

Poetry of Pratyabhijñā

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Abstract: *Pratyabhijñā* (recognition) is a keyword in the Kashmir Shaiva tradition, which contends that an individual being is one in substance with the Supreme Being who has materialized His own nature in the form of the universe through His own power within Him. This Shaiva metaphysics of self-recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) emphasizes that the whole universe is nothing but a manifestation of Śiva's divine self-awareness. In the present paper, I intend to examine how Jai Shankar Prasad's *Kamayani* weaves the essence of *Pratyabhijñā* into his poetic expressions. Prasad proposes a mystical recognition of the self's unity with the infinite at the metaphysical level, underlining the significance of recognising one's inner divinity through intuition and artistic vision. By analyzing select poems from *Kamayani*, this paper foregrounds how *Pratyabhijñā* functions as a poetic and existential motif in his poetic universe.

Keywords: *Spanda, Pratyabhijñā, mantric poetry, self-recognition*

For centuries, the religious knowledge was considered the ideal, authoritative knowledge. However, with the beginning of Industrial revolution, coupled with the advances made in the field of science and technology, which together ushered in Enlightenment, religion started losing its hold over people's mind. Human beings started questioning the long-cherished religious beliefs, erstwhile taken as truths. It was the beginning of the age of science. The scientists started revealing the mysteries of the world around them, with rationally verifiable facts. Writing about the crisis of religion in the Victorian period, Matthew Arnold writes that the value of religion in modern times lies not in its doctrinal principles but in its poetic essence.

He prophetically observes that religion “has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it,” indicating how religious beliefs were gradually being eroded with scientific advancements, industrial progress and materialist ideologies. However, the poetic and symbolic core of religion, Arnold suggests, continues to resonate with the human mind. He contends that “the strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry,” implying that the latent poetic content of religions have always served the inexhaustible human longing for meaning, beauty, and self-transcendence through poetic expression. For Arnold, poetry is far more than mere charlatanism; it is “the breath and finer spirit of knowledge” and “thought and art in one.” As religion declines, poetry assumes a greater cultural and philosophical role: “Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.”

Similarly, Sri Aurobindo, the renowned Indian mystic poet, attributed the higher function to poetry. Poetry did not remain the ‘spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and emotions recollected in tranquillity’ or merely ‘the criticism of life’, rather mantic expression of the realised soul. Aurobindo writes that

“For the poet has to make us live in the soul and in the inner mind and heart ... and for that he must first make us see by the soul, in its light and with its deeper vision ... He is, as the ancients knew, a seer and not merely a maker of rhymes, not merely a jongleur, rhapsodist or troubadour, and not merely a thinker in lines and stanzas. He sees beyond the sight of the surface mind and finds the revealing word, not merely the adequate and effective, but the illumined and illuminating, the inspired and inevitable word, which compels us to see also. To arrive at that word is the whole endeavour of poetic style”.

What then is the nature of this poetry of higher order of excellence? The high poetry, Sri Aurobindo suggests, has both formative and illuminative power. It expresses the deeper spiritual truths of human existence and extends profound spiritual joy, the Divine Ananda, “delight interpretative, creative, revealing, formative,—one might almost say, an inverse reflection of the joy which the universal Soul felt in its great release of energy when it rang out into the rhythmic forms of the universe the spiritual truth, the large interpretative idea, the life, the power, the emotion of things packed into an original creative vision”. Such a poet is “the seer and revealer of truth” in whom “the aesthetic, the vital, the intellectual elements of poetic speech pass into the spiritual” . He possesses “a large and powerful interpretative and intuitive vision of Nature and life and man . . . a soul that sees in itself intimately this world and all the others and God and Nature and the life of beings”, his poetry being “a supreme revelatory utterance”. For Aurobindo, poetry is more than artistic expression—it is a mantra, “a rhythmic revelation or intuition arising out of the soul's sight of God and Nature and itself and of the world and of the inner truth”.

However, what must be borne in mind is that Aurobindo classified poetry into four ascending orders: poetry of the external or vital vision, concerned with the senses, emotions, and external experiences of life; poetry of the intellect which engages with the thought, mind and philosophy; poetry of inner vision, born out of deeper intuitive insight beyond ‘mere reason’, revealing the truths of existence; and mantric poetry, “inspired and revealed seeing and visioned thinking, attended by s a realisation, to use the ponderous but necessary modern word, of some inmost truth of God and self and man and Nature and cosmos and life and thing and thought and experience and deed”. Therefore, poetry of the senses, intellect, or the imagination are neither the creators nor recipients of the poetic delight; the true creator, the true hearer is the soul. The function of such intuitive revealing mantric poetry is to manifest the supreme harmony of five eternal powers, Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and Spirit in order to

“liberate man into pure delight and to bring beauty into his life”. Its goal is Ananda, “the inmost expressive and creative nature of the free self because it is the very essence of the original being of the Spirit”.

Thus, Aurobindo elaborates about the poetry of “the intuitive reason, the intuitive senses, the intuitive delight-soul in us” which may lead to the poetry of the Overmind, “a still greater power of revelation nearer to the direct vision and word of the Overmind from which all creative inspiration comes”. For Aurobindo, this inspired poetry of Overmind indicates towards the alchemical fusion of poetic and religious emotion, which expresses the great unity supranatural unity of Life in its differentiated manifestation. Such type of poetry combines “truth of philosophy and poetic truth” in the “aspiration to the heart's perfection and the loving unity of all life”:

“The poet's business most really, most intimately is not with the outward physical life as it is or the life of the passions and emotions only for its own sake or even with some ideal life imaged by the mind or some combining and new shaping of these things into a form of beauty, but with the life of the soul and with these other things only as its expressive forms. Poetry is the rhythmic voice of life, but it is one of the inner and not one of the surface voices”.

Aurobindo suggests that all the old Rig Veda, all the Vaishnava poetry of North and South is more than poetry. It is “an elaborate Yoga or practised psychical and spiritual science”. In the following two section, I examine how Jaishankar Prasad’s Kamayani is a poetic manifesto of the mystical poetry, written in “a long inheritance of assured spiritual discovery and experience”. In the section which just follows, I briefly enumerate the major precepts of Kashmir shaivism which is claimed to have deeply impacted Prasad. In the final section, I

critically examine the select excerpts from Kamayani to see how pratyabhijna school of Indian philosophy found its new voice in Prasad.

Ramanujacharya refers to two sects of Shaivism, *Kapalikas* and *Kalamukhas*. Madhvacharya, in his *Sarvadarshansamgraha*, writes about three different schools, *Nakulish Pasupat*, *Saiva* and *Pratyabhijna*. Furthermore, a closer examination of Shaiva texts suggests that there are three major philosophical strands: monist (advait), dualist (dvait) and monist-cum-dualist (dvaita-dvait). Abhinavgupta writes that on the orders of Siva, three siddhas, Trayambak (Advaitvadi), Aamardak (dvaitvadi) and Shrinath (dvaitadvaitvadi), were born along with Trayambakaditya who initiated these philosophical streams. The two most prominent surviving philosophical streams of shaivism are, Shaiva Siddhant of South India and Kashmir Shaiva darshan of the north. Skand shakha and Nandi Shakha are two prominent streams of southern shaivism, which support dualism. Kashmir Shaivism is monist in nature, whose foundational texts are called *Aagamas* and *Tantra* shahitya. Abhinavagupta, the most renowned scholar of Kashmir Shaivism, suggests that the entire corpus of Aagam sahitaya consisted of 9 crore sutras, known only to Bhairav (Shiva), which was gradually passed on to the following, each knowing one crore sutras: Bhairav, Bhairavi, Svachchand, Lakul, Anurat, Gahanesh, Avjaj, Shakra and Guru. Guru later taught these sutras to Dakshas, Samvartas, Vamanas, Bhargav, Bali, Simha, Vinatabhu and Vasukinag. Half of it was forefully stolen by Ravana, and from whom, Vibhishan, Ram, Laxmana, Siddhas, Asuras, Guhayakas and yogins received it. However, with the onset of Kaliyuga, this sastra vanished into oblivion.

Somanand described its recovery in Kaliyuga. When Shiva saw the world in suffering and darkness, he inspired Durvasa to propagate this *sastra* among men. On his orders, Durvasa self-created his mind-born son Trayambakaditya, and transferred this sastra to him. Similarly,

Trayambakaditya self-created his mind-born son Trayambaka, and taught this sastra to him. This continued for fourteen generations till Sangamaditya, the 15th generation mind-born son was smitten by a beautiful girl, married her and settled in Kashmir. It is in the fifth generation of Sangamaditya (Sangamaditya—Varshaditya—Arunaditya—Anand—Somanand) Somanand, the first exponent of Kashmir Shaivism was born. Somanand was a contemporary of Bhattakallat who lived during the reign of Avantivarman. Accordingly, it has been presumed that Somanand lived in the perhaps later half of the 9th century.

Kashmir Shaiva darsana has two philosophical schools: spanda school and pratyabhijñā school. Vasugupta's Spandakarika is its foundational text. However, some scholars argue that it was composed by Vasugupta's disciple, Kallat. Kallat authored another prominent text, Spandavritti, based on the philosophy of Vasugupta. Kshemaraj's Spandasandoha and Spandanirnaya are some other important treatises of spanda school. Pratyabhijñā school found its first systemic exposition in Somanand. His seminal work, *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* (The Vision of Śiva), is a foundational text in this tradition, emphasizing the recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of one's essential identity with Śiva. Somanand was the disciple of Vasugupta, the renowned author of Siva sutra and spanda karika, who had suggested that the three Upāyas—Śāmbhava, Śākta, and Āṇava—are helpful methods to self-realization. Śāmbhava Upāya (the path of divine knowledge), involves instantaneous recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of one's identity with Śiva through sheer will and grace. Śākta Upāya (the path of energy and knowledge), employs the power of mantras, meditation, and subtle awareness, allowing the seeker to dissolve the ego and experience divine vibration (*spanda*). Āṇava Upāya (the path of individual effort), involves disciplined practices such as breath control, concentration, and rituals to transcend individual limitations (*āṇu*) and attain self-awareness. Some texts also mention Anupāya, an effortless, spontaneous realization beyond all methods.

Somanand's *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*, divided into seven *aahniks* (chapters) having 700 verses, is often considered the first systemic exposition of pratyabhijna darsana. It is concerned with the nature and essence of being and the world, gradual materialisation of the absolute reality into animate and inanimate beings, the identity of subjective and objective nature of the world .. Somanand argues that an individual being is one in substance with the Supreme being (Shiva); who has materialized His own nature in the form of the universe through his own power within him. Somānanda suggests that Śiva, as the supreme consciousness, is both immanent and transcendent. He critiques the idea of an inert, featureless Brahman (as seen in Advaita Vedanta) and instead presents a dynamic, self-aware, and creative Śiva who manifests the universe through his will (*icchā*) and consciousness (*caitanya*):

“Shiva is the highest reality. He is the essence and identity of all beings. He is cidanand (consciousness and bliss). He is svatantra. He can create or do anything by sheer free will without the aid of any upadan (instruments, materials etc.) He manifests himself through his powers of knowledge and action.” (Tagare 10).

The individual soul or Atman, Somanand Argues “is originally and essentially the Supreme Shiva. But he was led to believe in his identity with his body (psycho-physical dimension) (Tagare 19). Somānanda establishes a Shaiva metaphysics where self-recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) leads to liberation, emphasizing that the entire cosmos is a reflection of Śiva's divine self-awareness.

Paramsiva, the annnutar supreme being, who through his Free Wiil (Svatantrya) wishes to manifest the universe which is within Him. Para siva has five prominent powers: cit sakti, self-refulgence of siva, an independent power of manifestation; anand sakti, blissfulness of siva; ichcha sakti, the power to assume any form or create anything; janana skati, the power of knowledge (non-emotional knowledge of all objects); and kriya sakti. The individual soul, it

its original state, has omniscience, omnipotence and *nitya*, however, becomes bound by *pasas* or *malas*, *Aanav*, *karmik* and *Maiyay*. In Kashmir Shaivism, the three *Mālas*—*Āṇava*, *Māyīya*, and *Kārma*—are impurities that obscure one's true nature and create the illusion of separation from Śiva. *Āṇava Māla* is the subtlest impurity, causing an inherent sense of incompleteness and limiting the recognition of one's divine self. It is the root of ignorance (*ajñāna*), making the soul forget its true identity/ In other words, contracted will is *Aanana mal*. It refers to a self-limiting *svatantrya* and *ichcha sakti* of Paramshiva. *Māyīya Māla* arises from *Māyā* (illusion), creating the perception of duality and differentiation, leading individuals to see the world in terms of distinctions such as "I" and "you" or "good" and "bad." This reinforces the illusion of separateness. Paramshiva loses his omniscience, and perfection, therefore suggests limitation of *jnana sakti*. *Kārma Māla* is limitation of *kriya sakti* of siva. the impurity of past actions (*karma*), binding the soul through accumulated impressions and forcing it into cycles of birth and rebirth.

Kamayani (1936) is the magnum opus of Prasad, an epic with universal themes. Thematically, it could be called the story of paradise lost and regained. Manu, the first man and the progenitor of humanity, is perplexed with pensive sadness after the great deluge, and the epic relates his odyssey from his meditative melancholic disposition (*chinta*) to the state of blissfulness (Anand). This monumental epic, which explores the psychological and cultural evolution of mankind, is “a consummate combination of the historical, the psychological, the allegorical, the philosophical and the poetical” (Sahney 28). Kalyanmal Lodha also appropriately called it a confluence (*triveni*) of *kavya* (poetry), *darshan* (philosophy) and *itihās* (history). In the epic, Prasad expounded the eternal life streams, intellectual traditions, and perdurable ideals of Indian culture. Prasad himself regarded this epic to be “the history of the psychological evolution of humanity”. *Kamayani* has fifteen cantos: *Chinta* (Reflection), *Aasha*

(Hope), Shraddha (Devotion), Kaama (Desire), Vaasana (Passion), Lajja (Modesty), Shraddha (Devotion), Karma (Ritual/Action), Irshya (Envy), Ira (Intellect), Swapana (Dream), Sangharsha (Conflict), Nirveda (Non-attachment), Darshana (Vision), Rahashya (Mystery) and Aanand (Bliss). Kamayani is a poetic exposition of the philosophy of self-recognition, followed by self-realization. However, the question that remains to be answered is how this evolution of man happened? How can an individual attain this self-recognition? Prasad was an ardent devotee of Shiva, and his writings often carry subtle undertones of Shaiva philosophy. Pratyabhigya darshan, a branch of Kashmir Shaivism, suggests that “such recognition happens through direct realisation of his authentic nature” (B N Pandit). Pandit suggests that Shaivism stresses upon intuitional realization and philosophical thinking for this realization.

Kamayani begins in the aftermath of the great flood which has brought about the end of *dev sabhayata* (civilisation of the gods), a consequence of their *bhogvadin* (sensualist) worldview. Manu alone has survived this dissolution of the world. Sitting alone under the shade of a Himalayan Mountain rock, he is woebegone, anguished and disconsolate. Manu is mourning the end of a great divine civilization, grieving over the painful memories of the sensual pleasures of the past. As the flood water recedes and the submerged earth reawakens to life, the mind of Manu is vexed with existential melancholy. Manu understands that intemperate indulgence and pleasure-seeking greed of the gods has birthed this catastrophic apocalypse. He becomes disenchanted with the world, and immerses himself into ascetic austerities of tapas. His philosophical pessimism (meditative melancholy) rests on a premise that happiness can never be attained, either by the individual or by the world; and pain and suffering are inescapable concomitant of life. However, his pessimism turns out to be an interim, fugacious intellectual curiosity as Shraddha, the daughter of Kama, walks into his life. Shraddha obliterates the darkness of his soul, the despair of his mind. She rehabilitates Manu's enchantment with the world, showing him how true bliss lies in ethically being-in-the world,

not in senseless escape from the sufferings of life. Gradually, Manu is desire-driven towards Shraddha, who reluctantly acquiesces to his overtures. After a while, Kilat and Aakuli, two demon-priests, visit Manu. They persuade him to perform yajnya, and sacrifice Shraddha's fawn in oblation. This animal sacrifice deeply saddens Shraddha, nonetheless inebriated and befuddled Manu, somehow conciliates her with his wily words. Shraddha, now expectant, has now naturally lost her sexual passion, and Manu, bewildered by her sudden disoriented passion, abandons her out of jealousy, the constant auxiliary of lust. Meandering Manu meets Ira, a belle, who implores him to reconstruct the famed city of Saraswat

Kamayani, as suggested by Manohar Bandopadhyay, is an allegorical epic, having distinct recognisable planes: historical, mythical, moral, literary, psychological and philosophical. Manu has both historical and mythical dimensions in the mind of Prasad. In the preface to the epic, Prasad writes that

“The primordial man, Manu's history is scattered in Aryan literature from Puranas back to histories and Vedas. It is probable in the ancient time, the event of mankind's progress wielded through the joint enterprise of Manu and Shraddha was accepted as an allegory just as most Vedic histories were allegorised, but, nevertheless, the story of Manu as the founder of the new Man age (manwantar), or the new emergence of mankind has been described emphatically in the Aryan chronicles. It is therefore reasonable to accept the Manu of mythology (Vaivaswat Manu) as the Manu of history.”

The story of Manu, the primal father, has been chronicled in the eight chapter of *Satpath Brahman*. One morning, as Manu washed his hands, a small fish trapped in his palm, requested him for preservation. The fish pledged to reciprocate Manu with protection from a great impending flood. Manu, being compassionate, consented to look after the fish. As guided, he first put the fish in a jar, then placed it in a pit as it grew bigger, and eventually released it into

the sea when it became too mighty and large. The fish, on the opportune moment, alerted Manu of the looming deluge and advised him to build a ship. When the waters began to rise, Manu mounted the ship, tied to the fish's horn, and was guided to the Himalayas unharmed. The fish asked him to buckle the boat to a tree and descend later as the water receded. The flood has destroyed all other living beings; Manu alone survives to perhaps repopulate the earth. He immerses himself in deep meditation and performs a *yajna*, pouring clarified butter, sour milk, whey, and curds into the waters. A luminescent woman, after a year, emanates from the depths of the ocean. On being asked by the gods Mitra and Varuṇa, she proclaims herself to be the daughter of Manu, born from his sacrificial oblation. She meets Manu and divulges her origins, assuring him that including her in his sacrifices would usher prosperity for his offsprings. As advised, Manu invokes her blessings, engendering the rebirth of humanity after the flood.

The epic begins in the aftermath of the great deluge, perhaps the interregnum moment of Manwantar sandhya (the twilight of creation and annihilation). Manu is seated in the cool shade of an overhanging Himalayan cliff: his mind and heart anguished with meditative melancholy (*chinta*) envisaging the earth submerged into water:

“On the towering peak of the Himalayas,

Seated in the cool shade of a rock,

A man, with tear-filled eyes,

Watched the catastrophic flood.

Below him there was water, snow above

Liquid the one, the other solid was;

One element alone dominion held

Call it inanimate or animate.”

The visually descriptive imagery of Manu, a hermetic man sitting on the towering peak of the Himalayas and beholding the cataclysmic flood with tear-filled eyes, appears to be a profound philosophical meditation on the transient and cyclical nature of existence. Melancholic Manu suggests the non-duality of the cosmic element, two forms of the same element, one solid (snow) and the other liquid (water). Following non-dualistic Indian philosophical traditions such as Pratyabhijna and Advaita, Prasad seems to suggest that the same Supreme Being manifests Himself into both animate and inanimate worlds. The entire phenomenal existence is always present in the infinite and absolute consciousness, called Parasiva, the supreme Lord” (Pandit 59). This world is nothing but playful and blissful activity of His spiritual vibration” (64). It is only because of Maya, the delusive power of the absolute, imposes a viewpoint of diversity on all created beings, and for this reason they see objects as different from their subjective selves” (66).

Prasad seems to espouse Kashmir Shaiv philosophy which suggests that the universe can be divided into the sentience, the objects of determinate cognition having independent existence, and the insentience. He further meditates upon the reasons of this division indicating that

“चेतनता का भौतिक विभाग-

कर, जग को बाँट दिया विराग,

चिति का स्वरूप यह नित्य-जगत,

वह रूप बदलता है शत-शत,

कण विरह-मिलन-मय-नृत्य-निरत

उल्लासपूर्ण आनंद सतत

तल्लीन-पूर्ण है एक राग,

झंकृत है केवल 'जाग जाग'”

It seems obvious that Citi (Supreme Consciousness), for Prasad, is the underlying reality behind all existence, the non-dualistic nature of the absolute reality. Like pratyabhijna school philosophers, the “material division of consciousness” is nothing but a result of Māyā and the Kāñcukas, which fragment the infinite but not without his Will, manifest undivided Śiva-consciousness into finite, separate entities, creating the aabhas (illusion) of duality. Prasad argues that the world is marked by the eternal pulsation— Spanda—of the absolute, oscillating between “a ‘passion’ (raga) to create and ‘dispassion’ (virago) from the created” (Integral Monism of Kashmir Shaivism 41). The absolute, through his svatantrya skti, “transforms itself into all things and then returns back into the emptiness (sunya) of its undifferentiated nature” (41). The visually descriptive imagery of every particle constantly dancing in union and separation embodies the Spanda (divine vibration), This ceaseless rhythmic pulsation of Śiva’ (nritya nirat) suggests His creative and dissolving power. Prasad, similar to Shaiva darshan, proposes that the creation and destruction are not opposing forces but integral aspects of the same divine play. In Prasad’s estimation, Reality is the One (eka rag) which manifests as the many (shat-shat). Param siva, the Universal Being “moves between two poles, viz., diversification of the one and unification of the many” (42). Bheda between the object and ourselves evolves from Thought (vikalpa) which denies direct intuitive understanding of the oneness of the absolute reality.

“यही त्रिपुर है देखा तुमने,

तीन बिंदु ज्योतोर्मय इतने,

अपने केन्द्र बने दुख-सुख में,

भिन्न हुए हैं ये सब कितने
ज्ञान दूर कुछ, क्रिया भिन्न है,
इच्छा क्यों पूरी हो मन की,
एक दूसरे से न मिल सके,
यह विडंबना है जीवन की।"

Prasad also metaphorically describes the Tripura of reality: Icchā (will), Jñāna (knowledge), and Kriyā (action). These energies are the *saktis* (powers) of Śiva, emanate from Śiva but appear separated from Him in the conditioned world due to Māyā (veiling power) and other kanchukas (limitations). Prasad holds that the root of suffering in life is an outcome of the disharmony among these three saktis. These three radiant points of light (alok bindu)—as there is no true *bheda*—should ideally function in unity. However, in the limited world of duality, they don't remain One: Knowledge (the inseparateness of the individual soul with the divine) remains distant, Action breeds desire for its fruits, therefore seems disconnected, and consequently desires are bound to remain unfulfilled. Due to this fragmentation of saktis, the world appears different and diverse in the human experience, and the knowledge of unity with the divine harmony is lost. Where both separation and limitation are removed, Icchā, Jñāna, and Kriyā unite into a seamless, self-luminous awareness (Parā Saṃvit). This higher realisation of the unprompted unity of existence can materialise only with Pratyabhijñā (self-recognition) where desire, knowledge, and action exist in their original wholeness with perfect harmony.

“अपने दुख सुख से पुलकित
यह मूर्त-विश्व सचराचर
चिति का विराट-वपु मंगल
यह सत्य सतत चित सुंदर।

सबकी सेवा न परायी
वह अपनी सुख-संस्तुति है,
अपना ही अणु अणु कण-कण
द्वयता ही तो विस्मृति है।“

Prasad repeatedly foregrounds the non-dualistic vision of the world, suggesting that the world is a *spanda*, a divine vibration and manifestation of Chiti (Universal Consciousness). The entire world is interconnected in its essential substance and duality (Dvaita) is merely a Māyā. Therefore, recognition of the self in all beings seems not merely a pathway to spiritual liberation (Moksha) but also a very pragmatic philosophy of both individual and collective well-being. The realization that every atom that exists in this world is Śiva (Śivoham), and that the individual is not an isolated being is fundamental to both Kashmir Shaivism and Prasad. Prasad suggests that though the individual is moved by the personal sorrows or happiness world appears, it indicates the illusory nature (*vismṛiti*) of duality which contains the unity of all existence and the ever-present bliss of divine consciousness (*anand*). Because there is no separation between the divine and its material manifestation, serving others (both beings and non-beings) too is a self-serving act, an extension of one's own blissful existence. This certainly echoes the Shaiva ideal of oneness.

“चेतन का साक्षी मानव
हो निर्विकार हंसता सा,
मानस के मधुर मिलन में
गहरे गहरे धँसता सा।
सब भेदभाव भुलवा कर
दुख-सुख को दृश्य बनाता,

मानव कह रे यह मैं हूँ,
यह विश्व नीड बन जाता"

Towards the end of the epic, Prasad poetically explicates the state of self-recognition (*Pratyabhijñā*), wherein the true self (Shiva) becomes the detached observer to all experience, unaffected by worldly fluctuations. The realised soul which knows the unchanging nature of its absolute consciousness, does not renounce the world. It can see through the worldly distinctions, considering joys and sorrows mere 'leela' of Shiva's consciousness. This enlightened soul, without attachment or aversion, becomes aware that *dvaita* (duality) is *maya* (illusion). Pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow are just passing manifestations of Śakti's play (Leela) rather than absolute realities. Due to this *abheda-dristi* (non-dualistic vision) of the oneness of the individual and the cosmos, the entire world becomes One big home within the all-pervading divine consciousness.

“वह चंद्र किरीट रजत-नग
स्पंदित-सा पुरुष पुरातन,
देखता मानसि गौरी
लहरों का कोमल नर्तन
प्रतिफलित हुई सब आँखें
उस प्रेम-ज्योति-विमला से,
सब पहचाने से लगते
अपनी ही एक कला से।
समरस थे जड़ या चेतन
सुन्दर साकार बना था,
चेतनता एक विलसती
आनंद अखंड घना था।”

The epic ends with Manu's *Mansarovar yatra* (pilgrimage) which allegorically begins with *cinta* (anxiety/contemplation) and culminates into *anand* (bliss). This attainment of Ananda, Prasad, seems to suggest, is possible through *pratyabhijna*, which recognises the non-duality of individual and universal consciousness. Prasad argues that the divine light of consciousness (Prakāśa) pervades all beings, Śiva is both the seer and the seen, and everything in the universe is a reflection of the Self. In other words, Manu succeeds in this realization that the world is a manifestation of one's own divine nature. Prasad echoes perennial philosophical ideal that every being and object is but an emanation of the Supreme Consciousness and there is a fundamental harmony between the inert (Jada) and the sentient (Chetana). There is no duality between duality between matter and spirit. The universe is not separate from Śiva but rather His divine play (Līlā), an expression (Abhāsa) of Śiva's will where even the seemingly lifeless elements are suffused with His energy. In this state of blissfulness, individual identity dissolves into pure, constant joy (Ānanda)—the ultimate experience of liberation (Mokṣa) in Kashmir Shaivism.

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