
Spirituality, Social Consciousness, Ethics and Human Liberation in B. S. Tyagi's Poetry

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Abstract

The present research article examines the interrelationship of spiritual consciousness, ethical sensibility and human emancipation in B. S. Tyagi's poetry. It situates his poetry in the wider spectrum of Indian English Poetry tradition that tries to look at metaphysical quest for truth *vis-à-vis* socio-cultural aspect of life. Tyagi weaves together the five sheaths (pancha koshas) encompassing gross, vital/vegetative, psychic/mind-intellect/emotional and blissful layers of the Indian philosophical consciousness to offer a totalist conception of human existence with inner discipline as well as social responsibility. His spiritual meditations are not escapist, but deeply pragmatic, placing an emphasis on compassion, ecological balance and moral action. By blending Eastern metaphysics with Western rhetoric, Tyagi redefines spirituality as a praxis of active ethics that can solve the dilemmas of modern materialistic existentialism. The simplicity and freedom of his poetical diction give common readers access in an unusual degree to deep philosophical conceptions without loss of their meditative import. A site of revelation where silence speaks, selfhood spills over into cosmic coalescence and liberation is envisaged not only as transcendence, but also compassionate entanglement in the world. Based on close reading of poems— 'Silence', 'Beyond Life', 'To Myself, Self and Nature' and 'I Am a Warrior; this study shows that Tyagi construes silence as an actively transforming force, consciousness as the arena of ethical awakening and self-realization as the road to personal and collective freedom. The grants article Tyagi the status of a major contemporary Indian English poet whose poetry renews the spiritual humanist tradition and reassures us of literature's capacity to encourage ethical awareness, inner balance and cosmic liberation.

Keywords: Spiritual Consciousness, Silence, Vedantic Philosophy, Ecological Harmony, Mysticism

The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 8 & Issue 2 (April 2026)

Indian English poetry has been in the tradition of managing the complexities between the external world of socio-political realities and the internal cosmos of surreal and psychological explorations. From Rabindranath Tagore's mystical poetic visions to Sri Aurobindo's divine epic viewpoint, Indian poetic caliber has endeavored to scrutinize the hidden aspects of self, consciousness and salvation. They seem to peep out pre-natal and post mortal entities in order to reach the solution of mystical existential queries. In recent decades, this tradition has got different renewed utterances in poets who emphasize speculation, introspection, rumination and metaphysical search as reciprocals to the complexities and anxieties of modern life. B.S. Tyagi's poems such as 'Silence', 'Beyond Life', 'Silent Departure', 'To Myself' and 'I Am a Warrior' embody logical and philosophical melodious outpourings within his poetic realm, which has a wide range. These poems have enriched spiritual landscape in the Anglo-Indian firmament. The tradition of spirituality in modern poetry seemed to have lost in the din of today's life. It is heartening to see that Tyagi has wonderfully revived the almost forgotten tradition. It is so natural and spontaneous in his poetic works. Interestingly, he is not mystic in his approach but spontaneous and easy. He candidly says:

I embark on a soul-stirring spiritual journey, mesmerized by the dance of words and their enchanting music entralls me, transporting into a world beyond. They fill the inner void with meaning and mission, harmonizing the worldly and spiritual aspects of my being, and unleashing my creative energy that uplifts my soul to higher realms of consciousness, revealing an essential inherent trait of one's nature. (Tyagi 15)

A dexterous amalgamation of levels of consciousness can be explored in the multi shaded prism of his poetic thoughts. In some poems, his approach remains physical (*Annamaya Kosha*), sensuous (*Pranmaya Kosha*) and psycho-synthetic (*Manomaya Kosha*) while analyzing the philosophy of life and death like 'When Thou Smile', 'The Spring Carnival' etc. Such poems reveal his inner experience and deep longing to unravel the truth through his poetry. In order to discuss social-political and thought-provoking issues of modern life, some of his poems have touched the intellectual realm (*Jnanamaya Kosha*) like 'Splendors of Love', 'Borders Matter', 'The Talking -to' and many more. The poems which deal with spiritual domain (*Anandamaya Kosha*) question identity, ponder struggles as well as silence and reach transcendence and salvation. He opines- "Poetry written from a particular level of consciousness offers a glimpse into the poet's inner world, revealing insights that resonate with readers and leave a lasting impact" (Tyagi 17). Tyagi's poetry does not solely elaborate the blissful state of consciousness rather it explores to enact that spiritual state through rhythm, repetition and speculative imagery. It is so enchanting that the readers are left spell bound. Wordsworth comes to mind while going through Tyagi's poems: "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting. (The Immortality Ode)

Thus, the major themes of his selected poems provide the contemplative, multifaceted poetic cosmos which marks a commendable position in Indian as well as global poetic tradition.

The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 8 & Issue 2 (April 2026)

The poem 'To Myself' echoes an ontological tone and resembles the Upanishadic philosophical norms regarding self. He puts the baffling questions pertaining to prenatal and post mortal existence-

Who am I after all?
 Whence have I come?
 Why am I here?
 Whither will I go? (Tyagi 113)

He assumes the response which appears neither dogmatic nor doctrinal. To his own realization, Self is just 'pure consciousness' and 'a tiny particle/ Of that colossal mass of universal energy/ Pervading in the universe' (Tyagi 113). He dexterously clarifies the vision of microcosm and macrocosm. This vision of consciousness resonates with Sri Aurobindo's notions of the individual as a revelation of cosmic consciousness. Tyagi's concepts are not mere metaphysical dogmas but hypothetical truth which is realized after 'long persistence and perseverance'. Here we are reminded of William Wordsworth's 'Prelude', where the poet experiences a 'sense sublime/ of something far more deeply interfused'. Although the thought of consciousness as pervasive and immanent goes parallel to the notion of Western poets yet it aligns more conspicuously with the Eastern idea of indicating a motion from singularity toward universality.

After analyzing minutely, Tyagi's verse appears to build a poetic bridge between Eastern spiritual philosophy and modern existential crisis. Due to such a philosophical attitude, he presents silence not as a passive vacant state or absence of vitalizing sounds. He synonymizes the same as abundance and maximum. In 'Spectrum of Silence', silence is delineated as an energetic force with positive vibes and full potential. A stout opinion is revealed in the beginning of the poem-

Living inner force is silence deep
 That flows freely within
 Transcending words, sounds, actions
 And shuts door on the senses
 Then energy waves turn inward
 Taking man closer to the Consciousness. (Tyagi 22)

The lines, besides being highly poetic, reveal the great truth of Advaita Vedantic philosophy that affirms that spiritual realization can be experienced in higher spiritual state. No western poet can speak like this since they have no spiritual experience. It seems that these lines express poet's inner experiences. Their impact on mind and soul is clear. They are clear in their meaning.

The journey within, mentioned in the poem, excels the realms of words, sounds and actions indicating that senses and language fail to access deeper layers of experience. The oft quoted lines of Keats exhibit the same state of realization-

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard

The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 8 & Issue 2 (April 2026)

Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on; (Ode On A Grecian Urn, Keats)

Tyagi seems dexterous to comprehend this philosophy that's why he deliberately 'shuts door on the senses' and kindles the desired sparks of knowledge which take him 'closer to the consciousness'. In this way, silence is personified as an agent to transform from external to internal and from macrocosm to microcosm. In another poem 'silence' quietude is depicted as 'gentle, sweet, soothing, lifting'. Here, silence is converted into a kind of meditation which is termed as 'blessed mood' by Wordsworth. He elucidates-

...that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened - (Tintern Abbey)
Similarly, Tyagi presents 'silence' as healing resource-

Energy divine issuing from deep quietude
Brings the moment blissful,
And drives away all perturbing the placidity,
Making mundane life joyful. (Tyagi 143)

Such soothing and spiritual realization is greatly needed in the modern context where dilemma, crisis, affliction and restlessness dominate life. Thus, the poem 'Silence' lays emphasis on developing the ability to listen to 'subtle silent melodies' and to enable deeper perception rather than sensory deprivation. In another poem 'Silent Departure', taciturnity and fearlessness while departing the worldly life, are highlighted as essential resources to get the ultimate existential completion. The poet appears to be mentally prepared to face the last moment with tranquility. Along with similar zest to face the death, Browning declares in 'Prospice',

I was ever a fighter,
So one fight more- the best and the last! (Robert Browning)

In fact, such thoughts provide an optimistic approach even towards the greatest fear of the world that is *Abhinivesh* (fear of death) and simultaneously keep alive *jivishya* (desire for life). The speaker's last lines convey maximum meaning in minimum words:

I'm ready to go
How rewarding! (Tyagi 125)

Such a different outlook towards death enables an individual to hail the eternal silence (death) in which the soul is freed from the bonds of carnal frame and egoic identity. It is poet's spiritual outlook towards the eternal silence. In the poem, 'Beyond Life', he exhibits that post mortal existence is not just an emptiness rather it is enlightenment and complete liberation. In order to face it boldly, everyone should initiate its preparation through inner discipline,

The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 8 & Issue 2 (April 2026)

awareness and detachment inculcated within life itself. In fact, the poet offers the opportunities to have a robust mentality, convincing intellectuality, and the understanding of continuity, tranquility and transcendence. The notion of preparedness for final departure is a way to deal the last phase of life. Also, it shows his awareness of life and its purpose. In the beautiful poem 'New Dawn', he beautifully elaborates the whole philosophy of life and death-

Awake to the brilliant Light within
 And find all worries and gloom gone
 Then the one is immersed in wakefulness
 Just realise the SOUL shines luminously
 New dawn has broken! (Tyagi 55)

This conception reminds of Rabindranath Tagore's view of death as incessancy rather than severance- "Death is not extinguishing the light, it is only putting out the lamp because the dawn has come". Emily Dickinson, an American poet, also overcomes the feelings of terror and anxiety regarding the last moment of life. She treats Death as a suitor and her soul as beloved while penning down the lines- "Because I could not stop for Death / He kindly stopped for me". (Dickinson) In this way, the reticence in Tyagi's poetic realm is presented as a revelatory field where consciousness awakes, fear disappears and mystery seems to be solved. He discloses the fact in the preface of his collection of poems-

Poetry is a means of realising this universal spirit, a living force that pulsates in each life. When I am in quietude, I am buried down deep in joy and I hear never-fading music within utter silence; it has great power to heal a bruised heart and to dispel despair and fear. (Tyagi 16)

To quote Wordsworth:

Of the eternal Silence: truth, that wake,
 To perish never; (Ode On Intimations Of Immortality)

This realization of inward muteness lessens egoic noise and relieves mental anxiety. Tyagi seems to have such deep experience, which permits him to erase apparent boundaries between inner and outer entities. Silence shows the way towards awareness, that terminates ego and ego merges into universality. His notions go parallel with the thought-provoking philosophical ideas of T.S. Eliot. He endeavours to manifest in 'Four Quartets' that quietude becomes a gateway to insight- "At the still point of the turning world... there the dance is." (Eliot) Elliot's approach seems somewhat mixed with metaphysical anxiety while Tyagi's belief based on inner experience remains noticeable by gravity, serenity, and assurance. Another stimulating poem which deepens the thematic spectrum emphasizing on silence, selfhood, and universal consciousness- is 'Self and Nature'. It delineates conspicuously that self-realization remains incomplete without being acquainted with ethical and harmonious connection with the natural world. The beginning lines of the poem "A vast expanse of Self is the Nature / Over earth, sea and sky..." reveal the hidden philosophical paradigms of individual existence and external cosmos. Whatever is manifested

The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 8 & Issue 2 (April 2026)

before our eyes, appears to be the demonstration of the inner realm. As it is said in *Yajurveda-Yatha pinde tatha brahmande*. Beyond the human imagination, the above imagery suggests that the Self dwells in all visible and invisible spheres. The metaphor 'flower and fragrance' is used to enhance the intimacy and inseparability of Self and Nature. Both are one and in their oneness lies joy and peace. Their unity reveals spiritual harmony which is inevitable for inner growth. It opens new vistas of grandeur and grace. He utters-

Self sustains the universe through eternal laws
And illuminates each particle,
Ever goes changing the form yet the same shines
And ever remains inseparable. (Tyagi 91)

Isha Upanishad in its first verse:

Isavasyam idam sarvam yat kinca jgaatyam jagat |

All this – whatever exists in this universe – is pervaded and sustained by the Self.

It is the Self that pervades the universe:

Yasmin idam visvam otam protam. (Mundaka Upanishad; 2.1.1)

In which the whole universe is woven, as warp and woof.

Tyagi's lines resonate with Vedantic philosophy in simple and lucid words. It is also observed that he possesses the ability to express profound ideas with ease. Such a rare trait is rarely found among the modern poets. His poems that express philosophical notions are heart-warming and captivating. He is extraordinary in ordinary words and style. His outlook to life can be seen better through his spiritual lens, which includes worldly life, too.

The poet's ethical vision contains multifaceted meanings as well as menace to ecological crisis, particularly for exploitative modern attitudes. This way of thinking finds resonance in the poetic utterances of William Wordsworth who groans about the loss of this divine connection between human and nature- "The world is too much with us; late and soon/ We lay waste our powers". (Wordsworth) In a way, he wishes to spread the message among humanity that life span is too short to comprehend as well as relish the ultimate beauty from sky to the earth portrayed by Creator. While running after materialistic achievements, everyone should take a break to look at-

The tiny birds soaring high
With no ambition to gain anything great
Just to enjoy the vastness of the azure
And pass little time in full freedom

The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 8 & Issue 2 (April 2026)

Leisurely basking in the warm sun. (Tyagi 56)

These lines from his meditative lyric 'Light of Consciousness' unfold the utility of natural phenomena in healing of human afflictions. Heartfelt inclination towards Nature provides existential authenticity and preaches to lead life without anxiety of outcome. In lucid and quite simple manner, he elucidates the dual function of the human mind which causes positivity or negativity in life. Self-control through austere discipline is vital to achieve the goal. He claims that mind is both the derivation of bondage and initiator of liberation -

Mind - the only cause of man's bondage

And liberation too.

If it's cluttered with moth-eaten dogmas,

It acts as shackles.

If lit with Light of Consciousness,

It liberates soul. (Tyagi 56)

This natural process of inner transformation finds a philosophical parallel to *Upanishadic* thought-

Man ev manushyanam karnam bandhmokshyo

(The mind alone is the cause of both bondage and salvation)

In today's scenario, the human mind remains imprisoned with unexamined traditions, rigid beliefs and inherited ideologies. It is also entangled in cut-throat competitions, materialistic pursuits and ethical dilemmas. Enlightened awareness and self-realization diminish ignorance and enable the soul to transcend worldly limitations. John Milton has already anticipated this hypothetical conception in his Book I of *Paradise Lost*- "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven". (Milton) Moreover, Tyagi's observation lies beyond pain and pleasure, where stoicism emerges and some bizarre transcendental experience is imbibed. To him, if a man of modern age discovers the values of Self-assessment, awareness of Consciousness and the indelible effect of 'Silence', he can be able to blow away digital fatigue and ideological polarization. In fact, he lays emphasis on leading the life followed by 'simple living high thinking'. Simplicity and positive vibes are the formula to relish life smoothly. Thus, Tyagi's poetry can be read to delete dilemmas in current perspectives. It maintains the balance between incompatible norms like bondage and liberation, form and formlessness, motion and stillness, individuality and universality. This reflective dimension grants his work timeless traits tempting readers to reevaluate ethical introspection, ecological sensitivity and emotional equilibrium. This approach appears quite relevant not only to literary discourse but also lived experience. The line of Maurice Merleau-Ponty conspicuously encapsules Tyagi poetic concepts of recreating perception through silence and reaching at a renewed consciousness of self and entity-

True philosophy consists in re-learning to look at the world.

The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 8 & Issue 2 (April 2026)

Tyagi does not escape from the present harsh conditions but he wishes to transcend all that hinders the spiritual journey. Unlike Wordsworth, he is happy to cross the barriers that are on the way to inner growth. There is no room in Tyagi's poetry for despair and sadness; he knows that it is a passing phase.

And frequent sights, of what is to be borne!
Such sights or worse, as are before me here, -
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn. (Wordsworth; Peele Castle)

Then heart is lit up, dispelling darkness
And the world shines like the full moon
Showing joy, love, compassion on earth. (Tyagi 44)

Like, Robert Frost, Tyagi thinks that the world is a pretty place for growth – spiritual and worldly. He likes to achieve all that is worth achieving in the world.

Earth's the right place for love: I don't know where it's likely to go. (Robert Frost; Birches)

He wants to make the world a worth living, free from all man-made evils. He strives to make it a beautiful place where every person can live with a purpose.

If I can wipe tears
From the eyes of the poor
If it helps me
Bring a smile on dry lips. (Tyagi 38)

He does not wish to bask in spiritual glow; instead, he takes a pragmatic approach to life. He does not like to spare any effort to make the world better and better where not only humans but birds also can live happily. He has deep passion for making the world lovely, kind, and compassionate. I won't yield to obstacles

Or high waves of the ocean
Fight continues, rain or shine
Each morning sends me forth
To seek out new horizon, (Tyagi 67)

Several poems reflect his faith in human goodness, and his determination makes him an optimist. They convey a powerful message of hope, beauty, and grace.

New vista of ethereal life
With the flow of new energy
From darkness to Light. (Tyagi 45)

Thus, B S Tyagi is pre-eminently a poet of spiritual consciousness, but at the same time, he is deeply rooted in the world. He is fully aware of what is going around him. He intensely lives in the present and raises his voice against anything that goes against the grain. He believes in steady progress both at inner and spiritual level. The most interesting aspect of his poetry is the

The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 8 & Issue 2 (April 2026)

harmonious blend of spirituality and worldliness. His deep sense of realism can be seen in his poetic works. He has keen eye for minute aspects of the natural phenomena around. He is primarily interested in human liberation from sufferings in the world. His firm determination is clear:

Until the goal accomplished
 He'll go on wandering in the world
 Suffering and suffering endlessly
 Better if he is awakened to his 'Self'
 And rest in true abode of consciousness. (Tyagi 57)

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