WILLIAM BLAKE’S CONTRARY STATES IN HIS POETRY
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The two contrary states of the human soul, Blake followed his own maxim that “without contraries is no progression”

Abstract
The aim of this paper presentation is to critically appreciate Blake’s poetic intellect in developing the concepts of Innocence and experience in his poetry of songs, ‘Songs of Innocence’ and ‘Songs of Experience’ as the two contrary states of human soul. These volumes contain some of the simplest and sweetest as well as some of the most powerful short poems in the history of English literature. His songs have often been compared to those of Shakespeare; and his songs have simple vocabulary as that of a child, and his symbols – rose, sun-flower, lion, London, chimney sweeper, lamb, little girl, little boy or beetle are few and universal in nature. How his every lyric is a window into the imaginative world; comprehensible to the unlearned, but for ever incomprehensible to the unwise? The paper examines and studies how ‘Blake drew and wrote to reveal spiritual truth’, for him spiritual truth does not lie on the surface of appearance: indeed, it is often contradicted by appearance. Blake’s imagery is the product of his vision which is the most private of all experiences. In analyzing his poetry one can value his images are fresh and illuminating and embody brilliant insights, but at their worst, they are cloudy, vague, and obscure in their meaning. To understand Blake’s poetry, one has to understand his capacity for transforming complex states of mind into a pure song and for giving to his most unusual thoughts an appeal which is somewhat both intimate and delightfully exciting and this paper significantly studies on those aspects of two groups of songs that are contrasted elements in a single design.

Keywords: Appreciate, Contraries, Paradoxical, Articulated, Identical, Intellectual elements, Conventional figures, Duality, Universality,
INTRODUCTION
Blake’s poetry is poetry of the mind, theme was the soul of man, & aim was to reveal the nature of the soul and he was appreciated for universal qualities of his poems that are more appealing and symbolic in nature. Blake’s two groups of songs that is ‘Songs of Experience’ and ‘Songs of Innocence’ are dealing with the contraries of the human soul.

Little lamb, who made thee?
Does thou know who made thee,
These Lines are from ‘The Lamb’ (Songs of Innocence). The symbol of the lamb was God that takes away the sin of the world.’ The child speaks to the lamb and questions him happily about its creation.

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

We are still aware of the terrible beauty of the tiger but are more concerned with the mystery of the mind, and the purpose of the creator.

Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?
These Lines are from ‘The Tiger’ (Songs of Experience). The tiger symbolized life – relentless, strong, remorseless, yet beautiful and symbol of regeneration and energy.

Christ is symbolized by both the lamb and the tiger. In Christ’s person, therefore, equilibrium is achieved between the meekness of one and the wrath of the other. Taken together, the lamb and the tiger represent the duality of human nature.

Blake’s two groups of songs that is ‘Songs of Experience’ and ‘Songs of Innocence’ are dealing with the contraries of the human soul. The first group sets out an imaginative vision of the state of Innocence; the second shows how life challenge corrupts and destroys it. The Songs of Innocence have the shape and smell of leaves or buds, the songs of experience have in them the light and sound of fire or the sea. In the first collection it depicts those who deserve the gift of spiritual sight; in the second one, deals with those who are blessed with spiritual sight.

Blake’s purpose was that both poem and picture should contribute to the reader’s appreciation and enjoyment. He believed that from innocence man passes to experience and his Songs of Experience are the poetry of this process. Experience destroys the state of child-like innocence, it puts many destructive forces in its place. . He points that experience destroys love and affection which resides in an innocent soul forever, difficult to restore naturally. According to Blake, if the lamb symbolizes innocence and gentleness, the tiger is a symbol of the violent and terrifying forces within the individual man. Songs of experience are poles apart from the songs of innocence and a longer passage in the same work develops this concept of necessary opposition in terms of a “Prolific” force and a “Devouring” force in human nature.

BLAKE’S THEORY OF CONTRARIES IN HIS SONGS
Blake described innocence and experience as “the two contrary states of human soul”. His theory of contraries is summarized in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell as “without contraries there is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate, are necessary to human existence”. The essence of Blake’s theory is that, in some paradoxical way, it is possible for the contraries of innocence and experience to co-exist within a human being.
A study of the poems in the two groups shows the emotional tensions between the two contrary states. In the “Songs of Innocence” Blake expresses the happiness and innocence of a child’s first thoughts about life. To the child, the world is one happiness, beauty and love. At that stage of life, the sunshine of love is so radiant that human suffering appears only temporary and fleeting. The lines from ‘Introduction’ (Song of Innocence) offers conventional figures of innocence; a child, in a rural setting and their song is appropriately about the lamb, symbolizing innocence and Christ.

'Pipe a song about a Lamb!
So I piped with merry cheer.

The “Songs of Experience” are poles apart from the child-like mind of the “Songs of Innocence”. Some of them were written in intentional contrast, and have identical titles in the two series. The poems in the second group record the wounds and cruelties of the civilized world. London poem articulated bitter comments on the restraints forged by custom and law. A Poison Tree, in this poem anger produces the apple of hatred, which was stolen and eaten by his enemy and the childlike innocence admired in the lamb song disappears in this poem, when they grow up and live in a hostile and unsympathetic relationship.

I was angry with my friend
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.

I was angry with my foe: I told it not, my wrath did grow. The Nurse’s song in Songs of Innocence, tells how the children play and allowed to play until the light fades and here care-free play of human imagination was not spoiled by senseless restriction.

'Well, well, go and play till the light fades away,
And then go home to bed.'
The little ones leaped, and shouted, and laughed,
And all the hills echoed.

But in the second Nurse’s Song portrays the other side of the matter when experience has set to work, eager to point out the menaces and the dangers of the dark. He sought some ultimate synthesis in which innocence might be wedded to experience, and goodness to knowledge

Then come home my children. the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise
Your spring & your day are wasted in play
And your winter and night in disguise.

In fact, some of the poems in the first group have an irony which prepares us for the picture of life as depicted in the second group. When, for instance when we read Infant joy, we cannot help thinking of its contrary Infant Sorrow. If we read the first poem for the time, no doubt infancy a state of bliss and joy but the same appreciation will be missing in Infant Sorrow.

'I happy am,
Joy is my name.'

But when we read the poem Infant joy for the second time, after having gone through Infant Sorrow, our reaction will be different because the unrest and discontent of infancy will visit our mind the moment we read of the joy of the earlier poem.

My mother groaned, my father wept,
Into the dangerous world I leapt;

If both the poems are analyzed together, we get a good example of Blake’s insistence on holding Innocence and Experience together in existence.
There was a new intellectual elements in his poems, sharpen his vision and weights it with meaning and his remarkable symbols good and evil wedded as one and always loathed but always fascinating.

POWERFUL EMOTIONS OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE IN HIS POETRY

Blake felt although the state of child-like innocence and happiness is wonderfully charming, but it was not everlasting and to reach higher state, man must be tested by experience and suffering as it is a necessary stage in the cycle of being. This the link between the two groups of Songs-of Innocence and of Experience. The difference between the two groups is reflected in his poetry that is sweet and pure in the state of innocence as they do not possess or need the compelling passion of the experience. He set his tone intentionally quiet, mild, and tender in lyrical qualities in his songs of innocence and the most aggressive and violent in his songs of experience to imply impact of these two emotions on the mindset.

In the Introduction to the first series, Blake represents a laughing child as his inspiration for his poems. And in the poems that follow in this series, Blake gives us his vision of the world as it appears to the child or as it affects the child and this world is one of purity, joy and security. The children are themselves pure, whether their skin is black or white. They are compared to lambs “whose innocent call” they hear. Both “child” and “lamb” serve as symbols for Christ. Joy is everywhere – in the “Joy but two days old”; in the leaping and shouting of the little ones; in the sun, in the bells, in the voices of the birds; in the Laughing Song all nature rejoices. But above all, there is security. There is hardly a poem in which a symbol of protection, a guardian figure of some kind, does not occur. In the Echoing Green, the old folk are close by while the children play. Elsewhere there is the shepherd watching over his sheep; there are mother, the nurse, the lion, the angels and most important of all, God himself. In A Dream, there are the glow-worm and the beetle to guide an ant.

In the “Songs of Experience”, Blake’s mood is one of disillusionment. Instead of innocence, joy and security, Blake finds guilt, misery and tyranny in the world. The protective guardians have disappeared and in their place are the tyrants. Chief among the tyrants is the fearful god, Urizen (though he is nowhere named in these poems). Urizen’s deputies on earth are those who occupy positions of Authority – the king, the priest, the parents, the nurse. A specific reference to Urizen is made only in three poems. In Earth’s Answer, he is described as “Starry Jealousy” and “Selfish Father of Men”. In The Human Abstract, he is represented by such personifications as “Cruelty” and “Mystery”. In A Divine Image, we again have such personifications as “Cruelty”, “Jealousy”, “Terror” and “Secrecy”. But Urizen’s dark shadow hovers over most of the other poems in this group. Urizen hates life and joy, and has bound the world in his iron law of prohibition.

In The Garden of Love a chapel has been built on the green, and the prohibition “Thou Shalt Not” is written on the door. A Little Boy Lost depicts the cruelty of the church and its priests, a little boy being burnt to death because he dared to think for himself. The Little Vagabond is critical of the church for its unnecessary austerities. The Schoolboy shows the schoolmaster as a tyrannical influence. London shows us the misery of the blackened chimney-sweepers, and the thoughtless cruelty of the king under whose orders the hapless soldier bleeds to death. The poem also makes a reference to the loveless marriages which compel men to beget illegitimate children in the homes of prostitutes. In the same poem, we have the oft-quoted phrase “mind-forged manacles” which conveys the restraints that society imposes upon its members.
The rigours of sexual morality are depicted in *A Little Girl Lost, The Sick Rose, The Angel and Ah, Sunflower*. *The Sick Rose* shows the destructive effects of sexual repression. In *The Angel*, the maiden realizes too late what she has missed. *Ah, Sunflower* shows the youth “pining away with desire” and the “pale virgin shrouded in snow”, because both of them were denied sexual fulfillment.

In the “Songs of Innocence”, the prevailing symbol is the lamb, which is an innocent creature of God and which also symbolizes the child Christ. In the “Songs of Experience”, the chief symbol is the tiger “burning bright in the forests of the night”. The tiger burns metaphorically with rage and quickly becomes for some a symbol of anger and passion. The poet asks a crucial question here. Did God Who made the lamb also make the tiger? The lamb, innocent and pretty, seems the works of a kindly, comprehensible Creator. The splendid but terrifying tiger makes us realize that God’s purposes are not so easily understood. The tiger represents the created universe in its violent and terrifying aspects. It also symbolizes violent and terrifying forces within the individual man, and these terrifying forces have to be faced and fully recognized. No contrast could have been more vivid and more striking.

**IDENTICAL TITLES IN SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE**

There are a number of poems in the two groups which may be considered in pairs because they have identical titles. *Introduction, Nurse’s Song, Holy Thursday, The Chimney-Sweeper, Divine Image, The little boy lost*. In the first series, for instance, *The Chimney-Sweeper*, while conveying the misery of the little victims of the society, emphasizes the contentment and sense of security of the soot-covered boys. An angel comes and tells Tom that, if he would be a good boy, he would have God for his father and that he would never lack joy. But, in the second group, the poem with the same title emphasizes the misery of the chimney-sweeper and the cruelty not only of priests and kings but also of his parents. The wretched chimney-sweeper here is clothed in “the clothes of death”, while in the first poem the chimney-sweeper went leaping and laughing to bathe in a river.

In the first *Holy Thursday*, poor children sit “with radiance of their own”; while in the second *Holy Thursday*, the poet deprecates the fact that there should be so many poor and hungry children depending on charity in a country which is otherwise rich and fruitful. The second poem is very moving, as it was intended to be. We thus have pictures of contrary states.

Then there are two poems having the title *Nurse’s Song*. In the first of these, the nurse is a kind-hearted, indulgent woman who gladly allows the children more time to play, with the result that the little ones leap and shout and laugh. In the second of these poems, the face of the nurse “turns green and pale”; she thinks play to be a waste of time; she speaks of the “dews of night” which will soon arise; and she speaks of the coming mature years of the children as a sham and a deceit. The voice that speaks in this poem is not that of loving care but of sour age. The most fearful thing about experience is that it breaks the free life of the imagination and gives a deadly blow to the cheerful human spirit.

*Infant Sorrow* provides an antithesis to both *Infant Joy* and *Introduction*. In *Infant Sorrow*, Blake shows that even in the very beginning of the childhood there is a spirit of unrest and revolt. The child is shown as struggling and striving in his father’s hands, and is compared to “a friend hid in a cloud”, whereas the child in the *Introduction* is like an angel sitting on a cloud and laughing. In *Infant Sorrow*, the human creature feels itself a prisoner at the start of its existence and after its first efforts to resist, angrily gives up the struggle.
Then there are the two poems called The Human Abstract and A Divine Image, both of which provide a contrast to The Divine Image of the first group. In The Divine Image, mercy, pity, peace and love are human as well as divine attributes. In The Human Abstract, the poet shows how the same virtues can be distorted and used as a cover for base or cowardly motives. Speaking through the hypocrite’s lips, the poet goes straight to the heart of the matter by showing how hypocrisy claims to observe these cardinal virtues. A Divine Image depicts human nature in ugly colors.

But, while there is evil and misery in many of the songs of experience, the note of hope and optimism is not wanting. In the Introduction to these songs, the Bard calls out to Earth to arise from the “dewy grass” and to start a new life, even though the answer of Earth, which follows, voices complete despair. In the two introductory stanzas of the poem A Little Girl Lost, the poet predicts a future golden age. The Voice of the Ancient Bard also makes a cheering mood and atmosphere of the “Songs of Experience” is one of depression and desolation, just as the prevailing mood and atmosphere of the “Songs of Innocence” is one of freedom and joy.

CONCLUSION

Appreciation of his fundamental philosophy of contraries in progression through his songs introduces the readers to an interesting and enliven concept to study and examine the human nature and soul in new dimensions of philosophy revealing spiritual truth in the state of innocence and experience. The world as depicted in the ‘Songs of Experience’ is widely different from the depiction of the world in ‘Songs of Innocence’. He expressed the child’s spontaneous happiness of childhood in the Songs of Innocence was largely a world of simplicity, innocence, happiness and security and the world in the ‘Songs of Experience’ is a world of cruelty, tyranny, repression, evil, guilt, and suffering. One of way of looking at the songs of innocence is to say that they express ‘innocent view points’ and Blake is already aware of the change that comes over the world when the eyes of experience see it. In other words, the picture of life that we get in the Songs of Experience is in a sense anticipated in the Songs of Innocence.

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