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SUFI TEACHINGS OF PEACE ARE UNIVERSAL; A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PACIFISM IN THE POEMS OF RAHMAN BABA AND LANGSTON HUGHES

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Abstract

In the present world, violence and intolerance among various groups is one of the serious social problems. This study aims at highlighting the role of poetry in bringing love, peace and harmony in the society which is the need of the current day distress and frustration. Through the comparative study of the poems of the Eastern poet Abdurrahman Baba and Western poet Langston Hughes, the researcher aims to highlight the theme of pacifism as a universal theme in the genre of poetry. Pacifism is a belief that all kinds of disputes should be dealt with peace and harmony that there should remain no need of violence and distress. The research is carried out by close textual analysis of the poems and different themes related to peace are developed which are then concluded to a single major theme of pacifism. Both the similarities and differences in the poems are discussed and finally the researcher has come to the conclusion that Sufi teachings of peace are universal that appeal to the whole humanity irrespective of any creed, color or ethnicity.

Keywords: Poetry, pacifism, violence, peace, Abdurrahman Baba, Langston Hughes

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Introduction

The current situation of frustration, dissatisfaction, controversies, violence and disintegration in the world especially, the Muslim world have made the life very hard and frustrated. About 1.3 million people lose their lives each year due to violence in all its form. Among them, the Muslim countries are on the top list including Bosnia, Chechnya, Syria, Iraq, Bharma and Palestine (Lee, 2016). Internationally, it is realized that attention should be given to reduce and control violence, dissatisfaction and frustration in all spheres of life. Different institutions, associations and organizations i.e. WHO, USAID, UNDP, MANESTY, UNICEF, International Peace Organization, African Unions and Asia Watch are trying to reduce such evils in order to restore harmony, peace and integration worldwide (Hoo, 2007). Alongside the above mentioned organizations and different agencies, many other sectors are also involved in peace restoration and literature is one of them. Literature is the depiction of life and life activities, the depiction of social issues and society as a whole (Rahman, 2020). In literature, the role of poetry is very important that express one's feelings and emotions in a compact form.

Comparative literature broadens the concept and ideas and gives a broader perspective of theme, genre, technique and influence. The comparative study helps to understand the crystal clear idea of the selected topic. Mathew Arnold's comment highlights the importance of comparative literature "Those who only knows English literature, actually do not know English literature." Hence it is the comparative perspective of literature which creates the understanding and critique of the given literature (Cordle, 2017). H.N Posnett, for the first time coined the term "Comparative Literature" in 1886, but the actual use of this term is brought out by Mathew Arnold in the contemporary context (Posnett, 1986). By comparative literature study, the understanding between two cultures comes to existence and this type of study helps to understand the genre and the effects of different cultures upon one another. The gap between the "West" and the "rest" has been lessened due to popularity of comparative literature. It is a ray of light that enlightens the concepts and ideas about world literature.

The present study is very significant as it compared the poetry of *Pashto* poet *Rahman Baba* and an American poet *Langston Hughes* for the first time in literature. The study is significant as it highlights that the preaching of peace of Sufi poetry is universal as compared to that of a non-Sufi poetry. This research also contributed to Pashto Literature by discussing the teachings of a great *Pashto* poet in an international language in order to give a positive image of *Pakhtoons* that how they love peace and are against terror and violence. The present research study contributed to the role of peace makers/promoters that poetry especially the Sufi poetry can play a major role in peace restoration in all the societies irrespective of any religion, creed, ethnicity, race etc.

The main objectives of the study are to explore the theme of peace in the poetry of a Sufi poet *Rahman Baba* and an African-American poet *Langston Hughes* and to analyze that the preaching of peace of a Sufi poet is universal.

Research Questions

- 1. Is there any thing common in the themes of Rahman Baba and Langston Hughes's poetry?
- 2. How does the preaching of peace of a Sufi poet be called universal as compared to a non sufi poet?

Literature Review

The researcher carried out a comparative study of Pacifism in Rahman Baba and Langston Hughes' poems for which the following literature was studied.

Langston Hughes says in "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountaian" (1985), that the life and poetry of Langston Hughes is the true depiction of Black people's sufferings and their inferiority complexes. A Black child is

always taught to behave like White as White is the symbol for morality and virtue. Langston Hughes himself suffered this inferiority complex from his childhood (Hughes, 1994).

Nasrollah S. Fatimi and Fariborz S. Fatemi say in "Love, Beauty and Harmony in Sufism" (1998), that the major three teachings of a Sufi are love, beauty and harmony and it is love which is considered as the essence of religion and universalism (Fatemi, 1998).

WilujengLilis Lestarisays in his "A Study on Langston Hughes's poems as manifestation of racial protest", that Langston Hughes struggled for Black people's rights via literary intermediary and the main theme found in his poetry is a racial protest against institutionalization racism. His voice abides love of Black people and to inform the people about the sufferings and tortures of the race, in the most powerful country America (Wilujeng, 2003)

Hanif Ullah Khan says in his research work entitled "Mysticism of Rahman Baba and Its Educational Implications" (2009), that Abdurrahman Baba is a true Sufi who addresses humanity irrespective of any religion, color or caste and if his teachings are included in our educational curriculum, it will contribute greatly to the liberation of our next generation from inferiority complexes and frustrations (Khan, 2009).

Rahman, Farhat Naz and Kiran Sami say in "Regional Folklores in Pakistan" (2015), that Sufism is an Islamic phenomenon and by exposing Islamic thoughts through Sufi poets from the four provinces of Pakistan including Rahman Baba will greatly contribute to the unity of a peaceful nation of Pakistan.

Ghabool Ehsan says in "The Studies on Pacifism of Rumi's Thoughts" that in Islamic Mysticism, a phenomenon known as Pacifism is greatly related to the preaching of peace of a Sufi poet. Maulana Rumi's Pacifism is defined in two parts; humanistic peace that includes love for all the humanity and the second part is Universal peace that includes love for the whole nature and natural objects (Manzoor. 2019).

Langston Hughes adopted a mixed methodology of positive and negative pacifism in his works in order to promote equality regardless of demographic differences. The main area of Langston Hughes' work is based upon American Racism and Spanish Civil War. To abolish injustice and inequality, Hughes adopted Negative Pacifism (the absence of violence) which means to highlight the injustice and cruelty during Spanish Civil War, as well as to highlight the racial differences in America and worldwide. Hughes adopted Positive Pacifism in his poetry and other dispatches which mean "to promote peace". Hence Hughes' adaptation of such mixed approach is known as Pragmatic Pacifism. Through this Pragmatic Pacifism, Hughes supported International Brigades Spain which favours the equality and by adopting negative Pacifism, Hughes tried to abolish the long term threats of despair and violence (Hughes, 2001).

Black people themselves should accept their own identity with wholeheartedness. Black should seek their own inner beauty and preciousness. Discrimination of people on the basis of their skin colour is unfortunate and unfortunately it is installed in the subconscious of Black that White is the standard for everything, as the Black parents used to tell their children to behave like White and not like "Niggers" (Meyers, 2004). This is the reason that one day a poet came to Hughes and told him that he wanted to be a great poet; like White poets. Hughes considered it as a racial mountain for Black as if one runs away from one's own identity then he can never become a great artist. Black has to accept his own identity as a Black; he should climb this racial mountain in order to get equality and status in the society (Farrison, 1977).

This research paper provides an analysis of Langston Hughes' two poems "I Dream a World" and "Democracy" in order to make the reader aware of the dream of Black American society. In these poems, Hughes tells in very simple words about dream of such world which is full of love and peace, where there is equality and harmony. The dream of equality for Black is not only an American dream but the dream for all Black and colored people of the whole world. Everyone should feel the sweetness of this freedom and equality. One should not be devoid of freedom just because of his race, color or ethnicity. Hughes does not want a higher position for Black in the society but his demand is for equal rights and freedom as freedom is the natural right of every man by birth (Sorett, 2019).

This research paper deals with the role of dreams as reconstructing and deconstructing reality in the poem of Hughes. *"I Dream a World"*. Hughes lives in a ruthless society where he faced discrimination being a Black. He wants to deconstruct this ruthless reality as an inferior Black as perceived by White in order to reconstruct a parallel reality where all human beings will be treated as equals and with love (Cha-Jua, 1995).

Bill Lyne a member of the Board of Director of Washington Education Association, pointed out a serious economic problem in the US which is due to the unequal institutional shares between the White people and the colored. In the historical context of US, it has been recorded that a White labor is even considered superior to a Black owner and this sense of superiority in the White labor is very dangerous , not only racially but will have disastrous effects on the economy of US. "And as long as the White will consider themselves White, Black will remain conscious of their color" (James Baldwin).

English White politicians played a major role to sustain racism in US. The mature works of Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes, W.E.B-Du Boise and Angela Davis strive hard to abolish such racism not only in the institutions but all over the country and as a whole all over the world. The working class should be convinced to work hand in hand to eliminate racism and not to vote against their own interests which gives profit only to the leaders, that will ultimately destroy the nation's economy (Lyne, 2010).

All over the world, the ethical call resounded when the military forces started a total war on Spanish civilians to obliterate all civilians. The role of artists, authors and activists was very prominent regarding the condemnation of the war. Aid to refugees on the grounds of Spain was provided by these activists. These great authors and artists include Pablo Picasso, Langston Hughes, Virginia Woolf and Quaker volunteers; produced such paintings, poetry and prose that clearly give the message of peace and positive Pacifism to the Spanish military as well as to the whole world to condemn this barbarism. An exhibition held that include the literary works and paintings of the great authors and artists, giving a message of peace and prosperity to the whole humanity (Inskeep-Fox, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The comparative analysis of the two poems explored the same theme of peace or pacifism. The theoretical framework for the study is taken in the perspective of "Pacifism of Rumi's Thoughts" (Rūmī, 2018). Pacifism is a phenomenon and belief that anything that is disputed should be settled by peaceful means and not by war and violence (lexico, 2022). Maulana Rumi(1207-1273) a great Sufi scholar and dervish, a great teacher of universal love and peace was born in Balkh, Khorasan (Citlak "Rumi and his Sufi Path of Love"), known as "Maulana" in the Muslim world and "Rumi" in the Western world. His teachings are completely originated from *Tawheed*, *Quran and Risalat SAW* (Citlik "Rumi and his Sufi path of Love"). Being a Sufi poet, his teachings of love and peace are universal. He is acknowledged by both Eastern and Western population as a great Sufi scholar and dervish (Citlik). Humanistic peace and Universal peace are the two components of Rumi's pacifism; his approaches towards love for humanity and love for nature, the result of which is justice, love, guidance, beauty, respect for nature and the

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aesthetic attitude towards the world (Yasmin, 2020). The two poems are analyzed in the light of this theory for which a certain criteria for similarities and differences is set upon.

Methods

The present study is qualitative in nature. It is a descriptive form of study in which close textual analysis of both the poems is carried out by the researcher. In the present study, the researcher carried out comparative analysis, used close textual analysis in order to analyze the main theme of peace in the poems. The textual analysis is further elaborated in various research study themes and every theme is then linked to the main theme that is their preaching of peace. The data for the present research is collected from books, reviews, journals, articles, reports and research papers. The Poem "Sow Flowers" of Rahman Baba and the poem "I Dream a World" Langston Hughes have been analyzed in detail. In both the poems the theme of peace is compared and the similarities and differences are highlighted..

Analysis and Discussion

Both the poets belong to different areas i-e *Abdur Rahman Baba* (Pakistan) and *Langston Hughes* (an African_ American) but both of them appeal to the world for promotion and restoration of peace and harmony among the people and nations.

The Eastern poet *Abdurrahman Baba* in his poem "Sow Flowers" shared his message of peace and love to the humanity. He sensitizes and warns the humanity that hurting somebody and creating hurdles in others' path will hit you in return.

Sow flowers so your surroundings become a garden;/Don't sow thorns, for they will prick your feet.

If you shoot arrows at others: take it from me/That the same arrow will come back to hit you (1-4)

In the opening lines of the poem, the poet addresses the whole humanity and appeals for love and respect for the mankind. His appeal of love and peace is for both; the individuals and the states around the world. In the contemporary world it is observed that once a nation becomes powerful, it challenges the sovereignty of the other states. History shows that powerful nations used violence as a tool to get control over the territory of the other states. Such situation is also prevailing in the modern world which promotes political and social instability in the world and particularly in some regions (North, 2009). Such violent situation not only affects the whole state sovereignty but people are individually becoming the victims as well.

Abdurrahman Baba's teachings of love and humanity are for the purpose of stopping misuse of power and to bring peace and harmony in order to settle down the current social and political conflicts. The poet addresses the whole humanity and he preaches peace and love irrespective of the caste, creed, region, or ethnicity.

On the other hand, an African-American poet, Langston Hughes also shared his futuristic feelings about a peaceful world which he is dreaming in his poem "*I Dream a World*". Hughes dreamt of such a world where there is no place for hatred, a world where there are no issues regarding social or political context, a world where there is no misuse of power. Hughes dreamt of a complete ideal world where there is nothing but love and respect for each other:

"I dream a world where man/No other man will scorn" (1-2).

In the comparison of the above lines of the two poems, the same theme of love, peace and prosperity is found.

In the second line of his poem *Abdur Rahman Baba* shared about the freedom and its importance. Natural freedom is the fundamental human right. Every person is born free. The natural freedom includes freedom of life, liberty, thought, opinion, expression, association and movement. It is freedom

that liberates a person from the physical and mental constraints. To make hurdles in another's path and to constrain other's freedom results in the rebellious attitude that may cause serious destruction at individual and state level. It is the law of nature that if someone wants to attain success and at the same time he is creating problems for others, can never succeed in his aims unless he gets himself free from all prejudices. To restrain one's freedom does not mean to keep restrictions on one's movement but it also includes the mental as well as the physical restrictions. About the physical restrictions and physical freedom, Rahman Baba states:

"Don't dig a well in another's path;/In case you come to the well's edge yourself" (1-2).

In his poem, symbolically the Eastern poet appeals to the humanity to stop creating obstacles in others' path. He appeals to individuals at micro level and to the nation at macro level. It is the right of every individual and state to explore and make use of God's blessings in the earth freely and if one restricts the freedom of another person, he himself in return becomes the victim of those evil plans and caught up in the web of his own created cruelty. The poet talks about the mental freedom and mental peace that if someone finds weaknesses in others he should try to cover them.. This is the moral code for living a peaceful life as depicted by Rahman Baba in his verses:

"If you don't look for faults in others,/Everyone will keep your weakness concealed" (11-12).

Here Rahman Baba refers to Hadith: "Sayyiduna Abu Huraira R.A related this Hadith to Muhammad SAW; "Whosoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and the next."By hiding others' faults can prevent many conflicts to be held among the families and other social circles that ultimately gives a mental freedom and mental peace to all.

Similarly the Western poet, Langston Hughes also dreamt of such a world where no one will have the power and right to snatch the freedom of another person. Hughes called it "sweet freedom", as man is born free by nature so it's the right of every individual to taste the sweetness of this freedom.

"I dream a world where all/Will know sweet freedom's way" (5-6)

For Hughes, freedom is the basic and essential need of human kind. Being a Black writer and activist, Hughes knew the importance of freedom. The condition of Blacks in America was the worst and they were restricted to Southern part only. There was no question of their participation in the social and political affairs. They were mere slaves. These mental and physical restrictions and oppression of Blacks in America became a source of motivation for Hughes to take pen and start a fight against Black's oppression in America (Redding). Hence for this reason, freedom is called as "sweet freedom" by Hughes as being a Black writer he knows very well the importance of freedom. Although Hughes' desire for freedom arises from a particular situation yet he has generalized it for the whole human race by referring to

"where all will know" (5-6).

Another common appeal of Rahman Baba and Langston Hughes' for peace is to treat others with reverence and love. Hatred and disgust is the cause of dissatisfaction and despair, as Rahman Baba states:

"You look at everyone with contemptuous eye; /Though you will be the first one whose body turns to dirt" (7-8)

Rahman Baba's teachings are of love and respect for mankind. Similar views of Langston Hughes are found in his poem where he expresses his

desire for a world where there is no hatred, where one person does not condemn another but a world where all will live happily as Hughes states:

"I dream a world where man/No other man will scorn" (1-2)

The next important and crucial issue raised by Rahman Baba is the equality and oneness of all human kind. All the human beings are equally important. It is like *Organismic Analogy* according to which all the social institutions are very important to a society; like all the body parts are equally important for the proper functioning of the body and if any of the body part is being malfunctioned, the whole body will be effected (Sills"Social Institutions") as Rahman Baba states:

"Humans are all one body;/Whoever tortures another, wounds himself" (9-10)

In these lines Rahman Baba conveys his message that all human beings are equal and valuable. There is no distinction on the bases of color, creed or caste but these are just man made distinctions. African American poet, Langston Hughes also talks about the same concept. Hughes' focus is on the equality of White and Black. All the bad treatments that Blacks received are evident in the records of American history. This Black oppression become a motivation for Langston Hughes and he dreamt of such a world where there is no concept of Black and White, where all are treated equally, a world where all equally share the opportunities as Hughes says in his poem:

"A world I dream where Black or White,/Whatever race you be,/Will share the bounties of the earth/And every man is free" (9-12)

The last sermon of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) also addresses this issue of discrimination based on color:

All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; white has no superiority over black, nor does a black has any superiority over white; [none hassuperiority over another] except by piety and good action. (Qadri and Qadri, 238)

Both the poets address the same problem with the same intensity which will lead to a peaceful living by abolishing all kinds of discrimination.

The other major themes of Rahman Baba's poem that leads to peace and prosperity are his teachings of humbleness and services to human kind that will ultimately abolish the miserable condition and will bring happiness and prosperity. To achieve success and joy, one must be humble and compromising in all situations because one cannot attain satisfaction and happiness with his proud and arrogant nature, as Rahman Baba states:

The farmer doesn't sow the upland field;/Be humble_so that your wasteland becomes a garden (13-14)

The sound of a broken pot will never ring true/Everyone's behavior is divulged by their speech (15-16)

Rahman Baba lays stress on one's behavior that will ultimately decides one's relationship to another. Towards the end of the poem, Rahman Baba turns towards the teachings of services to humanity. To serve humanity takes one to the satisfactory condition. He preaches to do well with others even if others are trying to harm you:

If another does you harm, do him good/For every tree that bears fruit is harvested (21-22)

Harm from the evil ones inevitably reaches the good;/As worms destroy soft wood (23-24)

The heart that is safe in the storm/Is the one that carries other people's burdens like a boat (24-25)

In all these lines of the poem, Rahman Baba stresses upon humbleness and being devoting oneself to the service of humanity. Langston Hughes conveys the similar message for promoting peace . He lays stress that one should be the source of happiness to others. He dreamt of a world where there is no misery, where all mankind enjoys a happy life. For the abolition of miseries, one should try to acquire the capacity to tolerate and to devote himself to the services of mankind. Hughes teachings are the same as that of Rahman Baba's, in the context of humbleness and one's devotion to mankind's services. In fact Langston Hughes thinks of a world that is an ideal one just like Plato's Utopian world, where there is no evil, injustice or cruelty, where all human beings could live with harmony and with the feelings of brotherhood. Hughes concludes his poem by saying:

"Where wretchedness will hang its head/ And joy, like a pearl, /Attends the needs of all mankind/Of such I dream, my world" (13-14)

The universal themes of love, humanity, freedom, reverence, equality, humbleness and services for humanity are found in the poems of both the poet's.Although both the poets belong to different cultures and different time periods, yet their idealization of a peaceful society is same. Their teachings of love and peace are useful and recommended in the current scenario of frustrations, dissatisfaction and violence.

In spite of these similarities, differences are also found because of their different religious beliefs, social background, geographic differences and their different motives. Rahman Baba is a Sufi Muslim poet. The source for his inspiration is *Tauheed* and *Risalat(Saw)*. His verses are the true depiction of Islamic teachings. His instructions and guidance to humanity are according to Islamic principles. Islam itself means peace and humanity. Hence Rahman Baba's message of peace and love is in strict social and religious frame. While on the contrary, Langston Hughes message of peace is in the social and political context. Being an activist, Hughes focus is on the rights of Black people in America and his fight against Black's oppression.

A limited area is generalized by Langston Hughes. He is the voice for Black's rights and to achieve his purpose, he struggles to initiate awareness among Black Americans through his poetry. Hughes motivation is Black's oppression in America. In contrast, Rahman Baba's motivation comes directly from Allah and true love with His last Prophet (PBUH), due to his deep religious connection with Allah. He has already taken a broad and generalized area, where he addresses the whole humanity and teaches them a moral code for living a peaceful life. His aim is to bring the mankind to the right and straight path that leads to Allah, as he says in his poem:

"Follow the straight path now by the bright light of the day/For all of a sudden morning will become pitch darkness" (17-18)

Unlike Langston Hughes, whose aim is to bring prosperity for his race in this world, *Rahman Baba's* aim is to bring awareness not only for this world but also for the life after death- as Muslims' belief. The purpose of his poetry is to take out mankind from the burdens of their sins as he states:

"Don't consider any sin too small, however minute;/For when the small are put together, they become a lot" (19-20)

At the end of his poem, Rahman Baba implores Allah for forgiveness and salvation from his own sins as well as for the sins of whole humanity:

"May no sin be committed by his hands, and if so,/May all of Rahman's sins be forgiven" (27-28)

So to conclude we can say that both the poets raised their voice for humanity, peace and harmony. However they have some differences based on their religious and cultural backgrounds. The Eastern poet motivated humans for peaceful life in the world with reward for both in this world as well as in divine world while the Western poet highlighted the issue of violence in this world with prosperity and peace in this world only.

Conclusion

It is concluded that literature and especially the genre of poetry can play a major role in the restoration and prevalence of peace. The comparative study of Western and Eastern poetry enhances one's understanding of different cultures and their different approaches towards the same issue. The same theme of love, peace and harmony is found in the poems of both the poets but Rahman Baba addresses the whole humanity and talks about the peace not just in this world but also for the betterment of the life after death. His teachings are for all ages and for all ethnicities while in contrary the ideal existing of humanity in Langston Hughes poetry is limited in all spheres to a specific race and tribe. Hence the preachings of Sufi poetry is universal.

The study recommended that in the contemporary world which is full of violence and intolerance the poets should raise their voice for peace and harmony through their poetry to bring solidarity, peace, harmony and love in the global world.

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Appendix I

روښانه لار صحيح کړه چې صبح ده ىن تار صبح 13 ىە ناكهانه مه کڼه که هر څو کناه لږ وي شي کړې وبله جمع بسيار لر لر کاندي ته ښه ورسره بد بل وكره که هر يو نخل چې ميوه لري سنګسار شي وته ازار د بدو ښو . تل 9 بينجے و نرم چوب ته ور دوڅار هر

-----The End------

Appendix II (Translation)

D 304 Sow Flowers

Sow flowers so your surroundings become a garden;

Don't sow thorns, for they will prick your feet.

If you shoot arrows at others: take it from me;

That the same arrow will come back to hit you.

Don't dig a well in another's path;

In case you come to the well's edge yourself.

You look at everyone with contemptuous eyes;

Though you will be the first one whose body turns to dirt.

Humans are all one body;

Whoever tortures another, wounds himself.

If you don't look for faults in others,

Everyone will keep your weakness concealed.

The farmer doesn't sow the upland field;

Be humble _ so that your wasteland becomes a garden.

The sound of a broken pot will never ring true; Everyone's behavior is divulged by their speech.

Follow the straight path now by the bright light of the day; For all of a sudden morning will become pitch darkness. Don't consider any sin too small, however minute;

For when the small are put together they become a lot.

If another does you harm, do him good;

For every tree that bears fruit is harvested.

Harm from the evil ones inevitably reaches the good;

As worms destroy soft wood.

The heart that is safe in the storm;

Is the one that carries other peoples' burdens like a boat.

May no sin be committed by his hands, and if so;

May all of Rahman's sins be forgiven.

-----THE END------

Appendix III <u>I Dream A World</u>

(LANGSTON HUGHES)

I dream a world where man No other man will scorn, Where love will bless the earth And peace its paths adorn I dream a world where all Will know sweet freedom's way, Where greed no longer saps the soul Nor avarice blights our day. A world I dream where black or white, Whatever race you be, Will share the bounties of the earth And every man is free, Where wretchedness will hang its head And joy, like a pearl, Attends the needs of all mankind-Of such I dream, my world!

------THE END------