alone (consciously or unconsciously) or as a representative of physically united or scattered (but psychologically shares the same platform) mob goes against certain pre-fixed scales(laws and values) regarding the sectors of language, social norms, religious faith and rituals, political, psychological, regional ethics and this process hits the field of literature which is either the mirror of the society or the outcome of social issues under the veil of poetic or prosaic or epic or dramatic or any sort of literary medium. Thus, this research paper is an attempt to explore Occidental existential crisis that is reflected in writings of G.M. Hopkins and finally to understand his approach where —"Allis perfect, so perfectly well".

Key words: Revolution, realities, existence, dharma, pleasure, helplessness, samsara, aesthetic, irrevocable, choice, ignorant, other, unreal, sexual, barrenness, myth, subverting, tradition, unnumbered, self, consciousness, sameness.

Approximately from 1902 A.D. to 1965 A.D. is accepted as the modern age of the English literature. The notable features, incorporated by renowned English authors like T.S.Eliot, W.B.Yeats, Ezra Pound, W.H.Davis set their pen to the realities of life which the industrial revolution (1650-1950 A.D.) cannot suppress or cure. This is one of the main reasons for which Victorian poet G.M.Hopkins

certainly gets popularity with the publication of his first poetic collection in 1918 by his friend Robert Bridge as in the barren land of morality and true "dharma", his poems present a spiritual path, lost in the first world to obtain the real relief. Leaders fight for more and more lands, wealth, colonies but in the sacrificed eyes of Hopkins, those are merely temporary materials of this mortal world and lust

only for a prescribed time. In the place of sacrificing the huge number of human lives, why can not we sacrifice these material pleasures a little bit to attain eternal pleasure? The motif and message of Hopkins are straight and like a well aimed arrow, it struck the mission of masses and immediately brings fan following for Hopkins in his post death era. But the greedy, blood lover controllers of authority remain unchanged and continuously fuel their destructive works which brings lack of purpose and helplessness for a free-thinker---

"I WAKE and feel the fell of dark, not day.
What hours, O what black hours we have spent
This night! What sights you, heart, saw;
ways you went!
And more must, in yet longer light's delay."¹

Technically he overcomes the crisis of his poetic identity in 1868 itself as he chooses the path of a Jesuit priest particularly but still the silence of Hopkins as a poet from 1868 to 1875 is quite confusing as he burns all his verse at the starting of this period and on the other hand he searches the works of Duns Scotus² to clarify his own theory of inscape and in stress the possible questions of a common readers are whether Hopkins willingly does so or the order of his higher authority makes him bound to do so the answer is the first one that no abnormality arises but for the second answer the crisis of a poets identity is unavoidable as the religious identity being the "Subject" makes its counterpart the "Other" in the same way the white European once tries the colonies the "Others", browns and blacks of Asia and Africa or the males and the capitalists try to suppress the "others" the females and the labor class. The doubt becomes strong when we come to know that the supreme catholic authority asked him to do so; it further informs us about a certain conflict between the

authority and the individual identity which is an eternal feature of human civilization till it comes under certain institution-oriented systems like democracy, dictatorship, socialist, state, bureaucracy and so on. For Hopkins the authority is popularized as Catholicism which in spite of his full faith in it suppresses the "Other" identity as a poet in the same way crowd puts its decision on the wish of an individual and therefore transfers him/her as a mere specimen without any individuality. The life history of Hopkins also says so as the major will to live to become or catholic priest ignore the special attribute which distinguishes him as a poet with the unique capability to use the sprung rhythm, the rhythm of common speech where each foot contains one stress followed by any number of unstressed syllables and the stress in each foot falls on the first syllable or on the only syllable if there is only one. However, the conflict between catholic identity and identity as a sensuous poet unique and inculcates the creative transformation of his poems.

In 1860, at the age of fourteen G.M. Hopkins wins the poetry prize at High gate school for his poem "The Escorial"³ where under the veil or imagery of spiritual location be actually refers to the state of his mind be especially the state of intellect.

"There is a massy pile above the waste
Amongst Castilian barren mountain –
bound."⁴

"A massy pile" is the huge strength of human world, of whom Hopkins is also a port but the tragedy or source of crisis is that this pile is the inhabitant of materialistic castle under the tyranny and limitations of the sensuous barriers who are actually of our five senses and for a common man with utilitarian principle senses are the master controller of his or her each and every movement which are "mountain-bound ate limited (for fact, at the mountains with their picks, lengths seem huge

¹Hopkins, G.M.: *Studies in Poets; Gerald Manley Hopkins*. New Delhi: Rama Brothers India Pvt.Limited:2008: Edited: Pg no.16: Line no.8-11.

²Duns Scotus (1265-1308) was the theologian and philosopher who influenced the Roman Catholic ideology also. Latter, Hopkins followed him as a poet-priest under Jesuit hood. Albert, Edward:

History of English Literature. Chennai: Oxford University Press: 2005: Page no.470.

³Gardener, W.H.: *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. New Delhi: OxfordUniversity Press: 2009: Edited: Page no.3.

⁴ibid: Page no.3: Line no. 1-2.

and infinite to us to conquer but once they are conqueror)" [as all the mountain are already conquered] it seem to is that they also have limitations as they are also with "Saguna" (with features) attributes like our senses with the limited are of four towers, primarily the indication of main four sides (east, west, south, north) who are ultimate for a servant of five senses. To overcome this crisis Hopkins refers to "A pious work with their fold purpose" or the holy trinity of father son and holy spirit in Christianity which is crowd or gifted to a common man to choose between good and bad , pious work and sin by using his free-will and therefore to perform his or her duties as a "father" "Son" and as a "holy spirit" (a disciplined development from father to holy spirit and vise-versa as the places and status are not confined latter in the same poem we found,

"A doised convent first the proudest home of those who strove God's gospel to confound with barren regale and a fringed-glood flood by a royal palace and royal tomb."⁵

The idea about the consequences for the people who opposed God's gospel or the power of "Supreme-soul" with the misinterpreted issues of utilitarian duties, principal found only the futility of moments sensuous pleasure and nothing sensuous pleasure and nothing great can be observed by them through the idea of royal palace royal tomb, the symbols of wealth which thus signifies the trial of sensuous desire which will greed for more and more and ultimately celebrates the moral, ethical intellectual disorder of that certain person who in spite of the presence of the life-force (Atman or self or soul or Consciousness however, the name one may utter), a derived form or shadow of the almighty, remain unconscious and the presence of holy power in the form of self-inside him is seemed as useless as the uselessness of desires out of senses like sex, anger illusion geed to a person who attains self-realization the stop Christian concept (as he

elaborates is water clear and therefore solves the conflict between his choices to choose among Catholicism, romanticism (of John Keats) and pre-Raphaelite notions(like D.G. Rossetti) and he over comes the crisis by catholicizing himself in 1866 when he was merely an under graduate student and only the will power of pre-mentioned ethos makes it possible to burn all the his verses in 1868 and never writes before 1975 on the event of the wreck of a German ship, named as Deutschland under the request and permission of higher authority.

After seven years silence when he composes "The Wreck of the Deutschland: To the happy memory of fie Franciscan nun's exiles by the Falk Laws drowned between midnight and morning of December 7th, 1875"⁶, he is reflected as a whole-hearted devotee of God –

"THOU mastering me
God! Giver of breath and bread,"⁷

He, himself reveals the exact stand point of him in this genes when his belief on God ("Christ", the name through which he prays God) is as steady as a water in the infinite well, Signifies the infinite glory of the 'God'. Therefore even a minor has come through that particular design of his mind and the mode of higher lever in comparison to those basic crisis of early age the acceptance of the glory of God, even in utmost disaster has been revealed through the main human protagonist of this poem as the head nun among the group of five prays to Christ,

"O Christ, Christ, Come quickly
The cross to her she calls Christ to her
christens her wild worst
Best"⁸

And the poet declares,

" Strom flakes were scroll – leaved flowers,
lily showers – sweet

⁵Gardener, W.H.: *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press: 2009: Edited: Page no.3: Line no.6-9.

⁶Hopkins, G.M.: *Studies in Poets; Gerard Manley Hopkins*. New Delhi Rama Brothers India Pvt. Ltd.:2006: Page no.11.

⁷ibid: Page no.1: Line no.1: Verse no.1.

⁸ibid: Page no.6: Line no.7: Verse no.24.

heaven was strew in them"⁹

Even, the utmost agitation of the poet is full of Christianity.

"But how shall Imake me room there
Reach me a Fancy come faster---
strike you the sight of it? Look at it loom
there,
Thing that she there then the master
Ipse, the only one, Christ, King, head:
He was to cure the extremity- where he has
cast her,
Do, deal, lord it with living and dead,
Let him ride, her pride, in his triumph,
dispatch and have done
with his doom there".¹⁰

The long quotation from "*The Wreck of the Deutschland*,"¹¹ reveal the ultimate question a common man can ask to the supreme counterpart as Hopkins addresses to Lord Christ as the head of Mankind and give of life force to his earnest devotees, the Nuns; at the same time the sea shore is also a creation of him and under the control of his master hood. Then why one part of supreme self-destroys the other the other creations. The question is prominent and in the path of Christianity Hopkins, therefore solves the curiosity also. According to him, Jesus is beyond all sort of utilitarian and materialistic qualities and he is heart's light and ultimately both the unfortunate (in materialistic sense) Nuns and the sea shore performs there duty conjunctly by practicing Jesus's name mentally or through "*Manas*" and flowing in natural discourse, actions reactions against the influence of other forces like the geographical situation, gravity of moon, sun and other universal forces do their respective duties and in a same photometer, they are bound innocently to the Highest Controller, the "*Almighty*" From the perspective of their innocence and the way to show

devotion by performing there respective duty to the God brings the sameness of their existence in front of the "Supreme soul" Therefore only difference lies in their physical attributes for nun it is carbon made mass body and for the ocean, it is water, salt and other phenomenon which reveal their earthly existence but at the end of the both day the earthly figures of nun and ocean are temporary and in natural law are bound to be destroyed by some other super forces; so only the "Soul" or the life force will remain exact as a part of the supreme soul" Therefore, when the so called destruction of temporary figures which is bound to be formed from mass body to ask (for Hindoos), to mud soil (For Christian and Muslims) or from a huge source of salted water, minerals to futile desert the truth reveals that the 'Soul' remains unchanged and untransformed and out of any pier to do any harm with 'Soul', the real truth beyond the materialistic, fleshly identity Hopkins also points this truth out and ends without any confusion of mind by saying –

"Our hearts charity's heath's free, our thoughts chivalry's throng's Lord."¹²

At the same time he makes his "*Inscape*"¹³ Possible in the different shape, pattern, colour, force, light of nature by feeling the Omnipresence, Infinite glory in the "God" in it and the glory of "God" itself felt by losing the real self among the sameness of other creatures. Quite consequently, "*Instress*" has been followed as this concept of sameness bound all the creative energies different materialistic attributes but same form of soul, derived from the a mighty to gather and association a network to man's datary power of a true poet or an authority to evoke the different feelings inside the ethos and there by harvest his creative work for example, the feeling of Hopkins in his poem "*The Habit of perfection*"¹⁴---

⁹ibid: Page no.6: Line no.8,9: Verse no. 21.

¹⁰Hopkins, G.M.: *Studies in Poets; Gerard Manley Hopkins*. New Delhi: Rama Brothers India Pvt. Ltd.:2006: Edited: Page no.7: Line no.1-9, Verse no. 28.

¹¹ibid: Page no.1.

¹²Hopkins, G.M.: *Studies in Poets; Gerard Manley Hopkins*. New Delhi: Rama Brothers India Pvt. Ltd.:2006: Page no.9: Line no.10-11: Verse no.35.

¹³"*Inscape*" is Hophins's own coinage which tells us about the inner vision of an artist in art form and the shape or the whole sound pattern or the speech sound for poetry. ibid: Page no.38: Line no.7.

¹⁴ibid: Page no. 9.

"O Feel-of-primrose hands, o feet
That want the yield of plushy, sward,
But you shall walk the golden street
And you unhouse and hous the lord."¹⁵

In one of his most popular poems, "*Pied Beauty*" ,Gerald Manley Hopkins inscapes in "*dappled things*" ¹⁶by observing the common pattern of the infinite glory of the God among, "*Skies of couple colour*"¹⁷, "*beinded cow*," "*rose-moles*", "*Fresh-firecoal*", "*falling of chestnut*" "*finches wings*" "*plotted and pieced*", "*Landscape*","*Trades*", "*Fickle*" or "*freckled*" things, motions like "*swift, slow , sweet, sour, dazzle, dim*" and the sameness through the realization or instress provokes him to say,

"Glory be to God...
...He fathers forth whose beauty is past
change praise him"¹⁸

"*A pen is mightier than a sword*"¹⁹, as it is popularly told and the present author with touch one after one poem of G.M. Hopkins in order to search the crisis of made self and the Hopkinsian solution to them through a philosophic journey on Hopkins's poetry In "*Spring and Death*"²⁰, the metaphor of death threatens the temporary pleasure of spring on this earth –

"As I walk'd a stilly wood, sudden, Death
before me stood;
.....
Death, said I, 'What do you here At this spring
season of the year?'"²¹

It reflects the relative truth of death in the some way birth is true. But people, according to Hopkins, used to do anything and everything in their

spring time i.e. childhood and in mid-summer i.e. cherished youth without thinking much of the consequences to be followed and at the final moment used to repent on what he has done –

"As I marked, not always died
Sooner than their mates; and yet
Their fall was fuller of regret"²²

When, God's glory shines from silver foil and at the same time like the "*ooze of oil*" and for a period of time gathers to greatness. But, the source of crisis as he points out,

"Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And All is seared with trade; bleared,
smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's
smell: the soil.

Is base now, nor can foot feel, being shod."²³

The love for money makes the inner nature of human devil like and this starts to reflect in the outward nature also as human '*toil*', full of selfish motif affect the bare world also foot symbolizes the fine human qualities like sympathy, marry, love etc. which are lose by human as selfish motif suppress those fine qualities under the devil-desire to make more money But at the end of the poem, Hopkins regions his optimistic views over the rude picture, shown in the first part of "*God's Grandeur*"²⁴, "*Spring and Death*"²⁵ and "*winter with the Gulf stream*"²⁶through the eternal purity of real "*self*" which is beyond any corruption as the limitations of senses can't touch of affect it same thing for the self of nature which never lacks freshness and every time

¹⁵ibid: Page no. 10: Line no. 5-8.

¹⁶Hopkins, G.M.: *Studies in Poets; Gerald Manley Hopkins*. New Delhi: Rama Brothers India Pvt. LTD.: 2006: Page no. 11.

¹⁷ibid for rest of the italics.

¹⁸ibid: Page no. 11: Line no. 1.

¹⁹A popular proverb.

²⁰Hopkins, G.M.: *Studies in Poets; Gerald Manley Hopkins*. New Delhi: Rama Brothers India Pvt. LTD.: 2006: Page no. 13: Line no. 4.

²¹Hopkins, G.M.: *Studies in Poets; Gerald Manley Hopkins*. New Delhi: Rama Brothers India Pvt. LTD.: 2006: Page no. 12: Line no.5.

²²Hopkins, G.M.: *Studies in Poets; Gerald Manley Hopkins*. New Delhi: Rama Brothers India Pvt. LTD.: 2006 :Page no. 14: Line no. 29-31.

²³ibid: Page no. 11: Line no.5.

²⁴Hopkins, G.M.:<http://baiku-velomann.blogspot.com/2009/01/ah-bright-wings.html>:"*God's Grandeur*":2010:Edited:ePage no.1:Line no:15.

²⁵ibid.

²⁶Gardener, W.H.: *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. New Delhi: OxfordUniversity Press: 2009: Edited: Page no.12.

rejuvenates the world with new look, hope and expectation –

“And for all this, nature is never spent;

Their lives the dearest freshness deep down things”²⁷

However, the nature of other crisis of Hopkins reveal in separate poetic pieces have been echoed of same kind and the pre-mentioned solutions of Hopkins can solve them; therefore separate description of them is quite difficult due to the limitation of space as it is restricted but Hopkins offers on unique conclusion of any expected questions regarding his belief and philosophy as well as of the motif and literary solution of crisis on Hopkins’s made self. At the very beginning the basis human questions regarding the sources of different crisis.

This belief of Hopkins can be matched with the psychological theory of Buddhism which narrates the bindings with *samsara*²⁸ (universe) is the reason of all sort of miseries, the feelings of purposelessness, meaninglessness and every sort of sorrowful events will come to an end through the particular process to separate one’s identity from the bondage of “*Made Self*”²⁹ by enlightening the original “*Self*” and therefore, cut the bondage with the mortal world on this earth which is the source of all sort of temporary materialistic pleasure and endless sea of sorrow.

To overcome the pre-mentioned crisis, all the philosophic interpretations of Hopkins have significant essence. For example, Hopkins rectifies,

“Man’s spirit will be flesh-bound when found at best,

But unnumbered: meadow-down is not distressed

For a rainbow footing it more he for his bones risen.”³⁰

The best glory of human life lies not in the pleasure, derived out of fleshly body but by incorporating into particular pattern of inner “*Self*”, the real identity by stressing the enlightened “*Self*” in the way which, according to Tagore is a certain stage when the person will realize,

“I have not seen his face, nor have I listened to his voice;

only I have heard his gentle footsteps from the road before my house.”³¹

The limitations of the carbon made body, according to Hopkins is quite clear here and after showing this limitation of mass made body he turns back to the Golden Echo or the eternal voice of “*The Real Self*” which is a derived part or shadow of the supreme self with the assurance that there are ‘*One*’ which is un-changeable rather beyond the grip of relative, temporary world or worldly grief and enjoyment the “*Echo*” assures –

“Spare!”

There is one yes I have one (Hush there!)”,³²

and in the way to show the path to the beautiful woman, Hopkins under the veil of the golden echo advises them to surrender to God by avoiding the self-pride for “*loveliness of youth*”, “*beauty*”, “*gaiety*” in the way to avoid selfishness and then to attain realization as the cure to all materialistic complications.

²⁷Hopkins, G.M.: *Studies in Poets*; Gerald Manley Hopkins. New Delhi: Rama Brothers India Pvt. LTD.: 2006: Page no. 10: Line no.9-10.

²⁸A Sanskrit and Pali word, means this whole universe .Banarjee, Ajit : *Advancd Literary Essays* .Kolkata : Joy Durriga Library: 2005:Page no. 71: Line no. 13.

²⁹The identity which is given to a child or owned by him or her through materialistic gain or lose. *ibid*: Page no.71: Line no.18.

³⁰Jeffare , Norman : *Selected Poetry ;G.M. Hopkins*. New Delhi: Longman: 2001: Edited: Pg no.71: Line no.9-11.

³¹Tagore, Rabindranath: *Gitanjali, Song Offerings s* .London: School of Wisdom: 2009: e-book: e-page no.2: Line no.15-16.

³²*ibid*: Page no. 14: Line no.22-23.

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