

Swami Nem Pal's Poetry: An Exploration

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ABSTRACT

Swami Nem Pal had earlier held the post of MLA thrice in Uttar Pradesh, but as a veteran politician, he has slashed the disgusting depravity and massive corruption prevalent in Indian Politics. It seems he has been an honest and patriotic politician throughout his political career. Swami Nem Pal exhibited his strong poetic acumen in his first poetry book *India Malcontent* (1998). In *India Malcontent* (1998) the poet has peeled off the hypocritical mask of fiendish reprobated of Indian democracy (democracy) in an incisive language. The poet extols the meritorious, selfless contribution of labourers and farmers to the cause of the development of India and then deploras about their miseries in these lines: "You have built this nation great/ you labourers, farmers capable/ you are the masters but your fate/ is most heart-rending and miserable." The repetition of pronoun 'you' causes not only alliteration but also projects the great importance of the selfless, sincere services of the farmers and labourers who live in miseries.

Keywords: *India Malcontent, stylistics, Ram Rajya, Creation, Lord Krishna.*

Swami Nem Pal had earlier held the post of MLA thrice in Uttar Pradesh, but as a veteran politician, he has slashed the disgusting depravity and massive corruption prevalent in Indian Politics. It seems he has been an honest and patriotic politician throughout his political career. Swami Nem Pal exhibited his strong poetic acumen in his first poetry book *India Malcontent* (1998). After an interval of eight years, he has published two poetry books: *Pearls of Wisdom* (2007) and *Creation and Other Poems* (2007). As a poet, critic and linguist, my key concern in writing this research critique is to explore the significant features of linguistic deviations, foregroundings of intensive sensibilities by means of metaphysical conceits and neologism, which are manifest in Swami's poetry in totality. It is the distinctive style, deviant collection of words and figurative language which generates emotive appeal and gripping attention in the readers.

In *India Malcontent* (1998) the poet has peeled off the hypocritical mask of fiendish reprobated of Indian democracy (democracy) in an incisive language. The poetry book has been branched out in three parts: Part I-23 pages; part II-97; and part III-645 poems-four-line poems. In his preface of part I, the poet has expressed, in colloquial style, his doubt regarding the positive impact of his poetry on readers and critics in these lines: "Dear readers kind! / shall I impress / your taste refined / I cannot assess." (1) These four lines show grammatical or syntactical

deviation in that the nouns ‘readers’ and ‘your taste’ are post-modified by adjectives ‘kind’ and ‘refined’ instead of pre-modification. In fact, the syntactical deviation accounts for rhythm (kind/ refined) and end-focus of quality of readers. The use of regular diameter, vertical rhyme creates word music.

The poet gives prominence to sensibilities rather than words. A caution to critics glares in these lines: “So do not count/ much words’ defects/ Most paramount/ are feelings, facts. (14)” It is an apparent truth that words are limited and skimpy and they fail to highlight the unfathomable ocean of experiences of human life. A poet is constrained to temper with the nouns of formal language in order to foreground his unprecedented experiences by way of linguistic deviations and coinage of new phraseology that is, neologism.

The poet extols the meritorious, selfless contribution of labourers and farmers to the cause of the development of India and then deplores about their miseries in these lines: “You have built this nation great/ you labourers, farmers capable/ you are the masters but your fate/ is most heart-rending and miserable.” The repetition of pronoun ‘you’ causes not only alliteration but also projects the great importance of the selfless, sincere services of the farmers and labourers who live in miseries. According to the poetic message, Gandhi always worked for the betterment of the poor, downtrodden, labourers and farmers. On the contrary Gandhian ideals have been prosecuted by the demonic politicians of India who in the Gandhian coffin (khadi) are political extremists, dacoits and licentious.

The rich have ensconced themselves in the lap of enormous luxuries at the cost of burying the poor into acute miseries and privations: “Rich climbs higher up with blithe face/ poor still grovels lower.” By means of juxtaposition and contrast, the poet reflects over the harmonious ways of living of the rich with the poor in these lines in European countries: “Look at the neighbouring country’s way/ where all rich and poor march abreast.” The social panorama in India is too horrible to see, to read and write: “Look at the Indian farmer old/ the labourer infested and weak/ leaders’, millionaires’ looks cold/ hear latter’s laughter, farmer’s shriek.” Here noteworthy is the foregrounding of the word ‘infested’ in as much as it implies multifarious thematic imports. In denotative or literal term or sense, the word ‘infest’ means the presence of a great numbers of rats, insect, brigands etc, in a place. The remarkable collection of ‘infested’ with labourers connotes extraordinary thematic interpretation as analysed and explored below:

INFESTED: Thematic connotations:

1. The labourers are infested with the vermin of poverty and privations which have hewn them into the bundles of bones.

2. Indian politics is infested with the political brigands—the political desperadoes who exploit and beguile the innocent people to annoying extremities.

The cold looks and laughter of the rich and the leaders are juxtaposed against the grievous shrieks of poor farmers to suggest the inhuman sensitivity of the millionaires and politicians.

The application of stylistics reveals that the poet has accommodated the agonizing miseries, sufferings and horrible and disgusting ways of living of the poor, farmers and labourers in 17 pages, (4 to 20), 119 stanzas and 476 lines in ab ab rhyme scheme. The stanzas are interspersed with the luxurious life of the rich and the corrupt politicians and their barbaric antipathy against the painful privations of the poor. Certain words like poor, labourer, farmer, millionaire, politician, miseries, poverty and nature are used in great abundance in the poems to justify the title of the poetry book *India Malcontent*. For the poet, the poor labourers, farmers represent India but they are bitterly dissatisfied because the rich and the politicians have infected great pains on them instead of helping them in their poverty and privations.

Imagery not only beautifies thoughts but also occupies a dominant place in poetry. Vivid pictures made out of words constitute concrete imagery and it signifies all the objects and qualities of sense perception.

Imagery requires an extensive run of creative imagination to systematize unique experiences by means of an emotive array of words. Words are the colourful, brilliant raiments of thoughts which stimulate human organs of sense perception. The picturesque imagery in the lines of two stanzas stirs different sense organs that are visual, auditory, gustatory (taste), olfactory (smell) and tactile (touch).

“In their hut poor creatures moan
All bare breast, shivering and sad
But none hears their sob and groan
And none foresees o’erwhelming dread.
In a pallet children four or five
Snuggle shabby or half covered

With rags grimy; the babes alive

Look as corpses with pangs battered.

Onomatopoeia words, such as moan, sob, groan stir our auditory sense organ (ear); some words like, bare-breast, rags, shabby stimulate visual organ (eyes); words like pallet (straw- mattress) and grimy (thick coating of dirt on skin) pinch our tactile organs (fingers, hands) and the phrase-rags grimy (very dirty and stinking clothes) twitches our defactory organ (nose); other words, such as shivering, battering pangs actuate our kinesthetic feeling (sensations of movement). Such a marvelous picturesque description of the extremity of poverty haunts the mind of common people but the rich and the leaders are devoid of sympathy. The typical word 'snuggle' used in the context of poor children urges readers to visualize the pups piling on one another in sleep.

Besides to such emotion raking description of horrid privations affecting the poor, the poet considers the poor as 'poverty's bale'. The poet is very selective in connection with preferring subtle words which carry multiple shades of meanings. It is remarkable that the foregrounding of metaphoric phrase 'poverty's bale' reflects compressed feelings and it attracts semantic deviation. An abnormal collection of words having incompatible features accounts for semantic deviation. The word 'poverty' contains abstract,-concrete,-countable+ human features; whereas the word 'bale' implies+ concrete- abstract,+ countable, -human features. As a matter of fact, the device of semantic deviation encapsulates the figurative novelty of compressed sensibilities. The connotative interpretation of the semantically deviant phrase 'poverty's bale' is analysed under:

Poverty's: By putting an abstract noun in genitive case, poverty is personified here.

Bale: 1. Literal or denotative meaning- a bundle of merchandise or hay; Thematic, connotative meaning- a bundle of bones.

Interse, the metaphoric phrase 'poverty's bale' connotes that a poor person has been reduced to a bundle (bale) of bones by abject poverty. It is apparent that the use of plain word 'skeleton' in place of 'poverty's bale' was ineffective, jejune and monotonous, so the poet has coined nonce phrase 'poverty's bale' on the analogy of 'cotton bale', 'cloth bale', 'hay bale' etc which is very impressive and innovative.

Thomas Gray, in his famous democratic, rural elegy 'Elegy Written in A Country Churchyard', describes the miseries, helplessness and dreary luck of the rural poor in an unprecedented style,

but Swami Nempal sounds more impressive in connection with the delineation of the despicable, incredibly horrible account of Indian poverty with picturesque details in these lines: “And there from a whole under piles/ snake hisses, or from its shed/ or from smudged worn-out tiles/ fall scorpions or multiped.” What an ivory of situation glares and gouges the vision of readers. Startled are the English when they see a lizard creeping on the wall of a hotel room, but the Indian poor are constrained to forge relations with scorpions, snakes and multipedes instead of sharing the sympathy of the rich and politicians.

Time and again, the poet does not shirk from deriding the vacuity and triviality of the Fundamental Rights rolling in the pages of Indian Constitution. Immunized prostitution of the Fundamental Rights by the rich who grease the palms of corrupt politicians and the devils of law has been ridiculed by the poet in these suggestive lines: Fundamental millionaires thrive/ Poor fill their bellies with granites.” It is remarkable that the suggestive foregrounding of words in those lines connote a good deal of crude realities. The typical word ‘Fundamental’ personified by the ‘millionaires’ rather than ‘Rights’ implies two facts:

1. Only millionaires are fundamental to the cause of Indian democracy but not the poor;
2. Only millionaires are born and authorized to enjoy immensely the benefits of fundamental rights. In order to hone the edge of satire, the poet has suggestively juxtaposed the inscrutable, hard lot of the poor.

The verb phrase ‘fill their bellies with granites’ signifies a lot of imports as illustrated and analysed below:

1. The fundamental right left only for the poor is that they are doomed to earn their bread by constructing the palatial mansions of the rich.
2. The poor are born to pound the hard block of granite and eat to their fill the granite grits and dust.
3. The millionaires are born to despise the poor as the heart of the former is harder than granite.

In the second part of India Malcontent, the poet satirizes and thrashes the fiendish role of Indian politicians who are grossly accountable to the criminalization of politics as well as whole sole carnage of Gandhian ideals of Ram Rajya. The poet has exercised his creative knack for selective words to highlight bitter insult heaped by overseas countries upon the depravity of Indian politician’s reek of corruption and hypocrisy and they have turned democracy a butt of

stigma. By way of condensed style, the poet has exposed the world-wide fun of Indian democracy in these lines: “Nations abroad/ at India laugh/ take her for clod/ politics’ cenotaph.” The peoples of Europe, America and other countries hold India up to great ridicule as a lump of clay (clod) - an extremely trivial nation in connection with democratic set up. The import of the phrase ‘politics cenotaph’ suggests that Indian democracy is a great farce. A cenotaph is a monument which is bereft or divested of the relics of a dead person, so Indian democracy exists in name only since its fundamental ideals have gone to dust. Apparently, it is corollary to hold for, and term Indian democracy as ‘politics cenotaph’.

The poet has tailored very apt phraseology to portray the crude reality hinting at the most wretched condition of India after independence: “Nation screams/ In tortures clogs/ Her poor son seems/ Worse than their dogs.” The suggestive use of synecdoche in the phrase ‘nation screams’ implies that a few rich do not represent nation, but the soul of India lies in the poor who are tortured bestially, and their agonizing screams are gagged by the hooligans of administration what a disgustingly shameful role is played by the self- centred rich that their dogs are of utmost importance for them in contrast to the poor. It is evident that Swami Nem Pal’s poems are catalogue poems in the vein of Walt Whitman and W.H. Auden. In order to flavour his poems with the gravity of poignancy, the poet catalogues and contrasts the life of the rich who are ensconced in the lap of luxuries and the poor who writhe in the pains of abysmal privations and this scenario is manifested in great number of poems. The end of part II mirrors the chaotic finale of Indian democracy. The young are dumped in the overwhelming darkness of future: “Confused present/ Darkens our fates/ future vehement/ disturbed awaits.” It is noteworthy that future takes birth from the womb of present and the present is engulfed by the throttling confusion. Compact sensibilities packed in these lines reflect linguistic deviations. The semantic deviation in the phrase ‘confused present’ generates personification and it implies the young generation which is annoyed by confusion. The phrase ‘disturbed awaits’ accounts for grammatical deviation because the word ‘disturbed’ is a practical adjective which requires a noun as it cannot stand alone, that is, without a noun as a subject. Grammatical deviation is related to the peculiar grammatical innovation or device turned as enallage- the interchange of one part of speech for another, as adjective for noun or noun for verb. Here the Norman word is ‘disturbance’ which is noun but it is replaced by the participial adjective ‘disturbed’ which sounds more effective. The word ‘disturbed’ reflects both agitated condition and patience of people bearing with confusion, dark and sever future affecting the young generation. It is obvious that linguistic deviations bring forth novelty, compactness and

multiplex layers of suggestive meanings in poetry. But linguistic deviations cause ambiguity in poetry for those who are unaware of the practical application of linguistics for the proper interpretation of deviant style in poetry.

In the third part of *India Malcontent*, the poet expresses his dubiety in the beginning about the appraisal of his poetry by readers, critics and contemporary poets, but he is determined to express his poetic sensibilities (mental throes): “Let one oppose/ me and frustrate/ my mental throes/ let me state.” Here and there are scattered poet’s spiritual overtones: “Man chains himself/ with attachment/ power and pelf/ whichever torment.” The word ‘pelf’ connotes a contemptuous term for money which suggests triviality of money minting corrupt practices of people. The religion defiled by hypocrisy is deprecated in these lines: “Are now religions/ despicable/ like sinful nuns/ hypocrites’ will.” The correlations of religions with ‘sinful nuns’ is very apt in as much as, the tycoons of religions in their political dresses (divested of spirituality) now a days trade upon the blind faith of ignorant people, the gross absurdity of the followers of the religions glares in these lines: “God we worship/ And man we hate/ to a grave we slip/ from height straight.” These lines forward the stark reality that those worshippers who hate man dig the grave for God. Only humane attributes graduate people to the summit of very spirituality of God realization. The poet himself is a veteran politician but with a difference who undergoes great pangs when he has witnessed the massive abuse of Gandhian ideals by the depraved politicians. So, with his dashing candour, he strips the fiendish character of Indian politicians by peeling off their thick selfishness and loathsome hypocrisy in these lines: “Self-interest more/ common good less/ fill leaders’ core/ Tis their greatness.” These lines carry an ironical understatement through litotes. Again, scrapes the poet the rust of demoniac intrigues of Indian politicians in these lines: “Of communal fuss/ language, religion/ are problems thus/ readers’ creation.” It is observed that the excessive repetition of poet’s sentimental frenzy running through stanzas after stanzas generates maudlin poems. The poet reels off the vivid scenes relating to the odious apathy of the rich against the ineffable miseries of the poor and the depravity of politicians, but the unremitting hammering of similar thoughts in great number of poems stands as puerile whining. Walt Whitman also dulled the spell of his poems because of excessive repetition of similar ideas in a poem.

Upon the whole, the poet has presented effectively the trial balance of social and democratic degeneration of independent India and *India Malcontent* justifies those Indian politicians are but nation-ruining liabilities and gainful assets are labourers, farmers. The poet has posed great

faith in modern young people brimming with verve and courage and motivates them to revive from the dust of Indian ideals of ‘Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram’.

Swami Nem Pal’s second volume of poetry entitled *Creation and Other Poems* is a relishing pot-pourri of social and nature poems. The title poem ‘The Creation’ may sound deceptively ambiguous as the creation of universe is thematized in abstract imagery. The opening line ‘existence has risen from the permeating chaos’ typifies twofold interpretation. Firstly, the life appears from the medley of chaos; secondly, a man has to pave his way for meaningful existence, what though the life is paved with a fact that creation (birth) and ruin (death) are intertwined inseparably.

The poet is proficient in painting the colourful, varied hues of nature in an emotive language. The beautiful scene of ‘The Dawn’ is portrayed with picturesque details. Dawn is personified as a benign deity: “Goddess dawn has smiled/ with charm and glory adorned.” The poet is very innovative and selective in materializing his thoughts in suggestive phraseology. An effective blend of inversion and metonymy has been exercised in these lines: “In chirps by myriad tongues/ the welcome songs resound.” The suggestive, metonymic phrase ‘in chirps by myriad tongues’ highlights novelty of expression in the sense that twittering words welcome the dawn. It is noteworthy that the poet recreates nature like Robert Frost. Wordsworth sounds like a reporter of nature, a painter of nature. On the contrary, Robert Frost identifies his life with nature as nature permeates into the soul of Frost. Modern poets generally fail to differentiate the emotive bliss in the heartfelt recreation of nature and colourful description of nature by maintaining the distance of an observer lacking emotive appeal. The concrete objects of nature are the strong objective correlatives in Swami’s poems and they leaf through poet’s life-deep experiences.

By way of cohering personification and transferred epithet, the poet seeks heartfelt correlation between nature and human beings in these two suggestive lines: “The earth thrills with great joy/ at blithe daybreak’s advent.” The noun phrase ‘the earth’ having- human feature is collected with the +human feature verb ‘thrills’ that causes syntactical deviation. The syntactical deviation accounts for the figure of speech ‘Transferred epithet’, that is, human attributes are visualized in non-human object – the earth there exists a symbolic meaning in the phrase ‘the earth’ is that the earth signifies the scum, the slum dwellers who are deprived of great luxuries of life but they stretch their limbs in great delight when sweet morning rejuvenates them with hope and energy. Another thematic interpretation is that the earth

manifests her thrilling joy through beautiful, fragrant blossoms dancing on the twigs in soft breeze.

An emotive foregrounding of personification in opening lines- “The day tired/ of labour till twilight/ has retired to rest in the lap of night”- depicts the soothing spell of night in the nature poem ‘Tableaus of Night’. The noun phrase ‘labour till twilight’ rings in lilting music in ears on account of adroit blending of alliteration (initial repetition of concoid phoneme /t/), assonance (medial repetition of voccoid phoneme/I/) and internal rhyme created by the clustering of liquid lateral phoneme/l/. Again the threading of assonance and alliteration in the line-“fragrant delight/ floats” not only feeds our auditory organ but also olefactory organ. An implied situation presupposed in this line reveals the fact that soothing breeze as a courier of nature culls perfumes from flowers and serves to people free pleasure. On reading the nature poems composed by Swami Nem Pal, the readers are transported with wordless bliss. There is an impressive existence of a grammatical device- enallage in the use of noun ‘atmosphere’ as a verb in the line- ‘Hushed and silent/ dreams atmosphere whole.” The last two lines: “merely vigilant/ is a meditator’s soul”- relate to the spiritual message of the Gita: chapter 2, sloka 69 in which Lord Krishna preaches that a Yogi (an anchorite) passes his night too by chanting God’s name. A few poems exhibit the pathetic panorama of poor life. The poet delves deep into the extremities of poverty and the disgusting apathy of the rich in the utmost poignant poem ‘A Beggar’. The opening lines of the poem clustered with internal rhyme (words ending with the inflectional suffix-ed) and alliterate adjective ‘bare’ depict the most pathetic condition of the poor beggar: “Twisted, grey-haired and wrinkled browed/ Bare-headed, bare-footed and bare-breast/ A gaunt skeleton burdened with/ A wretched life, distressed, unablest.” It is a catalogue poem in that the poet has displayed the x-rayed poverty of nation, inhuman antipathy of the rich and deaf-dumb-blind God. The use of vivid, concrete imagery to delineate a beggar’s miserable hell stimulates the sense-perception organs of sensitive readers but not the inhuman petrification of the rich: visual organ (wrinkled, gaunt skeleton), auditory organ (sighs, wails), olfactory (twisted, grey haired) and kinaesthetic sense (crippled, staggering legs, trembling hands). The short poems of 2 lines and 4 lines are not impressive in contrast to longer poems. In fact, short poems have been invested with abstract wisdom which does not allow picturesque description. The use of paradox has turned his poem into an epigram: “Wisest is he who knows/ that he knows no knowledge’s jot:/ Ignorant is he who knows/ that he knows a lot.” The poet strikes a striking contrast between human beauty and nature’s beauty in these lines; “Beauty of a person/ Intoxicates as wine;/ Beauty of nature/ leads to beauty divine.” Swami Nem Pal’s

abstract poetry is neither dull nor irrational in sharp contrast to Nissim Ezekeil's jejune abstractions. It is heartening to explore the truth that there is not an iota of vulgarity in Nem Pal's poetry while Shiv K. Kumar gives enough room to obscenity in his poems. Although Nem Pal's poetry savours of caustic satire and moving poignancy, he lacks titillating humour.

The third book Pearls of Wisdom by Swami Nem Pal contains mostly didactic statements. It does smack of poetic-prose or purple patching. Various statements reflect aphoristic tinge. Common thoughts are clothed in suggestive diction having the twist of wisdom. The statement- "Never twiddle your thumbs, begin with a firm intent; and win success"- connotes that a man or woman with tottery will-power cannot succeed in his or her aim. It is the firm determination which gives a sure fillip to success. Statements are rich with balance, parallelism and coherence of thoughts. Stylistic subtlety of balance, parallelism and rhyme is impressive in this statement: "A thought silently wins; action does it with dins." Here 'thought' parallels 'action' and present tense keeps the balance of two juxtaposed statements. Other fine touch of balance and parallelism is transparent in this statement: "Helpless is he who loses self-confidence; hopeless is he who complains 'against his fate.'" Here the parallelism between helpless/ hopeless brings about alliteration and restrictive relative clauses (he who) balance the aphoristic appeal. In essence, Swami Nem Pal is proficient enough in rendering an effective linguistic tilt of poignancy, wisdom, satire in order to sensitize the dormant society and refine the ways of political prostitutes and defiled culture of modern youth. Swami Nem Pal enjoys a distinctive place in the realm of Indian English poetry.