

Nar Deo Sharma's Contribution to Post-Independence

Indian English poetry

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ABSTRACT

The poetry of Nar Deo Sharma is deep-felt and heart-stirring; it is thought-provoking, delightful, and full of dignity, frankness, charm, and pathos. It also carries some universal and wonderful message to everyone in the society. Each of his poems is a pure gem, sprinkling light in a reader's heart. He has attained a singular success and a permanent place in the firmament of English poetry. He is applauded warmly not only in India but also beyond the frontiers of this nation. His simple and direct poetry casts a brilliant spell and mesmerism on the readers and appeals through and through. The world is hag-ridden with crime, injustice, lies, agony, pain, and exploitation. There is no harmony in man's thoughts and deeds, and they lack self-knowledge and enlightenment. Sharma has looked at life's drama mutely and oozed out his resentment in the form of verse. His poetry is more important than other poets because he pens poems with a motive to reform his nation and the world. He has a heart brimming with the pain of humanity and a mind charged with the thought of reform.

Keywords: Exploitation, Mathew Arnold, enlightenment, dehumanization, moral bankruptcy.

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(1) A Comparative Study with Other Poets

Sharma is a chronicler of what Mathew Arnold speaks about eternal passion and eternal pain. He is politically conscious and has social awareness; these are writ large in his verse. Sharma has left no stone unturned in depicting the bare realities of life. His poems are replete with various social aspects like social and political hypocrisy, moral bankruptcy, religious bigotry, loneliness, decomposition of human values, dehumanization of man, terrorism, materialistic approach to life, sexual exploitation of women, the greed of the hoarders, barbarity and rampant corruption, communal disharmony, dirt, despair and secular prevalent in big cities and listlessness and indifference of people and so on. On account of these merits, Dr. Satish Kumar says right:

Sharma is a gifted poetic craftsman. His poems are honeycombed with irony and satire and marked by the felicity of phrases, beautiful images, and striking metaphors. He has carved for himself an important place among practicing poets. (Melody of Wounds)

His poetry has a similar sensibility to contemporary luminary poets; sometimes, he even excels in them. For example, we may take the poem 'a Request' by Kamla Das, in which she shows her preoccupation with death in the following manner:

When I die
Do not throw
The meat and bones away
But pile them up
And let them tell
By their smell
What life was worth
On this earth
What love was worth
In the end. (Roots and Blossoms 135)

And in the 'suicidal note,' Sharma seems more profound:

How long I'd keep my life intact
In the indement crime
Of your untoward idiosyncrasies
Where from the pinnacles of your fortunes
There had always been

An avalanche of your odium
And the sleet of smarting abuse
In the alley of my twinging needs. (Melody of wounds 15)

Sharma looks as emotional as Ramanujan when he mixes his emotions and memories. In his famous poems obituary, Ramanujan remembers his father and says:

Father, when he passed on,
Let dust
On a table full of papers,
Left debts and daughters,
A bedwetting grandson
Named by the toss
Of a coin after him. (Singnatures One Hundred Indian Poets 184)

In the poem 'Indian Rites,' Sharma remembers his father and seems equally emotional:

For want of rice, ghee, milk
My father gave way
To undue death;
But to satiate
The gargantuan appetite for rituals
I offered pindas,
Lad led out ghee
On my dead father's dug pate
And debt heaped upon my fate. (Melody of wounds 7)

The delineation of urban life with remarkable clarity of visual perception in the poem 'City Night, 2 A.M.' by Jayant Mahapatra can be seen:

The buses and trams are gone off the streets
A city tree starts bleeding in the neon light
My white eyes are turned in
To doors framed in their crowded silences
Where my body hangs in the air like a question
The ground was lonely, dropping below my feet. (Svayamvara and Other poems 25)

Nar Deo Sharma also sees the city with the same eye:

City seethes
With varied desires
Of innumerable people
Nested in the alleys
Of their selfishness. (Melody of wounds 21)

He also feels the indifference of man to the pains of others:

To my hurt
My neighbor respond
With the impassive spirit
Of shut doors and windows. (Melody of wounds 5)

Shiv K. Kumar, in his poem 'Epitaph on An Indian Politician,' provides a daring portrayal of an Indian leader who indulges in double-talk. Kumar says emphatically:

Rasectomised of all genital urges
For love and beauty
He often crossed floors
As his wife leaped across beds.

All his life, he shambled around
In homespun yarn,
Socializing his soul while his sons flourished
In the private sector of big business. (Indian Literature 60)

But the tone of the poem 'Leader' of Nar Deo is more satirizing:

As wounds, bruises are
Swathed in white relief
So in the Gandhian coffin
He covers his national nuisance
Of corruption, bribed dejection. (Melody of wounds 6)

He x-rays the intentions of politicians:

The x-rayed poverty of the nation
Paraded by skeletal, naked children
Who picks their tattered rights

From the garbage of democracy

He sees but flouts poor pains

By spatchcocking sophistry

Into his political ravings.

But you've populated the nation

With weighty worries. (Melody of wounds 3)

In a galaxy of poets like R. Parthasarthy, P.Lal, O.P. Bhatnagar, Baldev Mirza, Dom Mores, Keki N. Daruwalla, Arun Kolatkat, Krishna Srinivas, I.K. Sharma, Syeed Ameeruddin, D.C. Chambial and other poets mentioned above the poet Nar Deo Sharma outshines alike a northern star in the sky of English literature. He is deeper than Ezekiel, less frank than Kamla Das, simpler and more touching than Shiv K. Kumar or Jayant Mahapatra, as soul-stirring as Baldev Mirza and H.S. Bhatia, more socially conscious than R.K. Singh, O.P. Bhatnagar, and Keki N. Daruwalla. Therefore we can say that the poetry of Nar Deo Sharma is better than any other contemporary Indian English Poet, and it is as effective and appealing as the most luminary poets of Indian English poetry.

(2) Universal Appeal and Charm

Indian literature in English has been flourishing since independence more successfully than it flourished before, says David Mc-Cutchion. (Indian Writing in English 25) The poetry of Nar Deo Sharma is also flourishing daily and is receiving wide critical acclaim. Universal appeal and charm as the poet consider poetry the panacea of humankind's ills. He writes, "After undergoing the throes of extreme emotions, a poet delivers a good poem. I have painted the prickly panorama of social and political upheavals in my poems. By many slashing satires, I aim at refining the political desperadoes." (Melody of Wounds)

The poems of Nar Deo Sharma carry universality and captivating charm because they deal with the familiar person and affect the ordinary reader to the core. Jasvinder Singh, a noted reviewer, and poet, rightly observes: "Through his candid and forthright assertions, the poet has endeared himself among the lovers of poetry." (Poetcrit 119)

In the poem 'uncommon' the poet shows the difference in approach between the old and the young, which is realistically appealing:

Most uncommon experience

It was for me that
The frequent invasion of miseries
Couldn't corrode the deep faith
Old people placed in God;
But in every stroke of fresh grief
They perceived God's latent boon. (Melody of Wounds 31)

In another beautiful poem 'Letter from the Lost daughter' the poet exhibits the hollow of man that is not practiced in real mark out the following stanza:

People clamour for reforms but
They live a lie, avoid nice deeds;
Only such norms of any good
People embrace that never clash
With their selfish ends but satisfy them. (Melody of Wounds 33)

Sharma by his poem indirectly directs his readers to imbibe the ideals of duty, devotion, discipline, love, generosity, righteousness and spirituality in life. His poetry promotes the understanding of the oddities of modern civilization in which the opposite and paradoxes intermingle. He wishes to make his readers realize that they are the sparks of divinity. During the journey of life, man has to develop sacred thoughts and lead an ideal life. He emphasizes creating understanding in mind and values in the heart and soul. The poem 'To modern World' echoes the same idea:

Overall freedom for children
Meant for you their good growth;
But in the expanse of freedom
Without any moral hedges
Life gathers decadence. (Melody of Wounds 37)

In the poem 'Melody of Wounds,' one can experience the universal charm when the poet says:

By snowballing taunts at me
You salve your agonies of wants
That drives me to a terminus
Of nausea against life;
But attuning my pains
To the laughs of stray children

I translate my grief into gaiety. (Melody of Wounds 27)

The poetry of Nar Deo Sharma, in this way, echoes the voice of entire humanity and its suffering. Sharma strongly advocates the education of human values in life. Though, at times he castigates the moral bankruptcy and condemns it in an autobiographical manner, the aim behind this is not to the preacher to teach but to harbor the noble values and apply them in everyday life. Sharma defines a good poem as follows:

A good poem impresses the emotional and intellectual levels of its readers. Its emotional level assimilates theme, poetic trend, and network of thoughts, while the intellectual level comprises stylistics like diction application of multifarious images. (Interviews with Indian English Poets 110)

Thus, Sharma's poems contain all the characteristics of the universal application of ideas that can be discerned by poets and scholars and the general brain of the nation and the world.

(2) Future of Nar Deo Sharma's Poetry

Nar Deo Sharma keeps a good sensibility for the poetic process and the sublimating contents in the poem. Being also a critic of repute, his understanding of poetry is far better than other poets. He torches his contemporary poets and points out their achievements thus:

"Contemporary Indian English poets have launched out an intellectual crusade through realistic poetry for an overall refinement in every walk of life, as they do not write by being ensconced in their ivory towers of fancy, but by way of their subtle imagination and discerning intellect, penetrating morals of the poor, endemic corruption that is devouring morals of the nation, religious and spiritual hypocrisy that fritters national integrity, and hollow rituals, deprowed politics, and utter selfishness." (Indian English Writing 49-50)

It is also true in his poetry which is replete with vigour and hope for the future. He will be admired and praised in the forthcoming ages. His collection Melody of Wounds shows that the colors of life are still alive and shining. His poetry will keep shining till that day of doom because it is full of universal themes larger than life. Despite facing life's traumas, Sharma till the song of delight and humanity with optimism up to the brim. In 'Love Poem II,' he says:

I was natural, darling
When I clothed your love
In my plain praise that
You're air and water
Of my happiness
That your love
Dispels my dismay,
Dips me in delight. (Melody of Wounds 36)

He not only preaches morals and sermons but also performs his duties as a poet. In an interview with Atma Ram, he says, “Yes, poetry is a spontaneous creation for me as I cannot write a poem from my mind whenever I want. However, for impressive thoughts, I often get framed in inordinate waste.” (Interviews with Indian English Poets 109)

He boldly opposes the old dogmas and rituals which are deadening the invigorating spirit of India and says:

I won't espouse old rites
That ossify my progress,
Although change's met with
Gibbet or hard cross. (Melody of Wounds 7)

The poet himself becomes a battlefield where armies of thought clash with one another. The streams of memory run around, and the storm of grief honeycomb the sheets of his memory, but the poet continues to live. He says:

By snowballing taunts at me
You salvo your agonies of wants
That drives me to a terminus
Of nausea against life;
But attuning my pains
To the laughs of stray children
I translate my grief into gaiety. (Melody of Wounds 27)

Through his poem 'Acharya Rajneesh's Right Place,' he injects clear prospects of living a pious and glorious life.

Acharya, you're the lonely taper
Burning against the dark maelstrom
Of ancient, inveterate dogmas.
Your fresh philosophy
Is a fragrant bouquet
On the ancient graves
Of decadent religion. (Melody of Wounds 10)

So, it is clear that his poetry has a bright and radiant future. His poetry imparts the teachings of humanity and a sense of awakening for our fellow beings. It infuses the idea of universal brotherhood among humanity. Baldev Mirza says:

Sharma does not appear from an ivory tower like most of his clan. He comes out of the crowds of people, reveals his experiences in a subtle, sharp, and direct manner, and joins the crowds again. But the shades he leaves behind are dotted with his distinction and individuality as a poet who believes in 'Art for life's sake. (Melody of Wounds 46)

His poetry is yet far to go, much to say, to create a candid moment and situation and create an atmosphere of global brotherhood, unity, and harmony. Amar Nath Prasad says:

Now Indian English poets are paying attention to the various subjects of day-to-day reality. They are alive to the contemporary situations, particularly the social, economic, and political problems of society. (Critical Response to Indian poetry in English 35)

His poetry is an ever-widening laurel tree, which awakens and enlightens the poetry lovers. Dr. Satish Kumar says:

He aims at refining and purging the polluted human sensibilities by bringing them to exposes. Sharma does not dwell in an ivory tower. A hard-core realist and humanist, he poetizes his observations, sensibilities, and experiences in chiseled expression, apt and polished diction, evocative symbols, hard-hitting irony, and satire in simple, clear, and lucid language. (A Survey of Indian English Poetry 282)

Thus, it can be said that the poetry of Nar Deo Sharma will be a source of bliss and ecstasy and inspiration for the generations to come. His poetry is excellent and marvelous. He will surely gain new grounds in the arena of poetry.

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