

Mysticism And William Blake

Mysticism played a major part in the works of William Blake. Blake believed that ‘whatever was divine in God must be divine in man’. His poetry is known for its characteristics of mysticism, imagination, symbolism, and lyricism. A major portion of his works is accompanied by illustrative designs, which provide reasonable and profound meaning to his work. His poetry is socially and politically engaged. Although the works of Blake is now considered to be that of a genius, he was unsuccessful in publishing and exhibiting his works in his era.

This eccentric nature of Blake was perhaps due to the mystical elements that he often visualized. He explained this mysticism through symbols. These symbols were mostly objects of nature, thus suggesting that a spiritual reality exists behind everything. Mysticism is a nature of thought rather than a system of philosophy. Various mystical thinkers have various perspectives on the Truth. Some of them even contradict each other. Wordsworth achieved his revelation through nature, whereas Blake considered nature to be a ‘hindrance’, and imagination was the only reality. When it comes to comparing these mystic writers, we see a stark contrast between Blake and other mystic writers. Blake was born with mysticism. He had frequent visions of God standing at the window and angels seated on a tree during his childhood. He, therefore, lived a life at the service of the Absolute and “atmosphere of divine illumination”.

William Blake’s masterpiece *Songs of Innocence and Experience* may seem to be simple at the superficial level, but it can dive into greater depths and allow a large number of interpretations. The songs deal with rural life depicting childhood days with the intermingling of nature. At the very beginning of the book, Blake makes a connection with Christ - the child through the symbol of Lamb. The *Songs of Innocence* and the *Songs of Experience* is presented to us with multiple contrasting elements. The first portion provides us an imaginative vision of the state of Innocence, whereas the second portion shows us how the challenges that we face in life questions and destroys it.

In ‘The Lamb’, Blake identifies the mystical state of innocence with childhood. The child asks questions about the creator of Lamb and lamb’s food and his soft bright clothing. The child can answer because he has the mystical knowledge of the creator and his creation.

I a child and thou a lamb

We are called by His name (*The Lamb*)

Here we see the usage of mystical knowledge in the form of symbols again. Blake implies through the lines that God is the divine presence which exists in every child, man and woman.

In the *Songs of Experience*, Blake counterpoints the poems in the previous book. 'The Tiger' is the counterpoint to 'The Lamb'. The tiger seems to symbolize the fierce force that is needed to tear down the chains of experience. The evil presence in the tiger is only an aspect of divine strength and energy. The tiger of Blake is a symbol of divine wrath. The tiger is terrifying, unlike the lamb. Blake thinks that power is incomplete without love. God's power will guarantee God's love. Blake's philosophy stands on the ground that contraries are needed for advancement. Thus, his view on good or evil is essentially mystical.

He therefore also believed that religion and art are one, and Art takes a higher status over everything else. He indicated that imagination is the "first principle" of art and this placed him among the mystics. Blake stressed that vision was necessary for the creative processes. "The Man," says Blake, "who never in his Mind and Thoughts travel'd to Heaven is No Artist." One of Blake's consistent principles of art was the firmness of outline. He related this to the 'sublime' and to 'grandeur of ideas' and making it not only the 'golden rule of art' but of life, Blake considers it as a requirement for mystic imagination.

Literature is perhaps the only discipline which allows us to permeate and explore all these various facets of the human universe. It is the poems that we read that provides us a platform where fact and fiction, energy and reason, doubt and faith have a dialogue with each other rather than having a disagreement. William Blake comes along at this point and enables us to meet religion as an environment in which we find ourselves and our communities, our fall and our restoration to each other in the human form of God.