

## Shades of Social Life in the Poetry of O. P. Bhatnagar

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### ABSTRACT

Poetry of Bhatnagar is unlike the common run and it is surely not a kind of after dinner amusement. It is not a soft and pleasant hobby. Bhatnagar never writes poetry that seems out of touch with men's lives and real interests. He tells Prof. S. B. Srivastava in an interview, "Poetry can become significant when it reflects and contains responses to specific human situations". He also feels that poetry and life are essentially one. Both have to be lived and both have to be perpetually corrected and reformed. He remarks, "For me there is no difference between life and poetry". His poetry is integrated to social structure and he wants to prepare people for the most sweeping changes. It is his concentrated aspiration to portray the struggle of humanity. So, we should value work to avoid a waste of life. Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard and yet brings into blossoms, the fairest of roses is the contribution of Bhatnagar's poetry in the field of Indo-Anglian poetry. Silent, unperceived, yet potent in its effect, it is revolutionizing thought. Those who keep their eyes open and those who understand the working in mind will find immense change that may occur in the society of India by never ceasing the permeation of Bhatnagar's message, left in the pages of his poetry.

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We live in an era of the most significant social change in modern history. This, whether we note it or not is the distinguishing feature of our time. Ours is the century of the common person. However, our current age suffers from some prose defects. The supremacy of matter and the dogma of industrial religion have destroyed culture, beauty and morals. The intellectual class have been debased by the immense spread of newspapers-simply carrying news of violence rape and murder, cheap literature blue films, obscene Radio programmes and the pornographic TV scene serialized every night. Intelligence is becoming increasingly general and rampant on the large scale despite the course given in the schools, colleges and universities. School children and students and their parents all form their minds on the basis of silly programmes of public entertainments. What a fun that's social environment instead of favouring the growth of intelligence, opposes it tooth and nail. Bhatnagar's poetry deals with the details of modern life, which passes daily under our eyes. His poems present problems of modern life, social political economic moral and intellectual. Poetry of Bhatnagar is unlike the common run and it is surely not a kind of after dinner amusement. It is not a soft and pleasant hobby. Bhatnagar never writes poetry which seems out of touch with men's lives and their real interests. He tells Prof. S. B. Srivastava in an interview, "Poetry can become significant when

it reflects and contains responses to specific human situations” (p. 6). He also feels that poetry and life are essentially one. Both have to be lived and both have to be perpetually corrected and reformed. He remarks, “For me there is no difference between life and poetry”. (p. 77) His poetry is integrated to social structure and he wants to prepare people for the most sweeping changes. It is his concentrated aspiration to portray struggle of humanity. So, we should value work to avoid a waste of life.

Bhatnagar has trampled on the tuft of vast and varied fields of human life. He has poignant feelings, originality of insight and economy of language, which can be discerned by the study of different volume of his poetry published so far. He has cast remarks on contemporary society and living. Dr. S. Sahu remarks, “Mr. Bhatnagar too much conscious of the absurdity of life cannot help keeping himself aloof in the immense universe of modern age which increase one’s reasons for wishing that it were true” (pp. 118-119).

Bhatnagar is a poet critic. there is fusion of feeling and thought in his poetry Dr. H. L. Agnihotri remarks, “Bhatnagar compels attention for the human substance of his poetry imbued with a deep intellectual content” (p. 41). Undoubtedly, he seeks to evaluate and analyse the contemporary scene in Indian poetry. Bhatnagar says-

Poetry is meaning  
Like a deity enshrined  
“Round and Round’. (p. 5)

The present-day society has grown hopelessly crazy after materialistic progress- throwing all human ideals to winds. The gloomy dark of the poor is widening beyond all precincts of redemption. Bhatnagar says:

The poor fare in heated discussions  
In the air-conditioned halls. (p. 10)

Bhatnagar reflects in his poem on ‘Rituals’ on an eight-year boy, who is worshipping his ancestral God. He lights lamps and performs to attain nearness with God. However, during one of his prayers offered to the Lord, the clothing of the innocent boy catch fire by the sacred lamp and the boy succumbs to death in flames. There was one God to save him from death by fire. Bhatnagar’s satire is biting and immediate. He writes:

But with his Lord unnoyed by his purification  
The tiny self-lay in a trance.

Never to return to his temporal worship of God. (p. 14)

The editorial note of the Pioneer dated 1st January 1987 reads. “Life in India today is one unending nightmare hag-ridden by insensate violence stupefying squalor and monumental tragedies. Masses of India are sinking into poverty. The worst suffering in the world is to undergo poverty without putting up a serious flight against it. Poverty has been responsible for destroying civilizations. In the modern age too, it is doing the same. So, it is the foremost function of all people to root out poverty. There is a lot of hue and cry in the air that we are making great progress, but all this appears to be a mirage. Bhatnagar remarks:

“Foundation stones and paper plans fulfil our hopes”

But the real position is altogether different. We speak of many parrot-like things but never do them; speaking and not doing has become a habit. We are all averse to sincerity. We do nothing ourselves but scoff at them, who do something. We never care for the well-being of our brethren. We never realize that there is a vast majority living on a handful of oatmeal and half a piece of bread and undergoing all sorts of suffering without murmur. Bhatnagar sees these skeletons and utters that all claims of progress are fake.

So many years in sun and rain  
Has our freedom grown  
But far down in villages  
I'm the same  
Oppressed, ill-treated  
Humiliated and strange. (p. 13)

He adds:

To make me forget my pains  
But the frame of my misery  
Has not much changed  
I don't even have hopes  
To look for relief. (p. 13)

In India, floods cause unspeakable havoc almost every year and take heavy toll of lives. The poor are rendered homeless. Bhatnagar is moved at their pitiable lot and says:

Floods of tears are enough  
God need not threaten us with more. (p. 15)

Another poem ‘Harvest’ also highlights the deplorable condition of Indian farmers who have to bank on Monsoon for their crops.

Soon they see stars shooting

Down their fields  
And they harvest them  
With a heart hit  
With depleted crops. (p. 24)

The basic moral values have been lost. The horizons of the present haunt with desolation and seek of deep-rooted corruption. Bhatnagar says:

Ours is a multi-headed country  
Looking in no particular direction  
Trimurti is an all-inclusive vision  
From here to eternity risen  
Telling the tale of our frivolity. (p. 18)

Holiness of man is no more a reality now. Religion is a zig-zag road leading one to confusion. He doubts even God and so dismisses him. Him from human consideration:

Do not think of God  
For if he exists  
He need not be thought of  
If not it will not  
Make him exist the more. (p. 23)

“Bhatnagar aptly contrasts the simple honest men who decries bribery and corruption and the clever who is adept in those acts” (p. 14), says B. K. Das. So he ironically asks:

A simple honest man  
In a worn-out mode  
May still himself find  
Measuring life in value spoons  
Bribery, corruption and forgery  
For him a bitter poison be

But the clever in it  
A meaty situation see.

The man-woman relationship has become commercial today resulting in the drainage of emotional attachment between them. Says Dr. A. N. Dwivedi (p. 5). O. P. Bhatnagar confirms it in his poem 'Tradding'.

Women  
Hurled to helplessness  
Trade  
On their flesh  
Men  
Are not different  
They trade their prowess  
For flesh. (p. 23)

The ways of this world are crooked and it is really difficult to draw a correct line of demarcation or distinction between a good and a bad man. A person who was extolled as a 'Saint' all through the course of his life was found to be a woman-hunter and given to prostitution. So deep is the hypocrisy of this world. In his poem 'Saint', he portrays:

He preached abstinence  
All his life  
Keeping women away  
At a light's distance  
In an absolute purity of thought  
People ensainted him  
And when he died  
More prostitutes came  
To mourn the loss. (p. 49)

Bhatnagar possesses a widened outlook. Dr. P. S. Kasture observes, "In the world of today, when man is losing his moorings, this poet outshines with his high-serious attitude of commitment to the aesthetic of life" (p. 12). Bhatnagar does not make a propaganda but write living poetry of dynamic life. "Poetry is about life" says Gayatri Sinha (Indian Express, July 22 1988). What cannot be expressed in a letter, a story, a composition or a novel it is that which is fit for poetry. When you can't see stars, it is pointless writing love lyrics on them. Unlike

Bhatnagar, mostly the poets have been doing this job. But Bhatnagar's is the voice of dissent a voice of protest and anger against such a snobbery. Bhatnagar's poem on human understanding reveals the snobbery of poets:

My friend thinks  
That he is a great poet  
For him illusions are  
A real substitute for life. (p. 19)

Bhatnagar gives the picture of Snobbery in the poem, "The way to see a thing":

Unconsciously religious  
People still perform Virata Bandh  
In the age of remote control  
And feed hundreds of people with sweets  
To bring peace to the departed soul  
Or he again adds  
"Attaining the age of sixty  
Is an occasion for public celebration  
Like the return of an astronaut  
From space in wild admiration. (p. 29)

People always covet for gold, they make a show of their richness. But the so called rich people lose all sympathy, milk of kindness and turn stone-hearted. Bhatnagar says:

Stoned in our lust for gold  
We all are pyramids. (p. 16)

There are persons, who build big status to lionize their heroes. They make a grand show and neglect the commoner in the street Bhatnagar paints:

The fanatics erect marble statues  
Of their transient heroes  
On the evanescent route of times  
Some whispering revolution  
Others proclaiming peace  
Leaving the common man  
To elbow sun with sun shades".

If one starts asking question like Hamlet. (p. 17)

Perhaps it is a big truth that it that makes us the world go round. It is undoubtedly an endless misery. True love never claims, it ever gives, love ever suffers, never resents, never revenges itself. All thoughts all delights, all passions. whatever stirs the mortal frame is love. Love conquers all. Herbert Shipman writes in this poem 'Through Fare':

Across the gateway of my heart  
I wrote no thorough fare  
But love came laughing by and cried  
I enter everywhere. (p. 209)

Love has been called the noblest one. There is nothing perhaps nothing half so sweet in life as lovers honey dream. It is here that two heart that beat as one. Love is such a mickle might as makes all pains light. Love in like a sweet melody. Shakespeare says about love:

Love is a raised with the fume of sighs  
Being a purged a tire speaking in lover's  
A fire sparking in lovers' eyes. (Shakespeare)

Love is really something pious something which enables man to transcend the heights of spirituality. Tagore has said in 'Fire-Flies'.

He who does good, comes to the temple gate  
He who loves readers the shrine. (p. 184)

Loyalty to a country is better than loyalty to a tribe or dynasty. But the outlook of Bhatnagar is not narrow or bogoted one. Prof. R. Sundarsan says about Bhatnagar's poetry, "He has restored poetry to its serious vocation of active involvement with society culture and nation. He has demythicized the role of poetry in making it human. (p. 121) Bhatnagar always mean for the present predicament of the life and times of his people. He sings:

Ours is a multi-headed country  
Looking in no particular direction  
Trimurti is an all inclusive vision  
From here to eternity risen  
Telling the tale of our frivolity. (p. 18)

Bhatnagar vociferously comes out with rosy promise for his country. He has great attachment to his country. He says:

I love my country  
Which loves my voice  
And my speech. (p. 12)

He wants to spend his last breath to keep his countrymen awake. He always bewails for those persons, who betray the pious interests of the country and play a game of hide and seek with its security. He remarks:

Passing national secrets  
On cold heights  
Thickening conscience to snow  
Makes small news in our country.

At such betrayals that no faces contort nor nay eyebrows are tense, so abnormal has become the attitude of Indians.

Bhatnagar has the real love for this country and he does not believe in fake show. His heart really aches on the said plight of his countrymen even after the achievement of so-called independence. Look how sharply he criticises the same:

Before the British came  
The land was not ours  
After they left  
It was not ours too  
The land belongs  
To those who rule  
The others merely inhabit  
The no man's land. (p. 19)

Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard and yet brings into blossoms the fairest of roses is the contribution of Bhatnagar's poetry in the field of Indo-Anglian poetry. Silent, unperceived yet potent in its effect it is revolutionizing the thought. Those who keep their eyes open those who understand the working in the mind will find immense change that may occur in the society of India by never ceasing permeation of Bhatnagar's message, left in the pages of his poetry. Dr. R. K. Singh aptly remarks, "Bhatnagar is a poet of hope he stands for finding a new direction a new road for mankind to tread on, uprooting the signpost that have aged



telling faded routes. D. C. Chambial writes in his letter dated May 24, 1986, “I find Dr. Bhatnagar’s poetry soaked in socio-consciousness”.

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